

Title of Report: Disability Access and Training for Taxi Drivers

Item 6

Report to be considered by: Licensing Committee

Purpose of Report:

To report upon the progress of disability awareness training and update on current disabled access to taxis

Recommended Action:

To agree that officers continue to explore the full provision of disability awareness training for taxi drivers.

List of other options considered:

None

Key background documentation:
(bulleted list format)

- Office of Fair Trading – Consultation on the Regulation of Licensed Taxi and Services in the UK
- DPTAC response to Office of Fair trading – Consultation on the Regulation of licensed Taxi and PHV Services in the UK

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Supporting Information

1. Background

1.1 The Council, by virtue of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions Act) 1976 and/or By Laws, may attach to the grant of a licence such conditions as they consider necessary. This council and its predecessor have traditionally applied conditions to all taxi and private hire licences for both drivers and vehicles.

1.2 Conditions are intended to provide conformity and fairness, to ensure that vehicles are safe and roadworthy and that drivers are fit and proper persons to carry out the function of public hire.

1.3 At the Licensing Committee meeting on the 14th March 2005 the Committee commissioned officers to produce a report, giving an update on the current status of taxis in relation to disabled access and to report upon the progress of disability awareness training for drivers.

2. Current Statistics.

2.1 The current taxi fleet stands at 209 of which 13 are fully wheelchair accessible and 49 are fitted with a swivel seat. Since 15th March 2005, 6 fully wheelchair accessible vehicles have been licensed.

3. Disability Awareness Training

3.1 There are currently no requirements for taxi drivers to undertake disability awareness training. Officers have met with the West Berkshire Disability Alliance, the Council's Access Officer and training providers and have discussed a proposal to introduce disability awareness training for all new taxi drivers and to explore incentives, for introducing disability awareness training for existing drivers, especially those currently having a licensed vehicle which is required to be accessible for the disabled. This part of the report to be given verbally.

3.2 Officers have consulted the Council's Transport Services team regarding disability awareness training requirements for drivers and escorts of home to school transport vehicles. Although there is currently no training which is specific to disability awareness some training has been given in driver quality standards and dealing with children and persons with behavioural difficulties. The take up from taxi companies has been encouraging and officers therefore believe that if an incentive were offered to existing taxi drivers to attend training, there could be reasonable take up.

3.3 A response from the Disabled Persons Transport Advisory Committee (DPTAC) to the "Office of Fair Trading – Consultation on the Regulation of Licensed Taxi and PHV Services in the UK" confirms that Committee's view with regard to LA's providing, in advance of the Disability Discrimination Act, full disabled access across the taxi fleet and the provision of disability awareness training as a condition of the licence (see sec 17 of appendix).

3.4 This council has adopted conditions that require all new taxis to be fully wheelchair accessible and has confirmed that all taxis first licensed after the 1st April 2003 have an approved form of disabled access. It therefore follows that the council should also require those holders of licences of vehicles providing disabled access to undergo an approved form of awareness training.

3.5 Members are asked to agree to officers continuing to research appropriate training provisions with a view to introducing conditions requiring training for taxi drivers.

Appendices *(in list format)*

1. DPTAC response to the Office of Fair Trading Report
2. A copy of the OFT report is available at the OFT website at,
<http://www.of.gov.uk/NR/ronlyres/C309CE26-2D4E-46A6-8C1F-11B06BA8338B/0/OFT676.pdf>

Implications

Policy:	There is no established policy on this subject.
Financial:	Requires further research, however there is likely to be some cost from either the direct provision of training through the Council or in the form of incentives to induce drivers to attend training.
Personnel:	None
Legal:	Any imposition of further conditions could be appealed
Environmental:	Licensed taxis are a valuable contribution to the provision of public transport.
Equalities:	Areas of the policy changes are intended to satisfy Disability Discrimination legislation.
Property:	None
Risk Management:	None
Community Safety:	Awareness training for drivers will ensure, as far as is practicable that the Council have considered the safety of taxi passengers through its licensing responsibilities.
Consultation Responses	None

Local Stakeholders:	Taxi trade association members and independent taxi owners.
Officers Consulted:	John Priest, Michael Trevallion
Trade Union:	Not appropriate for this report.