

REPORT FOR: **CABINET**

Date of Meeting:	18 July 2013
Subject:	Concessionary Travel – Changes to the Taxicard Scheme
Key Decision:	Yes
Responsible Officer:	Tom Whiting, Corporate Director of Resources
Portfolio Holder:	Councillor Thaya Idaikkadar, Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Business Transformation and Communications, Finance, Performance, Customer Service and Corporate Services, Property and Major Contracts
Exempt:	No
Decision subject to Call-in:	Yes
Enclosures:	Appendix A – Taxicard Changes Consultation Report June 2013 Appendix B – Taxicard Changes EqIA

Section 1 – Summary and Recommendations

This report sets out the proposed changes to the Taxicard Scheme as a result of the need to make savings to balance the Council's budget for the next financial year. The report shows how feedback from the consultation has shaped the changes put forward to elected members for discussion.

Recommendations:

- a) To agree to the scheme changes as recommended by officers in the body of the report; namely the adoption of Option (2) a maximum of 40 trips per annum for all users with effect from 1/10/2013.
- b) To note the scheduled review of all existing members during 2013/14.
- c) To note Officers will be liaising with London Councils regarding the issues raised by users and HAD regarding the operation of the Taxicard Scheme.

Reason: (For recommendation)

The changes proposed to the Taxicard Scheme have been shaped as a result of feedback from a wide consultation with residents and users of the Taxicard Scheme. Feedback from the consultation has influenced both the proposals that are being put to Cabinet for consideration and the Equality Impact Assessment showing the impacts of these changes.

The changes to the Taxicard will be implemented on the 1st of October 2013 subject to Cabinet agreement.

Section 2 – Report**2. Introductory paragraph**

- 2.1 The Council has had to make savings of £22.4m to balance its budget for the next financial year. The Council must make savings across all of its services to meet this deficit. This report outlines the proposed changes to the Taxicard Scheme run in Harrow which, if taken forward will provide a contribution of £200k towards the overall Councils savings target.
- 2.2 The proposed changes to the Taxicard Scheme have been developed through a twelve week consultation with residents and users of the service. There was a good response to the consultation and the feedback has helped to shape both the proposals being put to members for discussion and the equality impact assessment carried out in relation to these changes. A summary of the feedback from the consultation is included within Section 6.4 of this report and further detail included in the Taxicard Consultation report at Appendix A.

3. Options considered

- 3.1 The savings to the Taxicard Scheme were agreed as part of the Council's overall budget setting and commissioning process and therefore the consultation focussed on asking the community for ways in which the savings could be made.
- 3.2 The options for change were limited as accessibility to the scheme is set by Transport for London (TfL) and focuses on need in relation to mobility. Therefore the Council consulted with the public on the areas which the Council has local flexibility to be able to change which are changes to trip numbers and changes to the subsidy provided to the customer.
- 3.3 The options put to consultation were:
 - 1. Increasing the initial contribution the users make for each individual trip from £2.50 to £5.00
 - 2. Reducing all trips to 40 a year
 - 3. Combination of options 1 & 2 as follows:
 - a. Increasing the contributions towards trips to £5.00 for year 2013/14 and then decreasing to £4.00 for year 2014/15.
 - b. Reduce all trips to 52 a year.

4. Background

- 4.1 The Taxicard Scheme is a discretionary service. The scheme operates across London and gives subsidised door-to-door transport for people who have serious difficulties with their mobility, or severe sight impairment and find it difficult to use public transport.
- 4.2 The scheme is funded by both the Mayor of London and currently the Council as detailed in the financial section of this report at Section 9. The scheme is run on behalf of the Council by London Councils Transport and Environment Committee (TEC).
- 4.3 All London boroughs currently participate in the Taxicard Scheme. Whilst the criteria to access the scheme is prescribed by Transport for London, the individual boroughs have the flexibility to decide the level of member contribution it requires and the number of trips that will be subsidised through the scheme.
- 4.4 Funding by TfL is based on a formula which takes the total TfL subsidy for London and divides it by a combination of the total cumulative numbers of recipients of the Higher Rate Mobility Component of Disability Living Allowance (HRMCDLA) and the number of people over 65 in the 33 London Boroughs and then multiplies the resultant figure by the relevant numbers for the same in Harrow. For 2013/14 the total subsidy to Harrow is £258k.

- 4.5 Following a report to London Councils TEC on 18/10/2012 changes were agreed with regards to the TfL funding contribution and boroughs own contributions from 2013/14. TfL reduced its contribution from £13.9m to a fixed sum of £9.4m plus taxi card inflation rate (assumed at 2.5%) or £9.635m in 2014/15.
- 4.6 Scheme expenditure for Harrow for 2013/14 is expected to be approximately £450k. The difference between the £258k TfL subsidy and the actual expected expenditure is paid by Harrow.
- 4.7 Currently the Harrow budget consists of £450k of which £302k was built into the MTFS as a saving for 2013/14 and £105k as a saving for 2014/15. As such scheme expenditure needs to be reduced to only the anticipated TfL allocation to Harrow which is expected to be approximately £280k-£320K although this could increase to a maximum of £345k due to small alterations in funding allocations being proposed.
- 4.8 Harrow residents took a total of 70,018 Taxicard trips in 2011/12 and 49,701 trips last year (2012/13). A further decrease has been calculated by the options proposed to bring expenditure in line with available budgets.

5. Current situation

The scheme is currently delivered as follows:

5.1 Criteria for access to the Taxicard scheme

- 5.1.1 The eligibility criteria is based on both automatic and discretionary criteria. To be eligible an applicant must have a disability that is permanent.
- 5.1.2 The automatic eligibility criteria is based on the following which is prescribed by Transport for London:
- In receipt of Higher Rate Mobility Component of Disability Living Allowance
 - Registered as Severely Sight Impaired/Blind
 - In receipt of War Pension Mobility Supplement

A person meeting the automatic eligibility criteria is not subject to further assessment.

- 5.1.3 If the person does not meet the automatic criteria then they are subject to a further assessment where they must prove that their impairment is constant and causes the applicant to walk only with excessive labour and at an extremely slow pace or with excessive pain at all times. By having discretionary criteria it allows Harrow Council to take into account exceptional cases. These cases will be reviewed on a regular basis to ensure the person continues to meet the eligibility criteria.

5.2 How the scheme operates

- 5.2.1 Computer Cab, contracted by Transport for London, is the major provider of taxis in London that work within the Taxicard Scheme.
- 5.2.2 A Taxicard user can book a taxi through telephoning the central booking number or through the internet. A Taxicard user can also pick up a Computer Cab taxi from the local rank or by hailing an available taxi. All of the taxis within the scheme all carry the logo. All licensed taxis are wheelchair accessible and the contractors' drivers are obliged to take wheelchair users. Some electric wheelchairs and scooters are too large to be carried by a taxi however some can be taken by certain types of taxi.
- 5.2.3 The standard tariff for all London Taxi journeys is £2.50 on arrival at the pick-up point. The meter can legitimately be left running for any time spent helping someone to, or into, the vehicle before departure. A taxicard user can travel with up to 4 companions at no extra charge however if there is a wheelchair in the cab then there may be less room for companions. A taxicard booking is treated in the same way as any other taxi booking.
- 5.2.4 Taxicard users can use the scheme 365 days of the year. Transport for London's Taxi and Private Hire Directorate sets fares for journeys made by licensed taxis. The metered fare shows on the meter at the end of the journey and works on a combination of both distance and time. In some areas, not in Harrow, private hire vehicles are also contracted to provide the taxicard service. Private hire vehicles will have a minimum charge and then a fixed amount per mile. Where this is the case the contractor would be able to advise the user how much the trip is going to cost in advance. The Taxicard is not a guaranteed service and therefore if there is not a taxi available the member will have to use another means of transport.
- 5.2.5 Users of the Taxicard Scheme pay a flat fare and then the remainder of the trip is subsidised by the Council. Dependant on subsidy provided by the Council, and the length of the trip, the member of the scheme may have to pay a 'top-up' amount if the trip cost goes beyond the flat rate and subsidy added together. The table below shows the pricing as it applies in Harrow:

	Member flat fare	Harrow trip subsidy (same at all times)	Fare limit
Harrow	£2.50	£8.30	£10.30

- 5.2.6 The Taxicard Scheme provides trips for social purposes, for example going shopping, visiting friends and family and going to events.

Transport for London and London Councils are clear that the scheme is not suitable for time specific appointments as it is not a guaranteed scheme, therefore it is not recommended that members of the scheme use it for hospital trips. Members in Harrow are advised, when they join the scheme, that the Taxicard should not be used for Hospital appointments. Many other London Boroughs do monitor members trips and will contact individuals to advise them to cease utilising the scheme as a replacement for NHS Patient Transport

5.2.7 Over the year 2010 a consultation was held, in partnership with Adult Services, on changes to Discretionary Travel which included proposals for change to the Discretionary Freedom Pass and changes to the Taxicard Scheme. As a result of this consultation currently the scheme allows members to the following:

- Member flat fare is £2.50
- Maximum of 104 trips a year for members who hold no other concessionary passes
- Members who also hold either a Freedom Pass or/and Blue Badge are only able to take a maximum of 52 trips per year.
- Members of the Discretionary Disabled person's Freedom Pass are not able to be members of the Taxicard Scheme.

5.2.8 A Taxicard trip is one journey and therefore if a Taxicard member uses their Taxicard to go to the shops and return home this will constitute as two separate journeys.

5.2.9 These changes were implemented on the 1/10/2011 for new scheme members and 1/4/2012 for existing members.

6. Consultation

6.1 The Adult Services Steering Group has continued to meet to monitor the implementation of changes to both Adult Services and Concessionary Travel. Therefore it was felt that the most appropriate approach to taking forward these most recent changes to the Taxicard Scheme was to meet with this group, discuss the proposed changes and get feedback to help shape the consultation activity. The group gave their views on the content of the consultation and helped to support the activity taken forward.

6.2 The consultation for the proposed changes to the Taxicard Scheme was carried out over a 12 week period from 8th March, 2013 to 31st May, 2013.

6.3 Consultation Activity

6.3.1 The consultation activity was shaped to ensure that all users of the scheme got the opportunity to be informed about the proposed changes and give their view in the way that was most appropriate to the individuals.

6.3.2 People were given the opportunity to respond to the consultation by contacting the Council through the web, email, telephone, freepost, face to face. A full consultation report is attached at Appendix A.

6.3.3 The following activity was held:

Activity	Response Rate
Consultation booklet and survey distributed widely and sent to all current Taxicard users (2,841 at the time of mailing) with opportunity for comment through freepost/telephone/email and web	794 forms returned through the post
Dedicated consultation web pages	97 surveys completed online
Face to face activity including discussion groups and events held with users of the service, carers and residents	Over 400 people spoken to about the changes

6.4 Consultation Feedback

6.4.1 The feedback from the consultation was collected and shared with the Adult Services Steering Group. The group discussed the feedback, impacts of the changes and the proposals being put to Cabinet. Harrow Association for Disabled People provided a formal response to the consultation and their feedback is included (page 12) within the detailed Consultation Report which is attached at Appendix A.

6.4.2 The response to the consultation is summarised below:

Question	Summary of Feedback
<p>1. Please tick the option you feel we should take forward to make savings to the scheme:</p> <p>Option 1 – Increase to £5 Members Contribution</p> <p>Option 2 – Reduce all members to 40 trips per year</p> <p>Option 3 – Increase to £5 Members contributions for 2013/14 then reduce to £4 and 52 trips 2014/15</p>	<p>The majority of people who responded through the web and completion of forms (56%) chose Option 2 – to reduce all members trips to 40 per year</p> <p>Through the face to face activity there was a mixed response to the options. Some people, who were more able, felt that the trips could be reduced and this would not dramatically reduce their ability to go out. However many people who were less mobile (often in wheelchairs), and had no other support felt strongly that the trips should not be reduced and no savings should be made to this Council Service as it provides support for the most vulnerable.</p> <p>The formal response from HAD refuses to select an option as they feel the service should be preserved with no further cuts until a better option is found.</p>

	<p>The Council's response:</p> <p>§ <i>The scheme will provide 40 trips for all users as from 1st October 2013. There will be no increase in the Member flat rate.</i></p>	
2.	<p>What do you think the effects of these changes will be for members of the Taxicard Scheme?</p>	<p>The majority of people who responded through the web and completion of forms made the following key issues</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Financial impacts if the member flat fare is raised would result in the scheme becoming prohibitively expensive and uneconomic, particularly for those members who only take short trips – The changes would impact greatly on social exclusion and would create isolation – People with disabilities particularly those in wheelchairs who are only able to go out using their Taxicard were concerned that they may not be able to go to health appointments <p>Through the meetings the face to face discussions tended to focus mainly on the impacts and the following were the key concerns:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Members were very concerned that the changes would result in isolation and an inability to go out, particularly for those people who had no other support and the Taxicard is their only means of getting out. – Concern that numbers had already dropped at Day Centres and if further changes then people will not be able to access services – Concern that these changes are hitting the most vulnerable and should not be taken forward – Concern that funding is being cut from this service and money wasted elsewhere within the Council – Some members who use the Taxicard often very distressed at the prospect of losing their independence <p>HADs formal response states: The service is necessary, and the fact that people use it at all indicates this, as few people would use such a poor value, poor quality, routinely discriminatory service if they had other options.</p>
	<p>The Council's response:</p> <p>§ <i>The member flat rate will remain the same</i></p> <p>§ <i>Work with Communications to ensure that people are aware that changes are being made across all Council Services</i></p> <p>§ <i>72% of the respondents use their Taxicard for health appointments. The council will liaise with Health Services to try and improve their patient transport.</i></p>	

	<p>§ <i>The Council will feed into other services/organisations providing transport to vulnerable people to ensure the best use of available resources for people who require these services.</i></p> <p>§ <i>As stated in Section 3 the Council will ask for a meeting with Transport for London and London Councils and invite HAD to attend to raise their issues regarding the operation of the scheme.</i></p>	
3.	Do you have any further comments?	<p>There was some concern that the consultation was merely a PR exercise and the decision had been taken.</p> <p>Within this section there were considerable comments relating to the operation of the Taxicard Scheme which include the following, all raised by more than one member:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Taxis running the meter for a long time before the member gets in the taxi. Particular problem for people with severe mobility issues as takes longer to get to the Taxi – Different Charging/costs for the same journey. Members aware the costs can be different dependant on traffic however wide variances in costs dependant on time of day and driver – Taking longer routes which in turn increases the cost – General unhelpfulness – Some people were very positive about the scheme and felt it was a great scheme and the Taxi Drivers were very helpful. <p>Within the formal response from HAD there was concern that the service “is generally incompetent, condescending, discriminatory towards disabled users, unreliable and expensive (even with all the subsidies) to the end user...”</p> <p>HAD have also suggested that support should be provided to get the funding from Transport for London released to develop a more effective local service.</p>
	<p>The Council’s response:</p> <p>§ <i>People were advised, throughout the face to face activity, that the Council was making savings across all services and had not only cut funding to this scheme</i></p> <p>§ <i>The Council will provide Transport for London and London Councils will a full breakdown of all the concerns raised throughout the consultation about the Taxicard Service and will request a meeting. HAD will be invited to attend the meeting.</i></p>	

7. Proposals for change

7.1 As a result of the feedback from the consultation activity the proposals for change to the Taxicard Scheme include the following:

1. The Scheme will remain 'as is' until 30th of September 2013 which is:
 - Member flat fare £2.50
 - Maximum of 104 trips a year for members who hold no other concessionary passes
 - Member who also hold either a Freedom Pass or/and Blue Badge are only able to take a maximum of 52 trips per year.
 - Members of the Discretionary Disabled person's Freedom Pass are not able to be members of the Taxicard Scheme
2. From 1st October 2013 onwards the scheme will include:
 - Member flat fare £2.50
 - Maximum of 40 trips a year for all users of the Scheme
 - Members of the Discretionary Disabled Person's Freedom Pass are not able to be members of the Taxicard Scheme

8. Legal Implications

8.1 In determining service provision, local authorities are obliged to consider their overarching statutory duties and its public law duties. This requires consideration of the public sector equality duty, as well as taking account of all relevant information, including results from consultation.

8.2 In determining service provision, local authorities are obliged to consider their overarching statutory duties. The Prioritising Needs guidance makes specific reference to the equality duties, stating that "equality should be integral to the way in which social care is prioritised and delivered, allowing people to enjoy quality of life and to be treated with dignity and respect."

8.3 Equality duties

8.3.1 Section 149 of the Equalities Act 2010 created the public sector equality duty. Section 149 states:-

(1) A public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to:

(a) Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;

(b) Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;

(c) Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

- 8.3.2 When making decisions in relation to service provision and in particular changing charging policies and eligibility criteria, the Council must take account of the equality duty and in particular any potential impact on protected groups
- 8.3.3 An EqlA's has been completed to indicate the impact of this proposal on particular groups and any mitigating measures that can be taken. A summary of the results is included in this report and copy of the EqlA is included in the appendices. The Council must also take account of other relevant information such as consultation results to determine whether there is a potential positive or negative impact on a specific individual or group of individuals and if so, what mitigating measures can be taken to address this
- 8.3.4 When making decisions on changing service provision, the Council must take account of all relevant material, including financial resources, consultation responses and potential equality impact in order to reach a decision. This report presents a number of options and the financial implications of these options. However, this does not preclude Cabinet from determining that another option is the most appropriate way forward. In an extreme case, if Cabinet felt that the severity of the impact of the proposed options on particular groups of individuals was such that none of the options are appropriate and that additional resources are required to fund these services, then it should refer the matter up to full Council with a recommendation that further spending resources be allocated to the Directorate (either from Council reserves or from other budgets)

8.4 Consultation

- 8.4.1 The Council undertook a stakeholder consultation exercise to ensure that users and other stakeholders had opportunities to comment on the proposals. This included involvement of the voluntary sector and groups representing service users.
- 8.4.2 Details of the consultation responses have been set out in the main report and copies of all consultation responses are available as background information. Case law has confirmed that when determining whether to change service provision, the Council must be receptive to reasonable arguments against the proposals, however this does not simply involve a head count of those for and against the proposals. It is common for the most vociferous response to come from those affected by the proposals and in the case of a cut in service provision, for the majority of respondents to be against the proposals. The Council must of course take these views into account, however just because a majority of the respondents to consultation do not agree with the proposals does not mean that Cabinet is not able to decide to change service provision if justified for proper policy reasons.

9. Financial Implications

- 9.1 As part of the budget setting for 2013/14, the Council reduced the Taxi Card scheme budget by £200k. Savings of £102k in 2013/14 and £105k in 2014/15 were already scheduled in the MTFS, having come about as part of the previous years (2012/13) budget setting process.
- 9.2 In summary the following savings are scheduled to be made from the Taxi Card Scheme;

MTFS Savings	Value £000	Effective from
Commissioning Process in 2012/13	£200k	2013/14
Commissioning Process in 2011/12	£102k	2013/14
	£105k	2014/15
Total Savings	£407k	

- 9.3 Scheme expenditure for Harrow for 2013/14 is expected to be approximately £450k. The difference between the £258k TfL subsidy and the actual expected expenditure will be paid by Harrow.
- 9.4 Currently the Harrow budget consists of £450k. From the beginning of this current financial year the budget has reduced by £302k, due to the savings scheduled, leaving a budget of £148k. In 2014/15 it will reduce by a further £105 to £43k.
- 9.5 The scheme will be need to be delivered within the available budget. As such scheme expenditure needs to be reduced to ensure it is capped at the anticipated TfL subsidy allocation to Harrow for 2014/15 which is expected to be between £280k and £320k. The scheme changes proposed restrict expenditure within the required parameters of between £280k - £320k leaving the small budget balance to cater for growth in scheme members (likely considering Harrow's ageing population) or as a contingency in case Harrow is allocated the lower end of the TfL subsidy.
- 9.6 In order to ensure no overspend this year, Harrow has already cleansed the database and removed all existing scheme members that had not used the Taxi card scheme for 12 months or more. This has reduced members from 5200 to 2990.
- 9.7 Additionally, Cabinet should note that all current members are scheduled to be reviewed in 2013/14 which is expected to remove around 5% of existing users; no eligible user has had a review since they were originally assessed, some having remained on the scheme for 10+ years regardless of positive improvements to their mobility. A three year rolling review will also be introduced which will ensure only those physically vulnerable and meeting the mobility criteria will in future be eligible, thus providing some headroom for growth and future

proofing the scheme for at least the next two years. Implementing the scheme half way through the current financial year will also restrict expenditure and support the savings expectation in the current year.

9.8 Financial Detail

9.8.1 To arrive at the consultation options, an analysis was carried out which looked at 2633 members who took trips in 2012/13 and how many they took. The results are summarised below.

	52 & 104		52 trip members only		104 trip members only	
	Members	<i>Trips Taken</i>	Members	<i>Trips Taken</i>	Members	<i>Trips Taken</i>
40 trips or below	2025	40839	1278	24756	747	16083
41-52 trips			208	1849*	48	302*
41-72 trips	333	3670*			97	1439*
53-72 trips			28	382*	49	549#
73-104 trips	100	5192*	1	54*	99	5138*
TOTAL		49701		27041		22660

**please note these figures are the additional trips taken above 40(#or 52) by these members and represent the saving in trips that would occur by the reduction. For example in the first column 333 members took 40 trips each and these (13,320 trips) are included within the 40839 on the top row so the additional 3670 trip taken by these members above 40 is only shown.*

9.8.2 However it has become apparent that only two options were really considered by respondents to the consultation, the option of combining a reduction in trips with increased member contributions proving unpopular. As such the two viable options, of reducing the number of trips to 40 or increasing member contributions to £5 are set out below. Officers' recommendation to Cabinet is the adoption of Option (2), a reduction in trips to 40 to all scheme members.

9.9 Option 1 - Increasing member contributions

Increasing members contributions to £5 from the current £2.50 would raise approximately £125k (49,701 trips x £2.50 extra) which would reduce Harrows own expenditure to within the budgeted parameters.

Increasing member contributions would impact on all 2990 members

9.10 Option 2 - Reducing all members to 40 trips

The total number of trips taken by all members in 12-13 was 49701 and to reduce all members to 40 trips would reduce this to 40,839 trips – or save 8,862 trips (a saving of £73.8k based on average borough fee of £8.30 per trip) and this is split between the 2 groups as follows:

Of the 52 trip members 27,041 trips were taken and reducing all members to 40 trips would save 2,285 trips (£19.03k saving)

Of the 104 trip members to reduce to 40 trips would save 6,577 trips (£54.79k saving).

Reducing to 40 trips would impact on 433 members

10. Performance Issues

- 10.1 The mitigation of this negative impact is to keep service users informed and to carefully explain the reasons for the changes, with an emphasis on providing the service in an equitable and sustainable way, while continuing to meet the needs of the most vulnerable regarding mobility. Arrangements will be put in place to closely monitor the effects of the changes and to act upon any negative impact.

11. Environmental Impact

- 11.1 In general, the above proposals will have a minimal environmental impact. The review of the Taxicard scheme may allow some reductions in Carbon emissions from reduced trip numbers but this may well be offset by scheme membership growth due to the population demographics in Harrow.

12. Risk Management Implications

- 12.1 The programme of changes to concessionary travel has now been ongoing for 3 years; the changes having commenced with centralisation & improvement of the application process, improved administration and the introduction of professional and consistent mobility assessments which have had positive impacts on customers and the most vulnerable.
- 12.2 However, the policy changes introduced in late 2011 and early 2012 reduced the service and the further changes proposed in this report will reduce the service further. The reduction in service is clearly linked to the savings required in the MTFS and the lower number of trips will potentially affect the most vulnerable detrimentally as is set out in the attached EqIA.
- 12.3 Officers however intend to address some of the poor service provided with London Councils which may well mitigate some of the issues. We will also monitor impacts through public health and through complaints to ensure we are aware of repercussions directly associated with the policy.

13. Equalities implications

- 13.1 The impacts of the changes have been shared with the Adult Services Steering group and feed in to both the body of the Cabinet Report and the attached EqlA attached at Appendix B.
- 13.2 The scheme is a discretionary service that only operates in London. Whilst savings are being made from the scheme the Council is continuing to operate the scheme using funding provided by TfL to ensure that vulnerable residents continue to be able to access the scheme and receive the Taxicard subsidy.
- 13.3 An extensive consultation was held with users, residents and voluntary organisations:
- There were positive comments about the scheme and some people felt the changes would not impact their use of the scheme.
- 13.4 The adverse impacts highlighted through the consultation raised by both users of the scheme and HAD impacted both the 'age' and 'disability' protected characteristics. The key impacts that were identified included:
- If option 1 (to increase the cost from the users to £5 from £2.50) then the feedback suggested that the operation of the scheme would not be viable as the costs for the users would be too great.
 - Limit the ability to go out (shopping, social appointments, health appointments, day centres)
 - The impacts of the changes are likely to increase social isolation
 - For those people with limited mobility, no other source of support and reliant on the scheme would be unable to go out as often.
 - There were lots of concerns regarding the operation of the scheme
- 13.5 As a result of this feedback Officers are recommending that Option 2 (reducing the trips to 40) is taken forward. In addition some mitigating measures have been identified as follows:
- The Council will work with the health sector in relation to patient transport services, as many trips relate to need to attend GP, clinic or hospital visits;
 - Work with other parts of the Council to ensure a joined up approach, in particular in relation to special needs transport and transport to day centres;
 - Contact with Dial-a-Ride has been made to ensure that other alternatives are considered for users of taxicards;
 - Liaise with London Councils on the quality issues raised about the current service;
 - Ongoing monitoring of the impact on service users.
- 13.6 The EqlA also highlights the potential cumulative impact of this proposal alongside changes to welfare reform and other council services. The purpose behind the taxicard scheme is to advance

equality of opportunity to older residents and those with a disability in relation to accessing social activities. As a result of the consultation, it is proposed to cut the number of trips rather than increase the cost of the service. Whilst the number of trips is proposed to be reduced, the scheme will continue to exist and officers will work with partners to identify alternative transport options.

14. Corporate Priorities

- 14.1 The retention of a reduced Discretionary Taxi Card Scheme supports and protects people who are most in need and as such reflects the aims of our corporate priorities. It also reduces expenditure and meets budget requirements which again reflects Harrow's financial priorities.

Section 3 - Statutory Officer Clearance

Name: Simon George	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Chief Financial Officer
Date: 4 July 2013		
Name: Sarah Wilson	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	on behalf of the Monitoring Officer
Date: 5 July 2013		

Section 4 – Performance Officer Clearance

Name: Martin Randall	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	on behalf of the Divisional Director Strategic Commissioning
Date: 18 June 2013		

Section 5 – Environmental Impact Officer Clearance

Name: Andrew Baker	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	on behalf of the Corporate Director of Environment and Enterprise
Date: 24 June 2013		

Section 6 - Contact Details and Background Papers

Contact: Fern Silverio (Head of Service – Collections & Housing Benefits),
Tel: 020-8736-6818 / email: fern.silverio@harrow.gov.uk

Background Papers: Taxicard Welcome Booklet
Taxicard letter template

**Call-In Waived by the
Chairman of Overview
and Scrutiny
Committee**

NOT APPLICABLE

[Call-in applies]