

LICENSING COMMITTEE

Minutes of a meeting of the Licensing Committee held on Monday 12th December 2011 at 11.00 am in Committee Room 3, Civic Offices, Telford

PRESENT

Councillors: C Mason (Chair), A Mackenzie, L Murray, R Picken and J Seymour.

Officers in attendance: Ian Mercer – Public Protection Service Delivery Manager, Suzanne Fisher – Public Protection Team Leader, Tina Street – Solicitor and Wendy Buckley - Democratic Services Support Officer.

Also in attendance: Mr Omar Ali – Mathieson Training Ltd.

LC-13 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Councillor K Tomlinson.

LC-14 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

LC-15 PRIVATE HIRE AND DUAL DRIVER CONDITIONS OF LICENCE

The report of the Service Delivery Manager – Public Protection was received which informed Members of funding for Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Driver qualifications. The proposed recommendation wording was changed with the deletion of 'of this condition coming into force'. Members also reviewed the condition of licence for Private Hire and Dual Drivers relating to driver qualifications in light of the available funding.

The current condition of licence for Private Hire and Dual Drivers required all new drivers to complete a qualification in transporting passengers by taxi or private hire vehicle, or similar qualification, within 12 months of being issued a licence. The qualification which had previously been taken was delivered at no cost to either driver or Council as funding was available through Train to Gain. However, no Government funding had been allocated to deliver this qualification for this academic year and the cost for a standard NVQ was £1172 per driver.

The Licensing Service had now been informed that there was funding available for Edexcel BTEC Level 2 Certificate in the Introduction to the Role of the Professional Taxi and Private Hire Driver. If funding should cease in the future, the cost of this course would be £295.

A comment was received regarding drivers licensed under other authorities. It was confirmed that any driver who could show they had passed a similar qualification to that which Telford & Wrekin proposed, but with another authority, would not need to take a qualification again if they were then licensed with this authority.

Members asked if there was any form of refresher training once the initial training had been completed. The Public Protection Team Leader confirmed that no refresher training was available at the moment but a condition of licence was that drivers attended up to 2 days training per year which Telford & Wrekin met the cost of. It was also confirmed that if a driver refused to attend training the driver would be in breach of licence conditions.

Mr Ali from Mathieson Training Ltd advised Members that trainers would liaise with drivers, police and councils to review common issues and advise drivers of parking areas, use of radio and horns, plying for hire and explain the differences between criminal and civil offences. This training would be in conjunction with the 9 BTEC units shown appended to the report of the Service Delivery Manager – Public Protection. Mr Ali confirmed that there was funding for the course until July 2012, after which he hoped to continue training at a cost of £295 per driver. Operators, Escorts and drivers without a badge had already carried out the training. One taxi company had completed the training for operators and drivers and another company were in the process of completing the training. The training could be taken over 4 full days or 8.5 half days. It could be taken on a flexible basis or between the hours of 9.30 am and 2.30 pm so that the course could be completed out of the ‘school run’ times. 12 drivers would be trained at one time and the on-line test would be marked externally. The training could also be paid in instalments if funding was then withdrawn.

Having considered all the information within the report and from the training provider, Members were reassured that their concerns at the financial impact of the revised condition for mandatory training had been addressed.

RESOLVED – that condition 7.2a of the Council’s Private Hire Driver Condition and 7.2 Dual Driver condition be amended to read “that all drivers must undertake a qualification in ‘Transporting passengers by taxi and private hire’ or similar qualification within 24 months.”

Meeting closed at 11.45 am

Chairman:

Date: