

**RIBBLE VALLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL
REPORT TO LICENSING COMMITTEE**

Agenda Item No. 8

meeting date: 17 MARCH 2015
title: COMMENT ON REMOVAL OF PRIVATE HIRE DRIVER'S TEMPORARY LICENCES
submitted by: CHIEF EXECUTIVE
principal author: MAIR HILL

1 PURPOSE

- 1.1 To report to committee representations which have been received from a private hire operator upon the effects which the removal of private hire temporary licences has had on their business, and to determine what action the Council should take in response to this.
- 1.2 Relevance to the Council's ambitions and priorities
 - Community Objectives - }
 - Corporate Priorities - } Consideration of these issues will promote the Council's aim to be a well-managed Council.
 - Other Considerations - }

2 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 On 21 January 2014, Committee resolved to remove the provision for temporary private hire driver's licences with effect from 1 April 2014.
- 2.2 In November 2014, the Council received a report from one of its Private Hire operators, detailing the effects which the removal of the temporary licence has had on its business. A copy of that report is enclosed as **Appendix 1**.

3 ISSUES

- 3.1 Committee will note that the operator states that in its view, it has difficulty recruiting private hire drivers and that the removal of the temporary private hire licence has exacerbated the situation.
- 3.2 Whilst the concerns of the operator are noted, the Council's role as licensing authority is to ensure the safety of the public. Committee will recall that the provision of temporary licences was removed because there was evidence that a large number of those applying for them did not complete either the steering to success course or take and/or pass the knowledge test.
- 3.3 The Council has not received any other representations on this matter and anecdotally other operators have expressed their satisfaction with the situation.

3.4 Committee therefore has three options, to take no action, to consult with all operators to gather their views on the effects or otherwise of the removal of the temporary licence, or to consider reinstating the provision of temporary licence.

4. RISK ASSESSMENT

4.1 The approval of this report may have the following implications

- Resources – No implications identified.
- Technical, Environmental and Legal – Improved control of licence holders should improve public safety.
- Political – No implications identified.
- Reputation – Improved public safety will enhance the Council's reputation.
- Equality & Diversity – no implication identified

5. RECOMMENDED THAT COMMITTEE

5.1 Take no action taken upon the matters raised in Appendix 1.

M Hill

MAIR HILL
SOLICITOR

Marshal Scott
MARSHAL SCOTT
CHIEF EXECUTIVE

BACKGROUND PAPERS

1. Report of Legal Services Manager dated 10 April 2008
2. Report of Chief Executive dated 17 September 2013
3. Report of Chief Executive dated 21 January 2014.
4. Appendix 1 Report LMC Transport November 2014

For further information please ask for Mair Hill, extension 3216

REF: MJH/Licensing Committee/17 March 2015

APPENDIX 1

Report to Licencing Committee – Ribble Valley Borough Council

November 2014

Subject – Constraints to Growth of Business

By; LMC Transport, Clitheroe Rd, Barrow, BB7 9AH

Introduction

LMC operate as a Private Hire provider with a fleet of 4 owned vehicles, supplemented by several local quality Private Hire owner drivers.

Work carried out is predominantly the servicing of corporate sector clients within the Ribble Valley and adjacent areas. We provide transportation services to; 3M, Smiths Medex, Johnson Matthey, Hanson Cement, Stonyhurst College, Fort Vale Engineering, Springhill Care Homes in addition to work for several travel agents and several Northern based private schools.

All work is pre booked several days in advance with 60% of work, booked over 1 week in advance. Drivers work schedules are issued to them a week in advance with minor amendments where required being made to the schedules on the evening prior to the travel.

Our drivers are generally ex professional, semi retired business people who are well versed in the provision of a high level of service to clients. They all understand and work to our company driver handbook which ensures they fulfil our company mission statement of;

LMC shall provide a quality door to door transportation service in vehicles that are clean, tidy and safe, using trusted, professionally qualified drivers who will always treat clients with courtesy and respect.

In line with a planned expansion, we commenced advertising for new Private Hire Drivers in May of this year to supplement our existing team. Adverts were placed with the Clitheroe Advertiser, Jobcentre and several online general and specialist job search sites.

In total we have received 35 applications, from which one applicant is currently attending the "Steering to Success" course at ACROSS which completes in November. He cannot commence driving duties until he has passed both this and the knowledge test which will be some 6 months after making his application.

The only other two suitable applicants hold Hyndburn badges and are currently contemplating whether to apply for a Ribble Valley badge with the added expense and time to learn the Ribble Valley area in order to take and pass the knowledge test in addition to the costs of medicals and application. One of these applicants also currently holds a PSV licence.

The make-up of applications from a total of 35 application was;

a) By experience;

experienced private hire drivers... 2 (Hyndburn badge holders)
non experienced drivers.....33

b) By Geographical area

Ribble Valley.....2
Hyndburn.....6
Blackburn.....4
Burnley.....4
Pendle.....4
Preston/Chorley.....3
Lancaster.....1
Other (inc non UK residents).....11

Case

In January 2014 the Licencing Committee were presented with a report on, "Private Hire Temporary Drivers Licences" (agenda item 5), which proposed the removal of the Temporary Private Hire Drivers Licence, on the basis that many drivers were not fulfilling the requirement to take and pass the Steering to Success course and the Knowledge Test and subsequently not renewing their licence after the 6 month period.

My daughter (and partner in LMC Transport) Miss Caroline Fox spoke to this committee last September about the possible affects on our business as minuted (para 326). It is now worthwhile for the committee to understand the affects of this decision on our business which should currently be expanding but is stifled by both this decision and other issues highlighted in the conclusions.

I undertook the Steering to Success course commencing in May 2014 to both understand what my employees would learn and whether there was anything that might contribute to my understanding of the Private Hire business. As an ex Senior Manager in the NHS for some 26 years with responsibility for hundreds of staff and control for a budget value £25M, I can say that personally the Steering to Success course served one purpose only, that being to provide a certificate of attendance to enable me to apply for a licence. I do however agree that this is a good course for many attendees who do not hold some of the basic educational and work skills experiences or understanding of customer service and some of the periphery issues relating to the industry.

Several other Compliances which affect our ability to compete in business is that of other Local Authorities providing "Executive status" to certain vehicles and operators, which does not enable us to compete evenly.

Manchester, Rossendale, Blackburn and Blackpool Councils all allow various relaxations for executive vehicle services which we have to try compete against. Many clients insist on a chauffeur service in an unmarked un-plated vehicles. We cannot provide such! And neither can we attract such owner drivers to work for us due to the relicencing requirements and plating of vehicles.

Conclusions

- We have received applications from PSV drivers, who can drive buses but cannot drive a private Hire vehicle until they go through the full application process.
- We currently have one prospective employee undertaking the steering to success course who has a degree in Pure Maths and many years of experience in the Travel Industry who will have waited some 6 months to commence employment!
- There is an obvious shortage of "quality" private hire drivers in the Ribble Valley
- There are real obstacles to the growth of "quality" Private Hire business within the Ribble Valley,

I welcome suggestions and views of the Licencing Committee prior to preparing our 2015 business plan.