

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE	Licensing Committee
DATE	9 October 2024
EXEMPT	No
CONFIDENTIAL	No
REPORT TITLE	Membership and Remit of the Taxi and Private Hire Car Consultation Group.
REPORT NUMBER	CORS/24/097
DIRECTOR	Andy MacDonald
CHIEF OFFICER	Jenni Lawson
REPORT AUTHOR	Mark Masson
TERMS OF REFERENCE	Introduction 3

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to consider changes to the membership and remit of the Taxi and Private Hire Car Consultation Group (T&PHC Consultation Group).

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Committee:-

- 2.1 approve the Taxi and Private Hire Car Consultation Group membership in accordance with the proposed composition at 3.14 of this report;
- 2.2 reduce the number of meetings to three per annum, commencing 2025, noting that there is scope to arrange Special meetings for specific and/or urgent items as indicated in section 3.8 of this report;
- 2.3 approve the updated remit of the Taxi and Private Hire Car Consultation Group, including the process for removing non attendees outlined in 3.11 of this report;
- 2.4 delete the 'Independent Driver' vacancy on the Consultation Group, noting that the position had been vacant for a number of years; and
- 2.5 take no action in relation to increasing the Taxi Trade representation on the Taxi and Private Hire Car Consultation Group.

3. CURRENT SITUATION

- 3.1 The T&PHC Consultation Group is a working group of the Licensing Committee and currently consists of a maximum of seven Elected Members and nine representatives of the taxi trade, of whom one would represent the airport operators and one would represent all licensed taxi offices,. The Disability

Equity Partnership (DEP) also sends one representative as a member of the Group.

- 3.2 Additional attendees include the Council's Enforcement Officer(s), the Fleet Services Manager, a legal adviser representing the licensing function and a representative from Police Scotland. Other relevant representatives and officers will be invited to attend meetings on an ad hoc basis.
- 3.3 Taxi trade members must represent a specific and recognised interest group. It is understood that the representatives will report to their members after meetings.
- 3.4 On 26 August 2022 the Taxi Trade requested that an additional meeting be held of the Group each year (from 3 to 4) in order that any relevant taxi trade issues and recommendations of the group could be submitted for consideration of the Licensing Committee on a more regular basis. There was a general agreement amongst members of the Group that an extra meeting would be beneficial for the trade members, given the city centre changes and the requirement for taxi trade feed in, following the measures which were put in place during the pandemic, Low Emission Zone proposals but more specifically due to the Council's City Centre Masterplan developments. The Licensing Committee on 6 September 2022 agreed to temporarily increase the number of meetings per year of the Taxi and Private Hire Car Consultation Group to four, commencing in 2023. But given the Council have now approved these projects, albeit CCMP works were continuing at pace, it is recommended that the meetings return to three per annum commencing 2025.
- 3.5 The group acts without any powers but discusses matters of relevance to the taxi trade at the discretion of the Convener and makes recommendations to the Licensing Committee as appropriate.
- 3.6 Matters of relevance includes all matters relevant to the taxi trade in Aberdeen that are within the remit of the Licensing Committee.
- 3.7 Currently there is a vacancy on the Group, namely as an Independent Driver. Given that there are two other Independent Drivers currently on the membership, officers are suggesting that this position be deleted.
- 3.8 At present, there is no clarity in terms of whether Special meetings of the Group could be arranged, it is therefore recommended that Special meetings be added to the remit for specific and/or urgent matters, noting that requests for them must be submitted to the Clerk providing details of the item including what outcome is sought and reasons why the matter could not wait until a scheduled meeting of the Group. Thereafter, the Clerk will liaise with the Convener of the Licensing Committee (Chair of the Group) or the Vice Convener whom failing to determine (1) whether a Special meeting is to be arranged; and if it is, (2) to determine the time and date of the meeting.
- 3.9 It was generally acknowledged that substitutes would be allowed if the substantive member was absent, however this was not reflected in the

remit/membership and was raised by a new member at the December 2023 meeting of the Group.

3.10 The following wording has been included within the updated remit:-

- Substitutes can attend meetings of the Group if the substantive member is absent. In relation to elected members, the substitute must be a member of the Licensing Committee. In relation to the taxi trade and Disability Equity Partnership, the substitute should be someone from within their own specified group/organisation. The substantive member should contact the Clerk in advance of the meeting and provide details of their substitute.
- Members cannot represent more than one specified Group/Organisation.

3.11 Officers are recommending that to avoid long term vacancies on the group, members who do not attend and do not send a substitute for three consecutive meetings will receive notification from the Clerk in writing (via email) advising that a fourth consecutive non-attendance will result in removal of their membership forthwith. This will be communicated to Group members at the subsequent meeting.

3.12 The Clerk generally makes minor amendments to the remit of the Group without the requirement for Committee approval, such as changes to Group member representatives and officer designation changes.

3.13 Council on 8 February 2024, agreed to amend the number of elected members on all committees with the Licensing Committee being reduced from 13 members to 9 and the composition being as follows:-

Licensing Committee	5 Partnership	2 Lab	1 Con	1 Ind	9 total
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3.14 It is proposed that with regard to the decision taken by Council, the membership of the Taxi and Private Hire Car Consultation Group be reduced from 7 to 5 elected members with the following composition:-

Taxi & Private Hire Car Consultation Group	3 Partnership	1 Lab	1 Con	5 Total
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Request for an Additional Member from the Taxi Trade

3.15 At the meeting of the T&PHC Consultation Group on 6 December 2023, there was a request from the taxi trade that an additional representative be added to the membership of the Group.

- 3.16 The request advised that Aberdeen Airport, Aberdeen Taxis and Rainbow Taxis were all effectively represented on the Group, and that it would be fair that ComCab was also represented.
- 3.17 It was acknowledged that ComCab being a Licensed Taxi Office was already being represented on the group by the Managing Director of Rainbow Taxis and that an additional taxi trade member representative in this regard would not meet the criteria of any of the two vacancies.
- 3.18 It was then suggested by the taxi trade that an additional member (from ComCab) could be a representative in relation to 'Taxi Trade Disability Liaison', although it was not clear at the meeting what that new role would entail, how that would work and how this new role would differ from that of the Licensed Taxi Office representative and/or the representative from the Disability Equity Partnership.
- 3.19 The Clerk wrote to the Licenced Taxi Office representative on 4 January 2024 requesting further information in relation to the potential new role and asking that he confirm whether the new member, if appointed to the Group, would be representing any other specific and different group in the taxi trade.
- 3.20 The response was as follows:-
- “Trade members of the T&PHC Consultation Group would like to add a new member to our group. We are aware that currently there are two available spaces, but the new member we are proposing fits into neither category. The Head of Operations at ComCab Aberdeen, he took up this position around October 2023. For the first time in a while, he is someone from ComCab who wants to be involved in discussions on our trade. As it stands currently both of Aberdeen’s other Taxi companies are both represented on the group, Aberdeen Taxis, who represents Private Hire Drivers and myself of Rainbow City Taxis, who represents Taxi Booking Offices, if for no other reason and given that there are available spaces, it would be, in our view sensible to allow the Head of Operations (ComCab) to be part of the T&PHC Consultation Group. He is also keen to give disability groups a focal point who they can contact directly, His tag, could be ‘Taxi Groups Disability Liaison Member’. As this would be a new position, he would need time to settle in and become accustom to whom from the disability groups would be his contact. Obviously he cannot deal with every individual who has a disability, but with the groups. This is something that he and the representative from DEP could work on. In the broader picture it is important that the makeup of trade members on the T&PHC Consultation Group, has a broad spectrum of all aspects of Aberdeen’s Taxi community. We ask that you look favourably on our request.”
- 3.21 Following the Licensing Committee meeting on 21 February 2024, where it was agreed to instruct the Chief Officer – Governance to submit a report to the Licensing Committee at their meeting in April 2024 on the request for an additional representative from the taxi trade as the Taxi Trade’s Disability Liaison member, the Clerk received an email from the DEP representative on the T&PHC Consultation Group, which requested that they would wish to express their view on the matter to avoid any ambiguity or mixed messaging prior to the Committee taking a decision, indicating that that DEP would not

want to see its role on the group, within ACC, or more widely, weakened, however inadvertently.

3.22 The following feedback was submitted by the DEP representative:-

“We have no issue with any taxi representation on the group but would seriously question the need for a duplicate disability liaison function, including how such a function would work, its purpose and its accountability. Surely that is the purpose of the Disability Equity Partnership (and the lived experience of our members, in addition to our own subject-specific knowledge that we bring) being extended an invite to join in the first place? I would also note our statutory footing as enshrined within the Council’s partnership agreement. We are very happy to have continued discussions and engagement with the taxi trade specifically, but do not understand why an additional role would be required to represent those at the consultation group. We are all individually and collectively capable of reporting back on any discussions or issues, as well as articulating our respective views on that where it is appropriate as part of the group’s remit. We remain happy for the taxi trade to approach us at any time outside meetings to take forward any work, as indeed we have already done late last year. Likewise, in addition to raising any issues as part of the official group, DEP are able and willing to approach taxi operators externally where needed should issues arise.”

3.23 Officers are of the view that there is no justification to increase the taxi trade representation on the Consultation Group at this time, given that the proposed additional position does not meet the membership criteria, and that liaison with the taxi trade representatives could still be undertaken with the Disability Equity Partnership representative on the Group. In addition, increasing the number of taxi trade representatives would not be consistent with the proposal to reduce the number of elected members on the group following the reduction in membership of the Licensing Committee.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

4.1 There are no direct financial implications from the recommendations of this report.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 There are no direct legal implications arising from the recommendations of this report.

6. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 There are no environmental implications arising from the recommendations of this report.

7. MANAGEMENT OF RISK

Category	Risk	Low (L) Medium (M) High (H)	Mitigation	*Does Target Risk Level Match
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				Appetite Set?
Strategic Risk	N/A			Yes
Compliance	N/A			Yes
Operational	N/A			Yes
Financial	N/A			Yes
Reputational	N/A			Yes
Environment / Climate	N/A			Yes

8. OUTCOMES

8.1 There are no links to the Council Delivery Plan.

9. IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

Assessment	Outcome
Impact Assessment	Impact assessment completed previously, no changes required.
Data Protection Impact Assessment	Not required

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

10.1 None.

11. APPENDICES

11.1 None.

12. REPORT AUTHOR CONTACT DETAILS

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