

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

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| COMMITTEE | Licensing Committee |
| DATE | 18/05/2021 |
| EXEMPT | No |
| CONFIDENTIAL | No |
| REPORT TITLE | Taxi and Private Hire Policy Review Consultation Responses |
| REPORT NUMBER | COM/21/114 |
| CHIEF OFFICER | Fraser Bell |
| REPORT AUTHOR | Sandy Munro |
| TERMS OF REFERENCE | 17 |

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To provide the Committee with the results of the public consultation on the proposed changes to the Taxi and Private Hire Policies.

2. RECOMMENDATION(S)

That the Committee:-

- 2.1 note the results of the consultation exercise detailed in Appendices 1, 2 and 3;
- 2.2 approve in principle the amendments to policy; and
- 2.3 instruct the Chief Officer – Governance to report back to the committee on 31 August 2021 with proposed policies for approval.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 At the meeting on 10 November 2020 the Committee instructed the Chief Officer – Governance to consult with the trade and public on the proposed changes to the taxi and private hire policies.
- 3.2 An online consultation was run from 21 January 2021 until 26 February 2021. A link to the consultation document was publicised via social media, sent to all licensed drivers for whom we had an email address and circulated to the Taxi & Private Hire Consultation Group for wider circulation to the trade.
- 3.3 A total of 149 responses were received. A summary is attached as Appendix 1 and a copy of all responses is attached as Appendix 2.

- 3.4 Question 1 – Proposal to introduce minimum dimensions for the passenger compartment with regard to seat width, legroom and height clearance as well as minimum boot capacity.
- 3.5 97 of the 149 responses were in favour of this amendment. Some queries related to more detail on the dimensions which will be provided in the wording of the policy. Some respondents suggested a list of approved vehicles would be preferable, but such a list would need to be updated when newer models of vehicles were released. A list of simple dimensions would allow licence holders or applicants to check with the retailer that the vehicle complies prior to making any purchase.
- 3.6 Question 2 – Proposal that the owner/registered keeper of the licensed vehicle requires to be the licence holder.
- 3.7 110 of the 149 responses were in favour of this amendment. Some respondents suggested a licence holder should only hold one licence but if an individual or company own a number of vehicles there is nothing to stop that individual or company holding the operator licence for each of those vehicles. The suggested exemption would only relate to a vehicle leased from a leasing company or on hire purchase, not a vehicle leased from another licence holder. The reason for that is the leasing or finance company would remain the owner of the vehicle.
- 3.8 Question 3 – Proposal that vehicle licences are granted for 3 years in line with other Civic Government (Scotland) Act licences.
- 3.9 106 of the 149 responses were in favour of this amendment. However, whilst the overall cost would be lower to the licence holder it would result in a larger upfront fee and a number of respondents were of the opinion that this would not be appropriate in the current climate. It is suggested that whilst this is approved in principal the implementation date is postponed until circumstances warrant.
- 3.10 Question 4 – Proposal to abolish the separate zones and simply have one licence for the Council's area.
- 3.11 101 of the 149 responses were in favour of this amendment. The main opponent to this change is from the airport itself and a copy of their letter is enclosed as Appendix 3. They have summarised their main issues as follows:
- It will compromise the high levels of site-specific safety and security measures
 - It will compromise Customer Service levels at AIAL for all arriving passengers at the terminal and heliports.
 - It will damage the sustainability of the current City Vehicles
 - There is no evidence to support that it would be of any benefit to any drivers on either Green or Yellow plates.
- 3.12 It should be noted however that the rank at the airport is a private rank and access to it would remain in the control of the airport, as is the case for the rank at the railway station. It would be within their remit to require availability of vehicles at certain times as part of the conditions of access to the rank.

Similarly, the number of taxis currently licensed is considerably below the limit imposed by the committee.

- 3.13 Question 5 – Proposal that the updated policy provides minimum specifications for CCTV systems but does not restrict to particular makes or models.
- 3.14 111 of the 149 responses were in favour of this amendment. This was merely a simplification of the specifications. There is no suggestion of CCTV being made mandatory nor are the specifications themselves changing.
- 3.15 Question 6 – Proposal to introduce a dress code for taxi and private hire car drivers.
- 3.16 112 of the 149 responses were in favour of this amendment. Most were in agreement with the suggested dress code, with some making alternative suggestions, the most common of which was that polo shirts be an acceptable alternative to a dress shirt or blouse.
- 3.17 Question 7 – Proposal to allow medical evidence to be provided in advance by all applicants.
- 3.18 100 of the 149 responses were in favour of this amendment. The change would be that all drivers would require to be medically certified to DVLA Group 2 standards, but that certification could be obtained by the applicant in advance and submitted with the application. Alternatively, the applicant would be referred to the Authority's Occupational Health provider. The fee for the latter would be higher to cover the additional costs of the medical referral.
- 3.19 Question 8 – Proposal that driver licences are granted for 3 years in line with other Civic Government (Scotland) Licences.
- 3.20 135 of the 149 responses were in favour of this amendment. There were some comments regarding the guideline fees but the final fees will require to ensure that the Authority recoups the costs of operating the licensing regime from the fee income.
- 3.21 Question 9 – Proposal to introduce a requirement for all vehicles to be alternative fuelled vehicles by a set date.
- 3.22 60 of the 149 responses were in favour of this amendment. Most of the comments on this topic related to the uncertainty involved with the cost and availability of such vehicles, the necessary infrastructure required being put in place and the availability of WAV vehicles that would meet the criteria. All of these points would need to be considered to ensure that all supporting infrastructure was in place prior to the implementation date.
- 3.23 This policy originates in the context of the Council's decision to develop a Net Zero Transition Plan. The Chief Officer – Governance was instructed by full Council on 3rd March 2020 to report to the Licensing Committee with proposals to consult with the taxi and private hire trade on options for transition to

alternative powered vehicles. The purpose of the question is to establish a realistic timeframe by which petrol or diesel vehicles will no longer be accepted as taxi or private hire vehicles in order to contribute to the Council's plan to meet the Scottish Government targets of reducing emissions by 75% by 2030 and to be net zero by 2045.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 Officer time will be required to finalise policy wording, however this will be met from existing budgets

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 There are no direct legal implications arising from this report but the adoption of a policy on alternatively fuelled vehicles would contribute to the Council's obligations under the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009 and the Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005.

6. MANAGEMENT OF RISK

| Category | Risk | Low(L) Medium(M) High(H) | Mitigation |
|------------------------------|--|--------------------------------|---|
| Strategic Risk | N/A | | |
| Compliance | N/A | | |
| Operational | N/A | | |
| Financial | N/A | | |
| Reputational | Implementing policy changes without adequate consultation may result in reputational damage. | L | Full consultation has been carried out and the results attached to this report for consideration. |
| Environment / Climate | Failure to approve the alternatively fuelled vehicle policy may have an adverse impact on the authority's climate targets. | M | Approval in principle is recommended in the report with further details to be acquired prior to finalisation of the policy. |

7. OUTCOMES

- 7.1 The proposals in this report have no direct impact on the Council Delivery Plan but the adoption of a policy on alternatively fuelled vehicles would contribute to outcome 14 in the LOIP, namely addressing climate change by reducing Aberdeen's carbon emissions and adapting to the impacts of our changing climate.

8. IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

| Assessment | Outcome |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Impact Assessment | Full impact assessment not required |
| Data Protection Impact Assessment | Not required |

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

N/A

10. APPENDICES (if applicable)

- 10.1 Appendix 1 – Consultation response summary
10.2 Appendix 2 – Full consultation responses
10.3 Appendix 3 – Letter from Aberdeen Airport

11. REPORT AUTHOR CONTACT DETAILS

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