

REPORT FOR DECISION

DECISION OF:	LICENSING & SAFETY PANEL
DATE:	21st DECEMBER 2016
SUBJECT:	OPERATIONAL REPORT
REPORT FROM:	ASSISTANT DIRECTOR (LOCALITIES)
CONTACT OFFICER:	M BRIDGE
TYPE OF DECISION:	N/A – Report for information only
FREEDOM OF INFORMATION/STATUS:	This paper is in the public domain
SUMMARY:	A report to advise members on operational issues within the licensing service.
IMPLICATIONS:	
Wards Affected:	N/A
Scrutiny Interest:	Internal Scrutiny Panel

1.0 BACKGROUND

1.1 The report advises Members on operational issues within the licensing service.

2.0 PRE-APPLICATION ASSESSMENTS

2.1 Further to the last meeting of the Licensing and Safety Panel. The Licensing Service can confirm that the assessments are continuing to be undertaken by the adult learning team. From the 28th October 2016 until the 2nd December 2016 there has been 30 assessments carried out. Of the 30 assessments that were booked, 27 passed, 3 failed and 0 failed to attend.

2.2 Members will recall that at the Licensing and Safety Panel in October, the Licensing Unit Manager informed the members that a progress report in relation to the pre-requisite assessments in relation to applications to become a Hackney Carriage / Private Hire driver would be presented at the December Licensing and Safety Panel meeting. The Licensing Service has contacted the Adult Learning Service and the companies undertaking the driving assessment, a report has been supplied and is attached at Appendix 1.

3.0 IMMIGRATION ACT 2016

3.1 Licensing Service staff have recently attended training about the new provisions relating to the Immigration Act 2016 (the 2016 Act) amended existing licensing regimes in the UK to seek to prevent illegal working in the private hire vehicle (PHV) and taxi sector. With effect from 1 December 2016, the provisions in the 2016 Act prohibit all licensing authorities across the UK from issuing to anyone who is disqualified by reason of their immigration status and they discharge this duty by conducting immigration checks. The 2016 Act also embeds other immigration safeguards into the existing licensing regimes across the UK. The Licensing Service is currently amending their procedures to comply with the requirements of the Act.

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Bury Adult Learning Service

The test materials are designed to replicate as far as possible the types of tasks a taxi driver would have to perform.

With regard to speaking and listening, we are looking for the ability to understand customers easily, ask for clarification where necessary and communicate clearly and appropriately.

It has been interesting to assess those candidates who have previously been, or still are, taxi drivers in other regions and are then unsuccessful in this test.

FAILS

In some cases, failures have been quite straightforward in that the candidate had very limited language skills.

Other reasons for failure have included

- Inability to follow directions
- Reading issues which have impacted on the ability to read a map / A-Z.
- Numeracy problems affecting ability to perform basic calculations.

There have been no complaints or disagreement when candidates have been unsuccessful. We are careful to explain weaknesses clearly and on a couple of occasions candidates have gone away, worked on addressing their issues then returned and passed the test. Where necessary we have recommended that candidates access classes to improve their standard of maths and English.

CANDIDATE FEEDBACK

Feedback from candidates has been largely positive, with many stating that tests are a good idea and will

Examples of positive comments below:

A gentleman last week (10.10.16) said that those candidates who can't communicate clearly or well "give other drivers a bad name".

One candidate said that his wife had frequently been given the wrong change in taxis and felt too shy to correct the driver. He felt checking drivers' maths ability would help to prevent such incidents.

'It's a really good idea to make sure that drivers can communicate properly with their customers.'

'It's good to make sure drivers can understand properly.'

'This is good. I was worried it was going to be like a proper exam, but I can see this is what I need to be able to do as a taxi driver.'

QUERIES

There have been a few queries about why the test was necessary for someone who held a non-UK degree, didn't have a GCSE or O Level certificate. One candidate complained about having to do the test after having a 5/6 month 'rest' from driving.

Our assessors fully explain the process and reasons for the test and ensure that it is carried out in a rigorous yet supportive manner.

Internal verification has been carried out to ensure consistency of standards amongst assessors.

Overall the process has been very positive and certainly sends out a clear message that Bury Licensing is serious about driving up standards.

Driving assessments

The Licensing Service has contacted the two approved companies who undertake the driving assessments and they have reported the following:-

Defensive Driver Training

We have had 25 applicants with

16 passes

5 fails

3 booked for test to take place

1 late cancellation to be re-arranged.

That represents a pass rate of 76% of the people who have attended.

Driving Standards

Feedback from the examiners suggests that the standard of those drivers who pass is very good with only a few minor errors.

At the other extreme, drivers who have failed usually do so after demonstrating poor and often dangerous habits.

The most common faults are lack of anticipation of other road users, poor forward vision, excessive speed and very late braking. When asked to pull over to simulate dropping off a passenger in a safe place, there is no mirror use to check what is behind. The sudden braking and lack of signaling raises the potential of a rear end shunt from following traffic.

Other faults have included driving onto the footpath to simulate dropping off a passenger, and when asked to turn the vehicle around in a safe place as if to pick up a nearby passenger, driving two and a half miles until they found a traffic island.

Mitchells

At the moment we have done around 150 Driving Test Assessments for the Greater Manchester Authorities.

A number of these have been for Bury Council although we do not keep any figures for any specific council.

We are running on about 50% to 60% pass rate with the tests.

The majority of the fails being:-

- 1, Observation at junctions
- 2, Use of speed. Too slow or fast
- 3, Manoeuvre

