

DRAFT

TAXI/PRIVATE HIRE CAR CONSULTATION GROUP

MINUTE OF MEETING OF 15th AUGUST 2011

Present: Councillor Kirsty West (Convener), and Councillors Boulton and Hunter.

In Attendance: Roy McHardy (ARTDA), Russell McLeod and Graeme McColl (ATG), Gordon McKay (Rainbow), Lynne Smith (Central Taxis), Tom Wilson and Steve Robertson (Unite), Sergeant Keith Middler (Grampian Police), Kevin Leiper (Independent), Nigel Buchan (Fleet Services), Eric Anderson (Senior Solicitor, Licensing), Alyson Mollison (Legal Manager, Licensing), Jacqui Wallace (Licencing) and Mark Masson (Legal and Democratic Services).

MINUTE OF PREVIOUS MEETING OF 23 MAY 2011

1. The Consultation Group had before it the minute of the previous meeting of 23rd May 2011.

The Consultation Group agreed:-

to approve the minute.

ROLE, REMIT AND MEMBERSHIP OF THE TAXI CONSULTATION GROUP

2. The Consultation Group had before it for information and an opportunity to comment, a report by the Director of Corporate Governance which sought the Licensing Committee's approval of the revised remit, governance and membership of the Taxi Consultation Group (TCG).

The Consultation Group agreed:-

- (i) to ensure that officers incorporate within the report to the Licensing Committee the suggestion that membership of the TCG should include a representative of the Disability Advisory Group; and
- (ii) to otherwise note the report.

TAXI FARE REVIEW

3. With reference to Article 6(i) of the minute of meeting of 7th February 2011, the Consultation Group had before it for information and an opportunity to comment, a report by the Director of Corporate Governance which provided advice that would allow the Licensing Committee to reach an informed decision on any changes to be made to the current taxi fare tariff, arising from proposals put forward by the Aberdeen Taxi Group.

Concerns were raised by Russell McLeod in relation to the formula which was used by officers this year, which in his opinion, was based solely on the depreciation of the vehicle and did not take into account that taxis were on the road three times as much as other vehicles.

The Consultation Group agreed:-

- (i) that following the Licensing Committee meeting on 14th September 2011, officers would take on board the comments submitted and liaise with relevant people in terms of future formula calculations; and
- (ii) to otherwise note the report.

TAXI TRADE SURVEY

4. With reference to Article 6 (ii) of the minute of meeting of 7th February 2011, the Consultation Group heard Eric Anderson provide an update on the progress of conducting a Taxi Trade (Demand) Survey.

Mr Anderson advised that invitations to quote to undertake the survey had been issued and that officers were awaiting bid submissions from interested parties. He explained that due to the competitive tendering process and confidential nature of the submissions, that details could not be circulated to the taxi trade for consultation. He indicated that a report which would include any cost implications for the taxi trade would be prepared and submitted to the Licensing Committee in due course.

The Consultation Group agreed:-

to note the information provided.

DETAILED AUDITED ACCOUNTS – PREVIOUS YEARS TAXI TRADE INCOME

5. The Consultation Group heard Alyson Mollison advise that as part of the Council's detailed budgetary process, that it was the intention to undertake detailed work to provide in future, robust information relating to the taxi trade income audited accounts.

Kevin Leiper advised that it would be beneficial to compare past and future figures to determine whether there had been value for money, however it was noted that work to extract previous years accounts would be time consuming, costly and have a significant impact on the workload of officers.

The Consultation Group agreed:-

to note that detailed audited accounts relating to taxi trade income would be made available in February 2012 and on an annual basis thereafter.

TAXI RANK SPACES REVIEW

6. With reference to Article 4 of the minute of meeting of 7th February 2011, the Consultation Group heard Kevin Leiper and Russell McLeod seek to determine whether work was being undertaken to review the current number of taxi rank spaces within the city centre.

The Consultation Group agreed:-

to request that Scott Ramsay provide an update on the position at the next meeting of the Group.

RELAXATION OF ZONING CONDITIONS – OFFSHORE EUROPE AND WALKER CUP

7. The Consultation Group had before them a report by the Director of Corporate Governance which provided information on (a) the Aberdeen Taxi Group's request on behalf of the Aberdeen Taxi Trade for the relaxation of the airport taxis zoning condition for the duration of Offshore Europe 2011 and the Walker Cup 2011 from midnight on Sunday 4th September until midnight on Sunday 11th September 2011; and (b) the licensing authority's consideration and decision making process in relation to the aforementioned request.

The report (a) explained that the proposed relaxation would permit airport zoned taxis to wait at the Aberdeen Exhibition and Conference Centre taxi rank and accept hire and if people are waiting, to pick up from any city taxi rank; (b) advised that previous decisions to relax the zoning conditions for Offshore Europe had been made at the Licensing Committee, however both events were scheduled to be held the week preceding the next meeting of the Licensing Committee; and (c) indicated that it was proposed that the Committee's Informal Business Panel would consider the request and utilise its powers to either grant or remit it to the Committee to consider as it does not have the power to refuse the request.

The report recommended:-

that the Consultation Group considers and notes the report.

It was noted that if the Informal Business Panel remits the request to the Licensing Committee to determine, then the request would fall as the Committee next meets after both events.

Eric Anderson advised that it was likely that the request would be considered by the Informal Business Panel within the next few days.

The Consultation Group agreed:-

- (i) to note that if the Informal Business Panel grant the request, officers would notify all taxi drivers accordingly by letter; and
- (ii) to note the report and the information provided.

ABERDEENSHIRE COUNCIL LICENSED TAXIS PICKING UP IN ABERDEEN

8. The Consultation Group heard Tom Wilson raise concerns in relation to Aberdeenshire Council licensed taxis picking up in Aberdeen which created ill feeling amongst taxi drivers.

Mr Wilson advised that it was perceived by drivers that the Police was taking very little action to enforce the rules and prevent the Aberdeenshire licensed taxi drivers from picking up in Aberdeen.

Sergeant Keith Middler explained that this was a long standing issue and that evidence was required to pursue offenders as some may be working legitimately. He indicated that a report had recently been issued to city centre policing to highlight the matter and to clarify the issue for charging offenders.

Graeme McColl advised that he had met with city centre Sergeant Jim Fraser and confirmed that briefings in this regard had been provided to Police Officers.

The Convener indicated that advice received from Aberdeenshire Council was that evidence (plate number, registration, dates and times, photographs if possible etc) should be obtained and forwarded to their complaints email address which was as follows:- taxicomplaints@aberdeenshire.gov.uk so that the matter could be investigated and any action taken.

The Consultation Group agreed:-

To note the information provided.

DATE AND TIME OF THE NEXT MEETING

9. The Convener requested that the next meeting scheduled to be held on 24th October 2011 commence at 9.30am instead of 10.00am.

The Consultation Group agreed:-

To note that the next meeting scheduled to be held on 24th October 2011 would commence at 9.30am in the Town House

COUNCILLOR KIRSTY WEST, Convener