

DRAFT

TAXI CONSULTATION GROUP

MINUTE OF MEETING OF 24th OCTOBER 2011

Present: Councillor Kirsty West (Convener), and Councillors Collie and MacGregor; and Tommy Campbell (Unite Union), Graham Grant (Airport Drivers), Graeme McColl (Aberdeen Taxi Group), Russell McLeod (Taxi Licence Office – Rainbow Taxis), Bill Price (Railway Taxi Drivers), Lynne Smith (Taxi Licence Office – Central Taxis) and Alastair Williamson (Disability Advisory Group),

In Attendance: Sergeant Keith Middler (Grampian Police), Vycki Shade, (Senior Engineer, Enterprise Planning & Infrastructure) Paul Connolly (Solicitor, Licensing), Alyson Mollison (Legal Manager, Licensing), and Mark Masson (Legal and Democratic Services).

MEMBERSHIP OF THE TAXI CONSULTATION GROUP

1. The Consultation Group had before it details of the membership of the group including elected members and the representatives from each group/organisation.

The Consultation Group heard from Russell McLeod who had suggested that consideration should be given to having an additional representative on the group from the Licensed Taxi Offices.

Tommy Campbell indicated that if consideration was to be given to extend the membership, then he would also suggest an increase in membership of group for the Unite Union.

The Consultation Group agreed:-

- (i) to take no action in terms of extending the membership of the Group as agreed at the Licensing Committee meeting on 14th September 2011; and
- (ii) to note that details of the two representatives from Licensed Taxi Offices would be submitted to the Clerk in due course

MINUTE OF PREVIOUS MEETING OF 15 AUGUST 2011

2. The Consultation Group had before it the minute of its previous meeting of 15th August 2011.

The Consultation Group agreed:-

to approve the minute, subject to deleting “audited” from the resolution at Article 5.

MATTERS ARISING

3. (A) Taxi Fare Review

With reference to Article 3 of the minute of the previous meeting, the Consultation Group sought an update in terms of a Taxi Fare Review.

Alyson Mollison advised that the statutory process required for the review was currently ongoing, and she would be in a position to report on the issue at the next meeting of the Licensing Committee which was in line with the agreed timescale.

The Consultation Group agreed:-
to note the information provided.

(B) Taxi Trade Survey

With reference to Article 4 of the minute of the previous meeting, Alyson Mollison clarified the position in terms of why members of the taxi trade were not permitted to be in attendance whilst the Licensing Committee considered the confidential report in relation to the Taxi Trade Survey.

Mrs Mollison explained that the Council undertook the tendering for the contract process on behalf of the licensing authority, in addition the report contained restricted financial information relating to the aforesaid contracts, therefore only members of the Council and officers were able to remain and consider the report.

Mrs Mollison also intimated that the costs for the survey had been included within the budget for 2011/12.

The Consultation Group agreed:-
to note the information provided.

(C) Taxi Rank Spaces Review

With reference to Article 6 of the minute of the previous meeting, the Committee heard from Vycki Shade who indicated that no further progress had been made to undertake a review of the taxi rank spaces in the city. She advised that consideration was being given to traffic management work on Chapel Street (one-way system) subject to resources becoming available.

Vycki shade also made reference to a report which had been considered by the Enterprise Planning and Infrastructure Committee relating to a traffic management scheme at Justice Mill Lane, however the Committee had decided not to go ahead with the scheme at this time and to request officers to further review the area and report back to the Committee with new traffic management proposals.

Ms Shade confirmed that the results of the Taxi Demand Survey would assist officers to quantify the demand for additional taxi rank spaces.

The Consultation Group agreed:-

to note the information provided.

WHEELCHAIR ACCESSIBLE TAXIS – THE OVER 60s

4. The Consultation Group had before it correspondence from Charlie Hepburn which sought the group's approval to consider an exemption for taxi drivers over-60 years of age from operating wheelchair accessible vehicles.

The correspondence advised that many of the drivers in this age group may need to seek medical exemptions, which seems an unnecessary financial burden for those involved, therefore it would be beneficial for the added cost of a wheelchair accessible vehicle being better used to help support drivers once they eventually have to retire as most are self employed.

Mr Hepburn was in attendance and the group agreed to hear from him in support of his request.

Alyson Mollison provided background information in relation to the wheelchair accessible vehicle policy and indicated that at present the Licensing Committee could only grant an exemption to use a saloon car instead of a wheelchair accessible vehicle on a case by case basis.

The Consultation Group agreed:-

to note the request and the information provided.

NIGHT TIME TAXI RANKS

5. The Consultation Group had before it correspondence from Aberdeen Taxi Group (ATG) and Unite Union submitted from Russell McLeod and Tommy Campbell respectively, which alerted the group to the concerns experienced by taxi drivers following the closure of the side street ranks (Sunday to Thursday) to coincide with the introduction of the new weekly night time taxi ranks guidelines.

The correspondence from ATG requested that all taxi ranks should be available for customers 00:00 to 05:00, apart from Saturday and Sunday (00:00 to 05:00), during which times only the night time ranks would be operational.

The correspondence from Unite Union referred to the current policy in relation to Sunday to Thursday (00:00 to 05:00) openings of the Union Street rank. It recommended that the Bridge Street rank be included within this policy; that Union Terrace be used as a feeder rank to Bridge Street, that Back Wynd be used as a feeder to the rank past the graveyard on Union Street and that taxi ranks in side streets be reopened at all times from Sunday to Thursday.

Graeme McColl raised concerns in relation to the Taxi Marshalls, who appear to be leaving the ranks at approximately 4.00am instead of the contracted 5.00am finish. He also sought confirmation as to when the new Castle Street taxi rank display pillar would be installed and why there were no Taxi Marshalls present.

Tommy Campbell suggested that bar staff should be encouraged to provide awareness information to their customers, specifically in terms of the location of the night time ranks.

In relation to the new Castle Street taxi rank, Vycki Shade advised that there had been a delay in receiving the display pillar from the suppliers, however it was anticipated that the pillar would be installed by the weekend. She concluded by intimating that it was never the intention to have Marshalls located at the new rank due to budgetary constraints, however she would confirm this arrangement and notify members of the group in due course.

In relation to the request to re-open the taxi ranks at all times during Sunday to Thursday, officers indicated that the Taxi Demand Survey would assist consideration of this issue and if the Licensing Committee approve the request, the normal statutory consultation would apply and that a report would require to be submitted to the Enterprise Planning and Infrastructure Committee for consideration.

The Consultation Group agreed:-

- (i) to recommend to the Licensing Committee that consideration be given to the re-opening of the side street taxi ranks at all times during Sunday to Thursday; and
- (ii) that officers write to members of the group clarifying the position in terms of whether the Taxi Marshalls were to operate at the new taxi rank on Castle Street.

OPERATION OF GREEN LIGHT POLICY AT THE AIRPORT

6. The Consultation Group had before it correspondence from Unite Union relating to the Green Light Policy at the Airport.

The correspondence advised (a) that the green light was not switched on at times when there is a queue of passengers waiting and there are no green plated taxis available; and (b) that there also appears to be a policy for Comcabs alerting their own non green plated taxi drivers to come to the airairport rather than switching on the green light.

The correspondence recommended that a meeting be established between all parties and facilitated by Council Officers to ensure fairness in the operation of the green light.

Also attached for information was correspondence dated 14th October by Tommy Campbell addressed to Mr D. Provan, Managing Director, BAA (Aberdeen Airport) which highlighted the concerns regarding the operation of

the green light at the airport and sought a meeting of interested parties to discuss the concerns of Unite Union members.

The Consultation Group agreed:-

- (i) to note that a meeting would be held between interested parties and airport officials to discuss the concerns surrounding the operation of the green light at the airport; and
- (ii) to await the outcome of the above meeting with interest.

MULTI-SEATER TARIFF RATES

7. The Committee had before it correspondence from Unite Union relating to multi-seater tariff rates.

The correspondence advised that there appears to be problems as some taxi drivers are overcharging passengers when a tariff should not apply in the multi-seater taxis when there are four or less passengers.

The correspondence recommended that consideration should be given for a suitable permanent display inside the taxi with the appropriate Council logo, and that this be inserted in all multi-seater taxis by the Council.

Mr Campbell circulated a draft tariff sign design for consideration.

The Consultation Group agreed:-

that officers report to the next meeting of the Licensing Committee in relation to the proposal to have a suitable permanent display inside multi-seater taxis advertising the tariff for these vehicles.

DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

9. The Convener indicated that the next meeting of the Group will be intimated to members in due course, however it was likely to be held in March 2012 commencing at 9.30am.

The Consultation Group agreed:-

to note that details of the next meeting will be intimated to members in due course.

COUNCILLOR KIRSTY WEST, Convener