

Name of Cabinet Member:

Cabinet Member for City Services – Councillor Innes

14 November 2016

Director Approving Submission of the report:

Executive Director, Place

Ward(s) affected:

All Wards

Title:

Driving Assessments for new applicant drivers & Hackney Carriage Wheelchair Assessments for new applicant and additional hackney carriage drivers

Is this a key decision?

'No – Although the matter may affect all Wards in the City, it is not anticipated that the impact will be significant'

Executive Summary:

In a Licensing & Regulatory Committee report dated 30 November 1994 the Committee decided to include wheelchair testing within the then driving assessment for new applicant drivers; carried out by licensing officers. In a Licensing & Regulatory Committee report dated 28 November 2000 a new Hackney Carriage & Private Hire Driving Test assessment and also a Hackney Carriage Wheelchair Assessment provided by the Driving Standards Agency (later to become the Driver Vehicle Standards Agency [DVSA]) was introduced. This was reaffirmed in a Licensing & Regulatory Committee report of the 16 November 2008 in a taxi licensing review of the "DFT Taxi & Private Hire Best Practice Guidelines Phase 1"

In a letter dated 31 August 2016 the DVSA wrote to chief executives of local authorities informing them that the provision of Driving Assessments for Private Hire & Hackney Carriage Drivers and Wheelchair Assessments for Hackney Carriage Drivers was being withdrawn as of the 31 December 2016. Applicant drivers have been unable to book these tests from the middle of September as the DVSA are fully booked.

Recommendations:

The Cabinet Member for City Services is recommended to:

1. Approve that it will be the Council's policy as from the 9 January 2017 that the DVSA Driving Assessment and DVSA Hackney Carriage Wheelchair assessment is replaced by equivalent assessment and testing by Coventry City Council qualified Driving Assessment Officers.

List of Appendices included:

None

Other useful background papers:

None

Has it been or will it be considered by Scrutiny?

No

Has it been or will it be considered by any other Council Committee, Advisory Panel or other body?

No

Will this report go to Council?

No

Report title:

Driving Assessments for new applicant drivers & Hackney Carriage Wheelchair Assessments for new applicant and additional Hackney Carriage drivers

1. Context (or background)

- 1.1 In a Licensing & Regulatory Committee report dated 30 November 1994 the Committee decided to include wheelchair testing within the then driving assessment for new applicant drivers; carried out by licensing officers. In a Licensing & Regulatory Committee report dated 28 November 2000 a new Hackney Carriage & Private Hire Driving Test assessment and also a Hackney Carriage Wheelchair Assessment provided by the Driving Standards Agency (later to become the Driver Vehicle Standards Agency [DVSA]) was introduced. This was reaffirmed in a Licensing & Regulatory Committee report of the 16 November 2008 in a taxi licensing review of the "DFT Taxi & Private Hire Best Practice Guidelines Phase 1"
- 1.2 In a letter dated 31 August 2016 the DVSA wrote to chief executives of local authorities informing them that the provision of Driving Assessments for Private Hire & Hackney Carriage Drivers and Wheelchair Assessments for Hackney Carriage Drivers was being withdrawn as of the 31 December 2016. Applicant drivers have been unable to book these tests from the middle of September as the DVSA are fully booked.
- 1.3 The obsolescent DVSA Driving Assessment was priced at £76.67 and the DVSA Wheelchair Assessment was priced at £25.45 (if combined a cost of £89.07).

Coventry City Council will provide these assessments at a cost of £70 and £25 to the driver (if combined a cost of £90).

2. Recommended proposals**2.1 Proposal**

Approve that it will be the Council's policy as from the 9 January 2017 that the DVSA Driving Assessment and DVSA Hackney Carriage Wheelchair assessment is replaced by equivalent assessment and testing by Coventry City Council qualified Driving Assessment Officers.

3. Results of Consultation Undertaken

None

4. Timetable for implementing these decisions

Subject to approval of the recommendations this will commence forthwith.

5. Comments from Executive Director, Resources**5.1 Financial implications**

Taxi Licensing is a ring fenced budget within the Place Directorate. The cost will be paid by the applicant driver. Any on-going impact will be addressed in future fee reviews.

5.2 Legal implications

The Council is entitled to adopt and maintain policies in respect of taxi and private hire licensing. Such policies should inform and guide decision making and promote consistency. They should not be binding nor should they prevent the exercise of discretion in a particular circumstance where an exception may be appropriate.

Under the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976, the Council may refuse to grant a hackney carriage/private hire driver's licence where there is any "reasonable cause" to do so. Any such decision is subject to a right of appeal to a magistrates' court and would not take effect pending the outcome of any such appeal.

6. Other implications

None

6.1 How will this contribute to achievement of the Council's key objectives / corporate priorities (corporate plan/scorecard) / organisational blueprint / Local Area Agreement (or Coventry Sustainable Community Strategy)?

It will help to facilitate improvements in the taxi services available to the people of Coventry, which will contribute towards ensuring that people in wheelchairs are correctly & safely secured in hackney carriages and the taxi drivers licence skills are proficient; making the city a safer place.

6.2 How is risk being managed?

Through established reporting and governance arrangements.

6.3 What is the impact on the organisation?

None.

6.4 Equalities / EIA

Having Coventry City Council licensed drivers suitably assessed as to their driving capability and competence in using wheelchairs will have a beneficial effect on passengers and the general public in Coventry

6.5 Implications for (or impact on) the environment

None

6.6 Implications for partner organisations?

Improvements in taxi services will benefit partner and other organisations, in terms of improving the safety, availability and value for money of taxis in Coventry.

Report author(s):**Name and job title:**

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Place

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Contributor/approver name	Title	Directorate or organisation	Date doc sent out	Date response received or approved
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Finance: Phil Helm	Finance Manager	Resources	14/10/2016	27/10/2016
Legal: Amy Wright	Licensing & Enforcement Solicitor	Resources	14/10/2016	14/10/2016
Director: Martin Yardley	Director of Place	Place	14/10/2016	
Members: Cllr Innes	Cabinet Member for City Services		14/10/2016	27/10/2016

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