

TAXI CONSULTATION GROUP

MINUTE OF MEETING OF 7th MARCH 2012

Present: Councillor Kirsty Blackman (Convener), and Councillors Collie and MacGregor; and Tom Wilson (Substituting for Tommy Campbell, Unite Union), Graeme McColl (Aberdeen Taxi Group), Russell McLeod (Taxi Licence Office – Rainbow Taxis), Ronald Mutch (ComCab Taxi Office), 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, Litigation and Licensing), Eric Anderson (Senior Solicitor, Litigation and Licensing) Alyson Mollison (Legal Manager, Litigation and Licensing), and Mark Masson (Legal and Democratic Services).

ORDER OF AGENDA

1. The Convener sought the agreement of the Consultation Group to consider Night Time Taxi Rank – Bus Queues at St Nicholas Kirk/Graveyard at an earlier stage on the agenda. (Article 4 of this minute refers).

The Consultation Group agreed:-

to agree to the Convener's request

APOLOGIES

2. Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Councillor Boulton and Tommy Campbell.

MINUTE OF PREVIOUS MEETING OF 24 OCTOBER 2011

3. The Consultation Group had before it the minute of its previous meeting of 24th October 2011.

The Consultation Group agreed:-

to approve the minute.

NIGHT TIME RANK – BUS QUEUES AT ST NICHOLAS KIRK/GRAVEYARD

4. With reference to Article 5 of the minute of the previous meeting of 24th October 2011, the Consultation Group heard Tom Wilson provide details in relation to queuing buses which he claimed have restricted taxi movement at the St Nicholas Kirk and graveyard area. He suggested that taxis be allowed to use Back Wynd as a holding rank at night times.

The Committee heard from Vycki Shade, who advised that at present taxis were not permitted to use the side streets as an overflow due to the restrictions on nearby taxi ranks.

During the discussion which followed, it was suggested that consideration be given to establishing a working group to specifically address issues relating to taxi ranks and to ensure that there was ongoing dialogue with Council officers and the taxi trade in this regard.

The Consultation Group agreed:-

- (i) to note that a report on taxi rank specific recommendations would be considered by the Licensing Committee at its meeting on 17th April 2012 as part of the overall work attributed to the recent Taxi Demand Survey; and
- (ii) to note that night time taxi rank issues would be considered at a future meeting of the Licensing Committee.

REPRESENTATION ON THE TAXI CONSULTATION GROUP

5. With reference to Article 1 of the minute of the previous meeting of 24th October 2011, the Consultation Group had before it correspondence from Tom Wilson which provided information in relation to the findings of a survey conducted by the Unite Union regarding taxi driver representation.

The correspondence (a) advised that the Unite Union agreed to undertake a survey to find out who taxi drivers want to represent them at the Taxi Consultation Group and other Council meetings regarding taxi issues; (b) outlined the process for completing the survey and validating their choice; (c) explained that a total of 825 taxi drivers took part in the survey, of which 616 (74.65%) chose the Unite Union as the body they wished to represent them; (d) indicated that as a result of the findings of the survey, the Unite Union was seeking an additional member to represent them on the Taxi Consultation Group; and (e) had attached to it, the results of the Taxi Badge Holder Survey.

The Consultation Group heard Tom Wilson in support of the correspondence and the results of the survey. In response, Russell McLeod and Lynne Smith intimated that they could see no benefit in increasing representation of the Unite Union on the Group.

The Convener referred to the decision of the Licensing Committee at their meeting on 14th September 2011, whereat the present remit, governance and membership of the Taxi Consultation Group was agreed and that a review of the of the Group would be undertaken following the Scottish Local Government Elections in May 2012.

The Consultation Group agreed:-

- (i) to note that a review of the remit, governance and membership of the Taxi Consultation Group would be undertaken following the Scottish Local Government Elections in May 2012; and

- (ii) that members of the Group will be given the opportunity to be consulted during the preparation of the report.

TAXI DEMAND SURVEY

6. With reference to Article 3(B) of the minute of the previous meeting of 24th October 2011, the Consultation Group heard Paul Connolly provide an update in relation to the progress following the recent independent Taxi Demand Survey undertaken by Edinburgh Napier University.

Mr Connolly (a) explained that a report which takes forward the work relating to the results of the survey would be submitted to the meeting of the Licensing Committee on 17th April 2012; (b) advised that officers had consulted with transport officials, Community Safety Officers and Grampian Police on taxi rank specific recommendations; and (c) indicated that a questionnaire was also issued to members of the Consultation Group on 22nd February 2012 seeking their views on multi seater vehicle surcharges and taxi rank specific recommendations.

Graeme McColl intimated that there were taxi ranks which were used less frequently than others, and if there was a potential recommendation to close these ranks, alternative provision should be identified.

Russell McLeod suggested that early consideration should be given to the inclusion of taxi rank provision within the planning process for the Union Terrace Garden Project to avoid taxi access problems similar to those at Union Square.

The Consultation Group agreed:-

- (i) that the relevant officers be notified of the suggestion to include taxi rank provision within the planning process for the Union Terrace Garden Project; and
- (iii) to otherwise note the information provided.

TAXI TRADE ACCOUNTS - UPDATE

7. With reference to Article 5 of the minute of meeting of 15th August 2011, the Consultation Group heard Alyson Mollison provide an update in relation to taxi trade income audited accounts.

Mrs Mollison advised that there had been some delay in obtaining the financial information required to produce the account figures, but indicated that the information would be available for circulation to members of the group in the course of the following week.

Mrs Mollison explained in detail, the process required to produce the account figures.

The Consultation Group agreed:-

to note that members of the group would receive the financial information relating to the taxi trade during the week commencing 12th March 2012.

MULTI SEATER TARIFF SIGNAGE

8. With reference to Article 7 of the minute of the previous meeting of 24th October 2011 and Article 6 of the minute of meeting of the Licensing Committee of 23rd November 2011, the Consultation Group heard the Convener advise that the information sought relating to the multi seater tariff surcharge was already contained within the existing tariff notice which was required to be displayed within the vehicle. She explained that no evidence had been provided to suggest that multi seater tariff signage was necessary and urged the taxi trade to report any instances of overcharging to Sergeant Middler, Grampian Police.

The Convener suggested that a multi seater vehicle tariff display could be prepared by officers and published on the Council website so that taxi drivers could obtain and display in their vehicles if they so wish.

It was acknowledged by some members of the group that the present taxi fare notice was difficult for passengers to understand due to the number of surcharges included within the notice. It was therefore suggested that the fare notice should be amended to enable passengers to understand the notice more easily.

The Consultation Group agreed:-

to note the Convener's suggestion of publishing a multi seater surcharge tariff notice on the Council website which could be downloaded for display by taxi drivers with this type of vehicle if they so wish.

WHEELCHAIR ACCESSIBLE VEHICLE POLICY – UPDATE ON REVIEW

9. With reference to Article 3 of the minute of meeting of the Licensing Committee of 17th January 2012, the Consultation Group heard Paul Connolly advise that a report in relation to the provision and policy of taxi wheelchair accessible vehicles (WAV's) would be submitted to the Licensing Committee meeting on 17 April 2012. He indicated that an Equalities and Human Rights Impact Assessment would also be submitted with the report and that consultation on the policy would be carried out with taxi representatives.

The Consultation Group agreed:-

To note the information provided.

TAXI FARE REVIEW 2013

10. Reference was made to Article 3 of the minute of meeting of 15th August 2011, at which the Consultation Group agreed that officers would

consult with the taxi trade on the process to determine the method to calculate the figures (the formula) for the 2013 Taxi Fare Review. In this regard, Tom Wilson suggested that arrangements be made to commence the process.

The Consultation Group heard Alyson Mollison explain that the results of the Taxi Demand Survey would be used to assist the process. She advised that there was a need to update the arrangements by involving external and independent support and to consider best practice options and current thinking.

The Consultation Group agreed:-

That officers in consultation with the taxi trade representatives progress the arrangements for a taxi fare formula review.

FREQUENCY AND LENGTH OF LICENSING COMMITTEE MEETINGS

11. The Consultation Group heard Russell McLeod refer to the excessive duration of previous Licensing Committee meetings and suggested whether consideration could be given to dividing the meeting into two sections with one of these being dedicated to taxi trade items.

The Convener advised that the previous two committee meetings had commenced at 10.00am to allow an adequate break at the appropriate time. She also indicated that it was likely that there would be a review of committee structures including the frequency of meetings following the Local Government Election.

The Consultation Group agreed:-

to note the information provided.

COUNCILLOR KIRSTY BLACKMAN, Convener