

Consultation Responses

1. I have received your letter concerning the proposed changes. I have no comment on them.
2. Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing Consultation – Thank you for your letter detailing Amendments numbered 4921 – 4926. I am in full agreement with them all.
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9. 1110 BTEC Level 2 Certificate
I make these comments as a qualified NVQ assessor.
Whilst I firmly believe that the NVQ is a good thing it is still lacking in a couple of departments. The local map knowledge and the correct instruction to load, unload and secure a wheelchair is not present. These are most important in my opinion as a sat nav does not send you the shortest way and regarding wheelchairs health and safety. As taxi drivers and you as Cheshire East Council one of our aims surely is to encourage new businesses to the area and as taxi drivers we are often the first contact people have with the area. Because of this and our current customers I would like to make the following relevant points. Some of the new taxis being licensed are up to sixteen years old. Can we not implement a rule as they do in Stoke on Trent. In Stoke a new or replacement vehicle has got to be under two years of age and changed when the vehicle is eight years old for a saloon car or ten years for a wheelchair vehicle. You might not wish to be that strict but say a three, ten

and twelve year rule is implemented in the long term it could only be good for the area.

Officer Comments: Both Macclesfield College and South Cheshire College have committed to including the Council's own Conditions, Byelaws, and geographical questions into the qualification. Similarly, unit 6 provides information in relation to dealing with disabled passengers. Service Level Agreements will be agreed to maintain consistency and content of the course. Additionally, the Council will have the right to audit both courses.

10. Section 1434 BTEC Level 2 Certificate in Introduction to the Role of the Professional Taxi and Private Hire Driver

With respect to the above I have no issues providing that this would not vastly increase the New Driver Applicant fees and that they would be able to retake the course in the event of minor failure without additional expense to themselves.

Officer Comments: The cost of the Course will be £235.35, payable by the applicant directly to the colleges. Funding to cover the course will be available to unemployed candidates. Any failures or re-sits will be a matter for the candidate and the college. Members will be aware that the Licensing Authority must set its fees on a cost recovery basis. Whilst a reduction in fees may be appropriate, any surplus may also be used to provide additional resources in the Licensing Team. This might include additional officers or equipment. The issue of an appropriate fee for the grant of a licence will be reviewed and will take into account the Authority's additional responsibilities in ensuring that the standard of training conducted by the colleges is appropriate.

11. Also if I may make a comment on the proposed NVQ to replace the in house Taxi driver Test. I think the in-house test is a little biased towards Crewe taxi drivers. Potential Taxi Drivers that are going to work in the Middlewich area should not have to know the topography of Crewe area to perform their role, so a more standard knowledge like the NVQ is welcomed by me as long as it isn't a full weeks course needed to be attended.

Officer Comments: The geographical knowledge questions are set for the relevant zone applied for. The duration of the course will be set by the colleges to fit in with their timetables and availability.

12. My final comment relates to knowledge tests. Many drivers starting now have no clue where they are going. Dropping the knowledge test will make this worse. A greater understanding of the area tested by people from the local area is needed. The btec is useful for new starters and contains valuable information. It should be used in conjunction with a local knowledge test. Seeing new starters say to customers that they don't know the way to the simplest location is embarrassing.

Officer comments: It is not intended that the Council will end the testing of applicants. Rather it is intended that the requirement for a national accredited qualification to be passed will increase the knowledge of applicants and

ensure that the licensed trade becomes a professional and creditable aspect of Cheshire East's transport provision. The colleges have undertaken to include local requirements into the qualification and the Licensing Team has undertaken to review, increase, and strengthen the geographical questions provided to the colleges.

13. Item 5988 you ask about the Btec level 2, yet a short while ago most taxi drivers took the NVQ Is this to be accepted for existing drivers or are we all to be put for Betc and at whos expense As I for would object strongly to having to give up yet more time from work to sit another course when your previous licensing enforcement officer advised us on this course and indeed Alison on my request attended with me to assess the course, and is there still to be the knowledge test as surely this is of great importance for any driver wishing to work in any zone.

Officer Comments: It is intended that the requirement to undertake the Btec qualification will be placed on applicants for the grant of a licence only. The requirement will not extend to exiting drivers. However, there may be instances where an existing licensed driver fails to renew a licence before its expiration. In these instances any application will be dealt with as though it were a grant application. The application will therefore be required to have completed the Btec qualification. Dispensation from this requirement will be given to those who have passed the similar NVQ Certificate in Road Passenger Vehicle driving (Taxi and Private Hire Driver) qualification.

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