

CABINET

DRAFT MINUTES

18 JULY 2013

Chairman: * Councillor Thaya Idaikkadar

Councillors: * Nizam Ismail * Asad Omar
* Krishna James * William Stoodley
* Zarina Khalid

**Non Executive
Non Voting
Councillors:** * Susan Hall * Barry Macleod-Cullinane

**In attendance:
(Councillors)** Kam Chana Minute 667
Paul Osborn Minute 667
David Perry Minute 667
Simon Williams Minute 667

* Denotes Member present

676. Concessionary Travel - Changes to the Taxicard Scheme

Cabinet considered a report of the Corporate Director of Resources, which set out 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 showed how feedback from the consultation had shaped the changes put forward.

The Leader of the Council, in his capacity as Portfolio Holder for Finance, stated that it was with a 'heavy heart' that he was introducing this report, which had been due to the need to eliminate a budget gap. However, the Council had to make difficult decisions and the proposal to reduce the Taxi Card scheme trip to 40 for all Members with effect from October 2013 was being proposed to make a saving of £200,000.

The Leader added that a comprehensive consultation exercise had been undertaken and the feedback received had been carefully analysed. The consultation had provided three options:

- an increase in the contribution to £5.00 for every individual trip a member of the Taxicard scheme took representing an increase of £2.50;
- a reduction in all trips to 40 a year;
- a combination of the two options above.

It was noted that users had, overwhelmingly, chosen the option of having the trips reduced to 40. The Leader added that he was mindful of the impact of the proposals, as he was aware that there were approximately 450 users who currently had been allocated 104 trips per annum, rather than the usual 52 because they had no other travel concessions, who might be severely affected by the introduction of these changes mid-year when they may already have used more than the new allowance of 40 trips by the time of implementation. As a result, he proposed an additional recommendation, which was duly seconded by the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Regeneration, which would provide transitional arrangements for users.

The Leader of the Council informed Members that the consultation had also brought to attention the many failings with the existing providers and it was intended to lobby London Councils in this regard. A meeting date had been agreed where Officers, Members and representatives from Harrow Association of Disabled (HAD) people would put forward the findings with a view to ensuring a better service or the procurement of different contractors in the future.

In response to questions from the Portfolio Holders for Environment and Community Safety and Adult Social Care, Health and Wellbeing, the Leader agreed that the role of the NHS in this area needed to be investigated through the Council's Health and Wellbeing Board. The Leader also responded to additional questions from the non-voting non-Executive Cabinet Members about the Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) which he was satisfied with, including that the consultation, which had received a high number of responses, had been thorough and inclusive. He added that the Council needed to save money and a way of achieving this was by providing efficient services. A non-voting non-Executive Member was pleased with the mitigation measures being proposed.

An officer informed Cabinet that a clear mandate for Option 2 had been received as a result of the consultation undertaken. In order to mitigate the impact a transition scheme had been proposed by the Leader. He added that the consultation had provided 'rich' data which would be used at the meeting with London Councils. The report also set out answers given to specific comments received during the consultation.

The Divisional Director informed Members that Harrow had the highest number of users and the highest numbers that received Discretionary Freedom Passes.

Having moved a further recommendation to help mitigate the impact of the proposals, it was

RESOLVED: That

- (1) 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 October 2013 be agreed;
- (2) the scheduled review of all existing members during 2013/14 be noted;
- (3) it be noted that officers would be liaising with London Councils regarding the issues raised by users and HAD regarding the operation of the Taxicard Scheme;
- (4) the implementation of additional trips on top of the new scheme allowance for the period 1 October 2013 to 31 March 2014 to support phasing from current scheme into new scheme be agreed; however
 - (i) for those users who were previously allocated 104 trips, an additional allocation of 20 trips for the year 2013/14 only for the period 1 October 2013 until 31 March 2014, be agreed so long as no more than 52 trips had been used by 30 September 2014, otherwise scheme holders would be given the balance of 72 trips minus their trip usage to 30 September 2013;
 - (ii) for those users who were previously allocated 52 trips, an additional allocation of 20 trips for the year 2013/14 only for the period 1 October 2013 until 31 March 2014, so long as no more than 26 trips had been used by 30 September 2013, otherwise scheme holders would be given the balance of 46 trips minus their trip usage to 30 September 2013.
- (5) resolution (4) above would provide transitional arrangements and would ensure that all scheme members had at least some trips for the rest of the year and specifically to use during the winter months when bad weather and lack of transport facilities could lead to unnecessary isolation.

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

To implement the changes to the Taxicard on 1 October 2013 and provide transitional arrangements.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected: As set out in the report.

**Conflict of Interest relating to the matter declared by Cabinet Member /
Dispensation Granted:** None.