

## ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

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COMMITTEE	Licensing Committee
DATE	18 April 2017
DIRECTOR	Richard Ellis
TITLE OF REPORT	Response to Consultation on Knowledge Test for Taxi and Private Hire Drivers.
REPORT NUMBER	CG/17/044
CHECKLIST COMPLETED	Yes

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### 1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

To provide the Committee with analysis of the results of the consultation on the Knowledge Test for taxi and private hire drivers.

### 2. RECOMMENDATION(S)

That the Committee:

1. Note the results of the consultation exercise; and
2. Instruct no change to the format of the Knowledge Test.

### 3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

This report simply informs the Committee of the results of a consultation exercise and accordingly will have no financial implications.

### 4. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

This report simply informs the Committee of the results of a consultation exercise and accordingly will have no other implications.

## 5. BACKGROUND/MAIN ISSUES

Following the decision by Committee to reinstate the Knowledge Test for private hire drivers, officers were requested to carry out a review of the test itself to determine whether it remained fit for purpose and whether it was suitable for application to private hire drivers as well as taxi drivers. Accordingly a consultation exercise was undertaken between 20 January 2017 and 1 March 2017.

The consultation paper attracted a total of 324 responses, of which 195 were from taxi drivers, 68 from private hire drivers and 61 “others”. Two responses were discounted as spoiled papers leaving a total of 322 for analysis, and of that figure 250 respondents indicated that they had sat the test.

From those 250 respondents 152 indicated that they had passed the test at the first attempt, with a further 59 taking two attempts and 18 respondents requiring three attempts. The remaining 11 respondents advised that they took more than three attempts or had yet to pass. It is current policy to allow applicants three attempts to pass the test on any one application and accordingly almost 92% of those respondents who have sat the test were successful over the course of one application.

Respondents were then given the opportunity to make any additional comment on the format and content of the test and 101 chose to do so. The most common response, with 35 comments, was that the test should be continued in the current format. A further 18 requested the addition of a practical driving test element to the test and 15 respondents sought a higher pass mark or more challenging questions. Other responses were fewer in number and included issues such as:

- the need to regularly update the information within the test (8 responses)
- the assertion that the test is too difficult (6 responses)
- the suggestion of the addition of incorporating an element of customer service training (5 responses) and
- the suggestion that an applicant should only have to resit the section or sections of the test failed (5 responses).

Of the remaining 9 comments, 7 indicated that they were of the opinion that the test was unnecessary and 2 thought that there should be a lower pass mark for private hire drivers.

The next question on the paper asked whether the test should be modified for private hire drivers. The overwhelming response to this question was in the negative with 262 respondents indicating that the same test should be applied to private hire drivers and taxi drivers. A further 11 answered “don’t know” to the question. Of the remaining 49 respondents, all of whom indicated that the test should be modified for private hire drivers, 20 were looking for some form of amended content, 7 for a lower pass mark and 4 reasserted that there should be no test

for private hire drivers. The remaining 18 respondents declined to indicate how they thought the test should be amended.

The issue of whether or not all drivers should have to retake the test after a period of time was also answered overwhelmingly in the negative with 248 respondents against the idea and 61 in favour. The question was unanswered by 11 respondents. Those in favour of retaking the test were split on the timescales in which this should happen. Every five years was the most popular suggestion with 20 responses. Other suggestions included:

- every three years (12 responses)
- annually (7 responses)
- every ten years (5 responses)
- every six years (3 responses)
- every three months (2 responses)
- every renewal of the licence (1 response)
- a monthly retest (1 response)

The final part of the consultation provided respondents with the opportunity to add any additional comments in relation to the test. The majority of those who chose to do so restated that in their opinion the test was adequate in the current format and that it should remain the same for all applicants (53 respondents). Others (12 respondents) chose to repeat their assertion that there was no need to retake the test once a pass had been achieved. Other comments included:

- the test was unnecessary (8 responses)
- it may be improved with a clearer structure or updated content (6 responses)
- the addition of customer focussed training (3 responses)
- the possibility of a retest in the event of a number of complaints being received about a particular driver (1 response)
- refresher training every 3 years (1 response)
- no limit on the number of times an applicant can sit the test in connection with one application.

In addition to the consultation exercise, officers undertook a comparison of similar tests operated by other local authorities, namely Dundee, Stirling, Glasgow and Edinburgh. The format of the test is broadly similar to those imposed by the other authorities and the percentage required to pass the test is generally higher across the board than that required by Aberdeen.

In summary therefore, the available evidence would suggest that whilst the test is challenging it would appear to be fit for purpose in terms of both the format and level of difficulty and accordingly the recommendation is to maintain the current test at present in order to preserve standards of those drivers obtaining licences.

6. IMPACT

**Improving Customer Experience** –No changes are proposed in terms of this report but the consultation appears to demonstrate that the current Knowledge Test for taxi and private hire drivers is fit for purpose.

**Corporate** – No changes are proposed in terms of this report.

**Public** – Again, no changes are proposed in terms of this report. By maintaining the test it should ensure that professional standards are maintained and accordingly an improved customer experience for the general public.

7. MANAGEMENT OF RISK

There is limited risk by maintaining the test in the current format. There may be a risk that any alteration of the test could result in a lower standard of licensed driver.

8. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None.

9. REPORT AUTHOR DETAILS

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