

## DECISION TO BE TAKEN BY THE CABINET MEMBER FOR WASTE AND LICENSING

### PRIVATE HIRE/TAXI LICENSING: ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEST FEE

#### 1 Purpose

1.1 The purpose of this report is to:-

Seek Cabinet Member approval for the proposed fee in respect of the Council's new English language testing requirements for private hire and hackney carriage drivers.

#### 2 Recommendations

2.1 That the Cabinet Member approves the proposed English language test fee of £46.00.

#### 3 Background

3.1 On 11 December 2018 the Licensing Committee agreed the arrangements for the introduction of a telephone based English language testing system for taxi and private hire drivers. Specifically, new licence applicants, who do not hold a recognised qualification, and those existing drivers where concerns are identified in relation to their communication skills, are required to take the test.

3.2 Tests are purchased by the Council in advance, must be used within one year and have a unit cost is £26.50. However, there are discounts available for bulk purchases:

No of tests purchased	Discount
25-49	5%
50- 99	10%
100-299	15%
300-499	20%
500-749	25%
750-1000	30%

3.3 It is intended that applicants will take the test at the Council's offices under the supervision of a member of Council staff, to ensure the integrity of the assessment process. For most applicants this will be at the same time that they attend the Council offices to provide proof of identity and other documents to support their application.

#### 4 Fee Proposal

4.1 It is anticipated that candidates will need 30 minutes to complete the test. It is proposed that the candidate bear the cost incurred for officer time and accommodation, which would be incorporated in to the overall test fee.

4.1 The Council typically receives around 100 new applications per month, although it is anticipated that this number may decline significantly with the introduction of additional testing. It is therefore proposed that tests be purchased in batches of 100 (achieving a discount of 15% and unit price of £22.53). The cost of staff time (including on costs and recharges) along with accommodation is £23.30.

4.2 On the basis of the above applicants will be required to pay £46.00 in total. For comparison purposes other Local Authorities using the same system charge as follows:

East Dorset - £30; Dacorum BC - £43:80; Mid Sussex DC - £52

4.3 To facilitate the ease of payment, it is proposed that delegates pay the English language test fee alongside the application fee. This is the same approach taken in relation to the fee for Disclosure and Baring Service Checks and means that applicants who fail the assessment will be reimbursed only the residual application fee element.

4.4 The fee will be reviewed each year as part of the usual budget setting process and will consider the number of new applications (post implementation), in order to achieve the best bulk discount price moving forward.

## **5 Reasons for Recommendation**

5.1 The proposed arrangements ensure that applicants bear the cost of the new test requirements and that the Council's costs are kept to a minimum. The bulk buying of tests provides a small cost saving to applicants, whilst the ability to pay alongside the application fee reduces inconvenience for both the applicant and the Council.

## **6 Resource Implications**

6.1 The cost of the test will cover the additional resources needed.

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Background Documents: None