

REPORT: Regulatory Committee
DATE: 11 March 2015
REPORTING OFFICER: Chief Executive
PORTFOLIO: Resources
SUBJECT: Taxi licensing matter
WARDS: Borough-wide

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

Executive Travel NW Limited of Halton Memorial Services Appleton Village Widnes operates as an airport transfer service and is required to licence their vehicles as Private Hire Vehicles and their drivers as Single Status Drivers (SSD).

Executive Travel NW Limited is requesting that two of the pre-conditions for a SSD licence namely the requirement for a Taxi Knowledge Test and a DSA Driving Test do not apply to their drivers. In exchange for this the company request restricted SSD driving licences restricting drivers to airport work.

2. RECOMMENDED

That the Committee considers the Company's request.

3. SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 3.1** The Council are advised that Executive Travel NW Limited has been operating within Halton for over 25 years and over the last 10 years have been operating under the VOSA Public Service Vehicle Scheme.
- 3.2** They operate an upmarket airport transfer service to both the general public and over 30 account companies. They have a long standing service contract with a local garage and an ongoing account with a local fuel station.
- 3.3** The Company does not undertake any journeys smaller than Widnes to Liverpool Airport and have no desire to encroach on any taxi trade within the borough. They currently employ six full time members of staff in their booking office and also 16 drivers with a fleet of 9 vehicles

- 3.4** Upon renewal of the VOSA scheme and change of business title the Company has been asked a series of ongoing questions regarding their operation specifically the running of Executive Cars (as opposed to the 16 seater vehicles) This issue along with the ever increasing success of the business and the need to expand the fleet of executive cars the vehicles and drivers need to become licensed in Halton.
- 3.5** The Company are requesting a **restricted SSD Licence** for the drivers of their vehicles. The first request is that drivers should not have to take the knowledge test. The reasons given are:
- (1) None of the journeys undertaken start within the borough and end within the borough. They are always an out borough start or finish
 - (2) All bookings are made in advance and collection addresses that are made within the borough all have destinations outside the Borough, the majority being Liverpool or Manchester Airport. The destinations are prescheduled and given to the driver two to three days in advance giving the drivers plenty of time to research their routes.
 - (3) The prices are pre-set and given to the client upon booking so this would be regardless of routes taken to get to the clients destination.
 - (4) On occasions when the Company has been contacted by the public for journey they have been redirected to one of the local taxi firms.
- 3.6** The second request is for drivers not to subject to the **DSA driving test**. The reasons given are:
- (1) They believe the DSA taxi driving test was introduced for drivers who are proposing to work within the confines of one borough.
 - (2) The work spans over the whole of Merseyside to the main airports (Manchester and Liverpool).
 - (3) The majority of work involves motorway driving which is not in the current driving test.
 - (4) All of the drivers are strictly monitored whenever they are driving one of the Company's vehicles.
 - (5) All vehicles are fitted with state of the art tracking devices and the office is manned 24 hours a day where a member of staff will monitor the driver's performance including speed etc.
 - (6) New drivers are accompanied to Manchester Airport by the Office Manager or the Transport Manager in order to check their driving ability before they are allowed to transport passengers.
- 3.7** The Company has supplied the Licensing Section with a printout of the arrivals and departures the Company undertook during the period 5 November 2014 to 5 February 2015. This information has been provided to show the number of journeys undertaken during the winter months. During this period 2571 journeys were undertaken and out of those 2286 where to Manchester or Liverpool airport. The remaining 285 journeys where a mixture of Southampton docks, Heathrow, Gatwick or nights out in Liverpool, Manchester or Chester City Centre etc. The printouts will be shown to members of the Committee.

3.8 Executive Travel NW Ltd have held a Private Hire Operator Licence since 4 July 2012. Earlier incarnations of Executive Hire have held Private Hire Operator licences for a number of years previously.

3.9 The applicant has been invited to the meeting.

4 SINGLE STATUS DRIVER APPLICATION PRE – CONDITIONS

4.1 The Taxi Knowledge Test comprises:-

- Local knowledge which includes routes, locations and the borough boundaries
- Taxi Laws, byelaws and conditions

4.2 The DSA driving test was adopted by Halton Borough Council in 2004 and comprises of:

- Awareness and anticipation
- Effective Planning of prevailing road and traffic conditions
- Correct use of speed
- Emergency stop
- Taxi test manoeuvre
- A manoeuvre involving reverse
- Passenger safety and comfort

5 ISSUES FOR THE COMMITTEE TO CONSIDER

5.1 The Company advises that all work is prescheduled and given to the drivers two to three days in advance of the journey.

5.2 The Company has stated they have no desire to encroach on any taxi trade within the borough.

5.3 Members might also consider the local economy and local employment. It is envisaged that the company will licence approximately 9 vehicles and 16 drivers though it is not known if the drivers would be from this borough. At the time of writing this item 9 people have submitted an application for a SSD Licence from Executive Travel NW Limited.

5.4 Restricted SSD licences were employed in the past but were discontinued because of abuses of the system.

5.5 The dispensation of not requiring a taxi knowledge test is capable of being appropriate if a restricted SSD licence is granted but the case for not requiring a DSA driving test is questionable.

6 OPTIONS

6.1 The options available to the Committee are:

- Approve the request for a restricted Single Status Drivers Licence whereby the applicants are not required to undertake a Taxi Knowledge Test / and or a DSA driving test
- Refuse the request

7 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

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

8 OTHER IMPLICATIONS

There are no other implications

9 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCILS PRIORITIES

- 9.1 Children and Young People in Halton**
None
- 9.2 Employment Learning and Skills in Halton**
N/A
- 9.3 A healthy Halton**
N/A
- 9.4 A Safer Halton**
None
- 9.4 Halton's Urban Renewal**
N/A

10 RISK ANALYSIS

N/A

11 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

N/A

12 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

Document	Place of Inspection	Contact Officer
Application Documents	Legal Services	John Tully/Kay Cleary