

TAXI/PRIVATE HIRE CAR CONSULTATION GROUP

NOTE OF MEETING OF 17 MAY 2010

Present:

Councillors Boulton, Hunter and K West, and

Sgt Keith Middler (Grampian Police), Inspector Iain MacLelland (Grampian Police), Kevin Leiper (ATG), Alistair Rose (ARTDA), Lynne Smith (Central Taxis), Russell McLeod (ATG), Gordon McKay (Rainbow), Scott Douglas (ComCab), Angeline MacKenzie (ComCab), Tom Wilson (Unite), Tommy Campbell (Unite), Fraser Bain (BAA, Aberdeen Airport), Scott Ramsay (EPI), Nigel Buchan (Fleet Services), Eric Anderson (Licensing), Jacqui Wallace (Licensing) and Caroline Treanor (Licensing)

Apologies: Councillor Reynolds (Convener) and Alistair Williamson (DAG)

CHAIR

1. In the absence of the Convener, Councillor Kirsty West chaired the meeting.

NOTE OF MEETING OF 08 FEBRUARY 2010

2. The note of the meeting was approved subject to the following amendments: - Item 8, date to be changed from 28 to 25.

MATTERS ARISING

3. With reference to Item 9 (1) –Green Light at the Airport, Councillor Boulton informed the group that she had now met with NESTRANS.

OPERATION OF THE GREEN LIGHT AT THE AIRPORT

4. At the last taxi consultation group meeting concerns had been raised regarding the operation of the green light at the airport and it was agreed to invite a representative of BAA to this meeting to discuss the matter further.

The group then heard from Fraser Bain, BAA, who explained that

(i) the purpose of the green light was to call on the assistance of non-airport zoned operators at peak times, when demand for taxis outstrips supply. Only drivers in the vicinity of the airport see that it is on but news of this would be spread by word of mouth.

(ii) the green light is not switched on as soon as people start forming a queue at the rank. It is up to the taxi marshall to decide when the green light should be switched on. He is the person best placed to decide on the operation of the green light. This is because he has information on matters such as incoming flights and likely passenger numbers made available to him. He also has a PDA device that tells how many airport taxis are in the area at any given time.

(iii) BAA has service level agreements (SLA's) with the managing agent wherein 15 minutes is the maximum time that anyone should be waiting for a taxi. If the green light is switched on as soon as a queue forms this impacts on the livelihood of the dedicated airport fleet; therefore, there is always a compromise to be struck and

(iv) there is a record kept of when the green light is on and the response to it for monitoring purposes

Kevin Leiper said that the issue had been placed on the agenda because there was a perception that ComCab was transmitting messages to its city fleet to pick up at the front door, without the green light being switched on, therefore breaching a condition of the licence.

Angela MacKenzie advised the group that the city taxis picking up at the front door outwith the operation of the green light are pre-booked. This system was agreed at a meeting with Grampian Police in 2008, therefore there is no breach of the zoning condition. She also informed the group that discussions were ongoing between ComCab and BAA regarding the possibility of having green lights installed at other locations to assist passengers, including those at the heliport.

Councillor Boulton stated that elected members do receive complaints regarding waiting times at the airport and she wanted to know how BAA monitors this. Fraser Bain advised her that there are set periods throughout the day when ComCab monitor the queue. BAA expect the managing agent to monitor the situation in line with agreed SLA's but BAA does have the means to verify and check the information.

Councillor Hunter asked if BAA is monitoring those taxis that are pre-booked to pick up at the rank. Angelina MacKenzie confirmed that they do. A spreadsheet is maintained with relevant information such as the plate nos. of the vehicles, and dates and times of the bookings.

It was agreed that BAA, ComCab and the trade should hold further discussions outwith this forum and if necessary the matter could be brought back to the group at a later date.

CHAPEL STREET AND BACK WYND TAXI RANKS

5. Councillor West stated that this item had been added at the request of Gordon McIntosh, Director of Enterprise, Planning and Infrastructure following receipt of a letter from Aberdeen City Centre Association (ACCA). ACCA had been invited to come and address the meeting but no one representing the Association was in attendance.

It was agreed that discussion of the item would be postponed to the next meeting, to allow someone from ACCA to attend. However, in the meantime Scott Ramsay gave a brief update on the situation at the ranks.

(i) Chapel Street – there is a proposal to make both Chapel Street and Rose Street one-way systems. The traffic management team is currently dealing with this, which includes consultation with the public.

(ii) Back Wynd – looking at relocating the disabled bay. This was discussed at a meeting of the Disability Advisory Group (DAG) who were not in favour of the proposal. However, there are a number of alternative options to discuss and Scott Ramsay will arrange a meeting with representatives of DAG and the trade.

Inspector MacLelland advised that the police were aware of the issues at the Back Wynd rank with taxis queuing the length of the street, He was unaware of any complaints from DAG. Most of the feedback he receives is from the City Wardens. With regard to Chapel Street, he considered that problems mainly occurred at night time.

Tommy Campbell stated that in his view the issue was about the total number of spaces at city ranks. There are only 70-80 spaces in the city. This means drivers have to drive around whilst waiting for spaces, which leads to an environmental issue.

Scott Ramsay advised that if the proposals contained in the current review of taxi ranks are accepted it would lead to an increase of about 20 spaces throughout the city centre.

MORAY COUNCIL TAXI TESTING SUPPLEMENT TO THE VOSA MOT TESTER MANUAL

6. The group had before it a draft testing supplement to the VOSA MOT Tester Manual. Nigel Buchan advised the group that it was intended to introduce the specifications contained therein in Aberdeen. Although testing had always been carried out, certain specifications had not been set out in a comprehensive manual. Once the specification is approved, it will be published on the Council's website.

Russell Macleod had three comments in respect of the draft specification

(i) Item 2.4.3 - INTERIOR

The specification referred to the Interior Taxi Plate, which had been abolished approximately 10 years ago and he wanted to know if it was being re-introduced.

(ii)Item 2.11 – ROOF SIGNS

He stated that the illumination of the taxi sign as given in the specification causes operational issues for some taxi companies and many operators' have disconnected the light.

(iii)Item 2.3-BODYWORK

There is an issue with what constitutes a dent or a scratch and how to ensure consistency amongst the examiners. Nigel Buchan explained that any time a vehicle test is undertaken there will be access to a supervisor if it is felt that the examiner is being too strict in the interpretation of the specification.

It was agreed that Nigel Buchan would (i) amend the specification in respect of the illumination of the roof light, (ii) remove reference to an Interior Plate and (iii) add a paragraph about access to a supervisor in respect of the assessment of dents and scratches.

The draft specification will thereafter go to a meeting of the Licensing Committee for approval

FOULING OF TAXIS

7. An e-mail had been sent to the Convener by a member of the trade who was concerned about the lack of support when trying to recover the £50 charge from passengers who had fouled a taxi. As it is a civil and not a criminal matter, it is not for the police to enforce. In the e-mail, the driver refers to it being taxi "fraud". However, Sergeant Middler stated that he had examined the legislation and it was his belief that a fraud charge was not competent. It was agreed that the clerk would write to the driver to explain the position.

VARIATION OF CONDITION ON AIRPORT ZONED TAXI LICENCES – OUTCOME OF TRIAL PERIOD

8. The draft report was noted.

ONLINE APPLICATIONS

9. Jacqui Wallace advised the group that there was a major upgrade to the licensing software being undertaken this week. Once complete applicants for all types of licence would be able to apply online.

MEETING DATES FOR 2011

10. It was agreed that meetings for 2011 would take place on 07 February, 09 May, 15 August and 24 October 2011. These meetings will be held at 10:00am.

AOCB

11. (i) Railway Station

Kevin Leiper stated that there were still concerns regarding the traffic signs in and around the railway station. Scott Ramsay advised him that in order to erect signs stating "no access except taxis", the matter would have to be referred to the Scottish Government. Kevin Leiper said that the main signs on Guild Street state that vehicles should drop off at the bus/rail stations, when in fact the correct place for dropping off is College Street car park. Scott Ramsay advised him that whilst the traffic management section had confirmed that all the signs were correct he would revisit this issue with them. Councillor Hunter stated that, as a ward councillor, he would look into the matter.

(ii) Training

Tommy Campbell stated that there was talk of introducing SVQ training for taxi drivers and wanted to know if the council saw a role for themselves in

this. Russell McLeod explained that this was being introduced in Glasgow for the 2014 Commonwealth Games, but on a purely voluntary basis. Councillor West stated that there were no plans for this at present.

(iii) Demand Survey

Tommy Campbell wanted to know if there were any plans for another demand survey to be undertaken. Councillor West stated that there were no plans to undertake a demand survey at this time