

The background of the slide features a large, light blue watermark of the City of Vancouver's coat of arms. The crest includes a crown with four maple leaves, a shield divided into four quadrants (top-left: a ship, top-right: a stag, bottom-left: a ship, bottom-right: an eagle), and a banner at the bottom with the motto 'A NE FOR A'.

## **Agenda Item 6**

### **Knowledge Test Arrangements for prospective Taxi Drivers**

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### **Falkirk Council**

**Title:** Knowledge Test Arrangements for prospective Taxi Drivers  
**Meeting:** Civic Licensing Committee  
**Date:** 30 November 2016  
**Submitted By:** Chief Governance Officer

#### **1. Purpose of Report**

- 1.1 This report provides Members with a summary of the Council's Taxi Knowledge test arrangements. It also provides details of approaches to testing that takes place in other local authorities.

#### **2. Recommendations**

**Members are requested to:**

- (1) Note the contents of the report**

#### **3. Background**

- 3.1 At a recent meeting of the Civic Licensing Committee, officers were asked to prepare a report outlining current practice in respect of the taxi knowledge set in the context of other local authority practices.
- 3.2 Section 13(5) of the Civic Government (Scotland) Act 1982 gives local authorities the discretion to require an applicant for a taxi driver licence to undertake a test of their knowledge of the area in which they intend to operate in terms of the road layout and any other matters relating to the operation of the taxi as the authority sees fit.

All prospective taxi drivers in Falkirk must pass a "knowledge" test. The test enables drivers to demonstrate their understanding and geographical awareness of the local area. This requirement was introduced on 1<sup>st</sup> January 1994 with the test taking the form of 20 questions in the following two categories:-

- 5 questions relating to the conditions attached to a Taxi Drivers' Licence; and
- 15 questions relating to journeys between various points within the area and the identification of specific locations

The pass rate is 85% and applicants are generally given 3 opportunities to sit and pass the test. Officers have discretion to offer a 4th opportunity if the applicant's previous attempts show a pattern of

improvement. Applicants who fail the test or fail to attend will have their applications remitted to the Civic Licensing Committee with an officer recommendation for refusal.

- 3.3 **The test is in a written format and lasts for 1 hour. Assistance can be given** by officers in terms of questions being spoken and also answers written if the applicant has a difficulty in either reading or writing in English.

#### 4. Considerations

##### Other Local Authorities

- 4.1 **A benchmarking exercise was undertaken with other local authorities to** ascertain what method of testing of taxi drivers, if any, they had in place. The responses received include the following:-

Council	Knowledge Test	Other form of testing
Clackmannanshire	No	No
Fife	No	Training course
Scottish Borders	No	Council training session
South Ayrshire	No	Training course
Stirling Council	No	No
Aberdeenshire	No	No
East Lothian	No	Wheelchair Training course
East Dunbartonshire	No	No
West Dunbartonshire	Yes	
East Renfrewshire	Yes	
Renfrewshire	Yes	
South Lanarkshire	Yes	
North Lanarkshire	Yes	
City of Edinburgh Council	Yes	
City of Glasgow	Yes	
West Lothian	Yes	
Dundee	Yes	
Aberdeen City	Yes	
Midlothian	Yes	
Angus	Yes	
East Ayrshire	Yes	

- 4.2 Of the 21 Councils' that information was obtained from 13 require a knowledge test to be undertaken by a prospective taxi driver.
- 4.3 The figures relating to new Falkirk Council taxi driver applications received in the past 5 years figures are:
- 2012 - 60
  - 2013 - 48
  - 2014 - 46
  - 2015 - 55

- 2016 – 38\* (so far)

### **Legislative Changes – Testing of private hire car drivers**

- 4.4 Changes to the Civic Government (Scotland) Act as a result of the Air Weapons and Licensing (Scotland) Act 2015 will allow a licensing authority to require testing of applicants for a private hire car driver licence, as is the case for new taxi driver applicants. This could mean potentially that the Council could decide that prospective private hire car drivers will need to sit the same knowledge test.
- 4.5 The following figures show how many new private hire car driver licence applications the Council has received since 2012:-
- 2012 - 27
  - 2013 - 18
  - 2014 - 24
  - 2015 - 58
  - 2016 – 67\* (so far)

### **Current test arrangements**

- 4.6 Knowledge tests are arranged every second Thursday depending on numbers and the test lasts for an hour. The Enforcement officer spends on average 30 minutes preparing the test paper. He will supervise the test which lasts for one hour. The marking of each test paper takes on average 30 minutes.
- 4.7 If an applicant has indicated on their application form that they require special assistance with their test, the Enforcement officer can either read the questions to the applicant or write the answers, or both. This option is infrequently sought.
- 4.8 In the past year knowledge tests have been carried out. The monthly breakdown figures is as follows:-

October 2015	7
November 2015	4
December 2015	3
January 2016	4
February 2016	6
March 2016	4
April 2016	1
May 2016	5
June 2016	4
July 2016	0
August 2016	1
September 2016	4
October 2016	2

- 4.9 The knowledge test is a tried and trusted method of measuring an applicant understands of their responsibilities in operating a taxi and knowledge of the local area.
- 4.10 The Scottish Government has endorsed the testing of topographical knowledge as best practice, although they have said that the stringency of the test should not act as an unnecessarily high barrier to entry for new drivers.
- 4.11 The current set up relies exclusively on one officer. If new private hire car drivers need to take a test then this would lead to a large increase in tests. This could lead to a greater burden on officer time.
- 4.12 The format of the knowledge test has not been reviewed since it was introduced in 1994. During the intervening period, questions have been revised to take account of new housing developments and iconic landmarks and tourist attractions such as the Kelpies. Officers are of the view that the test continues to have merit and should be retained, perhaps in a different format.
- 4.13 The benchmarking exercise with other local authorities has revealed that at least one uses an automated approach. This is of interest to officers and will be explored further in order to assess whether or not this approach would save on officer time. This would be particularly relevant should Members be minded to expand the knowledge test to include private hire car drivers in any future knowledge tests.
- 4.14 Officers will look to review the test content and format will keep Members updated as to their progress.

### **Consultation**

- 4.15 Officers benchmarked with other local authorities.

## **5. Implications**

### **Financial and Resources**

- 5.1 None.

### **Legal**

- 5.2 None

### **Risk**

- 5.3 None

## **Equalities**

- 5.4 An equality and poverty impact assessment will be carried out to ensure the current approach is not discriminatory.

## **Sustainability/Environmental Impact**

- 5.5 There are no sustainability/environmental impacts as a result of the recommendations.

## **Conclusions**

- 6.1 The current approach of the Taxi Knowledge test has served the Council well with licensed taxi drivers having demonstrated their local knowledge of streets which in turn will have benefited the customer as at peak periods as the shortest route is not always the quickest. It is 22 years since the test was introduced and the format hasn't changed since. Officers will review the test arrangements and update Members accordingly.

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Chief Governance Officer

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### **List of Background Papers:**

- None