



**WATFORD
BOROUGH
COUNCIL**

LICENSING COMMITTEE

Thursday, 15th September, 2016

7.30 pm

Town Hall, Watford

Publication date: 15 September 2016

Contact

If you require further information or you would like a copy of this agenda in another format, e.g. large print, please contact Jodie Kloss/Alan Garside in Democracy and Governance on 01923 278376 or by email to legalanddemocratic@watford.gov.uk .

Welcome to this meeting. We hope you find these notes useful.

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Committee Membership

Councillor K Crout (Chair)

Councillor J Fahmy (Vice-Chair)

Councillors S Bolton, J Connal, A Dychton, K Hastrick, M Hofman, Ahsan Khan, R Laird, B Mauthoor, M Mills, A Rindl, G Saffery, D Scudder and M Turmaine

Agenda

Part A - Open to the Public

6.1 **Requirement for new drivers to undertake DVSA driving test** (Pages 5 - 10)

Report of the Head of Community and Customer Services.

Members are invited to consider whether any applicant for a driver's licence received after 15 September 2016 be required to undertake a taxi/private hire driving test approved by the council.

PART A

Report to: Licensing Committee
Date of meeting: 15 September 2016
Report of: Head of Community and Customer Services
Title: Requirement for new drivers to undertake DVSA driving test

1.0 SUMMARY

- 1.1 In 2005 the licensing committee introduced a requirement for all new drivers to undertake the Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA) driving test before being licensed as a Private Hire or Hackney Carriage driver.

DVSA are withdrawing provision of this driving test from the end of December 2016. Notice was served of this intention on 31 August 2016.

Prospective drivers now have limited time to book an existing course and from Jan 2017 will no longer be able to book a DVSA test.

This report does not propose a change to the policy requirement for a driving test to be undertaken it just requests a change in the policy wording so that it is a test approved by the Council and not specifically a DVSA test.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That any applicant for a driver's licence received after 15 September 2016 be required to undertake a taxi/private hire driving test approved by the council.

Contact Officer:

For further information on this report please contact: Jamie Mackenzie
(Business Compliance Officer) on telephone extension: 8520 email:
jamie.mackenzie@watford.gov.uk.

Report approved by:

Alan Gough, Head of Community and Customer Services

3.0 **DETAILED PROPOSAL**

- 3.1 Since 2005 Watford Borough Council have required applicants for a new licence to undertake the Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency test for taxi or private hire drivers. The policy wording is:

That any applicant for a driver's licence received after 1 November 2005 be required to undertake a taxi/private hire driving test by the Driving Standards Agency.

This test has been offered nationally since 1999 and as well as being of a good quality has the added advantage to drivers of being portable between councils since a large number of councils require the same test to be undertaken.

- 3.2 The DVSA have, with very short notice, withdrawn this service. This withdrawal is explained in a letter from DVSA as being too resource intensive. (Appendix 1).

Already some test centres have begun to turn away bookings and the remaining centres are booking up rapidly. Drivers who already faced a wait of four or five weeks in order to secure a booking may well be left without any booking options despite the fact that they may have completed all other aspects of the application process.

- 3.3 There are currently a handful of other tests available although some of these are not taxi and private hire specific.

- 3.4 Alternatively, the council could explore offering an in-house test. This is something the council did prior to the introduction of the DVSA test and would be of benefit both to drivers, in terms of being easy and quick to book, and the council, in terms of being tailored to our requirements.

- 3.5 At this stage it is not known which of these outcomes will be best but a change to the specific requirement of the policy must be made if drivers are to continue to be able to progress through the application process. If this change is approved, officers will then work over the coming weeks to find a suitable option for drivers.

- 3.6 It is therefore proposed that the requirement for new drivers be changed to the following:

- (1) That any applicant for a driver's licence received after 15th September 2016 required to undertake a taxi/private hire driving test as approved by the council.

- 3.7 There is no longer a requirement for any existing drivers to sit or re-sit the test so this change only affects new applicants.

Based upon the number of applications made in the calendar year of 2015 as a whole, and so far in the calendar year for 2016, it is expected that in the course of a year up to approximately 30-40 new drivers will apply to be licensed.

3.8 **Public Consultation**

- 3.9 As the requirement for a test is already in place, a consultation would not be necessary to make a change to provider.

4.0 **IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 **Financial**

- 4.1.1 There are possible financial implications arising from this report.

4.2 **Legal Issues** (Monitoring Officer)

- 4.2.1 There are no legal implications arising from this report.

4.3 **Equalities**

- 4.3.1 This policy does not inherently discriminate and applies equally to all applicants.

4.4 **Potential Risks**

Potential Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Overall score
Legal challenge to policy during a prosecution	2	3	6
Reputation	2	3	6

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Letter from DVSA

Background Papers

Consultation Responses

File Reference

Environmental Health and Licensing enforcement policies



Driver & Vehicle Standards Agency

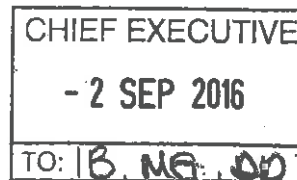
The Axis
112 Upper Parliament Street
Nottingham
NG1 6LP

T 0115 936 6370

www.gov.uk/dvsa

Chief Executive
Local Authority
IPSWICH
IP1 2DE

31 August 2016



DVSA Taxi Driver Assessments

DVSA (and previously DSA) have been conducting Taxi Driver Assessments for participating Local Authorities since 1999. Demand has increased over the years, with a throughput in 2015-16 of approximately 23,000 and a forecast of 28,000 for the business year 2017-18.

These assessments now require considerable examiner resource, at a time when the demand for statutory tests is at an all-time high. The Agency is under pressure to reduce car test waiting times and in order to achieve this, we need to prioritise our activities.

Regrettably, a decision has been made to withdraw the provision of Taxi Assessments with effect from 31 December 2016. We understand that this will be a disappointment and inconvenience to those Local Authorities who currently require their taxi drivers to pass the DVSA assessment.

The Agency also recognises the road safety benefits of such an assessment; therefore, we would point out that there are potential providers such as road safety charities and Driving Instructor representative bodies, who may be interested in providing an alternative service. Details of these organisations can be easily obtained by submitting a general internet search.

Yours faithfully

Neil Wilson
Head of Driver and Driver Training Policy

