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| REPORT TO: | ENVIRONMENTAL AND DEVELOPMENT SERVICES | AGENDA ITEM: |
| DATE OF MEETING: | 6th March 2008 | CATEGORY: DELEGATED |
| REPORT FROM: | HEAD OF ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES | OPEN |
| MEMBERS' CONTACT POINT: | Carl Jacobs 595717 | DOC: |
| SUBJECT: | Private Hire Knowledge Test | REF: c:\myfiles\com\ES\ Knowledge Test |
| WARD(S) AFFECTED: | All | TERMS OF REFERENCE: ES13 |

1.0 Grounds For Urgency

It has emerged during the year that the authority has received a surge to unprecedented numbers of applications for Private Hire Driver's licences, many of these from people ignorant of the locality. To respond to this in sufficient time to bring in corrective measures that will secure public safety and establish quality standards in time to commence at the start of the next financial year, this report has been submitted under the "Urgent" provisions.

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 Committee approves the introduction of a Knowledge Test as an element of the application for a Private Hire Driver.
- 2.2 Committee also approves that existing drivers will be requested to undertake the test following substantiated complaints from members of the public or failure to successfully complete "Mystery Passenger" exercises.
- 2.3 A fee of £20 be levied for each knowledge test undertaken

3.0 Purpose of Report

- 3.1 Private Hire Conditions have not been amended for numerous years and the introduction of a Knowledge Test is the first element of a number of recommended changes that will be brought before this Committee in the near future.

4.0 Detail

- 4.1 That the introduction of the Knowledge Test will commence for all new drivers from 1st April 2008.
- 4.2 Existing drivers will not be requested to undertake such a test unless substantiated complaints are received from the public. Additionally drivers who fail the Mystery

Passenger exercise, undertaken by officers of the Council, will be requested to undertake the test.

- 4.3 The Knowledge Test will be an addition to the existing application system. This includes the completion of an application form, a medical form signed by a Doctor and a Criminal Records Bureau Form.
- 4.4 Customer care will be improved as officers will be able to ascertain that applicants have full knowledge of the geographical area of operation.
- 4.5 At present we have over 400 Licensed Private Hire Drivers within South Derbyshire District Council. This number is putting a considerable strain on the Licensing Section to deal with large numbers of applications and to enforce legislative provisions. The introduction of this scheme will reduce the numbers of successful applicants.
- 4.6 The Council is presently receiving applications from candidates who reside outside of the South Derbyshire Area e.g. Birmingham, who have little or no knowledge of the area. We understand that they are applying to South Derbyshire because they will not be required to undertake such a test.
- 4.7 Only two Derbyshire Authorities do not request candidates to undertake Knowledge Tests. These are High Peak and Derbyshire Dales. The only other Council in close vicinity to South Derbyshire, which does not request such a test, is North West Leicestershire,

5.0 Financial Implications

- 5.1 The introduction of the knowledge test will be self-financing via an additional fee that will be charged to take the test. A fee of £20 is suggested.
- 5.2 Should the applicant fail the knowledge test on 3 occasions then his/her application should be rejected for a 12-month period. There should be a right of appeal to the Appeals and Licensing Committee, for aggrieved persons.

6.0 Corporate Implications

- 6.1 None

7.0 Community Implications

- 7.1 This will improve customer care and safety for those members of the public who use private hire vehicles

8.0 Background Papers

- 8.1 None