

Misc Licensing Committee

Item 26 – Licensing of Hackney Carriage Drivers and Private Hire Drivers within Cornwall.

Dear Colleagues,

Unfortunately, due to sad personal circumstances, I am unable to attend the meeting tomorrow but having worked with senior officers on this report I hope it might be accepted as helpful if I submit my own views on the issue being considered.

Can I say first of all, that the requirement for all drivers to undergo training on “**Safeguarding**” is I believe absolutely essential and to ensure consistency of delivery should be carried out by relevant officers of the council. As is the requirement for a **DBS check**

Likewise, I fully support the requirement for all drivers to speak and comprehend **English**. This may not require a specific test but can easily be assessed by officers during the application process in a face to face meeting.

With regards to **driver assessment**, I am conscious that we should be seeking to reduce the red tape currently inhibiting business growth and try where possibly to limit the burden on hard pressed small businesses. Having studied the evidence available there is absolutely no evidence that the use of driver assessment has reduced the number of passenger complaints in areas with the assessment when compared to the 4 zones to which it currently does not apply. The cost to taxi companies would be a significant financial burden. In addition, the ability to deliver such assessment would need to be tendered for, and there would be significant demands placed upon officer time to ensure consistent delivery, always assuming that the demand for assessments can be met. I can therefore see no valid reason to have a driver assessment and would strongly advocating dropping the requirement in the two zones where it currently applies. Possibly a more effective system of monitoring driver performance would be the requirement for each vehicle to display an internal sign advising passengers of the option to report driving standards to a council telephone line, along the lines of the “How is my driving?” scheme. This would not only provide independent passenger assessment on an ongoing basis it would also ensure that standards are maintained throughout and not just at the point of testing.

Similarly there is no evidence to suggest that the **knowledge test** provides useful protection for passengers. With the advent of SAT NAV and mobile phone maps there is little problem in locating destinations and routes. Perhaps more important is an effective code of conduct of the level of service which all passengers should expect and to which all drivers are required to accept.

Should the committee be minded to approve either the assessment or knowledge test then I would strongly recommend that it should only apply to new drivers and that existing operators are treated as having grandfather rights on such tests.

I do hope that these thoughts are helpful.

Kind regards Geoff