

## **Gambling, Licensing & Regulatory Committee 13 November 2017**

Report from the Assistant Director – Planning and Public Protection

### **Taxi Licensing – Review of Driver Training**

#### **Summary**

1. This report seeks Members' views in relation to the training package that is now being provided by the Council to both new and existing drivers in accord with the Council's Taxi Licensing Policy. The training is designed to enable drivers to demonstrate an awareness of sexual exploitation issues – this being required to meet the criteria of being 'fit and proper' to hold a York Licence.

#### **Recommendations**

2. That Members note the new training package and provide any comments they have to Officers.

Reason: to inform and seek Members' views about the Taxi Driver's Training Package.

#### **Background**

3. Following the findings of the Jay and Casey reports, which related to Child Sexual Exploitation in Rotherham, the Council introduced a requirement that as part of the application process new driver applicants should complete sexual exploitation awareness training to demonstrate understanding in this area. The Taxi Licensing Policy, approved by the Council in 2016, confirmed that existing licensed drivers should also complete this type of specialist training.
4. Potential applicants for hackney carriage or private hire drivers' licences are provided with guidance notes detailing the application process/requirements.

5. Officers have reviewed existing training and developed a new training programme that, amongst other subject areas, encompasses sexual exploitation awareness.

### New Training Format for New Driver Applicants

6. In designing the new training package, Officers considered feedback received from applicants regarding the knowledge test, concerns regarding the online disability awareness training and subject matter on complaints received regarding the licensed trade. Working with colleagues in the Workforce Development Unit (WDU) a proposal was put forward that new applicants attend a training day on 'Knowledge and Safeguarding', this training would cover a variety of topics aimed at helping applicants in their new role, these topics include:
  - *Disability Awareness;*
  - *Child and Adult Safeguarding;*
  - *Sexual Exploitation;*
  - *Equality Awareness;*
  - *Customer Service;*
  - Legislation and Byelaws; and
  - York's Pedestrian Zone awareness.
7. The training day now ends with a test on these subject areas, along with questions relating to routes within the York area, locations and places of interest, which applicants are expected to pass in order to progress their application. The training day includes a presentation, along with group work and discussion, the test has 20 questions, and 16 questions have to be answered correctly to pass. Five of these questions relate to routes and locations within the authority area. Applicants who fail the test can either re-sit the full days training and test, or re-sit the test. Applicants are allowed to take a maximum of six tests.
8. WDU sourced a training provider to facilitate this training. The cost to attend the training day is £80.00.
9. The training day programme and fee were agreed under delegated authority by the Director of Economy and Place, the Chair and Vice Chair of this Committee and the relevant Executive Member in June 2017. Members of this Committee were also notified by email with regard to the introduction of this new training in August 2017.

10. It was determined that from 1 September 2017 new applicants would be required to complete the comprehensive training day. New applicants who had not yet passed the Knowledge/Locality Test and were still going through the application process on the 1 September, were given the opportunity to either complete this training or continue doing the existing Knowledge/Locality test.
11. To date two training days have been held, with 23 new applicants passing the test (77%), 7 new applicants failed the test and have been given the opportunity to re-sit. Positive feedback has been received, especially in relation to the trainer, for example:
  - Very good trainer – well humoured easy to learn;
  - Very nice trainer making us feel confident and focused about the course, very good communication skills;
  - Very nice man;
  - Very helpful.
12. Following feedback received from the licensed trade that the new test was considered easy as they did not believe that enough questions related to routes and locations, officers have spoken to the trainer and the test has been amended. There are now 30 questions, 15 of which relate to routes, locations, conditions and byelaws, the pass mark is 26.

### Sexual Exploitation Training for Existing Licensed Drivers

13. Officers also considered the training that should be delivered to existing licensed drivers. Consideration was given to the grounds on which driver licences had been suspended or revoked and the complaints received regarding the licensed trade. It was determined that it would be beneficial that a half day training session would be held covering the five topics in italics at paragraph 6. This training would be delivered by the same trainers as the full day training and would cost £40.00. This session is in the same format as the full day, and includes group work and discussion. There is a test at the end of the session, in the form a 'quiz'.
14. Letters were sent to holders of hackney carriage and private hire drivers licenses, to advise them of this training, how to book, the cost and that they would be required to complete the driver prior to the expiry of their drivers licence (at this time a majority of which expire in 2019 and the remainder in 2020). Whilst the letter advised that drivers who fail to complete the training would not have their licences renewed, it should be noted that each renewal must be dealt with on its own merits. For

example, a driver may provide evidence that they have undertaken recent equivalent training that could demonstrate a sufficient level of understanding to meet the “fit and proper” test.

15. Some negative feedback has been received from approximately nine members of the licensed trade. Comments include:
  - they should not have to attend this training;
  - only training relating to child and adult safeguarding and sexual exploitation should be required;
  - there are too many topics to cover in half a day;
  - they already have recognised taxi qualifications;
  - the training should be free.

## **Consultation**

16. A consultation has not taken place in relation to this report.

## **Options**

17. Option 1 – The Members note the new training package and provide any comments they have to Officers.
18. Option 2 – That Members seek a further report to address any concerns they may have regarding the delivery of the present comprehensive training package.

## **Analysis**

19. The Council currently issues the following number of driver licences:
  - private hire - 611
  - hackney carriage - 286The aim being that by the end of 2020 100% of drivers licensed by this authority will of completed the training on:
  - Disability Awareness
  - Child and Adult Safeguarding
  - Sexual Exploitation
  - Equality Awareness
  - Customer Service
20. As Members are aware the Council is a member of the Combined Authority with the five Authorities within West Yorkshire. One of the

tasks of the Combined Authority is to consider is taxi licensing. Licensing Managers from the six authorities meet monthly, to discuss implementing joint policies in a number of areas. The work of the Licensing Managers Group is reported to and is overseen by Licensing Committee Chairs from the six authorities who meet bi-monthly. One area that has been discussed is driver training.

21. To provide Members with comparative information, the five West Yorkshire authorities expect new applicants and existing drivers to do training as detailed in Annex 2.
22. Officers are confident that the training package is suitable and the cost proportionate, having regard to the importance of safeguarding to the role of a licensed driver in providing services to the public.

### **Council Priorities**

23. The provision of hackney carriage and private hire licensing supports the council plan of a prosperous city for all, where local businesses can thrive.

### **Implications**

24. The direct implications arising from this report are:
  - (a) **Financial** – There are no financial implications.
  - (b) **Human Resources (HR)** - There are no HR implications.
  - (c) **Equalities** – There are no equalities implications.
  - (d) **Legal** – There are no legal implications.
  - (e) **Crime and Disorder** – There are no crime and disorder implications.
  - (f) **Information Technology (IT)** - There are no IT implications.
  - (g) **Property** - There are no property implications.
  - (h) **Other** - There are no other implications.

### **Risk Management**

25. In providing the training package to applicants and drivers the Council can manage the quality of the training provided which will be a factor in determining whether an individual driver is 'fit and proper'.

### Contact Details

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		<b>Report Approved</b>	√	<b>Date</b> 03/11/17
<b>Specialist Implications Officer(s)</b>				
<b>Wards Affected:</b>			<b>All</b>	√
<b>For further information please contact the author of the report</b>				

### Background Papers

Taxi Licensing Policy

[https://www.york.gov.uk/downloads/file/9715/taxi\\_licensing\\_policy](https://www.york.gov.uk/downloads/file/9715/taxi_licensing_policy)

### Annexes

**Annex 1** - West Yorkshire Authorities training requirements