
Report To:	General Purposes Board	Date:	11 November 2015
Report By:	Head of Legal and Property Services	Report No:	LP/155/16
Contact Officer:	James Douglas Legal Services	Contact No:	01475 712114
Subject:	Mandatory Training Of Taxi Drivers		

1.0 PURPOSE

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to advise members on the outcome of the consultation process following a proposal by Councillor Rebecchi for taxi drivers to undertake mandatory training as a condition of being granted a new licence or being granted a renewal of an existing licence.

2.0 SUMMARY

- 2.1 At the meeting of the General Purposes Board held on 8 April 2015, the Board remitted to the Head of Legal & Property Services to undertake a consultation with the taxi trade and other relevant bodies on the principle of introducing a mandatory training requirement for taxi driver licences. A report was to be brought back to the Board with the results of said consultation in order that a final decision might be made on whether to implement a mandatory training regime, and if so, in what form.
- 2.2 Information on the various options for a mandatory training regime was sent out to all taxi drivers, the taxi trade, Inverclyde Council on Disability and an advert placed on Inverclyde Council's website. Responses have now been collated, and these form the papers provided to Members as a supplement to this report.
- 2.3 ICOD would welcome the introduction of compulsory training for taxi and private hire drivers, particularly, on disability awareness. They would welcome practical training that informs and skills drivers on how to assist people with a variety of impairments, including physical, sensory, mental and learning needs. ICOD recommend that training is delivered by people with disabilities as they are aware of the issues faced by the disabled community when using taxis and the assistance that works best for them.
- 2.4 The overwhelming response received to the consultation was negative. Inverclyde Taxis Ltd advised that they were committed to enhancing the service being offered to the general public, and that their representation was not a direct objection to the proposal, but they took the view that the proposals lacked clarity and in turn opened up practical issues that would require exploration.
- 2.5 Of the other responses received, the vast majority were opposed to the proposals. The main objections centred on the fact that there have been few or no complaints about the way in which taxi drivers deal with the general public at large or in relation to disabled members of the community specifically. It was suggested those drivers that have been complained of should be targeted for training rather than training imposed across the board. The majority of objectors point to the fact that there could be insurance implications for drivers attempting to get involved with First Aid issues, or that the training was a costly exercise that would provide little or no benefit to the general public or disabled members of the community.
- 2.6 A petition signed by 133 people was lodged in opposition to the introduction of mandatory training for taxi drivers.

3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 That the Board note the responses to the consultation.
- 3.2 That the Board do not impose mandatory training for taxi drivers seeking to be licensed as new taxi drivers or those seeking renewal of existing licences.
- 3.3 That the Board remit to the Head of Legal and Property Services to bring a report to the Board in two years' time to advise on whether mandatory training should be introduced at that time in the event that a need for such training had become apparent.

4.0 BACKGROUND

- 4.1 Councillor Rebecchi raised a Motion at a meeting of the General Purposes Board on 8 October 2014 that the Board considers implementing mandatory training for all taxi drivers in how to safely transport, secure and interact with members of the disabled community. This was as a result of concerns that had been raised with him by those within the disabled community. The Board unanimously agreed that the matter should be investigated and a report brought back for consideration.
- 4.2 Licensing staff e-mailed all other local authorities in Scotland seeking information on any mandatory schemes that had been introduced within their areas. Twenty-two authorities responded to this request for information. Some authorities have no requirement for mandatory driver training, some authorities have training as a mandatory licensing requirement and some authorities are currently reviewing the matter.
- 4.3 Of the Councils that indicated a requirement for mandatory training of taxi drivers, some provide in-house training and others expect drivers to ensure they attend relevant training courses available throughout Scotland. Where drivers attend training courses provided by independent training providers, proof of attendance and completion of the course is submitted with the licence application at the appropriate time. Some authorities require mandatory training for all taxi drivers whilst others require training for new applicants only.
- 4.4 Research undertaken by officers suggests that there are training courses available from a number of independent training providers. The courses range in price for each delegate from £46 to over £100. The duration of courses range from a full-day course to courses provided over a period of four evenings. A number of training providers have also indicated that they would be interested in creating a training course in the event that all current and future taxi drivers would be required to undertake mandatory training.
- 4.5 Ayrshire College currently offers a course for taxi drivers, the cost of which may be covered by an Individual Learning Account (ILA). There are certain qualifying criteria for these grants such as the applicant must not be in higher education or earning in excess of £22,000 per annum. Skills Development Scotland, the body responsible for administering ILAs, has advised that at this time the course provided by Ayrshire College is the only course of this description registered with them as being eligible for the ILA grant payment. Each taxi driver would be personally responsible for applying for said grant in the event they wished to undertake any training with this establishment and wished the payment of the course to be covered by an Individual Learning Account.
- 4.6 There are other organisations such as GTC Training (Glasgow) and MiDAS that offer training courses. CTG courses are the providers of courses preferred by Glasgow City Council and West Dunbartonshire Council. The cost of the course is £46 per delegate. MiDas (Mini-Bus Driver Awareness Scheme) is organised by the Community Transport Association and promotes a nationally recognised standard for assessment and training. Enquiries indicate that they have a suitable course for drivers called "Driver Awareness Training" which would cost £500 regardless of the number of delegates undertaking the course, with the maximum number of delegates being 12. Accordingly the lowest cost per delegate would be £41.67 per person assuming all 12 training places were taken up. The cost to delegates would increase if uptake was not at full capacity or proposed delegates failed to attend the course.
- 4.7 All courses offered deal specifically with customer care, including the particular needs of the disabled community. Taxi licence conditions are also discussed, and particular emphasis can be provided by the training providers on Inverclyde Council's conditions of licence.
- 4.8 The introduction of a training programme would comply with the Scottish Governments recommendation for best practice as detailed in the publication Taxi and Private Hire Car Licensing Best Practice For Licensing Authorities.

4.9 The consultation process attracted 12 letters of opposition to the prospective proposals as they stand, a petition comprising 133 names was also submitted in opposition to the proposals, and 34 letters sought further clarification on what was being suggested. ICOD are in support of the proposals and 1 further letter was received in support of the proposals.

4.10 As there are a number of ways that mandatory training is carried out by those authorities requiring such training, a decision would have to be made on what type of training would become mandatory. The consultation responses show that there is little support from the trade on any training. There has been a suggestion that specific taxi drivers could be asked to undertake training where it was felt that they would benefit from training following a complaint by the public. Targeted training was thought to be of more use than training being imposed on all drivers.

4.11 It was suggested that the introduction of such training would be prohibitive to part-time drivers resulting in a reduction of those drivers available in the area. This would, in turn, impact on the service available to the local community and have financial implications for operators. It was further suggested that there lacked any evidence of the need to introduce this type of training at all.

5.0 IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Finance

There are financial implications for those requiring to undertake any training required in the event that they do not wish to apply for an Independent Learning Allowance or do not qualify for same.

5.2 Legal

There are legal implications in that any decision by the Board is subject to Appeal to the Sheriff Court by those with locus to do so.

5.3 Human Resources

If Licensing staff are required to monitor training there will be an increase in administrative work.

5.4 Equalities

There are no equalities implications.

5.5 Repopulation

There are no repopulation implications.

6.0 CONSULTATIONS

6.1 Information on the various options for a mandatory training regime was sent out to all taxi drivers, the taxi trade, Inverclyde Council on Disability and an advert placed on Inverclyde Council's website.

7.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND INFORMATION

7.1 Responses have now been collated, and these form the papers provided to Members as a supplement to this report.