

**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY  
COMMITTEE**

16th February 2016

**IMPROVING DISABLED PEOPLE'S ACCESS TO REDDITCH'S TAXI FLEET –  
PROPOSED SHORT, SHARP REVIEW**

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| Relevant Portfolio Holder  | Councillor John Fisher, Portfolio Holder for Corporate Management  |
| Portfolio Holder Consulted | No   |
| Relevant Head of Service   | Simon Wilkes, Head of Worcestershire Regulatory Services (WRS) and Claire Felton, Head of Legal, Equalities and Democratic Services. |
| Ward(s) Affected           | All wards.   |
| Non-Key Decision           |  |

**1. SUMMARY OF PROPOSALS**

This report provides Members with an opportunity to consider a proposal that has been received for Members to undertake a Short, Sharp Review of action that could be taken to enhance the accessibility of local taxi fleets for people with disabilities.

**2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Committee is asked to **RESOLVE** to approve one of the following options:

- 1) **Subject to any changes agreed during the meeting, the proposed Improving Disabled People's Access to Redditch's Taxi Fleet Short, Sharp Review be launched.**
- 2) **Members consider options for enhancing the accessibility of Redditch's taxi fleet for customers with disabilities at a forthcoming meeting (or meetings) of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.**
- 3) **No further action be taken by Overview and Scrutiny Members in respect of this matter.**
- 4) **Alternative action, to be identified and clearly specified during the meeting, be taken in relation to this matter.**

**3. KEY ISSUES**

**Background**

- 3.1 In 2011 the Overview and Scrutiny Committee launched the Access for Disabled People Task Group. This group was tasked with investigating barriers facing people with disabilities who travelled into Redditch town centre on various modes of transport. As the review spanned two municipal years the membership of this Task

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Group changed but included the following: Councillors Andrew Fry (Chair from May 2012), Chalk and Y Smith (from May 2012), A Clayton and Hartnett (until April 2012), and former Councillors Mason (Chair until April 2012) and Quinney.

- 3.2 At the end of the review Members proposed a number of recommendations including two which had implications for taxi services in the Borough:
- 3.3 Recommendation 3: “Taxi companies should be offered licences to operate adapted vehicles for a longer period of time than standard vehicles to incentivise taxi firms to increase the number of adapted vehicles in their fleets. The vehicles should be permitted to operate for these lengthier periods of time subject to passing the three inspection tests and the MOT that the Council’s licensing regime requires for each vehicle”.
- 3.4 Recommendation 4: “Taxi drivers should be offered disability awareness training, which would include information about manually assisting people with disabilities, by Redditch Borough Council”.
- 3.5 Following consultation the Licensing Committee adapted the Council’s Private Hire Vehicle Policy to take into account the actions proposed in recommendation 3 and disability awareness training was also introduced for taxi drivers in accordance with recommendation 4.
- 3.6 However, during a meeting of the Redditch Licensing Taxi Forum in January 2016 concerns were raised about the services that were being provided to customers with disabilities. This included concerns about the availability of adapted vehicles for passengers who use wheelchairs.
- 3.7 In this context a review of this subject would be timely as it could help to address current concerns within the local community.

**Financial Implications**

- 3.8 There are no direct financial implications.

**Legal Implications**

- 3.9 A short, sharp review of this subject, if it is launched, will need to take into account applicable legislation including the Equality Act 2010 and any relevant legislation in respect of licensed hackney carriages and private hire vehicles.
- 3.10 Overview and Scrutiny reviews cannot consider specific licensing applications as this is subject to a separate and established quasi-judicial decision making process. The focus of this review, if it is launched, will only be on licensing policy issues.

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**Service / Operational Implications**

- 3.11 At present there are no scrutiny Task Group or Short, Sharp Reviews taking place in Redditch. There is therefore capacity amongst both Members and the Democratic Services team to support this review.
- 3.12 A review of this subject would be focusing primarily on licensing matters. Representatives of Worcestershire Regulatory Services (WRS), which manages all Licensing functions on behalf of the Council, will need to be consulted throughout the investigation.

**Customer / Equalities and Diversity Implications**

- 3.13 The proposed review is intended to enhance the services available locally to customers with disabilities.
- 3.14 There are clear equalities and diversity implications to this proposed review. If the review is launched, Members should consider consulting with the Council's Policy and Equalities team for expert advice and guidance.

**4. RISK MANAGEMENT**

No specific risks have been identified.

**5. APPENDICES**

Appendix 1 – Improving Disabled People's Access to Redditch's Taxi Fleet Short, Sharp Review – Scoping Document.

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