

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

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COMMITTEE	LICENSING COMMITTEE
DATE	6 FEBRUARY 2018
REPORT TITLE	KNOWLEDGE TEST CONSULTATION
REPORT NUMBER	GC/18/005
HEAD OF SERVICE	FRASER BELL
REPORT AUTHOR	SANDY MUNRO

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**1. PURPOSE OF REPORT:-**

- 1.1 To inform the committee of the results of the consultation undertaken with the trade on the proposed procedural changes regarding the knowledge test for taxi and private hire drivers.

**2. RECOMMENDATION(S)**

- 2.1 The Committee is recommended to:
- 1) Note the responses received to the consultation exercise; and
  - 2) Implement with immediate effect the proposed changes to the procedures for implementing the knowledge test for applicants for taxi and private hire driver's licences.
  - 3) Make no changes to the content of the knowledge test at this time.

**3. BACKGROUND/MAIN ISSUES**

- 3.1 At the meeting held on 12 September 2017 the Licensing Committee instructed the Head of Legal and Democratic Services to consult with the trade on proposed changes to the procedures for administering the Knowledge Test for taxi and private hire driver's licences.
- 3.2 The consultation paper explaining the proposed changes and rationale for the new procedure was delivered by e-mail to all members of the Taxi and Private Hire Consultation Group on 19 December 2017. A copy of the consultation paper is attached as Appendix 1.
- 3.3 Currently all applicants for a taxi driver's licence or private hire driver's licence have 3 attempts to pass the Knowledge Test once an application for a licence has been submitted. As the Authority has a statutory time limit of 6 months in

which to determine an application this means that the applicant must pass the test within that 6 month period. This has proved challenging for a large number of applicants and has resulted in those applicants being referred to Committee for determination solely due to failure to pass the test within the required time period.

- 3.4 It is proposed to introduce a separate charge of £20 for the Knowledge Test and make it a requirement that an applicant has passed the test before an application for a licence can be submitted. This will remove the six month deadline for passing a test and applicants will be able to study at their own pace and apply for the test when they feel it is appropriate. It is hoped that the introduction of the separate charge will encourage applicants to only apply for the Test when they are confident in their ability to pass, which will have the effect of increasing standards. There will however be no limit on the number of times an applicant can apply for the Test. It will also mean that applicants no longer forfeit the application fee for a licence as a result of failure to pass the test.
- 3.5 It is considered that the proposed amendments to the procedures would result in a system which carries a greater degree of clarity for both applicants and officers, and would result in fewer applications requiring to be referred to Committee.
- 3.6 A number of queries were received from the trade and are attached as Appendix 2 with officers' responses marked in red. Otherwise there were no opinions proffered.
- 3.7 No opinions were received with regards the inclusion of sat-nav operation in the test. Officers remain of the opinion that this would not be practical as this equipment is not mandatory and it is not considered appropriate to include elements within the test that are not required to hold the licence.

#### **4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 The introduction of a separate fee for the Knowledge Test may result in a new income stream. However income from application fees for the licences may be affected should potential applicants fail to pass the test and accordingly not submit an application.

#### **5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 There are no direct legal implications arising from the recommendations of this report. Licensing Authorities are specifically entitled by the legislation to require potential applicants to pass a Knowledge Test and the only changes being proposed are the method of implementation.

## **6. MANAGEMENT OF RISK**

### **6.1 Financial**

There is a small risk that income from application fees may be affected should the amended procedures be put in place. This would be mitigated by the fresh income stream of the test fees as well as a reduction in officer time as a result of fewer referrals to Committee.

### **6.2 Employee**

There is no direct risk arising from this report.

### **6.3 Customer/Citizen**

There is no direct risk arising from this report.

### **6.4 Environmental**

There is no direct risk arising from this report.

### **6.5 Technological**

There is no direct risk arising from this report.

### **6.6 Legal**

There is no direct risk arising from this report.

### **6.7 Reputational**

There is a small risk that the introduction of an additional fee may be seen as income generation. This has been mitigated by a full explanation of the rationale in the consultation documents.

## **7. IMPACT SECTION**

### **7.1 Economy**

If introduced, the amended procedures will result in fewer applications requiring to be referred to Committee and will accordingly provide a saving in respect of officer time as well as Member time.

### **7.2 People**

If introduced, the proposals will result in a greater degree of clarity for applicants. It is hoped that applicants will only apply for the test when they are confident of passing which will have the effect of raising the standard of applicant and resulting in a higher standard of service.

### 7.3 **Place**

The proposals are largely a procedural change so will have little effect but as previously stated it is hoped that, if introduced, the amended procedures will have the effect of raising standards of service in the area.

### 7.4 **Technology**

No direct impact from this report.

## 8. **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

CG/17/094 Update on Driver Training and Knowledge Test

## 9. **APPENDICES (if applicable)**

1. Consultation paper.
2. Responses to consultation exercise.

## 10. **REPORT AUTHOR DETAILS**

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