

| Report of | Meeting | Date | Item No |
|-----------------|------------------------------|-------------|---------|
| Chief Executive | Licensing & Safety Committee | 7 June 2006 | |

VOCATIONAL TRAINING FOR HACKNEY/PRIVATE HIRE DRIVERS

PURPOSE OF REPORT

1. To report to members the discussions that have taken place regarding the possible introduction of vocational training for drivers of hackney carriages and private hire vehicles.

CORPORATE PRIORITIES

2. This report is relevant to further the following key corporate priorities of the Council i.e. making a safer Chorley by ensuring as far as practicable that all licensed drivers are fit and proper persons and that they are adequately trained to carry out their duties

RISK ISSUES

3. The issue raised and recommendations made in this report involve risk considerations in the following categories:

| | | | |
|------------|---|------------------|---|
| Strategy | ✓ | Information | |
| Reputation | ✓ | Regulatory/Legal | ✓ |
| Financial | ✓ | Operational | ✓ |
| People | | Other | |

4. The Council needs to show that it is addressing the issue of driver training, there will be cost involved, members of the trade could ask for a judicial review of any decision made and there are also operational considerations with the extra work involved in setting up and running a training scheme

BACKGROUND

5. The Disabled Persons Transport Advisory Committee in its good practice guide 2003 emphasised the need for driver training for taxi drivers in dealing with disabled people.
6. In a speech by the Transport Minister Karen Buck to the National Taxi Association on 25 October 2005 concerning best practice, she said that drivers training is something that is mentioned in a draft best practice and that in the future licensing authorities might stipulate those applying for their first licences undergo a certain amount of training.

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7. The chairman of the National Private Hire Association has given his support for the need for driver training to a BTEC level and there is clearly a growing impetus for Councils to introduce driver training.
8. Preliminary discussions have already been held with Preston and South Ribble Councils regarding the setting up of a scheme to provide training for new drivers of hackney carriage and private hire vehicles.
9. Other Councils have addressed this matter and have adopted different approaches: Blackburn initially sent drivers on a course run by Accrington College, this course had attracted central funding, however when funding was no longer available that Council decided to use the driving course run by the Driving Standards Agency that is designed specifically for hackney carriage and private hire drivers (the cost of this is £53.50 - £62.50) Kirklees Council was one of the forerunners in introducing driver training, their approach is a one and a half day training course run by a local college with the help of the Police (the cost for this training is £60).
10. A meeting was held at Preston City Council on 10 May 2006 attended by representatives of the Licensing Sections of Chorley, Preston and South Ribble Councils when representatives from Runshaw College outlined their proposals for a vocational training course for new applicants for hackney carriage and private hire drivers licences.
11. The proposal from Runshaw College was to set up a course that would address all the issues concerning the transportation of passengers by hackney and private hire vehicles, including the necessary training in disability awareness. This course would be a total of 24 hours, probably split into four days at a total cost of £150 per candidate. This would be a nationally recognised course that could be tailored to suit each Council's licensing conditions following liaison between the tutors and the Councils. There would no longer be a need for the Council's knowledge test that would give a saving in time and resources.
12. Candidates would undergo an initial assessment to ensure that they would be capable of understanding and completing the course and a certificate would be awarded upon successful completion of the course.
13. The college would need a minimum of 15 candidates for each course to make it viable and it is important for this proposal to succeed that all three councils participate. In addition if one Council were to introduce training that was perceived to be easier and/or cheaper for the applicant it may make it difficult for the Councils who adopt the Runshaw training to encourage new drivers.
14. The Driving Standards Agency has been running driving assessment tests for hackney and private hire drivers for a number of years and in fact have given a presentation to this Committee in the past.
15. The Driving Standards Agency do not run a course but issue an explanation of the assessment procedure that places the onus on the applicant to familiarise himself with the requirements. The cost of this assessment is £53.50 for saloon type vehicles, £62.50 for hackney carriages with an additional £18 to upgrade from the saloon type test to a hackney test. The Council would still need to require applicants to undergo the existing knowledge test. The main problem with the assessment is that candidates are not given any indication as to where they can receive the necessary training to enable them to successfully complete the assessment.
16. There are already considerable costs for an applicant who wishes to obtain a Hackney/private hire drivers licence ie. Criminal Records check £35, medical (depending upon the applicants GP) in the region of £100, licence/knowledge test fee £59.

17. These proposals have been put before the local Licensing Liaison Panel and representatives have been invited to attend this Committee meeting.

COMMENTS OF THE DIRECTOR OF FINANCE

18 Not applicable

COMMENTS OF THE HEAD OF HUMAN RESOURCES

19 Not applicable.

RECOMMENDATION(S)

20 That the Committee considers the introduction of driver training after considering the following three options ie.

- (a) A full training course as suggested by Runshaw College, resulting in the award of a certificate, involving the three Councils
- (b) The Driving Standards Assessment resulting in a nationally recognised driving qualification
- (c) In house training utilising officers time and knowledge and possibly the help of external sources,

DONNA HALL
CHIEF EXECUTIVE

| Background Papers | | | |
|---|-------------|-------------|----------------------------|
| Document | Date | File | Place of Inspection |
| Driving Standards Agency information pack | | | Licensing Office |
| Scheme of Work suggested by Runshaw College | | | |

| Report Author | Ext | Date | Doc ID |
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| K Ogden | 5163 | 11 May 2006 | LEGREP/VOCATIONAL TRAINING |