

Chichester District Council

General Licensing Committee

22 March 2017

Update regarding changes to the provision of Taxi/Private Hire Driving Assessments

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2. Executive Summary

To seek the approval of Members to amend the current policy in relation to how the taxi/private hire driving assessment and wheelchair assessment is delivered.

3. Recommendations

- 3.1 That Members approve proposed conditions and changes to the existing policy in relation to the taxi/private hire driving assessment and the wheelchair assessment.**

4. Main Report

- 4.1 As part of the application process for a taxi or private hire driver licence, the Council's policy requires the applicant to sit and pass a driving assessment. The assessment has historically been provided by the Driver & Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA, formerly VOSA & DSA). The assessment was designed to test those applying for a taxi or private hire driver licence to establish whether they could drive in a safe and considerate manner and were therefore competent to carry members of the public.
- 4.2 To pass the DVSA taxi/private hire driving assessment, the candidate was permitted to accumulate up to 9 driving faults. If the candidate accumulated 10 or more driving faults or any serious or dangerous fault, they would fail the test.
- 4.3 In September 2016, without consultation, the DVSA wrote to all Councils advising that they were withdrawing their assessment service as of the 1st January 2017.
- 4.4 In light of this decision, officers of the Licensing Team acted swiftly to identify suitable alternative organisations within the region with capacity to provide an almost identical driving assessment to the one originally offered by the DVSA.

- 4.5 Two organisations were identified; 'The Blue Lamp Trust', based in Hampshire and '1st Castle School of Motoring', based in Bognor and Chichester.
- 4.6 The Blue Lamp Trust was established in 1998 by ex-emergency service personnel from the Hampshire area. The Trust has been a major supplier of taxi assessments to neighbouring Local Authorities in Hampshire since 2011 including Havant BC, East Hampshire DC and Portsmouth City Council.
- 4.7 The assessment offered by the Trust mirrors that provided by the DVSA. The Trust's website provides further information regarding what the assessment consists of
https://www.bluelamptrust.org.uk/Driver_Training/taxi_driver_assessment.php.
- 4.8 The Trust's assessors are DVSA fleet approved and therefore qualified to assess existing DVLA licence holders. The Trust has recently extended its service to conduct the assessments from Chichester.
- 4.9 1st Castle School of Motoring is a driving school that has operated in the local area for many years. The School already undertakes the driving assessments for Arun DC. Officers of the Licensing Team have met with one of the School's principle assessors to devise a test that replicates the requirements of the DVSA test. This same individual undertakes the assessments.
- 4.10 Both organisations have been conducting the taxi/private hire driving assessment for this Council since November 2016. The Licensing Team's experience of working with both organisations has been extremely positive. Both organisations are highly competent and professional in how they deliver the assessment. The fees charged by both organisations are considered to be competitive and do not exceed the charge originally levied on applicants by the DVSA.
- 4.11 This Council's Licensing Technician has observed two driving assessments conducted by 1st School of Motoring on the 17th February 2017. The content of the assessments reflected accurately what would have been in the DVSA's version of the taxi/private hire driving assessment. It included two manoeuvres which would typify a driver setting down passengers, a 3 point turn, 10 minutes of independent driving and a series of questions at the end of the practical element which covered the Highway Code, road signs and 'cabology'.
- 4.12 The DVSA has also ceased to provide the wheelchair assessment. The wheelchair assessment consisted of the following elements:
- safely load and unload the wheelchair into a vehicle
 - use the wheelchair brakes to secure and release it
 - fasten the seat belts or safety harness
 - secure any wheel belts or clamps fitted to a vehicle
- 4.13 This is an existing policy requirement for any applicant or existing driver that drives a wheelchair access vehicle on a regular basis. There are two Hackney Carriage drivers who are awaiting to undertake this training.
- 4.14 Officers of the Licensing Team have made contact with a provider of wheelchair training to WSCC staff. The course involves a days worth of practical training and concludes with an assessment. The cost would be borne by the driver.

- 4.15 An officer of this Council's Licensing Team is scheduled to attend the course on the 17th March 2017. Further feedback can be provided to Members at the Committee Meeting.

5. Conclusion

- 5.1 In light of the above, it is felt appropriate to amend the current policy to reflect the change in practice that has occurred. A copy of the proposed wording along with a copy of the original wording is at **Appendix 1**.
- 5.2 If Members are minded to approve the changed wording then the following sections of the policy will be amended accordingly:
- Section 14 of the general policy
 - Section 1 of the PH Driver policy
 - Section 1 of the HC Driver policy
- 5.3 A condition will also need to be added to the Private Hire Driver's Licence requiring a driver to re-sit the driving assessment if they reach 7-9 points on their DVLA driving licence within a 3 year period or there is evidence through complaints that a driver's driving has fallen below the standards expected. This is not a legal requirement but considered appropriate by this Council for public safety purposes. It is possible to add this condition to a Hackney Carriage Driver's Licence, but this would require altering the HC Byelaws. The proposed condition is at **Appendix 2**.
- 5.4 A condition will also need to be added to the Private Hire Driver's Licence requiring a driver to sit a wheelchair assessment if they intend to drive or are driving a Wheelchair Access Vehicle. Similar to 5.3 above the completion of an assessment is not a legal requirement but considered appropriate by this Council for the protection of the public. Again, it is possible to add this condition to a Hackney Carriage Driver's Licence but this would require altering the HC Byelaws. The proposed condition is at **Appendix 2**.

6. Appendices

Appendix 1 Proposed wording for changes to Policy

Appendix 2 Proposed wording for conditions to be attached to the PH Driver Licence in relation to the driving assessment and wheelchair assessment.