

## **PRIVATE HIRE AND HACKNEY CARRIAGE LICENSING SUB-COMMITTEE**

**WEDNESDAY, 20 DECEMBER 2006**

PRESENT:- Councillor John Ballman, Councillor Sinead Darker, Councillor Brian Ford, Councillor Colin Lovell and Councillor David Sammels.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Melanie Duff, Councillor David Glaholm and Councillor Philip Young

### **21. Declarations of Interest**

The Chair reminded Members of the need to declare any known interests in any matters to be considered at the meeting. No declarations were made.

### **22. Minutes**

Resolved – That the minutes of the meeting held on 26<sup>th</sup> September 2006, be confirmed and signed.

### **23. Public Question Time**

Mr. Anthony Johnson asked what the Sub-Committee intended to do to resolve the issue of current licence holders who had poor English communication skills. He referred to complaints he had received from Members of the public concerning this issue.

The Chair thanked Mr. Johnson for his question and asked officers to address these issues as part of their presentation to the Sub-Committee.

Mr. Jaginder Bassi (Director of Swindon Racial Equalities Council) asked the following question:

We welcome moves by the Council to improve the standards of services provided by taxi drivers in Swindon and the intention to test drivers before granting a license. However, we are seeking assurances from the Council that a robust monitoring system be put in place in line with the Race Equality Scheme

- i) To measure any adverse impact on different groups of people and the results reported and made public via the Race Coalition and the Equality Advisory Forum
- ii) The tests are set at a level which is relevant to enable drivers to perform their duties effectively.

The Chair indicated that officers would address these issues as part of their presentation to the Sub-Committee.

## **24. Revised Conditions for Applicants for Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Drivers Licences**

The Sub-Committee considered (a) a report of the Group Director, Environment and Leisure setting out recommendations for revised conditions to be met by new applicants for Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Drivers' Licences, (b) an oral update on discussions with Swindon College regarding English comprehension tests, (c) questions and answers arising from the report and officers' presentation, and (d) public questions received from Mr. Johnson and Mr. Bassi.

Resolved – (1) That, as from 1<sup>st</sup> January 2006, the Council's terms and conditions for the grant of Hackney Carriage or Private Hire drivers' licences to new applicants for Hackney Carriage or Private Hire drivers' licences be amended to include:

(a) A Hackney Carriage or Private Hire drivers licence will not be issued to any new applicant who has not held a full United Kingdom driving licence granted under Part III of the Road Traffic Act 1988 for a minimum of 36 months, or held a licence from another EEC state for a minimum of 36 months. Driving licences must show the applicant's current address.

(b) Applicants who have been resident in the United Kingdom for less than five years from the date of application are required to provide a Certificate of Good Conduct, or equivalent, from any country in which they have been resident within the previous five years. The Certificate of Good Conduct must be in English and provided at the applicant's own expense. This is in addition to the enhanced Criminal Records Bureau check.

(c) A driving licence must be taken up within six months of a candidate being informed that he has successfully passed the Local Knowledge Test.

(2) That, subject to the final details being approved by Members of this Sub-Committee, from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2007 all applicants, prior to taking the Local Knowledge Test, for a Hackney Carriage or Private Hire drivers licence will be required to attend an interview at which there will be an appraisal of his/her spoken English, English comprehension, a test of reading, basic written English and basic mathematics. Drivers not reaching a satisfactory level will be refused a licence.

(3) That, further to (2) above, officers be authorised to continue negotiations with Swindon College to administer the appraisals set out on the basis that Swindon College has the necessary skills for such appraisal work.

(4) That, further to (2) above, a mechanism be included in the new policy for review of existing drivers who have had complaints made against them by members of the public, on the grounds of their competency in any of the areas set out, and that whilst the process be robust enough to protect the public it also be framed to prevent vexatious complaints.