



Committee - Regulatory

Thursday 4th June 2026

Subject: Removal of Knowledge Test Requirement for Taxi Drivers

Report by:

Chief Executive

Contact Officer:

Andy Gray – Head of Environmental Services

Executive Summary:

It is proposed that the existing knowledge test, required to be passed by taxi drivers as part of their licence application is removed and not replaced. It is believed that the knowledge test is no longer required as the existing “out of area” policy on its own, now allows the Council to effectively manage and enforce against any risks of drivers predominantly operating out of area.

Appendices to Report

- No appendices

RECOMMENDATION(S):

(a) That Regulatory Committee agree to remove the requirement for a knowledge test to be carried out by any driver applying for a hackney carriage vehicle license within West Lindsey.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 A knowledge test for taxi drivers was introduced at West Lindsey in September 2013 due to the sudden increase in out of area applications, individuals wanting to obtain a drivers badge with West Lindsey, licence a vehicle and then use it in other parts of the country. Whilst this was legal and within the legislation it resulted in a heightened risk to the council, as we were still responsible for any enforcement activity on individual drivers licensed by the Council, wherever they were operating. The knowledge test was intended as a blunt tool to effectively discourage individuals with no intention of operating within our area from applying for a driver's badge.
- 1.2 After the knowledge test the Council also implemented an 'out of area policy' with the clearly defined expectation that applicants for hackney carriage vehicle licences ply for hire predominately within the administrative area of West Lindsey District Council.
- 1.3 It is now believed that the knowledge test is no longer required as the "out of area" policy on its own allows the Council to effectively manage and enforce against any risk in this area. The knowledge test appears to be having unintended consequences and is affecting the pass rate of local residents when applying.

2 The Knowledge Test

- 2.1 New applicants applying for a taxi/private hire driver's badge are at a financial disadvantage as they currently have to undertake a knowledge test at the current fee of £44.50, with a re-sit fee of £42.50. They can only take the test 3 times and then they have to wait 12 months to start the process again.
- 2.2 On average it takes at least 2 attempts for potential drivers to pass the test causing an extra burden on the trade. Very few applicants pass first time, which is preventing local people from working and prospering in our district. An example of this is that an applicant, intending to work solely on the rank in Gainsborough, has to pass a knowledge test that requires they demonstrate knowledge across the whole district such as the name of a public house in Keelby or location of a GP's surgery in Bardney. Individuals intending to operate solely in and around other areas in the district such as Market Rasen are similarly disadvantaged by having to demonstrate their knowledge of Gainsborough where they will never work.
- 2.3 This unintended outcome was never the intention of the knowledge test when it was introduced as it was aimed at preventing drivers who had no intention of operating in the area from obtaining a licence. It is also accepted that drivers now extensively use devices such as satellite navigation systems or in phone apps on journeys, which significantly reduces the level of local knowledge needed for journeys. Any issues around reports from customers about an individual driver's navigation knowledge can be effectively dealt with through existing enforcement tools. Although reports such as this are very infrequent.

2.4 From the 1st of April 2025 to the 30th March 2026 17 knowledge tests were carried out (including retests), providing an income of £725. This income would no longer be received if the knowledge tests were removed. However, the requirement for staff to carry out and support the administrative elements of the test and for the Council to process these tests and fees would also be removed.

3 Summary

3.1 There is no legal requirement for the Council to have a knowledge test and in the latest guidance from the Governments Department of Transport in 2023 it suggest that topographical knowledge tests are no longer necessary.

3.2 The removal of the knowledge test will help to aid driver retention and give local people the opportunity to work within the taxi industry. It will also remove the financial burden on any applicant and reduce the timescales for becoming a licensed driver.

3.3 The Council is still able to effectively manage any risk presented by the geographical operation of a taxi driver through its “out of area” policy. The policy can be found here [West Lindsey Out of Area Taxi Policy | West Lindsey District Council](#)

(No.) Alternative Options

	Option	Rational for not recommending
1	Do nothing	As per the report. The knowledge test in its current form is not fit for purpose and is not of benefit to local persons wanting to become licensed taxi drivers.
2	Amend the knowledge test to make it more “local.”	Government guidance suggests that knowledge tests are no longer required. Retaining a more local test will still require applicants to pay a fee and will carry the same administrative burden.

ASSOCIATED IMPLICATIONS

Legal:

There are no legal implications. The provision of a knowledge test is not a legal requirement,

Financial: FIN/34/27/JT/JT

The removal of the knowledge test will mean that a small amount of income is lost to the Council (c£725 IN 25/26, c£1,000 ongoing pressure on the MTFP from 26/27).

This is expected to be offset by non-cashable efficiency savings of staff time time (estimated at 2.5hrs per test) from the reduction in administration and processing of the tests.

Staffing:

None noted.

LGR implications:

None noted.

Equality and Diversity including Human Rights:

None noted.

Data Protection Implications:

None noted

Climate Related Risks and Opportunities:

None noted.

Section 17 Crime and Disorder Considerations:

The Council's existing "out of area" policy still provides the framework for any enforcement required.

Health Implications:

None noted.

Risk Assessment:

There is very little risk to the Council in approving the removal of the knowledge test. The report sets out that the Council still has tools available to ensure effective enforcement should it be required.

Title and Location of any Background Papers used in the preparation of this report:

These are not appendices – you should list here any supporting information used to inform your report – e.g. government guidance –

Call in and Urgency:

Is the decision one which Rule 14.7 of the Scrutiny Procedure Rules apply?

i.e. is the report exempt from being called in due to urgency (in consultation with C&I chairman)

Yes

No

X

Key Decision:

A matter which affects two or more wards, or has significant financial implications

Yes

No