



Walsall Council

REPORT OF THE INTERIM HEAD OF COMMUNITIES

AND PUBLIC PROTECTION

LICENSING AND SAFETY COMMITTEE

25 FEBRUARY 2015

TAXI LICENSING – DRIVER AND VEHICLE STANDARDS AGENCY

WHEELCHAIR ASSESSMENTS COURSE

1.0 Summary of report

- 1.1 Following a meeting of Taxi Licensing Sub-Committee A it was resolved that a report be presented to the Licensing and Safety Committee, to consider a requirement for all potential new private hire and hackney carriage drivers to successfully complete a Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (D.V.S.A.) assessment in relation to the safe loading, securing and unloading of wheelchair passengers in licensed vehicles.

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 For members of the committee to note the information contained in the report and to resolve whether the DVSA wheelchair assessment, or the possibility of an alternative training regime be considered further following consultation with members of the Taxi/Private Hire Liaison Group.

3.0 Background information

- 3.1 Following a meeting of Taxi Licensing Sub-Committee A in December 2014 it was resolved that a report be presented to the Licensing and Safety Committee to consider the possible requirement for all potential new private hire and hackney carriage drivers to successfully complete a DVSA assessment in relation to the loading, securing and unloading of wheelchair passengers in licensed vehicles.

- 3.2 Members had noted an increase in the number of licensed drivers (both hackney carriage and private hire) who had been referred to committee, for failing to correctly secure a wheelchair whilst passengers were being transported in their licensed vehicle. Five such drivers have been referred to committee since April 2014. These drivers have then subsequently been required to complete the D.V.S.A. course.
- 3.3 Currently, all new drivers only undertake a practical driving test at a cost of £79.66 weekdays and £96 at weekends and bank holidays.
- 3.4 All drivers that have completed the Driver Training Course run by Walsall Adult Community College receive theoretical guidance in respect of disability awareness which in part, includes loading, securing and unloading wheelchairs into licensed vehicles however, there is no actual practical assessment.
- 3.5 The Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency carry out such an assessment (in conjunction with the practical driving test) at a cost of £92.44 weekdays and £112.34 at weekends and bank holidays.
- 3.6 Just the wheelchair assessment is £26.56 or £32.68 dependant on the day of the week.
- 3.7 To undertake the wheelchair assessment the driver must himself provide the wheelchair accessible vehicle, without this, no test can be conducted. This in theory could prove to be an obstacle for persons who do not have easy access to such a vehicle. These assessments are conducted at a limited number of test stations within the Midlands area.
- 3.8 It should be noted that at Dudley M.B.C, all drivers have to complete such training. This is a 2.5 hour course which covers theory and practical assessment at a current cost of £22. The course also addresses getting visually impaired passengers and their assistance dogs into a vehicle. Again the applicant must attend with their own vehicle. A dedicated officer provides this training and has done so for a number of years.

4.0 Resource considerations

- 4.1 **Financial:** Fee levels as given in 3.4, 3.5 and 3.8 of the reports.
- 4.2 **Legal:** The cost of any appeal to a magistrate's court by any person aggrieved by the decision of the council in respect of any conditions set by the authority as permitted under the legislation.

The Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 governs

the issue and control of licences for private hire and hackney carriage vehicles, drivers and operators.

Section 51 of the Act in part states:

(2) A district council may attach to the grant of a licence under this section such conditions as they may consider reasonably necessary.

5.0 Citizen impact

5.1 Wheelchair passengers must be loaded and unloaded safely and must be correctly secured in all licensed vehicles.

6.0 Community Safety

6.1 The Council is entitled to attach specific conditions to driver licences.

7.0 Environmental impact

7.1 None.

8.0 Performance and risk management issues

8.1 None at this stage.

9.0 Equality implications

9.1 Wheelchair passengers must be loaded and unloaded safely and must be correctly secured in all licensed vehicles.

10.0 Consultation

10.1 Local Authorities. D.V.S.A

11.0 Contact Officer

11.1. Steven Knapper – Principal Licensing Officer. 01922 653073.