

Taxi Consultative Committee Meeting – 14 January, 2015

Plating of licensed vehicles

Introduction

This report outlines a proposal for the renegotiation of the test station contract for licensed vehicles.

Background

Chesterfield Borough Council is the licensing authority for the taxi trade in our council area and attaches conditions to the grant and renewal of vehicle licences. Amongst other things these conditions require vehicles to be tested for design, safety and mechanical condition.

All Chesterfield taxis are tested by one testing station which is based in Eckington and operated by North East Derbyshire District Council [NEDDC]. This station has been the sole provider since 2002.

The location of the testing station means Chesterfield Borough Council does not comply with the spirit of section 50 of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 that states vehicles should be presented for test 'at such place within the area of the council'.

Chesterfield Borough Council currently licenses 385 private hire and 150 hackney carriage vehicles with each licence lasting six months. Each of the 535 vehicles is therefore tested every 6 months; a total of 1,070 tests per year. The validity of the licence is shown by numbered plates displayed to the front and rear of the vehicle.

A new application or renewal is dependent on four factors:

1. The vehicle passes a test of its roadworthiness and compliance with council policy;
2. A valid certificate of insurance is produced;
3. A valid V5 document is produced showing the proprietor as the keeper; and
4. Payment of a fee.

After passing the test drivers return to the licensing office in Chesterfield to renew the licence and collect the new plates. Test failures are notified to the licensing section who consider the awarding of penalty points.

Key points

Selection criteria will need to be approved in consultation with the taxi trade but could include the following:

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1. The premises must have at least two test lanes and at least three VOSA approved testers;
2. All appointments will be made directly with the test station;
3. Testing will take place in accordance with VOSA standards and any supplementary manuals as appropriate;
4. In accordance with VOSA standards the premises must have a dedicated clean and comfortable waiting area for drivers;
5. The station must be able to carry out an agreed minimum number of tests per day between specified hours, including some weekend availability;
6. The issuing of vehicle licences, plates and associated paperwork will be included in the test fee;
7. Failures results will be emailed to licensing office on a daily basis;
8. The premises will be able to supply pass and fail information to the licensing office on a monthly basis;
9. Regular progress meetings will be held with the licensing office to assess performance and procedures;
10. Regular customer feedback information will be provided to the licensing office;
11. Any garage wishing to be considered must sign a declaration that neither the garage nor the testers have any commercial or other direct link with any taxi operator or driver attending the garage for vehicle testing.

The transfer of vehicle plating to the test station itself will provide an enhanced service for drivers and operators as they will be able to collect the licence at source. The reduction in visitor numbers to the licensing office will free up officers from service counter cover and enable more compliance work and site visits to take place. At present such work is driven by complaint and/or information.

Financial considerations

The authorisation of a garage as a taxi testing station does not imply or require any financial transaction between the council and the garage. The taxi driver or operator pays the required fee to the garage.

Policy considerations

The appointment of additional testing stations is consistent with the principles of lean review as they reduce the amount of travel for customers and provide an enhanced service by plating vehicles at source.

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