

## AGENDA ITEM

### REPORT TO EXECUTIVE SCRUTINY

10<sup>th</sup> JUNE 2008

### REPORT OF TEAM LEADER- SCRUTINY

## SCRUTINY REVIEW OF TAXIS

### SUMMARY

To consider the need to allocate responsibility for a scrutiny review of Taxis to be carried out within the current year.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

Members are invited to consider prioritising a review of taxis in the near future and to consider the delegation of responsibility to an appropriate Select Committee or Task & Finish Group.

### DETAIL

1. Members will be aware that at the meeting held on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2008, the Committee considered topics put forward by the Scrutiny Liaison Forum for inclusion within the Scrutiny Work Programme for 2008/9. Included within the topics put forward was the suggestion that a review be carried out of taxi licensing (**Appendix 1**).
2. The Committee allocated an initial work programme for each of the seven Select Committees; with the suggested review of taxis prioritised (using the PICK system of scoring) as number 10 on the list of review topics, meaning it would therefore be considered at a later date by the Committee when determining future workload allocation for the Select Committees. Details of the priority scoring for each of the suggested reviews is attached
3. The background to the proposal for such a review to be carried out relates in the main to recent controversy around the new level of licensing fees proposed by the Council in February 2008. Following consultation, the Council subsequently agreed a lower level of fees than originally proposed and a package of other measures, including the fact that there would be a scrutiny review during 2008/09.
4. Such a review would initially need to start with input on how the Taxi Licensing system operates, the two kinds of taxis, legal framework, governance via Licensing Cttee etc, how we maintain separate accounts for all this, the arrangements for consultation via the 'Trade Times' and our attempts to have regular meetings with the Stockton Hackney Drivers Assoc (SHDA) and how SBC approach has always been to aim for full cost recovery via the fees.
5. As the review unfolds it would also need to engage with issues including the case for and against setting a quota/limit on the number of Hackneys, and how our fees compare with those in other authorities (including how much enforcement we and others do).

6. The taxi trade in Stockton, like many through out the country, is also unhappy about taxis from other areas trading in Stockton. Transport licensing controls are based on legislation dating back to 1847 (the Town Police Clauses Act) and were introduced to control the use of horse and carriage for transporting people. This means that the legislation is not always ideal, as at the time of its writing the current use of hackney carriages and private hire vehicles could not have been envisaged. The aims of the authority in it's enforcement and control must be:
  - To ensure public safety; and
  - To protect legitimate traders from rogue operators.
7. With the exception of the Health Select Committee (who are currently being consulted on GP location and Momentum by the PCT prior to commencing a brief review of Audiology), the other Select Committees are not due to complete their current reviews until October-January.
8. In addition, there are two Task & Finish Working Groups that are close to completing their reviews. The Corporate, Adult Services & Social Inclusion Select Committee Task & Finish Group on the Voluntary Community Sector is scheduled to submit its final report to Cabinet in June 2008. The Environment Task & Finish Group on Rats and Pigeon issues is due to complete its work by reporting to Cabinet in July 2008.
9. Members are invited to consider prioritising a review of taxis in the near future and to consider the delegation of responsibility to an appropriate Select Committee or Task & Finish Group.

## **FINANCIAL AND LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no direct financial or legal implications arising from the report.

## **RISK ASSESSMENT**

The proposal is categorised as low to medium risk. Existing management systems and daily routine activities are sufficient to control and reduce risk.

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### Background Papers:

N/A

Ward(s) and Ward Councillors: Not Ward Specific

