

AGENDA ITEM

REPORT TO EXECUTIVE SCRUTINY

28 OCTOBER 2008

REPORT OF TEAM LEADER- SCRUTINY

SCRUTINY REVIEW OF TAXIS

SUMMARY

To receive further information regarding the current review of Taxi Licensing Policy and Procedures and to review the remit and benefits of conducting a scrutiny review of Taxis within the current year.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That the report be noted.
2. Members are invited to consider whether it wishes to prioritise a review of taxis in the current year's work programme and, should it wish to proceed with a review, to decide whether the review should be carried out by an appropriate Select Committee or Task & Finish Group.

DETAIL

1. At its meeting on 8 July 2008, the Committee were provided with further information regarding the possible remit and benefits of conducting a scrutiny review of Taxis within the current year.
2. The background to the proposal for such a review related in the main to 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.
3. The Committee were invited to consider whether it wished to prioritise a review of taxis in the near future and to consider the delegation of responsibility to an appropriate Select Committee or Task & Finish Group. However, as a review of policy and procedures was already underway by the Licensing Department in relation to practices, procedures and conditions relating to taxi drivers, vehicles and operators, Members felt that this review should be completed prior to a Scrutiny Review taking place. However, the Committee wished to be consulted on this process with a report back once the review was complete. Members requested that as part of this review that Officers consider further training for taxi drivers to include history of town to promote tourism and further training on disability awareness. It was felt that a taxi driver's role should be as an 'ambassador' for the Borough. Once the review was complete Members would then consider whether a Scrutiny Review by a Select Committee/Task Finish Group was required.
4. The review of Policy and Procedures has been completed and various options for change were considered by the Licensing Committee on Monday 13 October 2008 and a final draft Policy and Procedures document will be consulted upon imminently. A copy of that document is attached as Appendix 1.

5. Appendix 2 contains the issues that Members were asked to consider as part of a Scrutiny Review, items 1 to 3 are covered by the Policy and Procedures review being consulted upon. Items 4 to 6 have not been addressed as part of this process and Members are asked to consider if it would be appropriate for a Select Committee or Task and Finish Group to undertake a review of those areas.
6. The current work programme is summarised in the table set out below. In addition to the seven reviews currently underway, a task and finish group has been established to scrutinise decisions made in relation to the commissioning of the neighbourhood nurseries.

| Committee | Review | Scheduled to approve final reports: |
|--|---|--|
| Corporate, Social Inclusion and Adult Services | Older Peoples Strategy | 17 February 2008 |
| Children and Young People | Obesity | 7 January 2008 |
| Regeneration and Transport | Highway Management and Pavement Parking | 9 February 2008 |
| Health | Audiology | TBC |
| Housing and Community Safety | Registered Social landlords | Concluded |
| | Neighbourhood Policing, Neighbourhood Watch, CCTV | TBC |
| Environment | Animal Welfare/ Dog Fouling | 9 March 2008 |
| Arts, Leisure and Culture | Tees Active | 21 January 2008 |

7. It would be helpful if the review could be concluded by the end of March 2009 in order that any recommendations could be considered and implemented before the setting of transport licensing fees in 2009.

FINANCIAL AND LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

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

RISK ASSESSMENT

9. 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

Potential Areas for Scope/Remit of Taxi Licensing Scrutiny Review

1. Drivers

1.1 Application Process

- Requirement for DSA test
- Relevance of Convictions/CRB Disclosure
- Written knowledge test
- Medical requirements
- Ability to speak/write English
- Training e.g. disability awareness, customer services etc
- Age limits

1.2 Licensed Drivers

- Frequency of CRB Disclosure
- Frequency of Medicals
- Driver conduct and subsequent actions
- Conditions
- Dress Code
- Driving Standards
- Continuing professional development (refresher training etc)

2. Vehicles

2.1 New Vehicles

- Age, size and accessibility
- Meters (types and testing)
- Prior accident damage
- Use of swivel seats
- Signage
- Advertising

2.2 Licensed Vehicles

- Age (maximum vehicle age)
- Conditions
- Frequency and type of vehicle test
- Suspension and revocation of vehicle licence

3. Operators

3.1 Application Process

- Relevance of Convictions/CRB Disclosure
- Production of business accounts/plan
- Radio Operators Licence
- Interview/Test
- Training e.g. disability awareness, customer services etc

3.2 Existing Operators

- Frequency of CRB Disclosures
- Production of Business Accounts/Plan
- Continuing professional development (refresher training etc)
- Conditions

4. Staffing

4.1 Resource and funding (Administration)

- Staffing levels
- Efficiency and effectiveness
- Computer systems
- Continuing professional development (refresher training etc)

4.2 Resource and funding (Enforcement)

- Staffing levels
- Efficiency and effectiveness
- Computer systems
- Levels of Enforcement/activities
- Working with other Agencies (paid/unpaid)
- Continuing professional development (refresher training etc)

4.3 Vehicle Testing Station

- Training and authorisation of staff
- Testing requirements
- Continuing professional development (refresher training etc)

5. Funding of Service

- Setting of appropriate budgets
- Resourcing budget (i.e. should the service be self financing)
- Setting of fees

6. Transport Planning

- Taxis as part of the public transport service
- Provision of Taxi ranks
- Use of bus lanes/exemptions from Road Traffic Orders