

**Report of** Head of Elections, Licensing and Registration

**Report to** Licensing Committee

**Date:** 4 July 2017

**Subject:** Taxi and private hire licensing Training Review – responses to consultation

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 The council has for some time wanted to review the way it commissions, delivers and reviews the training for the taxi and private hire trade.
- 2 This report updates Licensing Committee on the responses received to a public and trade consultation about driver training.
- 3 This report summarises the responses, and suggests the next steps of an option appraisal.

## Recommendations

- 1 That Members note the information in this report.
- 2 To seek Members' support for the option exploration stage of the review.

### 1 Purpose of this report

- 1.1 To inform Members of the responses received to the consultation on driver training.
- 1.2 To inform Members of the next steps of the review – exploring the various options identified.

## 2 Background information

- 2.1 The council has for some time wanted to review the way it commissions, delivers and reviews the training for the taxi and private hire trade.
- 2.2 At present the council has a set of six approved taxi and private hire courses, provided by a range of training providers:

Course title	Provider	Cost
Customer Care	Provided by LCC Fleet Services	£55 (to LCC)
Driving Standards Assessment	Provided by a choice of 3 local providers:	
	Diamond Advanced Motorists	£78
	AA DriveTech IAM RoadSmart	£86.40
Hackney Carriage (Taxi) Knowledge	Provided by LCC Taxi & Private Hire Licensing	£50 (to LCC)
Literacy & Numeracy	Provided by LearnDirect	£25
Private Hire Driver Seminar: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Basic legislation</li> <li>• Leeds knowledge and Leeds city centre knowledge</li> <li>• Private Hire conditions</li> <li>• Using a reference tool (AZ)</li> </ul>	Provided by LCC Taxi & Private Hire Licensing	£90 (to LCC)
Safeguarding	Provided by Carolyn Eyre, Safeguarding Consultant	£10

- 2.3 The training is predominantly for drivers, and particularly new applicants, of which there are around 1000 a year. However, all drivers and operators have been required to attend Safeguarding training, and a small number of drivers and operators have been required to attend training as a restorative approach if they have been found to break the council's conditions.
- 2.4 In February 2017, Licensing Committee Members heard of the service's plans to conduct a review of driver training provision, beginning with consultation with the local trade. The report outlined the reasons for the review, the possible options and associated risks, and the possibly timescales for the review, in particular:

- 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 Main issues

#### Survey responses

- 3.1 The council issued the survey in March 2017. The survey is summarised in **Appendix 1**. The survey was circulated to a wide range of bodies to ensure responses came for different perspectives: training providers, current staff, other authorities, passenger groups, trade bodies associations and individual self-employed drivers. We are very grateful to everyone who took the time to complete the survey and will publish the list of all the survey responses, anonymised where relevant.
- 3.2 In total, 72 organisations and individuals completed the survey, with the majority of respondents providing additional comments and information in support of their responses (in **Appendix 2**). More than 40 respondents completed two open questions about training and testing methods (**Appendix 2**), and 10 respondents replied by email providing more general comments (**Appendix 3**).

#### Responses to each question

- 3.3 The survey showed a mixed view from respondents to the proposals the council was suggesting. We gave respondents the chance to agree, disagree or express no opinion either way, with only three questions showing half or more people in favour of any single proposal.

**The highest score was 63% of respondents said they supported the council's approach in seeking a modular professional driver accreditation, with recognised and transferable qualifications, for example across West Yorkshire authorities.**

**57% of respondents said that the council should not stop either providing or contracting any of the training.**

**Half (50%) of respondents said that the council should seek to consolidate the training so that we use fewer contractors or training providers**

- 3.4 Although the survey responses show differing views throughout, there was a pattern across many of the comments supporting the responses (in **Appendices 2 and 3**).

**Many respondents commented negatively on the length of time it takes to book and complete training.**

**Some respondents expressed a view that it would be a clearer division of responsibilities for the council not to provide training.**

**Some respondents expressed a view that using dedicated training organisations would improve response times and value for money.**

**Some respondents expressed a view that some commercial training providers wouldn't necessarily have the safety of the public as a priority.**

**Some respondents expressed a view that the training could be designed, refreshed and delivered differently, including some new areas of awareness, and that the council might not be the best organisation to do this.**

### **Next steps - Options Appraisal**

3.6 The consultation does not show an overwhelming response in favour of any single approach. It does, however, show a preference for the council to develop a modular approach to training, to increase the capacity in Leeds and in the wider economy for training course places.

3.7 The proposed next step of the review would be to explore the following:

- Baseline all W Yorkshire & York (WY&Y) in house and contracted training provision (may also involve the project leader of the WY&Y 'harmonisation' project group as discussed in the separate report);
- Site visits to learn from modular training procurement, provision, contract management, e.g. Liverpool, which has 5 recognised training providers who each provide all of the required training courses;
- Assessment of the financial impact of having applicants pay the training fees directly to a training provider, not the council, see section 4.4.2 below;
- Opportunity for the council to put forward a traded training function to be included on the list of training providers; and
- Opportunity for a framework contract for accredited driver training across the West Yorkshire Combined Authority area;

## **4 Corporate Considerations**

### **4.1 Consultation and Engagement**

4.1.1 This review is based on significant consultation and engagement with the trade, staff, passengers and representative groups.

### **4.2 Equality and Diversity / Cohesion and Integration**

4.2.1 Equality and Cohesion Screening Assessments will be carried out on any changes to training provision.

### **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 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 The options exploration will affect the fees review the council is currently undertaking, and may also require a review of the structure of Taxi & Private Hire Licensing.

4.4.2 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 licenses. Currently, the council charges the applicants fees for attending those training courses provided by the council, and the other training providers charge separately.

4.4.3 If the council were to contract out **all** of the training, then the fees would be paid by applicants directly to those organisations, and not the council. However, the council would retain a role in monitoring the contracts. This would mean that

there is a risk of a fall in fee income of between £100,000-150,000 in the first 12 months of the contract, if the council were to contract out the training, and not operate as one of the training organisations itself.

#### **4.5 Legal Implications, Access to Information and Call In**

4.5.1 There are no legal implications arising from these proposals, and they are not subject to call in or publication.

#### **4.6 Risk Management**

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

### **5 Conclusions**

5.1 The council has received a wide range of responses and many suggestions, to its consultation on driver training provision.

5.2 The responses show mixed views on the best way forward for the council, however, there is strong support for the council developing a modular approach to training, with drivers able to get accreditation they can use in different authorities. The view of both the service and majority of the respondents is that it takes too long to attend and pass training in Leeds, and the council can learn from other authorities and organisations.

5.3 The council is also embarking on some collaborative work with the neighbouring licensing authorities, which would develop a common training curriculum and qualification, and should significantly improve training capacity in Leeds and in West Yorkshire.

### **6 Recommendations**

6.1 That Members note the information in this report.

6.2 To seek Members' support for the option exploration stage of the review.

### **7 Background documents**

Appendix 1 Training Review Consultation: Summary of responses.

Appendix 2 Training Review Consultation: General Responses

Appendix 3 Training Review Consultation: Comments