

**REPORT:** Regulatory Committee

**DATE:** 16<sup>th</sup> January 2019

**REPORTING OFFICER:** Strategic Director Enterprise, Community and Resources

**PORTFOLIO:** Resources

**SUBJECT:** Taxi Licensing Matter

**WARDS:** Borough-wide

## **1. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

Airport Transfers Widnes is a licensed private hire operator (PHO78) and is required to licence their vehicles as Private Hire Vehicles and their drivers as Single Status Drivers (SSD).

Airport Transfers Widnes is requesting that one of the pre-conditions for a SSD licence namely the requirement for the “local area” section of the Taxi Knowledge Test, does not apply to their drivers.

## **2. BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 Mr Michael Nicholas Pile of 22 St Mawes Close, Widnes, Cheshire, WA8 7NR is the current holder of a single status driver’s licence, private hire vehicle licence as well as the private hire operator’s licence. The private hire operator’s licence allows him to invite and receive private hire bookings from his address. The business currently operates under the name of Airport Transfers Widnes.
- 2.2 Mr Pile has continuously held a single status driver’s licence with this Authority since 30<sup>th</sup> November 2004.
- 2.3 Mr Pile attended the Regulatory Committee hearing on 29<sup>th</sup> November 2017 when he was granted an exemption for his private hire vehicle(s) from displaying the Council’s private hire door signs and that his vehicles may display the discreet “gold plates” as opposed to the standard private hire plates (subject to the Licensing Manager’s decision on what is deemed to be an “executive” type vehicle).

### **3. SINGLE STATUS DRIVER APPLICATION PRE-CONDITIONS**

- 3.1 In accordance with sections 51 and 59 of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976, district council's shall not grant a licence to drive a hackney carriage/private hire vehicle (i.e. a SSD licence) unless they are satisfied that the applicant is a fit and proper person to hold a driver's licence.
- 3.2 One of the pre-conditions this authority has set in order to determine if an applicant can be deemed a "proper person" is that they will be required to prove they have a basic knowledge of the role of a professional driver by successfully completing a taxi knowledge test.
- 3.2 The taxi knowledge test comprises of 2 sections (15 questions per section).
- 3.3 Section 1 tests the applicant's knowledge of the Runcorn and Widnes area which includes routes, locations and the borough boundaries. The purpose of this section is for applicant's to demonstrate that they have a basic grasp of the road network and locations of popular landmarks and businesses in the area so that they can comply with the Council's requirement of driving a customer to their destination by taking the shortest route to the required destination.
- 3.4 Section 2 tests the applicant's knowledge in respect of taxi Laws, byelaws and conditions. This section is relevant so that an applicant knows what he legally can and cannot do when undertaking work as a licensed driver.

### **4. CURRENT ISSUE FOR CONSIDERATION**

- 4.1 Mr Pile is requesting that future applicants who wish to work under his private hire operator's licence be exempted from section 1 of the taxi knowledge test.
- 4.2 Mr Pile has been asked if he could provide the justification for his request prior to the hearing, however in the absence of this at the time of producing this report the evidence will be presented during the hearing.
- 4.3 If Members are satisfied that Mr Pile's evidence as to the why driver's working for him would still be deemed as a proper person with the meaning of the 1976 act then they may grant the exemption.

- 4.4 Should Members decide to grant the request then future successful applicants who wish to drive for Airport Transfers Widnes will be issued with a licence that would restrict them to drive only licensed private hire vehicles operated by this company. The licence would also exclude them from driving private hire vehicles not operated by this company as well as hackney carriage vehicles. These drivers would have the option to “upgrade” their licence to a Single Status Driver’s licence should they wish to do so by successfully passing section 1 of the knowledge test.
- 4.5 Members have previously approved a similar request for another Halton licensed operator, Executive Travel. This was based on the company stating and providing evidence that their business operated differently from a “standard” private hire business as they do not undertake any journeys within 24 hours of receiving a booking as well as not accepting any bookings that start and end within the Halton area.

## **5. OPTIONS**

- 5.1 The options available to the committee are:
- Grant the request to exempt future applicants who wish to be licensed to work as a driver for Airport Transfers Widnes
  - Refuse the request

## **6. POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 The application is for exemption to policy for specific reasons and not for a policy change. All such applications are treated on their merits.

## **7. OTHER IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1 None

## **8. IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCILS PRIORITIES**

- 8.1 **Children and Young People in Halton**  
None
- 8.2 **Employment Learning and Skills in Halton**  
N/A
- 8.3 **A Healthy Halton**

N/A

**8.4 A Safer Halton**

None

**8.5 Halton's Urban Renewal**

N/A

**9. RISK ANALYSIS**

N/A

**10. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES**

N/A

**11. LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972**

<b>Document</b>	<b>Place of Inspection</b>	<b>Contact Officer</b>
Application Documents	Licensing Office	Kay Cleary/ Nick Wheeler