

GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE

10 MARCH 2022

REVIEW OF THE KNOWLEDGE TEST FOR LICENSED DRIVERS

1.0 Purpose of Report

1.1 To seek Members' approval to implement changes to the Knowledge Test for licensed Hackney Carriage and Private Hire drivers.

2.0 Background

2.1 The fundamental requirement when considering an application for a driver licence for a Hackney Carriage or Private Hire vehicle is whether the applicant is a 'fit and proper' person. Within the Council's Policy there are a number of requirements that an applicant must satisfy to indicate that they are fit and proper. One of these is the Knowledge Test.

2.2 As stated above, in order to assist the Authority in determining the fitness of an applicant to hold a Hackney Carriage and/or Private Hire driver's licence, applicants are required to undertake a knowledge test. The test consists of the following parts:

- Signs
- Highway Code
- Numeracy
- Customer Care
- Laws and Conditions
- Locations
- Routes

2.3 The test takes place at Castle House and applicants have 40 minutes to complete the test. Each test contains 100 questions and is completed on-line in controlled conditions. Mobile phones and other devices with internet access are not allowed to be used.

2.4 Candidates may take 3 attempts to pass the knowledge test. There must be a two week period between each test a candidate takes. The current cost of the test is £40 and this is payable for every test taken, including re-tests.

2.5 The routes and locations sections are the ones most likely to lead to a fail.

2.6 In the last calendar year, 12 people have sat 21 knowledge tests. Out of those, 28% have passed and 72% failed. 53% of those failed on routes and locations.

2.7 The application process for drivers is constantly being reviewed to take account of any changes that may have an impact on this process. The past few years have seen a vast increase in mobile devices that can operate as route finders and many more vehicles now have built in navigation aids as standard. In light of this the two sections within the knowledge test relating to locations and routes have been under consideration for a review.

- 2.8 In addition to this, a representation has been made from a well-established taxi proprietor seeking assistance with the recruitment of drivers. The case he has made is that recruitment is challenging as many local drivers have now moved into food delivery. He is able to attract drivers from areas surrounding Newark & Sherwood, but is concerned that they will not be suitable for applying for a licence for a number of months due to the routes and location requirements in our knowledge test.
- 2.9 In view of the above, a number of options have been considered during the review of the Knowledge Test. The use of navigation aids during the test was the first option considered. The problem with this is that many drivers now use their mobile phone as the navigation aid. There are elements of the knowledge test where a mobile phone can be used to access other information that would assist in passing the test and therefore mobile phones are not permitted within the test. Stand-alone navigation aids have also been considered but these are not always familiar to the driver and there have been issues with obtaining a link to the satellite to receive a signal.
- 2.10 Due to the ubiquitous nature of mobile phones and their common use by drivers consideration has been given as to whether the locations and routes sections of the knowledge test are still relevant.

3.0 Proposals

- 3.1 A robust and challenging application process is important in ensuring that all applicants are properly considered in terms of their suitability to hold a licence. Equally it is important that the application process does not put barriers in place unwittingly limiting the ability of applicants to successfully obtain a licence, or to prevent the local taxi trade from being able to recruit drivers in a timely manner.
- 3.2 It is proposed that the knowledge test is amended to remove the sections on routes and locations.

4.0 Equalities Implications

- 4.1 There are no equalities implications arising from this report. All applicants are required to take the test.

5.0 Financial Implications

- 5.1 None from this report

6.0 Digital Implications

- 6.1 There are no digital implications arising from this report.

7.0 RECOMMENDATION

That the taxi knowledge test is amended to remove the sections relating to routes and locations.

Reason for Decision

To ensure that the taxi application process is fair and reflects the use of technology and supports the taxi trade.

Background Papers

NSDC Hackney Carriage & Private Hire Policy

For further information please contact Alan Batty on Extension 5467.

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