

**Report of the Service Director Culture,
Housing and Regulation to the
General Licensing Regulatory Board
to be held on the 22 February 2017**

BMBC Licensing Service – Alternative Driving Assessment Update

1. Purpose of Report

This report has been prepared to advise Members of the appointment of two alternative driving assessment providers, following the withdrawal of the Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA).

2. Background

In common with most other local authorities, Barnsley Council requires all applicants for a hackney carriage and private hire drivers licence to successfully complete a DVSA driving assessment before being granted a licence. On 19 October 2016, the DVSA stated that a decision had been made to withdraw the provision of taxi assessments with effect from 31 December 2016. In a statement, the DVSA commented ‘These assessments require considerable examiner resource, at a time when the demand for statutory driving tests is at an all-time high. The agency is under pressure to reduce car test times and in order to achieve this; we need to prioritise our activities’.

3. Current Position

From 31 December 2016, all applicants for a hackney carriage and private hire drivers licence were unable to make a booking to undertake the required practical driving test assessment thus rendering the Council unable to issue any new licences.

4. Proposal

- 4.1 In order for the Council to continue to grant such licences, the Licensing Service identified two alternative providers; the Blue Lamp Trust and Taxi Driving Solutions, both of which test to the same standards as the DVSA which includes:

- Reversing exercises
- Turning in the road
- Manoeuvring
- Motoring judgements
- Planning
- Cabology knowledge

The Blue Lamp Trust itself is a charity, although its assessments are provided by the charity's 'business arm' as a source of income. They currently provide practical driving assessment tests (excluding wheelchair element) to a number of local authorities and deliver the test from a location convenient to the applicant. Current waiting times are approximately 15 working days and those undertaking the test will be charged £87.

- 4.2 Taxi Driving Solutions is a private sector organisation providing practical driving assessments (including wheelchair element) from a locally based testing centre in the Barnsley area. Current waiting times are approximately 5 working days and those undertaking the test will be charged £65 (standard test) and £80 (enhanced test inc. wheelchair assessment).
- 4.3 Members are minded to note that both driving test providers have been delivering this service for approximately 2 months without issue or complaint.

5. Background Papers

No background papers

6. Officer Contact

Kate Liddall ext 4258