

# Briefing Notes

Committee name: Licensing Committee

Date: 5 February 2016

Responsible officer: Licensing Team Leader

This note contains information to keep Members informed of matters relating to the work of the 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.

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In December Members requested data relating to new Private Hire driver applications. This request was made in response to a meeting that was held with private hire operators expressing concern about a drop in the number of new private hire drivers applying for licences.

The operators alleged that the policy change in December 2014 had an impact on the number of new drivers applying for a licence and/or passing the council's assessment criteria.

## Policy Background

A review of the Council's taxi and private hire licensing policy was undertaken in 2014 that resulted in a revised policy being adopted and implemented in December 2014. The relevance for this briefing note is the revised fitness assessment criteria for new drivers. The revised policy introduced the following changes to new driver fitness criteria:

- Requirement to be proficient with English;
- Safe driving assessment is now being undertaken by the DVSA (previously GCC's driving assessment unit); and
- Enhanced medical checks.

## Meeting with Operators

As previously stated, a meeting was held with the operators concerned. The outcome of the meeting identified two potential issues:

- The length of time it takes to get a DVSA driving assessment booked; and
- The difficulty of the knowledge test and consideration whether private hire drivers should be exempt on the basis of advances in satellite navigation systems and that private hire drivers know where they are going prior to the commencement of their journey (unlike public hire drivers).

Other matters included the length of time it takes to get a licence and the general drop in applications.

## Data

In response, the committee has requested officers to provide them with data to enable them to come to an informed conclusion with regards to whether any policy changes should be recommended in response to the request by the operators.

## 1. Average application processing end to end time for new private hire drivers:

2014 60 days

2015 84 days

The average increase in the number of days in 2015 can be attributable to:

- The new policy that certainly had an impact due to the increased nature of the fitness assessment for new drivers:
  - The new DVSA driver's assessment bookings have prolonged the process. Furthermore, if drivers have to retake the assessment this caused further delays.

Officers do however now believe that undue delays with the DVSA have now been resolved following a meeting with them. Too early to assess the impact of this due to lack of sufficient data since the meeting but there has been a drop in the number of complaints about this which may be indicative of an improved picture.

## 2. Number of new private hire applications received

2014		2015		Comparable (15 v 14)
50 total applications	21 completed (42%)	31 total applications	16 completed (51%)	↓
29 abandoned (58%)		15 abandoned (49%)		↑
				↓

## 3. Number of new private hire applications received (breakdown)

	2014	2015	Comparable (15 v 14)
January	1	3	↑
February	5	1	↓
March	3	1	↓
April	2	5	↑
May	7	3	↓
June	3	5	↑
July	3	2	↓
August	3	1	↓
September	11	3	↓
October	6	0	↓
November	3	5	↑
December	3	2	↓

## 4. Other Local Authority – Fitness Criteria

Assessment	CBC	GCC	SDC	FoD	SGC	CDC	TBC
Enhanced DBS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Local Knowledge Test	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Medical	Group 2 driver standard	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	Other medical	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Driving Assessment	DVSA Driving Assessment	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	County Council Driving	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

	Assessment							
<b>English Proficiency</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Evidence of right to work</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Cheltenham's fitness criterion is broadly similar to that of Gloucester and South Gloucestershire with the exception of the requirement to undertake an additional English proficiency test.

#### **Local Knowledge Test Pass/Failure rates (2014/15)**

<b>Average rate – pass on first attempt</b>	54%
<b>Average rate – pass on second attempt</b>	38% (those that had to re-sit)
<b>Two or more failures</b>	8%

Data across the two years (i.e. 2014 & 2015) were broadly similar. This would be expected because the local knowledge test has largely remained unchanged and unaffected by the policy change.

The majority of applicants do pass the test on the first go. The most common areas for failing the test are (in order):

- Highway Code (self-study)
- Geographical knowledge (self-study)
- Law & conditions (applicants supplied with study material)

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