

REPORT TO EXECUTIVE



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PORTFOLIO	Environment
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Vocational Training For Hackney Carriage And Private Hire Drivers

PURPOSE

1. For members to consider the introduction of vocational training for applicants for, and all current holders of, hackney carriage and private hire vehicle driver's licences.

RECOMMENDATION

2. That the Executive approves the following recommendations with effect from 1st November 2008:
 - a. To approve the introduction of a Local Knowledge Test for new applicants for hackney carriage and private hire driver's licences at a cost of £15 per test.
 - b. To require all new applicants, upon applying for a Hackney Carriage or Private Hire Driver's Licence, to have registered for the Driver's VRQ2 (BTEC) course for Transporting Passengers by Taxi and Private Hire and to have passed that course within 6 months of the application date.
 - c. To require all existing licensed hackney carriage and private hire driver's to undertake and successfully complete the Driver's VRQ2 (BTEC) course for Transporting Passengers by Taxi and Private Hire by 31st October 2011
 - d. In the event that a driver fails to successfully complete the Driver's VRQ2 (BTEC) course for Transporting Passengers by Taxi and Private Hire within the time limits set out in b and c above, to approve the use of the Head of Planning and Environment's delegated powers to revoke or refuse to renew, as appropriate, the Hackney Carriage and/or Private Hire Driver's Licence. In such cases the driver will be offered the opportunity to put any exceptional circumstances to the Licensing Committee to show why the licence should not be revoked or renewed.
 - e. To accept, as an alternative to VRQ2 (BTEC), a similar qualification that includes such learning modules as may be required by the Council, and that at least matches or exceeds the level of qualification attained by VRQ2 (BTEC).

- f. That Officers provide a monitoring report for Licensing Committee 12 months after the commencement of this initiative.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION

3. To improve the standards of the provision of passenger transport by taxi and private hire vehicles within the Borough.

To improve the skills, knowledge and performance of Hackney Carriage and Private Hire driver's within the Borough.

To improve the standing and status of Hackney Carriage and Private Hire driver's within the passenger transport industry.

SUMMARY OF KEY POINTS

4. Up until 1998 applicants for hackney carriage and private hire driver's licences in Burnley were required to complete a 'local knowledge test', which tested their knowledge of the whereabouts of key destinations in Burnley and neighbouring boroughs, the shortest routes to various destinations and other matters relating to conditions attached to their licences. In 1998 this test was discontinued, the reasons for this are not recorded.
5. Over the last 18 months complaints have increased regarding a minority of taxi drivers' lack of knowledge of the roads and routes within the borough, general standard of driving and customer care, together with disputes arising out of misunderstandings caused by language difficulties.
6. The Burnley Disabled Peoples Network have also expressed strong concerns both in writing and at meetings of their group which have been attended by the Principal Licensing Officer, regarding the way that disabled people are treated and transported by hackney carriage drivers.
In particular people in wheelchairs have been placed in hackney carriages without access ramps being used, wheelchairs have not been secured by anchorage straps, seatbelts have not been used and disabled people have been refused access to hackney carriages.
7. The Disabled Persons Transport Advisory Committee, in its Good Practice Guide 2003, emphasised the need for driver training for taxi drivers in dealing with disabled people.
8. In its best practice guidance (October 2006) the Department for Transport states that there is advantage in encouraging drivers to obtain a nationally recognised vocational qualification for the taxi and private hire trades
9. The Government, through 'GoSkills' (the Sector Skills Council (SSC) for Passenger Transport) is keen to introduce training to the passenger transport sector. GoSkills is committed to the development of workers in all industries in the passenger transport sector. GoSkills was contracted by the Department of Transport to investigate ways in

which the skills and learning initiatives in the hackney and private hire industry could be more widely available.

A report was commissioned by GoSkills and produced by Roger J. Silvers MA, LL.M. It reviews the underpinning legislation and provided an evaluation into gaps in the skills and workforce development and how these may be addressed to:

- Achieve an improved quality of service
- Raise the profile and professionalism of the sector
- Attract more people to enter and remain in the industry
- Ensure the sustainability of the industry

10. In order to address the above issues it is proposed to introduce a requirement for all existing holders of hackney carriage driver's licences and private hire driver's licences and for all new applicants for such licences to successfully complete a Driver's VRQ2 (BTEC) course for Transporting Passengers by Taxi and Private Hire.

There is a considerable cost associated with this course, however, by linking it to an NVQ Level 2 in Road Passenger Vehicle Driving, it is possible to access 'Train for Gain' funding that will allow driver's to achieve the qualifications at no cost, subject to them meeting eligibility criteria.

The purpose of the course is to provide drivers with the knowledge, skills and understanding required for effective passenger transport.

In order to obtain the qualification it will be necessary for drivers to pass the following units;

- Customer Service
- Passenger Transport and Equal Opportunities
- Passenger Transport and Disability Awareness
- Taxi and Private Hire Safety
- Carriage of Luggage and Parcels by Taxi
- Route Planning
- Taxi and Private Hire Regulations (UK)

11. Burnley College has been approached with a view to them delivering the BTEC course, however after lengthy negotiations, they have recently declined to be course providers.
12. CAB have approached the Council as a recognized provider of NVQ2 training, which incorporates the BTEC course. This has allowed them to deliver training free to over 1800 drivers in Bournemouth using Train to Gain funding. They provide a comprehensive, professional solution that can be delivered locally, at times and locations that meet the needs of drivers. Their availability will enable the Council to implement these proposals for all new and existing drivers within the timescales proposed and at no cost to the Council or drivers. Representatives from CAB Business Solutions gave a presentation to members of the Council and to the Taxi trade on 3rd September 2008 outlining their work across the country and the benefits that have been identified as a result of recognizing the professional qualification within the trade.
13. Other providers of the BTEC course include Runshaw College at a cost of £150.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS AND BUDGET PROVISION

14. There are no financial implications for the Council.

Applicants for, and holders of, Hackney and Private Hire driver's licences will be required to meet the cost of the Knowledge Test.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

15. The disability issues addressed in this report support the Council's Disability Equality Scheme.

DETAILS OF CONSULTATION

16. Initial consultation took place with the taxi and private hire trade in July and the responses received are as follows:
17. Mohammed Ibrar who represents approximately 10 hackney carriage drivers who operate under the title of 'taxi call' has given unqualified support for the introduction of the training course for all new and existing drivers. His written comments are attached as Appendix 'A'
18. Jamil Munir, the Chair of the Hackney Carriage Association, who represents the majority of the hackney carriage drivers, has submitted written comments attached as Appendix 'B'. He states that drivers are totally against compulsory training for all existing drivers but supports training for all new drivers. He also suggests that any existing drivers, who are the subject of complaints, should also have to undergo training.
19. Alan Hosker, who represents Padiham private hire operators, fully supports the implementation of driver training. He has not submitted a written response.
20. Mohammed Arif, the Chair of the Private Hire Association has submitted written comments attached as Appendix 'C'. He objects to the proposal and states that drivers believe that compulsory vocational training is excessive. He agrees that a knowledge test for all new drivers would be beneficial.
21. Peter Mackie, on behalf of Althams Travel, strongly objected to these proposals and had particular concerns regarding the costs associated with the course and knowledge test. Those cost have now been reduced to only £15 for a knowledge test. He also asks for exemption from the qualification for Altham's driver's as they currently undergo in-house training and are only involved in airport transfer duties. His comments are attached as 'Appendix D'
22. In view of the added responsibility placed on hackney carriage drivers in relation to the transporting of disabled persons together with the criticism of hackney carriage drivers by disabled groups, emphasis will be placed on ensuring that those drivers are encouraged to attend the earliest possible courses.
23. Further consultation on this latest, amended report has taken place during August and September.

Mr. Munir has recently resigned from his position as Chair of the local Hackney Carriage Association, which has now become incorporated into the Bolton, Bury and Preston Hackney Association. The Chair of that Association, Mr Charles Oakes, has been consulted and has responded by e-mail. His comments are attached as Appendix 'E'.

He states that Hackney drivers are not the sole provider of transport for disabled people and that this report overstates the case for the disabled in an attempt to ensure approval of the report by members.

He makes other comments, which although difficult to understand, appear to suggest that the Council is not legally entitled to require hackney driver's to undergo training. This is incorrect.

In summary Mr. Oakes states his Association is against any compulsory training.

There have been no other additional responses to this latest consultation process.

24. All currently licensed private hire operators have been consulted.
25. This report was considered by the Licensing Committee on 10th September. Members of that Committee recommended the report to the Executive and also asked that they receive a monitoring report from officers 12 months after the commencement of this initiative.
Environment and Housing Scrutiny Committee Members have been consulted.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

26. Disabled Persons Transport Advisory Committee Good Practice Guide 2003
Department for Transport Taxi and Private Hire Licensing - Best Practice Guide
Edexcel Course syllabus for 'Transporting Passengers by Taxi and Private Hire'

FURTHER INFORMATION

PLEASE CONTACT:

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ALSO:

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[Appx A](#)

[Appx B](#)

[Appx C](#)

[Appx D](#)

[Appx E](#)