

Title of Report: **Disabled Taxi Access**

Item 4

Report to be considered by: Licensing Committee

Purpose of Report:

To report back to Members on the outcome of the Task Group's investigation into disabled access to taxis in West Berkshire.

Recommended Action:

To note the report and adopt the recommendations listed in the report.

List of other options considered:

Three options are set out in the report including taking no further action and appealing against the Stipendiary Magistrate's decision

Key background documentation:

- None

Contact Officer Details

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Supporting Information

1. Background

- 1.1 The Licensing Committee considered a report about Disabled Access to Taxis at its meeting on 7 December 2004 which is attached as Appendix 4(a).
- 1.2 In July 2000 the Council, as the Licensing Authority, considered reports on disabled access to taxis and agreed that taxis licensed after April 2001 should either be fully wheelchair accessible or have an approved swivel seat fitted to the front passenger seat. Taxis operating under licenses issued prior to April 2001 would be exempt from this condition.
- 1.3 Many taxi operators met the condition, but a small number did not choose to do so and chose to appeal. The Stipendiary Magistrate allowed the appeal as he felt that swivel seats, although safe, were not suitable for all passengers. However he noted that, had the Council chosen to impose only the fully wheelchair accessible option, the appeal would have been dismissed.
- 1.4 In September 2004 the Licensing Committee imposed a temporary moratorium on granting taxi licenses in order for a Task Group to be set up who would undertake an investigation into disabled taxi access in the District.
- 1.5 The Task Group, consisting of four Members, met with representatives from the taxi trade and from disabled users to discuss issues concerning taxi access and disability awareness training. Their report and recommendations following these meetings are attached at Appendix 4.

Appendices

Appendix 4(a) – Taxis – Access by the Disabled (Report to the Licensing Committee on 7th December 2004)

Appendix 4(b) – Report and Recommendations by the Licensing Committee Task Group reporting on Disabled Access to taxis in West Berkshire

Implications

Policy:	There is no formal policy on this subject other than the broad policy of the Council linked to equalities below.
Financial:	The recommendations may tend to reduce the number of taxis on the road. This in turn may affect income from licensing although the exact impact is difficult to predict.
Personnel:	None
Legal:	The report summarises the recent legal actions and the recommendations involve imposing new licence conditions for taxis. These reflect the experience of the last appeal.
Environmental:	If Members opt to resolve to impose a wheelchair-only policy for new taxis this may result in fewer additional taxis on the road. The exact impact is difficult to predict.

Equalities: The provision of reasonable levels of access to taxis by disabled people is central to the Council's equality policy. Disability awareness training for drivers of the taxi service will enhance the service provided by the taxi trade.

Property: None

Risk Management: None

Community Safety: None

Consultation Responses

Local Stakeholders: Representatives of disabled groups and the taxi trade.

Officers Consulted: John Priest, Environmental Health Manager
Brian Leahy, Senior Licensing Officer

Trade Union: None