

Summary of Proposals

Proposal	Officer Observations / Comments
<p>Return to a two-tier system (private hire or hackney carriage)</p>	<p>The Council currently issues “dual” licences to all successful applicants that authorise them to drive both hackney carriage and private hire vehicles.</p> <p>Officers think there could be some merit in offering a “private hire only” option as an alternative to the dual licence. Applicants for such a licence would not necessarily need to undertake a geographical knowledge test as the private hire drivers are booked in advance and would have opportunity to research the route to the required destination.</p> <p>This may provide an incentive for applicants to seek licences to drive private hire vehicles only as they would not need to study for the knowledge test.</p> <p>Officers are however mindful of the impact that the Deregulation Bill could have on driver licensing and believe that it may be worth delaying the implementation of any changes to driver licensing policies and procedures until the Deregulation Bill is being implemented.</p>
<p>New applicants to pay separately to undertake each knowledge test they sit.</p>	<p>Officers are in agreement with this proposal.</p> <p>Currently those that wish to obtain a drivers’ licence pay a set fee (£92) which covers the cost of administering the licence application, including any knowledge tests undertaken.</p> <p>An applicant who passes the knowledge test on the first attempt pays the same fee as someone who takes a large number of attempts to pass the test, which does not seem to be fair and reasonable.</p> <p>Therefore it is proposed that applicants pay separately to undertake knowledge tests and that they pay each time they want to undertake a test. The cost of the knowledge test would be removed from the licence fee paid by new applicants.</p> <p>This proposal is being taken forwards and will be addressed by officers when proposing</p>

	<p>the fees and charges for 2015/16.</p>
<p>Limit applicants to three attempts at passing the knowledge test and having to wait six months before sitting the test again after a third failure.</p>	<p>Officers are generally supportive of the principle of encouraging applicants to “do their homework” before sitting the knowledge test.</p> <p>However the proposal above to charge for each knowledge test taken provides a direct financial incentive to applicants to only sit tests when they are ready to, and so officers feel that such a change may ultimately not prove necessary.</p>
<p>Hackney carriage licences should be more expensive than private hire.</p>	<p>Licence fees can only be charged on the basis of cost recovery. Fees cannot be increased solely with a view to dissuading people from making applications for particular categories of licence.</p> <p>However if the Council did decide to offer a “private hire only” badge where the applicant did not need to complete a knowledge test, the cost of the knowledge test would not need to be paid by those applying for licences to drive private hire vehicles only.</p> <p>Hackney carriage vehicle licences are already more expensive than private hire vehicle licences due to differences in the licensing process for each type of vehicle and the fact that hackney carriage proprietors contribute towards the creation and maintenance of hackney carriage stands in the district.</p>
<p>All new applicants to sit a Maths and English test.</p>	<p>Other Council’s in the County require their applicants to undertake an “essential skills” test alongside the knowledge test.</p> <p>Officers broadly support the introduction of such a test to improve standards generally.</p> <p>Officers are however mindful of the impact that the Deregulation Bill could have on driver licensing and believe that it may be worth delaying any changes to driver licensing policies and procedures until the Deregulation Bill is being implemented.</p>
<p>Applicants for licences to drive hackney carriage vehicles to be tested on the hackney carriage tariff.</p>	<p>Officers agree that it would be beneficial for the knowledge test for hackney carriage drivers to include questions based on the hackney carriage tariff.</p>

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<p>All new applicants (and those who receive in excess of six penalty points on their DVLA licence) to take a driving standards agency test.</p>	<p>Some other Council's in the County require their applicants to undertake a driving assessment carried out by the Road Safety Team at Worcestershire County Council.</p> <p>Officers would support the introduction of a similar requirement for licence applicants in Bromsgrove to improve standards and increase public safety.</p> <p>A Licensing Sub-Committee considering a drivers fitness to hold a licence, could then require them to undertake a similar assessment of their driving capabilities.</p> <p>Officers are however mindful of the impact that the Deregulation Bill could have on driver licensing and believe that it may be worth delaying any changes to driver licensing policies and procedures until the Deregulation Bill is being implemented.</p>
<p>Introduce a requirement that new hackney carriage vehicles entering the licensed fleet are under five years of age when first licensed.</p>	<p>Currently any vehicle deemed suitable under the age of 10 years of age can be licensed as a hackney carriage.</p> <p>This proposed amendment could potentially generally improve the standard of licensed vehicles, but would need to be subject to proper consultation with the licensed trade and other interested parties.</p>
<p>Additional licences for hackney carriage vehicles should only be granted in respect of brand new wheelchair accessible vehicles.</p> <p>This requirement to not apply to existing licence holders who are replacing licensed vehicles that have reached the upper age limit or which need to be replaced for any other reason.</p>	<p>There are currently very few wheelchair accessible hackney carriage vehicles licensed by the Council. In fact just 3 out of 121 hackney carriages licensed by the Council are wheelchair accessible at the time of preparing this report.</p> <p>This proposed change in policy would no doubt help to increase the number of wheelchair accessible hackney carriages available in Bromsgrove over time.</p> <p>A similar policy is in place at Redditch</p>

	<p>Borough Council.</p> <p>Any such change in the Council's hackney carriage vehicle licensing policy would have to be drafted carefully to ensure it did not lead to any unintended consequences and would have to be subject to proper consultation with the licensed trade and other interested parties.</p>
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General Comments

Officers are supportive of changes to licensing policies and procedures that improve standards and help improve the safety of the travelling public. However officers are mindful that changes in policy should not just be made for the purpose of providing economic protection to the existing licensed trade.