



CHELTENHAM

BOROUGH COUNCIL

Notice of a meeting of Licensing Committee

Wednesday, 2 August 2017

6.00 pm

Pittville Room - Municipal Offices, Promenade

Membership	
Councillors:	Wendy Flynn (Chair), David Willingham (Vice-Chair), Mike Collins, Tim Harman, Adam Lillywhite, Paul McCloskey, Dennis Parsons, Diggory Seacome, Max Wilkinson and Pat Thornton

The Council has a substitution process and any substitutions will be announced at the meeting

Agenda

1.	APOLOGIES	
2.	DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST	
3.	PUBLIC QUESTIONS These must be received no later than 12 noon on the fourth working day before the date of the meeting	
4.	MINUTES OF LAST MEETING To approve the minutes of the last meeting held on 10 July 2017.	(Pages 3 - 8)
5.	APPLICATION FOR PERMISSION TO PLACE TABLES AND CHAIRS ON THE HIGHWAY Suffolk Arms, Suffolk Road	(Pages 9 - 16)
6.	BRIEFING NOTE Licensing Policy, Guidance and Conditions for Private Hire and Taxis Policy Review Working Group 2017	(Pages 17 - 20)
7.	ANY OTHER ITEMS THE CHAIRMAN DETERMINES TO BE URGENT AND WHICH REQUIRES A DECISION	
8.	DATE OF NEXT MEETING Wednesday 6 September 2017 at 6pm	

Contact Officer: Annette Wight, Democracy Assistant, 01242 264130

Email: democratic.services@cheltenham.gov.uk

Licensing Committee

Monday, 10th July, 2017

6.00 - 7.05 pm

Attendees	
Councillors:	David Willingham (Vice-Chair, in the Chair), Mike Collins, Adam Lillywhite, Paul McCloskey, Diggory Seacome, Max Wilkinson and Pat Thornton
Also in attendance:	Vikki Fennell and Phil Cooper

Minutes

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillors Flynn, Harman and Parsons.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None

3. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

None

4. MINUTES OF LAST MEETING

The minutes of the last meeting held on 31 May 2017 were approved and signed as a true record.

Matters Arising

A member raised the matter of what could be done to prevent a taxi driver who had had his licence revoked by this committee, being able to continue to work as a taxi driver for a neighbouring authority which would inevitably mean him coming into the Borough of Cheltenham, particularly when anger management problems were clearly an issue. The member also asked whether the taxi driver in question had appealed.

The Legal Officer replied that he had not appealed, as the time had now expired and probably because he was still able to drive in a neighbouring authority.

The Chair stated that cross boundary issues were ubiquitous. However, it was not something that could be solved by this Council as it was down to the law.

In answer to Members' questions the Licensing Officer confirmed that a taxi driver or private hire driver may work for more than one company and that vehicles can pick up passengers outside their 'home' area if the journey is legitimately pre-booked. Cheltenham Borough Council's taxi licensing policy only applies to the drivers, vehicles and operators licensed by it. He said that the cross-boundary issue is a common problem for towns with more prosperous night time economies, where drivers from areas where it might be easier to get a licence come into town for work. He said that Hackney Carriages can use

designated taxi ranks and be flagged down, but only in the area where they are licensed, however they can do pre-booked journeys anywhere. Private hire cannot use taxi ranks, cannot be flagged down and must be pre-booked through an operator licensed in the same area as the vehicle and driver, but the pre-booked journey may be outside their 'home' area.

The Licensing Officer continued that hackney carriage proprietors in Cheltenham are required to sign a declaration stating they intend to mainly operate in Cheltenham, but that it would be up to other licensing authorities to introduce a similar requirement in their areas.

The Legal Officer explained that Gloucester City Council runs an internal penalty point system whereby once a driver had accumulated 12 penalty points they were brought before a Sub-Committee to determine whether they were still a fit and proper person to hold a licence.

In conclusion the Licensing Officer told members that partnership meetings are held with licensing officers in neighbouring districts where issues of this nature are discussed, but that all districts have different opinions, policies, priorities and resources.

5. APPLICATION FOR PERMISSION TO PLACE AN OBJECT ON THE HIGHWAY - 'A' BOARD

The Licensing Officer, Phil Cooper, introduced the report regarding an application from Costa Limited to place an advertising board on the highway outside Costa Coffee at 118-120 High Street, Cheltenham. The A board would be displayed from 7am to 7pm Monday to Saturday and from 9am to 5pm on Sunday and would measure 1082mm x 762mm. No objections had been received, however the application does not comply with Council policy on the basis that the premises has ground level street frontage on Cambray Place and the High Street. The Officer informed members that the policy states that A boards in the conservation area will only be approved for premises that are disadvantaged due to being in a basement or along a side alleyway and therefore with no street frontage. Members were also advised that there is already an approved A board adjacent to this location, which has been in place for several years due to those premises being in a basement and having no shop frontage at street level.

A picture of the proposed A board was at Appendix A, with a plan of the proposed location at Appendix B.

The Officer advised members that having regard to the facts, they should decide whether to grant permission if they were satisfied that there were sufficient grounds to depart from policy or to refuse permission as the application did not comply with the adopted policy.

The applicant had been invited to the meeting but did not attend.

In response to questions from members, the Officer confirmed that the applicant had not contacted the Licensing Office to discuss signage on the building prior to the application. When asked about the signage on the building itself, the Officer advised that signage is a planning rather than licensing matter, but if the building is listed there may be limitations on signage. However, he confirmed

that Costa did have permission for tables and chairs outside the premises in Cambray Place which had complied with policy and which had barriers around them with the Costa branding on them. The Officer was advised by several members that the barriers had not been in place when they had passed by and the Officer said that he would deal with that as an enforcement matter.

One member stated that with the presence of barriers with Costa emblazoned on them and with the current signage that the brand was well known enough. Another member reported that the Costa signage could be seen from the start of the pedestrianised area and that as the application was not compliant with policy he could see no reason to vary from the policy.

There being no further comments, the Chair moved to vote on 1.6.2 of the report being to refuse the application.

Upon a vote it was unanimous, 7 for, 0 against.

RESOLVED THAT, Costa Limited's application for permission to place an A board on the highway outside the premises at 118-120 High Street, Cheltenham, be refused, as it did not comply with the provisions of the street scene policy.

6. REVIEW OF A HACKNEY CARRIAGE DRIVER'S LICENCE

The Licensing Officer, Phil Cooper, introduced the report regarding a review of Mr Wahidur Osmani's Hackney Carriage Driver's Licence HCD175. Mr Osmani had held his taxi driver's licence in Cheltenham since 2015, with it being due for renewal on 25 February 2019. On 2 May 2017 a complaint was made to the Council relating to Mr Osmani, who had refused to take a passenger who was accompanied by a dog. Mr Osmani reported the incident to the Licensing team, however the complainant's version of events differed from Mr Osmani's in that the complainant maintained that Mr Osmani knew the dog was an assistance dog. The complaint and Mr Osmani's explanation of events were contained in the background papers. The Officer circulated a letter of support from Cheltenham Borough Homes which provided further information about a separate incident involving a dog and relating to Mr Osmani and his family and which might therefore be relevant.

The Officer continued that although an offence under the Equalities Act had been alleged, the Licensing Manager had decided not to prosecute but to refer the matter to committee for members to consider whether Mr Osmani was a fit and proper person to hold a Hackney Carriage Driver's licence. Members were advised that they could revoke the licence, take no further action or issue Mr Osmani with a written warning.

In response to questions from members, the Officer confirmed that the Equalities Act 2010 places a statutory duty on licensed drivers to carry assistance dogs with no extra charge. However the transport of other pets is at the driver's discretion and the driver can make a charge. The Officer also clarified when asked that religious reasons are not legitimate grounds for refusing to carry an assistance dog. The only legitimate reason for a taxi driver refusing to take a passenger with an assistance dog is on medical grounds, in which case the driver can apply for a certificate of exemption but Cheltenham does not have any drivers holding such a certificate.

There being no further questions to the Officer, the Chair invited Mr Osmani and his representative Mr Mani Masih to address the committee. Mr Masih informed members that Mr Osmani admitted that the incident had taken place but not as the version of events stated. He explained that Mr Osmani was on the telephone to his wife who was dealing with a racist incident at home, when he was approached and asked to take a passenger with a dog. He refused and suggested they ask the car behind as it was a wheelchair access taxi and thus a bigger car. Mr Osmani admitted that he was not really paying attention as he was more concerned for his wife and that he had not realised that the passenger was visually impaired as he himself had not approached his taxi. When asked by the passenger why he would not take the dog, Mr Osmani found himself saying because I am a Muslim, something for which he apologises. Mr Masih continued, informing members that Mr Osmani had been a taxi driver since 2015 and knew this was not good customer service and that he should have asked if the dog was an assistance dog. Mr Osmani did not realise this until the taxi driver behind him questioned why he had not taken the fare. He stated that he had taken dogs before and had done so since. Mr Masih informed members that Mr Osmani was himself a victim of discrimination and that the letter of support from Cheltenham Borough Homes outlined the problems his family were encountering at home, which did involve a dog. Mr Osmani did not recall the complainant threatening to call the Police, as he would then have taken more notice as the Asian culture are afraid of the Police. Realising that there might be a complaint made against him, Mr Osmani took steps to report the incident to the council and to rectify the situation and to express his apology to this person.

In reply to questions from members, Mr Osmani:

- Stated he had not seen the dog or its harness. It was dark, about 11.30/11.45 at night and the person who approached him from the group of about 5 people did not have the dog with them.
- Admitted he was distracted on the phone to his wife and realised that he should have asked if it was a guide dog, as he knew it was law to take assistance dogs, even in Islam law it was okay to take guide dogs.
- Confirmed that he would not say 'I'm a Muslim' again as an excuse to refuse a fare, or refuse to take dogs and stated that he does have regular customers with dogs.
- Stated that he knew his action had not been professional and said that he had been running a restaurant for 6 years and therefore knew how essential customer service was.

Members felt that it was not professional to be at the front of the taxi rank and on a mobile phone and suggested that in future he should leave the rank and drive to a different location to take calls of a personal nature.

Members empathised with Mr Osmani regarding the racist threats he was having involving knives, petrol bombs and a bull mastiff type dog and noted the letter of support regarding Mr Osmani and his family from the Officer at Cheltenham Borough Homes. A member asked if the issue had been resolved as the case had been adjourned until late July for sentencing and the Legal Officer replied that he must have pleaded guilty for the case to have gone through so quickly.

It was generally felt by members that there was no ill-will meant by Mr Osmani and that he was clearly trying to deal with a difficult situation at home, however good customer service, regulated phone use and checking whether a dog was an assistance dog, were all qualities required of a fit and proper taxi driver. The Chair reminded members that this was a serious offence in law and that if Mr Osmani had been the last taxi available that night, the customer would have been more at risk. The Chair expressed his opinion that a written warning advising on customer service regarding assistance dogs and appropriate phone use, might be the appropriate course of action.

In summing up, the applicant stated that it had not been a deliberate act and that if he had known it was a guide dog he would not have refused the fare. He said he understood the complainant's reasons and wanted to apologise from the bottom of his heart to this person.

There being no further comments, the Chair moved to vote on 1.4.2 of the report being to continue the licence but with a written warning.

Upon a vote it was unanimous, 7 for, 0 against.

RESOLVED THAT, Mr Wahidur Osmani's Hackney Carriage Driver's Licence be continued but that he be issued with a written warning stating that if in future he refused to take an assistance dog he would be charged with a criminal offence.

7. **ANY OTHER ITEMS THE CHAIRMAN DETERMINES TO BE URGENT AND WHICH REQUIRES A DECISION**
None
8. **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**
Wednesday 2 August 2017 at 6pm

Chairman

Cheltenham Borough Council

Licensing Committee – 2 August 2017

Highways Act 1980 Part VIIa Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1982

Application for permission to place an object on the highway: Tables and chairs Suffolk Arms, 40 Suffolk Road, Cheltenham, GL50 2AQ

Report of the Licensing Officer

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 EI Group PLC have made an application to place 4 tables and 8 chairs on the highway outside Suffolk Arms, 40 Suffolk Road, Cheltenham, GL50 2AQ.
- 1.2 It is intended that the tables and chairs be placed on the highway at the following times:

Monday	09:00 – 01:30
Tuesday	09:00 – 01:30
Wednesday	09:00 – 01:30
Thursday	09:00 – 01:30
Friday	09:00 – 02:30
Saturday	09:00 – 02:30
Sunday	09:00 – 00:30

- 1.3 In addition to the tables and chairs, the applicants have applied for permission to place 2 planters on the highway.
- 1.4 A location plan is attached at **Appendix A** and a plan showing how the objects will be placed on the highway, along with measurements, is attached at **Appendix B**.
- 1.5 The application does not comply with the council's policy on objects on the highway because the applicants have indicated that they do not intend to have barriers separating the furniture from the rest of the highway, which is a policy requirement.
- 1.6 The council's standard recommendation is that any objects on the highway should leave a minimum distance of 1.8m to allow for pedestrian access. In this case, according to the plan provided, the distance left between the tables and chairs and the kerbside is 1.55m and the distance between the planters and the kerbside is 0.8m.
- 1.7 **The Licensing Committee can:**
- 1.7.1 **Approve the application because Members are satisfied that the location is suitable, or**
- 1.7.2 **Refuse the application because it does not comply with the provisions of the policy.**

1.8 **Summary of implications**

Legal No right of appeal.

Contact officer: One Legal
E-mail: legalservices@teWKesbury.gov.uk
Tel no: 01684 272693

2. Background

2.1 The current policy for *Town Centre Street Activities: Street Trading & Objects on the Highway* was approved on 1st April 2013. A copy of the whole policy has previously been circulated to members and it has been published on the council’s website to assist applicants.

3. Policy Principles, Aims and Objectives

3.1 This section outlines the policies the council will apply when making decisions on applications for consents.

3.2 In particular, this part of the policy will aim to promote the following aims and objectives:

- To have a clear & transparent policy governing all decisions relating to objects placed on the highway.
- To enable the Council to manage all objects placed on the highway in order to provide effective control measures.
- To ensure that all objects placed on the highway meet the required quality standards, pose no risk to public health, safety & protection and to ensure that these objects do not obstruct the highway.
- To avoid duplication with other statutory provisions and the Council’s commitment to work in partnership with other enforcement agencies.

Each application is assessed against the outlined conditions included in the application pack and this policy.

No object and its associated activity may generate noise which is likely to cause nuisance or annoyance.

Any object given consent to be placed on the highway must be sufficiently weighed down or secured to ensure that the object will not cause any harm or damage.

The Council wishes, as far as is compatible with other highway uses, to promote the ‘cafe culture’ in Cheltenham because of the added life and vitality this brings to the town. To this end, the Council will look favourably on applications by operators in appropriate locations to put tables and chairs on the pavement outside their premises.

Consent to place tables and chairs on the highway will only be granted for the consumption of food and drink, provided they are in association with a business operating from nearby premises.

Consent to place tables and chairs on the highway will be subject to the use of canvas barriers to cordon off the area where the tables and chairs are placed on the highway.

For health and safety reasons, the Council will not permit glass top tables.

Where consent has been issued for tables and chairs to be placed on the highway the Council may permit, within reason, other objects to be placed inside the area that has been cordoned off with barriers.

4. Consultee Comments

4.1 During the consultation process the following comments were submitted by the council’s Senior Enforcement & Compliance Officer:

No objection in principle subject to: i) no barriers , ii) no A board, and iii) the furniture being of high quality and design. There is little if no space for barriers, A board and the like on this section of pavement fronting the Suffolk Arms which is a Listed Building, the setting of which will be compromised by the proposal.

5. Licensing Comments

5.1 This report has been brought to Members’ attention as prescribed in the scheme of delegation set out in the adopted policy, whereby all applications for objects on the highway which do not comply with the policy requirements are referred to the Licensing Committee for determination.

5.2 The applicants, EI Group PLC, have been sent a copy of this report and invited to attend the meeting.

5.3 Members will note that the application does not comply with the council’s policy in as much as the applicants do not propose to use barriers, whereas the policy requires the following:
Consent to place tables and chairs on the highway will be subject to the use of canvas barriers to cordon off the area where the tables and chairs are placed on the highway.

5.4 Further to 5.3, Members will also note that the senior enforcement and compliance officer has specifically stated that, whilst he is not opposed to the application, barriers should not be used in this instance because of the limited space available. The question for Members is therefore whether there are sufficient grounds in this instance to depart from the policy by permitting tables and chairs without barriers.

5.5 The senior enforcement and compliance officer has also stated that there is insufficient space available in this location for an “A-board and the like”. Members are advised that the applicants have not applied for permission for an A-board, but have asked for permission to place 2 planters outside the premises. Due to the limited space available, if the committee is so minded, they could approve the tables and chairs but with a condition that no additional items such as planters be used.

5.6 This application must be determined on individual merits taking into account the information received and in accordance with the Council’s current adopted policy with respect to objects being placed on the highway.

5.7 Whilst the policy and officer recommendation should not fetter the committee’s discretion, the committee should only depart from the policy where there are clear and defensible reasons for doing so.

6. Officer recommendation

6.1 The officer recommendation is that this application be refused.

Reason(s): The council’s adopted policy includes a requirement that barriers will be used wherever tables and chairs are permitted on the highway. In this case no such barriers are proposed and a consultee, whilst not objecting, has given his opinion that there is insufficient space available for barriers. Consequently the application, if approved, would not comply with the council’s policy. Furthermore the council’s recommendation is that any objects on the highway should leave a minimum distance of 1.8m to allow for pedestrian access, which these objects do not.

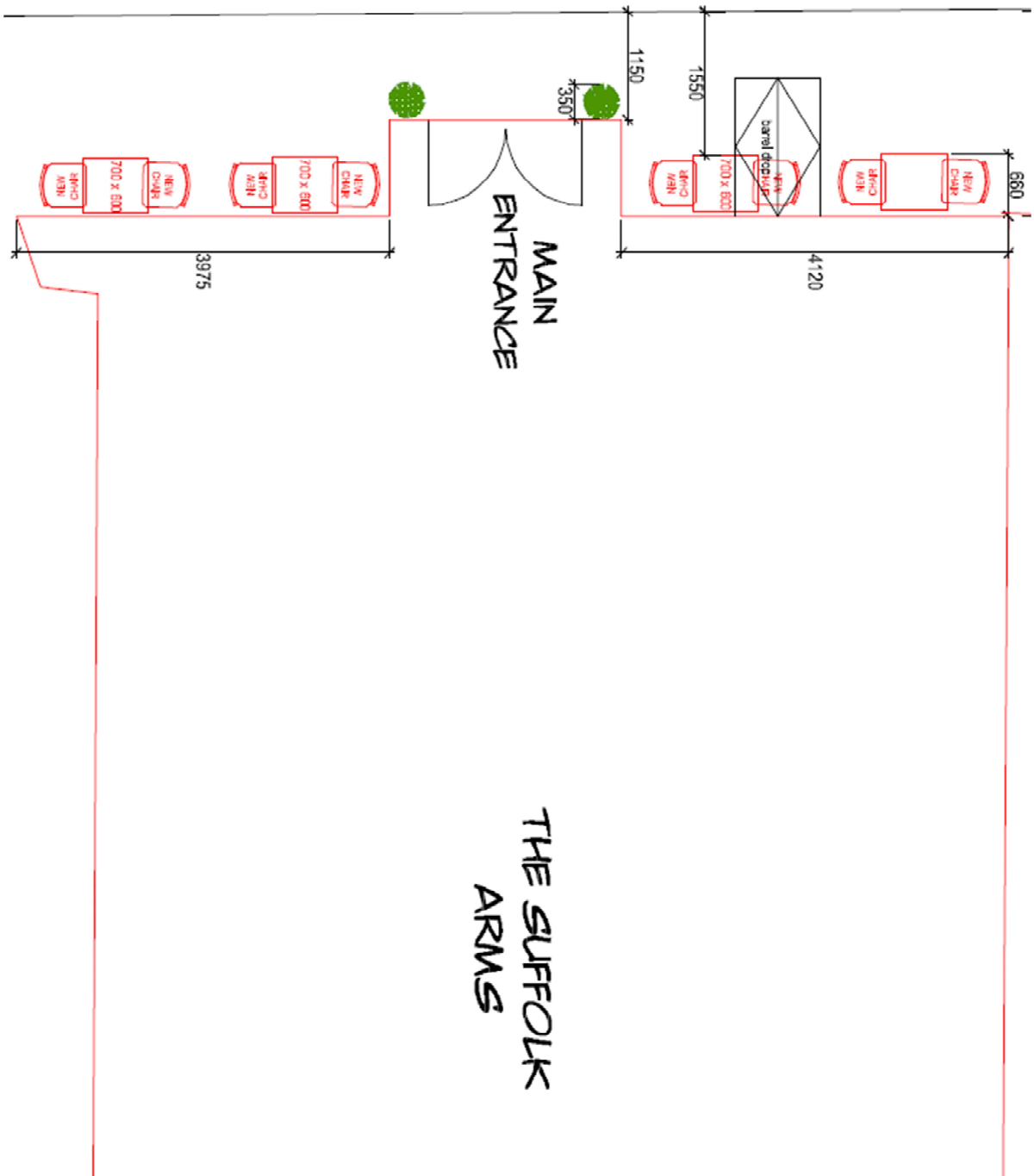
Background Papers

Service Records

Case Officer

Contact officer: Mr Phil Cooper
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Tel no: 01242 775200





Briefing Notes

Committee name: Licensing Committee

Date: 02 August 2017

Responsible officer: Philip Cooper

This note contains information to keep Members informed of matters relating to the work of the Cabinet or a committee but where no decisions from Members are needed.

If Members have questions relating to matters shown, they are asked to contact the Officer indicated.

Licensing Policy, Guidance and Conditions for Private Hire and Taxis Policy Review Working Group 2017

Background

Cheltenham Borough Council's current licensing policy for private hire and taxis ("taxi policy") was approved by Cabinet on 15 July 2014. While there is no statutory requirement to undertake a review of the taxi policy, there is a commitment set out in the policy to do so at least once every three years to ensure the policy remains up to date and relevant.

To facilitate the review and better engage with key stakeholders, a working group was set up by the Licensing Committee earlier this year. The working group was made up of Licensing Committee members, representatives of the hackney carriage and private hire trade, and council licensing officers.

This briefing note is to update the committee on the work of the working group and to apprise the committee about certain proposed changes.

In due course Cabinet will be asked to approve a revised policy, following which a full consultation will be undertaken with the trade, the committee and other stakeholders.

Working Group

The working group met on four occasions. Each meeting was attended by representatives of the hackney carriage and private hire licensed trade, members of the Licensing Committee and council licensing officers.

The topics covered at the meetings were as follows:

Meeting 1	30 March 2017	Drivers
Meeting 2	6 April 2017	Vehicles
Meeting 3	13 April 2017	Vehicles
Meeting 4	20 April 2017	Operators and miscellaneous

Matters under consideration

NVQ

In 2010 the council introduced a mandatory requirement on all licensed drivers to undertake and successfully pass a recognised NVQ in road passenger vehicle driving, which was free to most drivers due to government funding. Government funding for the NVQ has now ceased, as a result of which the cost to drivers is now several hundred pounds.

Since the NVQ requirement was introduced, the council has introduced several other requirements on drivers such as mandatory safeguarding training, a more robust practical driving test, an English proficiency test and a more robust knowledge test. Due to these enhancements and the fact that the NVQ is no longer government-funded, it is proposed to change the policy to remove the mandatory requirement on drivers to undertake the NVQ.

Mandatory online DBS checks

As part of the council's duty to ensure that all taxi and private drivers licensed by it are fit and proper people, all drivers in Cheltenham are required to produce, on new application and renewal, an enhanced criminal records certificate from the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS). In 2013 the DBS introduced an 'update' service whereby people who obtain DBS checks regularly, such as taxi and private hire drivers, can register online. This enables licensing authorities, with the drivers' permission, to check drivers' DBS status online when they renew their licence, which is more efficient and cost effective than carrying out a new DBS check each time. Many of Cheltenham's drivers have signed up for the update service but some have not. It is intended to introduce this as a mandatory requirement, which will achieve the following:

- Reduced costs to the driver (the update service currently costs drivers £13 every year whereas a new DBS check carried out through the council costs drivers £55 every 3 years);
- Significantly reduced application processing times;
- Reduction in the number of times the driver is required to attend the council offices when making an application and a reduction in the number of documents they are required to produce;
- Reduced officer time and resource costs to the council.

Knowledge tests / training day

The application process for new drivers currently includes a mandatory knowledge test covering geographical knowledge of the borough, the Highway Code, general arithmetic and knowledge of taxi / private hire policy and legislation. Officers propose to review this process so that instead of a knowledge test there will be a mandatory training day. The day will include everything applicants need to know about local policy and national legislation as well as safeguarding and other important matters, followed by a shorter test solely covering geographical knowledge and general arithmetic.

Convictions policy / penalty points / "three strikes" scheme

Appendix J of the existing policy provides guidance on how the council will deal with applicants and licence holders who have been convicted of offences or who have received endorsements for driving offences. When an existing driver commits a misdemeanour, a breach of policy or an offence, but one which does not result in prosecution, officers refer the matter to the licensing committee on a case-by-case basis depending on the seriousness of the matter. To formalise the process, with the agreement of the working group, it is proposed to introduce a penalty points or "three strikes" scheme, whereby such misdemeanours will be formally recorded and once a certain number of "points" have been reached, the licence will be subject to review by the licensing committee. Notwithstanding such a penalty points scheme, the committee would retain its discretion to review a licence where a serious matter has occurred but where the points limit has not been triggered. Issues that could be covered by such a points scheme will include, for example, refusing a fare without justification, failing to report a change of address, failing to report a driving offence, or failing to properly display the vehicle's licence plate.

Advertising on vehicles

Appendix E of the existing policy permits proprietors of hackney carriage vehicles to display third-party advertising subject to the written approval of the council, and subject to certain restrictions (for example no advertising that is insulting, offensive or abusive).

In the case of private hire vehicles, the only permitted forms of advertising are the operator's approved signage and advertising of public safety initiatives such as Crimestoppers. All other forms of third-party advertising are prohibited on private hire vehicles.

The working group propose an amendment to the existing policy to enable private hire vehicle proprietors to display third-party advertising in the same way and subject to the same restrictions as hackney carriages.

Restriction of numbers

The local Hackney Carriage association have asked the council to introduce a limit on the number of taxis that are licensed in the borough, due to their assertion that there are too many licensed vehicles and consequently there is insufficient work for the existing drivers. Such a limit can lawfully be imposed but only if a local licensing authority is satisfied that there is no significant unmet demand for taxis in the area. Common practice elsewhere in the country in determining this matter has involved the commission of an independent formal survey to establish whether or not an unmet demand exists.

The Department for Transport and the Competition and Markets Authority have both recommended, through non-statutory guidance, that local authorities should not impose a restriction on the number of taxis. Whilst the council should have regard to the national guidance, its discretion to make a decision locally on the individual circumstances in this area should not be fettered by it. This matter will be referred to Cabinet to determine as part of the review of the policy.

Designated vehicles

In April 2017 sections 165 and 167 of the Equality Act 2010 were enacted, giving local authorities the power to maintain a list of wheelchair-accessible vehicles and to place a duty on drivers of such vehicles to carry passengers in wheelchairs and to provide assistance to those passengers without charging extra. The licensing team in Cheltenham has for several years informally maintained such a list and it is now proposed to use the new powers to adopt and maintain a formal list. Drivers who have a valid reason to be exempt from the requirements – for example on medical grounds – will be able to apply to the council for an exemption certificate.

Vehicle specifications

Officers are currently undertaking a review of several aspects of the specification required for licensed vehicles, many of which were highlighted or proposed by the working group. Once this work has been undertaken the proposed changes will be included in the report to Cabinet for consideration, after which they will form part of the wider consultation. Vehicle specification issues under review are: type approval and specifications for wheelchair accessible vehicles; emissions; tinted windows; the maximum age of new vehicles and whether this should be relaxed for fuel-hybrid vehicles; the standard roof-sign (toplight) for hackney carriages; and the carriage of emergency equipment in licensed vehicles.

Approved testing station

All licensed taxis and private hire vehicles are subject to an enhanced MOT test on new application and annually on renewal of the licence. Vehicles over 8 years of age are subject to testing every 6 months. The council currently approves only one testing station for licensed hackney carriage and private hire vehicles, the Ubico testing station on Swindon Road. As part of the policy review and with the approval of the working group, officers are currently researching alternatives so that the testing of licensed vehicles can be opened out to additional testing stations, thereby providing licence holders with additional options.

Operators' records

The existing policy requires all licensed private hire operators to maintain records of drivers, vehicles and desk clerks used by them and to provide those records to the council at quarterly intervals. The working group proposes to amend this so that operators will be required to maintain records and submit them to the council on request but they will not be required to complete quarterly submissions. This will remove an unnecessary burden on both the operators and the council's officers in maintaining and recording quarterly submissions.

Contact Officer: Philip Cooper

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