

## AGENDA ITEM NO 7

**TITLE: REVIEW OF FEES FOR LICENSED HACKNEY CARRIAGE AND PRIVATE HIRE DRIVER KNOWLEDGE TEST**

Committee: Licensing

Date: 9<sup>th</sup> March, 2011

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[K295]

### 1.0 ISSUE

1.1 To review the current fee charged for the driver knowledge test for joint private hire and hackney carriage driver applications.

### 2.0 RECOMMENDATION(S)

2.1 That Members note and approve the proposed revised fee level for consultation with those drivers currently licensed by the Council.

### 3.0 BACKGROUND/OPTIONS

3.1 As part of the application process for a joint hackney carriage/private hire drivers licence, a person is required by the Council to undergo a driver knowledge test.

3.2 The driver knowledge test comprises of a disability discrimination test, a routes, journey and general knowledge test to ensure that drivers are aware of the licence conditions that are to be attached to their driver licences issued by the Council, and that they are familiar with the most direct route to take in relation to common journeys and routes requested by fare paying passengers.

3.3 Drivers are required to attend the Council Offices at a pre arranged time to watch a disability awareness DVD, listen to a presentation by a Licensing Officer and then to take three relevant multiple choice tests. One test relates to a disability awareness DVD that they are shown, the second test is in relation to questions based on licence condition knowledge. The third test covers journey route knowledge . The process takes approximately 1.5 hours for drivers to complete.

3.4 The administration process related to the knowledge test involves a letter of confirmation to the driver of their test date, and re booking where a date cannot be made, in addition to the organisation of the meeting room and arrangement and organisation of the test papers. Should an applicant fail the tests, they are advised to review those areas of the test that they failed. The applicant is requested to telephone to arrange an appointment when they

are ready to sit the test again .Computer and filing systems are also updated and maintained as a record of the application process.

- 3.5 On completing the tests, the Licensing Officers mark the test papers and advise the applicant whether they have passed. Applicants are currently charged £20 for the knowledge test part of the application process. No charge is made for a re sit where an applicant has failed.
- 3.6 A break down of the time and charges of the process is as attached.  
(Appendix 1)
- 3.7 The proposed fee to cover the cost of the knowledge test is £40.00 for a new application test fee, and £20 for a re sit fee.
- 3.8 Unlike fees for vehicles and operators, there is no statutory duty to publish proposed variations or revisions of fees (section 70(1) (2) Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976.
- 3.9 However, it is recommended that a form of consultation be made with relevant persons. This would be by way of a letter to current licensed drivers, outlining the proposals and inviting comment within a 28 day period. The proposals would also be published on the Council web site and displayed in the reception area of the Council.
- 3.10 Where no objections have been received, or those received have been subsequently withdrawn, then the new fees will take effect, either at the end of the objection period, or when the last objection is withdrawn.
- 3.11 If objections are made but not withdrawn, the Council will consider the objections (although it does not have to vary the proposal as a result of them) and will then set a second date, which cannot be more than two months after the first date specified, when the new fees come into force.

#### 4.0 ARGUMENTS/CONCLUSIONS

- 4.1 Section 53(2) of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 states that 'a district council may demand and recover for the grant to any person of a licence to drive a hackney carriage, or a private hire vehicle, as the case may be, such a fee as they consider reasonable with a view to recovering the costs of issue and administration and may remit the whole or part of the fee'
- 4.2 This will cover the costs of assessing the suitability of the applicant, including a police check and driving and knowledge tests. It also includes the cost of the issue of the badge and other associated administrative tasks.

- 4.3 The current charge of £20 for a joint hackney carriage and private hire driver application does not cover the officer and administrative tasks to assess the suitability of the applicant.
- 4.4 The proposed fees would not affect existing drivers- only new applicants.
- 4.5 Whilst there is no statutory duty to consult with regard to proposed charges and revisions in relation to driver related application fees, it is recommended that a similar type of consultation exercise be carried out as prescribed in statute for fees relating to operators and vehicle charges (section 70 Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act, 1976).
- 4.6 The proposed consultation method is similar in that it allows a period of 28 days for comment and then subsequent consideration of any objections, however, for the purposes of this exercise, an advert would not be published in a local newspaper; instead drivers would be written to directly.
- 4.7 The control of hackney carriage and private hire drivers is a time consuming and costly exercise, and it is legitimate to recover as much of the costs as is possible.

5.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The cost of writing to the currently licensed private hire and hackney carriage drivers.

6.0 APPENDICES

- 6.1 Appendix 1 – Breakdown of current time and charges for driver knowledge test process.

<u>Background Documents</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Contact Officer</u>
Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976	Room SF209 The Grange, Ely	Mrs E A Bailey Principal EHO (Commercial) (01353) 665555 E-mail: elizabeth.bailey <a href="mailto:elizabeth.bailey@eastcambs.gov.uk">@eastcambs.gov.uk</a>

## Appendix 1

### **Driver Knowledge Test Process.**

1. Sending out letter to invite to training session/phone call – ½ hour
2. Arranging of papers and setting up of room ready for candidates -1/2 hour
3. Officer time in room with candidates- DVD/Presentation/Q&A and test-1.5 hours
4. Officer time taken to mark a test paper and to telephone to advise passed-15 minutes
5. Time taken to re invite/re arrange another test where failed-1/2 hour