

## PROPOSAL TO INTRODUCE AN ‘EARN AS YOU LEARN’ PRIVATE HIRE DRIVER’S BADGE

### 1 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To consider the introduction of an ‘earn as you learn’ private hire drivers badge to encourage new drivers into the trade.

### 2 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 There is currently a national licensed driver shortage and since the pandemic the Council has also seen a reduction of drivers.
- 2.2 There are a number of reasons for this decline, one of which has included drivers amending their working patterns and focusing on the daytime trade rather than the evening and weekend trade. This change has had a knock-on effect to the number of licensed vehicles that operate on a Friday and Saturday night across the district.
- 2.3 The Council’s Licensing Team has since met and been working closely with the 4 main local operators (the trade) to look together at short to long-term solutions.

### 3 PROPOSAL FROM THE GROUP

- 3.1 It was identified that the current requirements in place to obtain a Hackney Carriage (Taxi) driver’s licence takes approximately 6 months before the driver can obtain their licence and work.
- 3.2 For those that are seeking alternative employment, they have to take this timeline into consideration with the knowledge they may not work for up to 6 months whilst they complete the application process.
- 3.3 The trade, along with the support of the Licensing team, have proposed a new ‘earn as you learn’ scheme, which maintains essential licensing conditions, but reduces the timelines, as detailed in paragraphs 3.1-3.2. The Scheme outline is as follows:-

#### **Essential Measures for the ‘Earn As You Learn’ Badge**

- 3.4 The proposal would require an applicant to complete the following before the badge was issued:
- Application form confirming they will work for an existing Rochford District operator
  - Pay the application fee
  - Demonstrate Right to Work in the UK (Passport / Driving Licence / Work permit)
  - Pass the Maths and English Suitability Test
  - Comply with the requirements of the Disclosure & Barring Service (DBS)

- Comply with the requirements of the DVLA Driving licence requirements
- Comply with the requirements of the Group 2 Medical requirements
- Comply with the requirements of providing reference details

3.5 Within 6 months of receiving their badge they must:

- Pass a Disability Awareness Course with a contractor approved by Rochford District Council
- Pass a Safeguarding Training Course with a contractor approved by Rochford District Council
- Pass an enhanced driving assessment with a contractor approved by Rochford District Council

3.6 Within 9 months from the date of issue of their badge they must:

- Pass the Hackney Carriage Driver's Knowledge Test

#### **Failure to Meet the Requirements**

3.7 The driver's licence will automatically expire on the expiry date printed on the badge (9 months).

3.8 If the operator or the Licensing Team are aware of any concerns relating to the driver, the badge will be suspended immediately.

3.9 The driver cannot re-apply to Rochford District Council until 12 months has passed from the expiry of the 'earn as you learn' badge.

#### **Role of the Operator**

3.10 The operator must ensure they are assigned to work solely within the Rochford District and not sub-contracted to operate outside the district.

3.11 All work must start or finish within the Rochford District.

3.12 The 'earn as you learn' badge will place a requirement on the operators to work with the licence holders to encourage them to obtain their full badge. Any concerns relating to the driver must be reported to the Licensing Team immediately.

3.13 The drivers will only drive Private Hire vehicles and can only work on pre-arranged bookings.

3.14 The operators will help the driver by means of financial support and assistance from their knowledge test schools.

## **4 RISK IMPLICATIONS**

### **Reputation**

- 4.1 There is a low reputational risk associated with this; the proposal outlined in paragraph 3.4 should reduce the risk and identify any concerns early on.
- 4.2 The operators will work closely with the Licensing Team should anyone raise concerns over a specific driver.

**Strategic**

- 4.3 Additional new drivers help reduce any safeguarding concerns that may arise, specifically relating to Friday and Saturday nights. It has been identified that the wait for some pickups can be up to 2 hours from the moment the vehicle is booked.
- 4.4 The current low numbers of drivers is also impacting on the travelling public and specifically those with limited mobility. The lack of drivers indicates those that are reliant on this method of transport could be disadvantaged with the lack of drivers and vehicles.

**5 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 There are no resource implications arising from the “earn as you learn” proposal. The ongoing administration of the policy will be carried out within existing resources in partnership with the trade.

**6 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

**Town Police Clauses Act and Local Government Miscellaneous Provisions Act**

- 6.1 The Town Police Clauses Act (Hackney Carriage licence) does not allow local authorities to apply conditions to a licence. However, Section 51 (2) of Local Government Miscellaneous Provisions Act 1976 relating to drivers of Private Hire vehicles states: A district council may attach to the grant of a licence under this section such conditions as they may consider reasonably necessary. Paragraph 3.8 will apply in this case.

**7 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1 The Public Sector Equality Duty applies to the Council when it makes decisions. The duty requires us to have regard to the need to:
- To eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation
  - To advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not
  - To foster good relations between those who share a protected characteristic and those who do not

- 7.2 The protected characteristics are age, disability, gender, race, sexual orientation, religion, gender, reassignment, marriage/civil partnerships, pregnancy/maternity.
- 7.3 The Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) indicates that the proposals in this report will have an impact on any people with a particular characteristic by increasing public services.

**8 RECOMMENDATION**

- 8.1 It is proposed that the Committee **RESOLVES**
- (1) That the Rochford District Council, Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Driver, vehicle and operator licence conditions be amended to allow the “earn as you learn” scheme to operate.
  - (2) That the effectiveness of the scheme to be reviewed after 12 months in partnership with the trade.



Louisa Moss

Assistant Director, People & Communities

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**Background Papers:-**

None.

For further information please contact Steven Greener, Principal Licensing Officer on:-

Phone: 01702 318148

Email: [licensing@rochford.gov.uk](mailto:licensing@rochford.gov.uk)

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