

REPORT OF GENERAL PURPOSES AND LICENSING COMMITTEE

(Meeting held 24 June 2005)

1. DEREGULATION AND ACCESSIBILITY OF HACKNEY CARRIAGES (TAXIS) (REPORT A) (MINUTE NO 8).

The Committee has considered the possibility of ceasing to control the numbers of taxi licences issued in the District, and the accessibility to the disabled of vehicles licensed as taxis.

The Committee has noted that the Government's position is that restrictions on taxi numbers should be retained only where it can be shown that there is a clear benefit to the consumer. If local authorities wish to retain control of taxi numbers, they need to be satisfied that there is no unmet demand for taxi services. However, the Government's position is also that local authorities remain best placed to determine local transport needs and to make decisions about them in the light of local circumstances. The last full survey of demand was undertaken in 1995. The Committee has therefore decided to commission a further survey, the cost of which is likely to be between £10,000 and £20,000. The cost will be recovered by increases in the fees for taxi licences. This was done when the previous survey was conducted in 1995. When the results are available, the matter will be further considered by the Committee.

With regard to accessibility of taxis, the Government is proposing to make regulations under the Disability Discrimination Act 1995. However, pending the making of these regulations, the Government has suggested that local authorities consider adopting their own policies for accessibility of taxis. The Committee has considered a few options for a policy and will give further consideration to the matter when it has the results of the survey into unmet demand.

2. PROPOSED JOINT WARRANTING PROJECT BETWEEN THE HEALTH AND SAFETY EXECUTIVE AND THE COUNCIL (REPORT B) (MINUTE NO 9).

The Committee has considered whether the Council should enter into a pilot project with the Health and Safety Executive (HSE), involving all local authorities within Hampshire and the Isle of Wight, to evaluate the benefits of a more flexible approach to authorising health and safety inspectors. At present regulations determine the type of premises over which local authority and HSE inspectors respectively have jurisdiction. These regulations are not clear and often fail to keep up with increasing changes in the work environment, leading to a potential barrier to common-sense enforcement. The proposal is that the respective Councils and the HSE will authorise anyone who is competent to act as an inspector so they can act for the partner organisation. The pilot is being managed by a steering group consisting of officers from the HSE and from Rushmoor and Basingstoke & Deane Borough Councils.

This Committee has some reservations about the proposals, but these will be addressed during the pilot period. The Committee therefore on balance supports the proposals, and recommends that the Council should enter into the pilot programme for an initial period of 6 months to evaluate its benefits. A further report will be made to the Committee at the conclusion of the pilot scheme.

RECOMMENDED:

(a) *That the project be supported and that the Council participates in the pilot programme;*

(b) *That, for a period not exceeding 6 months from the date the Council enters the pilot programme, the following officers be permitted to be authorised by the Health and Safety Executive:*

- *Derek Jordan*
- *Bob Lennie*
- *Stephen Stone*
- *Ben Stockley*
- *Jeremy Stout*
- *Paul Travis*
- *Jenny Taylor*

(c) *That, for a period not exceeding 6 months from the date the Council enters the pilot programme, the following officers from the Health and Safety Executive:*

- *Roger Upfold*
- *Dennis MacWilliam*
- *Nina Judkins*
- *Bryony Mitchell*
- *Michelle Hickey*
- *James Barrie*
- *Phil Leonard*
- *Sarah Hill*
- *Michael Sarson*
- *Joanna Woodstock*
- *Rowena Shepherd*
- *Tracey Cartwright*

be authorised:

(i) *To exercise the powers of an Inspector specified in:*

(1) *Sections 20, 21, 22, 25 and 39 of the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974;*

(2) *Any Health and Safety Regulations; and*

(3) *The provisions of the Acts mentioned in Schedule 1 to the 1974 Act which are specified in the third column of that schedule and of the Regulations, Orders or other instruments of a legislative character made or having effect under any provision so specified, as enforced from time to time;*

(ii) *To institute proceedings in England and Wales pursuant to Section 38 of the 1974 Act;*

but not to the extent that these functions are discharged in the Council's capacity as an employer.

Cllr W H Dow
CHAIRMAN