

**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE**

12th April 2016

**IMPROVING ACCESS FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES TO REDDITCH TAXI
FLEETS SHORT, SHARP REVIEW – COVERING REPORT**

Relevant Portfolio Holder	Councillor Bill Hartnett, Portfolio Holder for Community Leadership and Partnership (including Voluntary Sector and Health Services)
Portfolio Holder Consulted	No
Relevant Head of Service	Claire Felton, Head of Legal, Equalities, and Democratic Services and Simon Wilkes, Head of Regulatory Services
Ward(s) Affected	No specific ward relevance.
Non-Key Decision	

1. SUMMARY OF PROPOSALS

This report provides an overview of the findings of the Improving Access for People with Disabilities to Redditch Taxi Fleets Short, Sharp Review. More detailed information about the evidence basis for the group's recommendations can be found in the group's final report attached at Appendix 1.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee is asked to RECOMMEND to the Licensing Committee that

the Hackney Carriage Vehicle Licensing Policy and the Private Hire Vehicle Licensing Policy should be amended:

- 1.1) to allow applications for new hackney carriages to be made for vehicles that are less than six years old, meet European M1 safety standards and have facilities for carrying a disabled person in a wheelchair within the vehicle. (*This relates to the Hackney Carriage Vehicle Licensing Policy only*); and**
- 1.2) to require drivers to display stickers in their vehicles that provide information about how to report complaints;**
- 1.3) the Driver Licence Policy – Application for a Hackney Carriage and / or Private Hire Vehicle Driver's Licence – should be amended to require that refresher training should be provided on driving standards and disability awareness to taxi drivers every three years;**

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- 2.1) **there should be a media campaign to guide disabled people and taxi drivers when travelling by taxi about their rights and responsibilities;**
- 2.2) **WRS should publish a list of drivers who currently operate licensed wheelchair accessible vehicles on the WRS and Redditch Borough Council websites in a similar format to Brighton and Hove City Council and Eden District Council;**
- 3.1) **WRS should undertake a review of the conditions attached to taxi operators' licences; and**
- 3.2) **The Licensing Committee should review the effectiveness of the disability awareness training provided to taxi drivers.**

3. KEY ISSUES

Background

- 3.1 In February 2016 Councillor Tom Baker-Price submitted a proposal form for the consideration of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. This form outlined suggested terms of reference for a review of action that could be taken to improve taxi services delivered to customers with disabilities in the Borough. Members had concluded that a review of this subject matter would be timely as it followed on from a distressing case involving a lady with multiple disabilities who had struggled to book a taxi to transport her home from a supermarket in November 2015.
- 3.2 Four Councillors were appointed to serve on this review; Councillor Gay Hopkins (Chair) and Councillors Tom Baker-Price, Natalie Brookes and Jennifer Wheeler. To ensure that the group's findings and proposals could be acted on as soon as possible, to the benefit of local residents with disabilities, a decision was taken to launch this exercise as a short, sharp review.
- 3.3 As part of the exercise Members took into account the relevant findings of a previous review of access for people with disabilities to Redditch town centre, which was completed in 2012. The impact of the previous group's proposals in respect of taxi services provided to customers with disabilities is detailed in the group's final report attached at Appendix 1.

Financial Implications

- 3.4 All financial implications arising from the group's recommendations are detailed in the final report.

Legal Implications

- 3.5 All legal implications arising from the group's proposals are detailed in the final report.

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Service / Operational Implications

- 3.6 In line with standard practice any of the group's proposals that receive support from the Council's Licensing Committee and which require changes to Licensing Policies will be subject to further consultation with relevant stakeholders.
- 3.7 This short, sharp review has been a very intense exercise. A total of 11 meetings of the group were held over period of six weeks creating a significant workload for both Members and Officers.

Customer / Equalities and Diversity Implications

- 3.8 The group has proposed numerous actions which are designed to enhance the services that are received by customers with disabilities who travel by taxi in the Borough.
- 3.9 There are numerous equalities and diversity implications which are detailed in the group's final report.

4. RISK MANAGEMENT

No specific risks have been identified.

5. APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – the Improving Access for People with Disabilities to Redditch Taxi Fleets Short, Sharp Review's final report.

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