32   THE INTRODUCTION OF ONLINE DBS CHECKS

The Committee received the report of the Licensing Manager to inform Members of the recent problems in relation to the return of Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks and to ask Members to consider proposed improvements.

It was reported that changes had recently been made to the DBS, which had impacted negatively on the delivery of the service. The change was to the issue of the client's completed DBS check, which had been issued to both the applicant and the licensing authority at the same time.

Since the change, only the applicant received a copy, which meant that licensing officers were reliant on the applicant delivering a copy of the DBS to them. This could sometimes cause delays in issuing licences and extra administrative work for officers, who had to chase up copies of the DBS check.

It was reported that the checks took between 4 and 8 weeks. However, in exceptional circumstances, they could take a lot longer, and this meant that the driver could have a period when he/she could not work. Officers had therefore undertaken work to establish how best to avoid this situation.

The Licensing Manager had been approached by some umbrella companies who could carry out the DBS checks on behalf of the licensing authority and provide a one stop shop for enhanced disclosures, which were processed through a portal. The cost for the DBS check would be £54 for 3 years, compared to the current £44 for 3 years. The umbrella companies could not give guarantees in relation to the timescale for the return of the checks if they got stuck at the police stage, and would not be able to escalate the application until 60 days had passed.

Another option was for drivers to update their DBS check online, which had to be done within 19 days of receiving the initial DBS check. The cost of updating online was currently £13 per year, which equated to a saving of £5 over the 3 year period. The information would be available immediately, except where the information indicated that there had been a change since the last certificate.

This would eliminate the issue of checks not being received on time and provide drivers with the assurance that they would always have a valid DBS check, unless their circumstances

changed. The information would have to be accessed and checked by a licensing officer via a unique pin code, which the driver would need to provide.

Members considered the three options set out in the report.

Option 1

Approve the change in relation to the administration procedures to allow the checks to be done by an umbrella company. This would speed up most applications but would not completely alleviate the problem where an application was stuck at the police stage.

Option 2

To continue as at present, but publicise, encourage and assist drivers to register online. Ideally to the point where this became the default DBS system where necessary, all drivers would subscribe to the DBS online update check, which would mean that new certificates would only be required when the check indicated that there had been a change since the last check. This would ensure that checks could be done with immediate effect.

Option 3

Make no changes to the current procedures. However, this option would not improve the problems that had been occurring in recent months.

The Officer preferred option was Option 2.

It was proposed by Councillor Redfern and seconded by Councillor Edwards:

"That Option 2, as set out in the report, be approved."

Upon being put to the vote, Members voted unanimously in favour of the proposition, whereupon the Chairman declared the proposal to be clearly carried.

Resolved:

That the delivery of the DBS service continue as at present, but that registering online be publicised and drivers encouraged and assisted to register online. Ideally to the point where this becomes the default DBS system where necessary, all drivers subscribe to the DBS online update check. This would mean that new certificates would only be required when

the check indicated that there had been a change since the last check, and would ensure that checks could be done with immediate effect.