

NORWICH CITY COUNCIL

Report for Resolution

Report To Licensing Committee

18 March 2010

ITEM

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Report of Head of Legal, Regulatory & Democratic Services

Subject Fitness testing of hackney carriage / private hire vehicles and hackney carriage / private hire driver assessments

Purpose

To inform Members of changes to the contractual arrangements for the fitness testing of hackney carriage / private hire vehicles and the assessment of applicants for hackney carriage and private hire vehicle driver licences .

Recommendation

That Members note the position regarding the changes to the contractual arrangements for the fitness testing of hackney carriage / private hire vehicles and the assessment of applicants for hackney carriage and private hire vehicle driver licences.

Financial Consequences

The financial consequences of this report are nil.

Corporate Objective/Service Plan Priority

The report helps to achieve the service plan priority of protecting the interests of the public through the administration of the licensing function.

Contact Officers

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Background Documents

Background

1. All hackney carriage and private hire vehicles licensed by the city council are required to pass a fitness test to ensure compliance with set criteria of mechanical and fitness requirements. Vehicles that successfully pass the test will also have reached normal 'MOT' standards.
2. Section 48 (1) of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 provides that:

Subject to the provisions of this Part of this Act, a district council may on the receipt of an application from the proprietor of any vehicle for the grant in respect of such vehicle of a licence to use the vehicle as a private hire vehicle, grant in respect thereof a vehicle licence:

Provided that a district council shall not grant such a licence unless they are satisfied –

- (a) that the vehicle is -*
 - (i) suitable in type, size and design for use as a private hire vehicle;*
 - (ii) not of such design and appearance as to lead any person to believe that the vehicle is a hackney carriage;*
 - (iii) in a suitable mechanical condition;*
 - (iv) safe; and*
 - (v) comfortable;*

3. Section 50 (1) of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 provides that:

...the proprietor of any hackney carriage or private hire vehicle licensed by a district council shall present such hackney carriage or private hire vehicle for inspection and testing by or on behalf of the council within such period and at such place within the area of the council they may by notice reasonably require:....

4. Before a licence to drive a hackney carriage or private hire vehicle can be granted, the applicant must successfully complete the city council's driving assessment. The assessment comprises a multi choice computer based test on the Highway Code followed by a practical assessment of the applicant's driving capability.

Current arrangements

5. Both the fitness testing of hackney carriage and private hire vehicles and the driving assessments of applicants for hackney carriage and private hire vehicle driver licences are currently provided by Morrison Veolia Ltd (trading as City Care) Central Depot Mile Cross Road Norwich.
6. These arrangements were due to finish on 31 March 2010 when all the various City Care service contracts come to an end. A tendering process is currently underway to find suppliers to provide the fitness test and driver assessment services after this date.
7. On 5 February notification was received from the General Manager of City Care stating that they would be unable to provide the testing and assessment service beyond the 28 February 2010.

Alternative arrangements

8. Due to the early curtailment of the services provided by City Care, it was necessary to put arrangements in place to ensure the continuation of vehicle testing and driver assessments.
9. In conjunction with the Head of Procurement and Service Improvement, a 'mini-tender' arrangement for a framework of suppliers to provide the testing facilities was put in place. The proposal was to tender the service for a limited period, at which point the service could be evaluated and then re-tendered.
10. Three contractors were appointed to carry out the fitness testing of hackney carriage and private hire vehicles for an interim period between 1 March and 30 June 2010. Vehicles will continue to be tested against the same criteria applied by City Care.

Details of the three contractors and costs are shown below:

Name / address	Contact details	Opening times
Delmonte Garage Unit 26 Concorde Road, Norwich NR56 6BN	Tel: 01603 426746 Email: info@delmontegarage.co.uk	Office hours: 0800 – 1800 Test hours: 0730 – 1830 Monday – Saturday

Dolphin Autos (Nch) Ltd 2 Swanton Road, Norwich NR2 4LR	Tel: 01603 400400 / 400300 Email: dolphin.travel@btconnect.com	0600 -2100 Monday - Saturday
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MOTS 610.COM 17 Javelin Road, Norwich Airport Industrial Estate, Norwich NR6 6HP	Tel: 01603 780990 / 407972 Email: mharvey@peoplemovers.tv Fax: 01603 780999	0800 – 2100 Monday – Friday Saturday mornings by appointment
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Costs

	Delmonte	Dolphin	MOTs 610.com
Hackney carriage test	£70.00	£68.00	£65.00
Hackney carriage re-test	£35.00	£34.00	£25.00
Private hire vehicle test	£50.00	£44.00	£55.00
Private hire vehicle re-test	£25.00	£22.00	£20.00

11. The Driving Standards Agency (DSA) is the organisation with responsibility for setting driving standards and conducting driving tests within Great Britain. The DSA also trains, tests and monitors the performance of all examiners and sets the standards and syllabus against which all Approved Driving instructors teach.

12. The DSA has developed a specific assessment for prospective/existing hackney carriage and private hire vehicle drivers. It is proposed that from 1 March 2010, applicants for hackney carriage driver's licence successfully complete the DSA hackney wheelchair enhanced assessment and applicants for private hire vehicle driver's licences successfully complete the private hire saloon DSA assessment. A DSA booklet detailing the procedural matters and content of the assessment will be available at the meeting.