

**LICENSING
COMMITTEE**

6th March 2017

**RESULTS OF CONSULTATION ON “IMPROVING DISABLED PEOPLE’S
ACCESS TO REDDITCH TAXI FLEETS”**

Relevant Portfolio Holder	Councillor Yvonne Smith
Portfolio Holder Consulted	Yes
Relevant Head of Service	Simon Wilkes – Head of Worcestershire Regulatory Services
Wards Affected	All Wards
Ward Councillor Consulted	N/A
Non-Key Decision	

1. SUMMARY OF PROPOSALS

Members are asked to consider the results of the consultation exercise recently undertaken in relation to a number of proposed amendments to the Council’s Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Vehicle and Driver Policies that were recommended to the Licensing Committee following the Overview and Scrutiny Committee’s “Improving Access for People with Disabilities to Redditch Taxi Fleets” Short, Sharp Review.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

That Members note the responses received during the consultation exercise and RESOLVE which amendments to Policy that they wish to take forwards.

3. KEY ISSUES

Financial Implications

- 3.1 The costs involved in carrying out the consultation exercise were met from existing budgets held by Worcestershire Regulatory Services.

Legal Implications

- 3.2 Proper consultation on the proposals to amend the Council’s policies was undertaken to minimise the risk of legal challenge if the proposals are subsequently implemented.

Service / Operational Implications

- 3.3 On 18th July 2016, the Licensing Committee received a presentation from the Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Board, Improving Disabled People's Access to Redditch Taxi Fleet Task Group and considered the findings contained in the Task Group's Report.
- 3.4 The Task Group had been established to carry out a review of action that could be taken to improve taxi services delivered to customers with disabilities in the Borough.
- 3.5 The Task Group made a number of recommendations in their report and the Licensing Committee were asked to resolve to implement these recommendations, subject to further consultation where required.
- 3.6 The recommendations from the Task Group were:
- 1) The Hackney Carriage Vehicle Licensing Policy and the Private Hire Vehicle Licensing Policy should be amended:**
 - (a) 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**
 - (b) to require drivers to display stickers in their vehicles that provide information about how to report complaints;**
 - 2) 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;**
 - 3) There should be a media campaign to guide disabled people and taxi drivers when travelling by taxi about their rights and responsibilities;**
 - 4) 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;**

- 5) **WRS should undertake a review of the conditions attached to taxi operators' licences; and**
- 6) **The Licensing Committee should review the effectiveness of the disability awareness training provided to taxi drivers.**
- 3.7 The Licensing Committee resolved that the recommendations of the Task Group be agreed subject to a small amendment so that the stickers displayed in vehicles provided information on how to report compliments as well as complaints and subject to further consultation where appropriate to be carried out by Worcestershire Regulatory Services with the relevant consultees.
- 3.8 Following discussions with Legal Services, it was concluded that the recommendations that require amendments to be made to the Council's policies or would involve licence holder's details being published on the Council's website, would need to be subject to consultation with relevant stakeholders.
- 3.9 A consultation document was therefore produced to facilitate consultation on these proposals. The consultation document can be seen at **Appendix 1**. The consultation document was sent to all drivers and operators licensed by Redditch Borough Council at the beginning of October 2016.
- 3.10 Details of the consultation were also been posted online on the Council's website at www.redditchbc.gov.uk/consultations. The website offered an online version of the consultation form that people can complete as an alternative to the paper version.
- 3.11 Details of the consultation were forwarded to relevant stakeholders that represent both the hackney carriage and private hire trade, relevant organisations such as the Police and also groups that represent people with disabilities in the Borough.
- 3.12 The consultation was open for responses until 31st December 2016 and the results of the consultation exercise are now being reported back to Members for consideration.
- 3.13 A table setting out a summary of the survey responses received during the consultation exercise is attached at **Appendix 2**.
- 3.14 A total of 22 survey responses were received although not every respondent provided an answer to each of the survey questions.

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- 3.15 The majority of respondents to the survey (68%) agreed with the Council's proposal to relax its policy on the licensing of vehicles as hackney carriages so that instead of additional hackney carriages having to be "brand new" wheelchair accessible vehicles, they can be wheelchair accessible vehicles that are up to six years of age.
- 3.16 A smaller majority of respondents to the survey (59%) agreed with the Council's proposal to amending its policy on the licensing of drivers of hackney carriage and private hire vehicles to require all drivers to undertake refresher training in driving standards and disability awareness every three years.
- 3.17 A substantial majority of respondents to the survey (90%) agreed with the Council's proposal to amend its policy and conditions for the licensing of hackney carriage and private hire vehicles to require vehicle proprietors to display stickers in their vehicles that provide information on how passengers can make complaints or pass on compliments.
- 3.18 Every single respondent to the survey agreed with the Council's proposal to publish a list on their website of all taxi owners / operators who can provide a vehicle that is capable of carrying a passenger who remains seated in their wheelchair.
- 3.19 A number of other comments were received via the survey responses received. These comments can be seen in **Appendix 2**.
- 3.20 In addition to those who completed the consultation survey, a submission in response to the consultation exercise was made by the Redditch Taxi Association (RTA). The RTA submission was accompanied by a list of those drivers that the submission is submitted on behalf of. The RTA submission can be seen at **Appendix 3**.
- 3.21 The RTA disagree with the proposal to relax its policy on the licensing of vehicles as hackney carriages so that instead of additional hackney carriages having to be "brand new" wheelchair accessible vehicles, they can be wheelchair accessible vehicles that are up to six years of age.
- 3.22 The RTA disagree with the Council's proposal to amending its policy on the licensing of drivers of hackney carriage and private hire vehicles to require all drivers to undertake refresher training in driving standards and disability awareness every three years.

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- 3.23 The RTA agree with the Council's proposal to amend its policy and conditions for the licensing of hackney carriage and private hire vehicles to require vehicle proprietors to display stickers in their vehicles that provide information on how passengers can make complaints or pass on compliments. However the RTA suggest that such information should be included on the licence plates rather than on a separate sticker.
- 3.24 The RTA agree with the Council's proposal to publish a list on their website of all taxi owners / operators who can provide a vehicle that is capable of carrying a passenger who remains seated in their wheelchair.
- 3.25 The RTA make a number of other comments and suggestions in their submission, including that an independent inquiry must be carried out before any decision is made to change policies.
- 3.26 Members are asked to consider the responses received during the consultation and resolve which of the proposed amendments to the Council's Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Policies that they wish to take forwards.

4. RISK MANAGEMENT

- 4.1 None

5. APPENDICES

- Appendix 1 – Consultation Document
Appendix 2 – Summary of Consultation Survey Responses
Appendix 3 – Submission from Redditch Taxi Association

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