

Report of Executive Officer, Taxi & Private Hire Licensing

Report to Licensing Committee

Date: 7 February 2017

Subject: Training Review, Taxi & Private Hire Licensing

Are specific electoral Wards affected? If relevant, name(s) of Ward(s):	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Is the decision eligible for Call-In?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? If relevant, Access to Information Procedure Rule number: Appendix number:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No

Summary of main issues

- 1 This report is intended to give an introduction to committee members of the reasons for a training review.

Recommendations

1. That members note the information and timescales in this report.
2. That members support the proposal for the council to consult with taxi and private hire trade on the review of the council's driver training provision.

1 Purpose of this report

- 1.1 This report is intended to give an introduction to committee members of the reasons for the Training Review.

2 Background information

- 2.1 The role of the Taxi and Private Hire Licensing service has long been recognised as an important council function in ensuring that the travelling public are safe with professional drivers who have attained good standards, safe vehicles, and a dedicated enforcement team.
- 2.2 In recent years, the spotlight on licensing functions nationally has attracted much media attention, and the deficiencies identified in procedures across the country which led to the shocking effects on a large number of children's lives. Leeds City Council Executive Board initiated a wide-ranging review of its taxi and private hire licensing functions, reporting to the cross-council Safeguarding Group, Licensing Committee, Central and Corporate Scrutiny Boards and to the Executive Board.
- 2.3 The review has resulted in significant changes throughout the service. We have implemented new and strengthened licensing policies, including a strengthened Convictions Criteria policy, and the introduction of a safeguarding training requirement for all drivers. We have implemented an annual online Disclosure & Barring (DBS) procedure, which has required processing around 6000 individuals into the new system over a 12 month cycle ending March 2017. We have changed the shifts of enforcement officers to match their hours of work with the busiest hours of the trade and meet new demands in line with the Deregulation Act 2015.
- 2.4 As part of the service improvements, we seek support from the committee for the council to conduct a review of driver training provision, beginning with consultation with the local trade. The report suggests the reasons for the review, the possible options and associated risks, and the timescales for the review.

3 Main issues

- 3.5 The council has provided some driver training directly to the licensed trade for several years, primarily to new applicants, although some drivers are asked to resit training and tests if their driving or behaviour falls below required standards. The council also has bought in some externally provided driving standards and literacy/numeracy training for several years. The council is also significantly through a process of putting all 6000 taxi and private hire drivers through safeguarding awareness training, which is planned to complete in December 2017.
- 3.6 The time is now appropriate to review the current mix of training provision, which is summarised in **Appendix 1**.
- 3.7 There are three main issues motivating the training review.

- **Benefits to the trade** of a modular driver accreditation (training and testing) approach, through training with recognised and transferable qualifications, such as BTec, City & Guilds, Institute of Advanced Motoring, NVQ, Public Service or Light Goods driving;
- **Benefits to customers and staff** at Taxi & Private Hire Licensing offices of removing training delegates from the queue and car park at 225 York Road, which has experienced significant increases in queue time and congestion; and
- **Benefits of using a developed local market** in external training provision, able to draw on Training Levy and other training incentives.

3.8 At this stage, it is difficult to be exact about the findings of the review. It is possible to highlight the following indicative milestones.

- **Feb 2017:** Initial report to Licensing Committee. Initial staff and public consultation.
- **March 2017:** Report to Licensing Committee – results of consultation, options appraisal and recommendations/proposals to change policy.
- **April 2017:** Further consultations on proposals to change agreed at Licensing Committee. Commence procurement/market testing.
- **June 2017:** Final report to Licensing committee with outcome and final recommendations.
- **July 2017:** Executive approval and implementation of new contract.

3.9 Ahead of detailed consultation, it not possible to be confident about the specific risks or costs which might adversely affect the review, or its' implementation.

4 Corporate Considerations

4.1 Consultation and Engagement

4.1.1 Initial consultation with the staff affected by the review in the Taxi and Private Hire Licensing service has been undertaken and will continue as options are explored and proposals are developed.

4.1.2 Initial consultation has been undertaken with the licensed trade in January, and further consultation will be undertaken with the licensed trade, with training providers, other licensing authorities as options are investigated and proposals are developed.

4.2 Equality and Diversity / Cohesion and Integration

4.2.1 Equality and Cohesion Screening Assessments will be carried out on the policies agreed at Licensing Committee which are used to inform decision making.

4.3 Council policies and City Priorities

4.3.1 The Taxi & Private Hire Licensing policies contribute to the following aims:

Best Council Plan 2013 -17

Towards being an Enterprising Council

Our Ambition and Approach

Our Ambition is for Leeds to be the best city and Leeds City Council to be the best council in the UK – fair, open and welcoming with an economy that is both prosperous and sustainable so all our communities are successful.

Our Approach is to adopt a new leadership style of civic enterprise, where the council becomes more enterprising, business and partners become more civic, and citizens become more actively engaged in the work of the city.

Our Best Council Outcomes

Make it easier for people to do business with us

Our Best Council Objectives

Promoting sustainable and inclusive economic growth – Improving the economic wellbeing of local people and businesses. With a focus on:

- Helping people into jobs,
- Boosting the local economy
- Generating income for the council

Ensuring high quality public services – improving quality, efficiency and involving people in shaping their city. With a focus on:

- Getting services right first time
- Improving customer satisfaction

4.3.2 The Taxi & Private Hire Licensing policies contribute to priorities:

- Reduce crime levels and their impact across Leeds
- Effectively tackle and reduce anti-social behaviour in communities
- Safeguarding children and vulnerable adults:

4.3.3 Leeds City Council has both a moral and legal obligation to ensure the duty of care for both children and vulnerable adults across all of its services. This cannot be achieved by any single service or agency. Safeguarding is ultimately the responsibility of all of us and depends on the everyday vigilance of staff who play a part in the lives of children or vulnerable adults.

4.4 Resources and value for money

4.4.1 As this is an information report, there are no resource or value for money issues to consider.

4.4.2 However it should be noted that the Taxi and Private Hire Licensing service is cost neutral to the council and by virtue of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act, 1976, raises its own revenue by setting fees to meet the cost of issuing and administering licences. This means that if the proposals were associated with additional costs, they would be funded via licence fees and will not place additional pressure on the council's budget.

4.5 Legal Implications, Access to Information and Call In

4.5.1 There are no legal implications arising from this proposed review, and it is not subject to call in or publication.

4.6 Risk Management

4.6.1 Consideration will be given to each proposal prior to introduction.

5 Conclusions

5.1 The review will investigate the opportunity to review the current mix of training provision, and review options.

5.2 The review will engage with staff, the local trade, training providers, neighbouring authorities and other stakeholders.

5.3 The review findings will have regard to council policy, conditions and criteria approved by Licensing Committee.

6 Recommendations

6.1 That members note the information and timescales in this report.

6.2 That members support the proposal for the council to consult with taxi and private hire trade on the review of the council's driver training provision.

Background documents

Appendix 1 List of current training courses

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Course title	Provider
Customer Care	Provided by LCC Fleet Services
Driving Standards Assessment	Provided by a choice of 3 local providers
Hackney Carriage (Taxi) Knowledge	Provided by LCC Taxi & Private Hire Licensing
Literacy & Numeracy	Provided by LearnDirect
Private Hire Driver Seminar: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Basic legislation• Leeds knowledge and Leeds city centre knowledge• Private Hire conditions• Using a reference tool (AZ)	Provided by LCC Taxi & Private Hire Licensing
Safeguarding	Provided by Carolyn Eyre, Safeguarding Consultant