

North Lanarkshire Council

Report

Finance and Resources Committee



approval



noting

Ref: PG/GG

Date: 13 March 2019

Taxi and Private Hire Car Drivers – Knowledge Test

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Executive Summary

The purpose of this report is to present the Committee with options in relation to whether the applicant for a Taxi Driver Licence or Private Hire Car Driver Licence should be required to take a test of his/her knowledge of the geographical area to which the licence is to relate.

Recommendations

It is recommended that the Committee adopts option C narrated in the following report and continue to only require taxi drivers to sit and pass a knowledge test.

1. Background

- 1.1. At its meeting on 20 December 2018 the Council agreed that a report be submitted to the Finance and Resources Committee outlining new procedures and how these could be implemented for new Private Hire Driver's Licences regarding the requirement for new applicants to sit and pass a knowledge test.
- 1.2. North Lanarkshire Council currently require applicants for Taxi Driver Licences to sit and pass a knowledge test before granting them licences. The Civic Government (Scotland) Act 1982 allowed for this and allowed the licensing authority to refuse to grant a licence to a person who did not satisfy it that they had adequate knowledge of the area in question.
- 1.3. The aforementioned Act has been amended by the Air Weapons and Licensing (Scotland) Act 2015 and a local Licensing Authority can, if it sees fit, require applicants for Private Hire Car Driver Licences to undertake a test of their knowledge in relation to the relevant area.

2. Report

- 2.1. In terms of the licensing legislation there is a distinction between taxis and private hire cars in that taxis can be flagged down in the street whereas anyone conveying a passenger in a Private Hire car has to be satisfied that the hire has been pre-booked.

When the Civic Government (Scotland) Act 1982 was drafted local authorities could only require applicants for Taxi Driver Licences to sit and

pass a knowledge test. The local authority could not impose a similar requirement in relation to Private Hire Car Drivers. It is assumed that the thinking of Parliament at the time was that a Private Hire Driver is given advance notice of any prospective destination and in consequence of this does not require to have the same degree of immediate knowledge as a taxi driver.

Since the 1982 Act was enacted, there have been developments in technology that perhaps override the requirements for drivers of taxis or private hire cars to have the requisite knowledge in that such vehicles can be fitted with satellite navigation systems.

In the last two years there have been five complaints made regarding private hire drivers not having the requisite knowledge of their area when conveying passengers. The current number of licensed private hire drivers is 1,521.

Having regard to the foregoing there are three options available to the Committee, as follows:-

- (a) stipulate that from a future date all Taxi Driver and Private Hire Drivers require to sit and pass a knowledge test;
- (b) due to the advance in in-car technology, remove the requirement for the knowledge test in its entirety (both in relation to Taxi Drivers and Private Hire Car Drivers), or
- (c) continue to only require Taxi Drivers to pass a knowledge test having regard to the fact that they can be hailed down at any location and there is no requirement for any prospective fare to be pre-booked.

Option (c) above is being recommended due to the fact that in the last two years officers of the Council have only received five complaints alleging a lack of area knowledge on the part of Private Hire Drivers when conveying passengers.

3. Equality and Diversity

3.1. Fairer Scotland

Not applicable.

3.2. Equality Impact Assessment

Not applicable.

4. Implications

4.1. Financial Impact

It should be noted that if Private Hire Drivers in addition to Taxi Drivers were required to pass a knowledge test then consideration would have to be given to increasing staff resources to service this requirement leading to an additional cost.

4.2. **HR/Policy/Legislative Impact**

There is no HR/Policy or legislative impact

4.3. **Environmental Impact**

There is no environmental impact

4.4. **Risk Impact**

There is no risk impact

5. **Measures of Success**

5.1. Enhancement of services to the public.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "C. L. H. G.", is positioned above the title of the signatory.

Head of Legal and Democratic Solutions