

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

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COMMITTEE	LICENSING COMMITTEE
DATE	17 MARCH 2015
CORPORATE DIRECTOR	EWAN SUTHERLAND (ACTING)
TITLE OF REPORT	SURVEY ON UNMET TAXI DEMAND – COLLATION OF DATA AND CONSULTATION WITH TRADE
REPORT NUMBER	CG/15/34
CHECKLIST COMPLETED	YES

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1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

To advise the Committee of the procedures for analysis of taxi marshal data to fulfil the recommendations in the Survey on Unmet Taxi Demand and to inform the Committee of the outcome of discussions with the Taxi Consultation Group.

2. RECOMMENDATION(S)

That the Committee:

1. Notes the terms of the report;
2. Instructs the Head of Legal and Democratic Services to report to the Licensing Committee in early 2016 with an analysis of taxi marshal data over a twelve month period in accordance with the terms of this report.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications arising from the report.

4. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

The Community Partnership Analyst based in Communities Housing and Infrastructure will be asked to provide analysis of the taxi marshal data to enable officers from Legal and Democratic Services to report to Committee in early 2016. It is not envisaged that this will have any significant impact on resources. The data is already being collated by the taxi marshals and stored by officers in Communities Housing and Infrastructure therefore its collection will not require any additional resources.

## 5. REPORT

### 5.1 BACKGROUND

In June 2014, the Licensing Committee commissioned a taxi demand survey by CTS Traffic and Transportation Ltd. The report concluded that there was significant unmet demand for taxis in Aberdeen and recommended a controlled increase in the limit on taxi vehicle licences by an additional 30 taxi licences with regular monitoring to ascertain whether such an increase was sufficient to meet demand. The report suggested that such monitoring could be done through analysis of data collected from the taxi marshals.

At its meeting on 25 November 2014 the Committee received a presentation from the author of the survey report. The author indicated that in his opinion there were other factors separate from the number of taxis in the fleet that were affecting demand for taxis in Aberdeen. Those factors were not immediately evident and he therefore recommended that the Committee undertake further investigation in an attempt to identify any other issues that were impacting on demand.

The Committee agreed with the recommendation in the report and increased the limit on taxi licences by 30 to 1079. In order to ensure effective monitoring the Committee instructed officers from Legal and Democratic Services to report back on the procedures for collation of the taxi marshal data with a view to providing a report to Committee after a period of twelve months.

The Committee further instructed officers from Legal and Democratic Services to raise the issue of unmet demand at the next meeting of the Taxi Consultation Group in an attempt to identify any matters separate from the limit on taxi licences that may be having an effect on demand for taxis in the city and report back to Committee on the outcome of the discussions.

### 5.2 ANALYSIS OF TAXI MARSHAL DATA

The city of Aberdeen currently has four ranks on Union Street which operate during the late hours of Friday and Saturday night between 12 midnight and 5am. During those hours the ranks are manned by marshals from Securi-Group who are contracted by Aberdeen City Council.

The marshals carry out regular monitoring of the operation of the night ranks. The number of taxis on the rank, the length of the queue, the number of people departing from the rank and the average waiting time are noted on a half hourly basis between 00.30am and 5am.

The data is collated on a spreadsheet which is sent to officers from Communities Housing and Infrastructure on a weekly basis. In addition, any particular issues

with the ranks are noted separately. To give an example, during the weekend of 24<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> January 2015 marshals noted that there were three instances where taxis drove away from ranks for no reason without customers and there were three incidents of fighting amongst customers at the ranks.

It is proposed that the data collated on the spreadsheets together with details of any particular issues is provided to officers from Legal and Democratic Services on a monthly basis so that a record can be kept by the licensing authority and any issues of significant note can be identified and further action taken if appropriate.

In December 2015 officers from Legal and Democratic Services will instruct a report to be prepared analysing the data for the period December 2014 to November 2015. It has been agreed following discussions between officers from Legal and Democratic Service and Communities Housing and Infrastructure that the report will be produced by the Community Safety Partnership Analyst. The report will be presented to Committee in early 2016.

### 5.3 OUTCOME OF DISCUSSIONS WITH THE TAXI CONSULTATION GROUP

The Taxi Consultation Group met on the 19<sup>th</sup> February 2015. Present at the meeting were representatives from Unite the Union, Aberdeen Taxi Group, the airport taxis and the Independent Drivers.

The Group discussed possible sources of unmet demand. The trade representatives present felt that the assessment of significant unmet demand had arisen primarily from the excessive waiting times during the late hours on a Friday and Saturday. It was felt that due to the high volumes of customers there will always be unmet demand during those times.

The discussion with the trade representatives did highlight the following issues:-

#### (i) Roads infrastructure

Representatives from Unite the Union highlighted problems with the roads infrastructure that impacts on customer service during peak times. An example was given of a trip to the airport which could often take up to two hours from the city centre during the rush hour periods, but only half an hour out with those times.

The Unite representatives also mentioned problems at the railway station. There were issues with private cars entering the taxi rank and causing obstructions to taxi vehicles. The traffic lights on entry and exit to the rank also create problems. Vehicles have to queue for significant periods of time which result in delays in servicing the customers queuing at the station as well as increased fares. The Unite representatives felt that a “give way” junction at the exit to the station would be more appropriate than the current traffic light system.

The Group noted that whilst the above issues could impact on the issue of unmet demand, any changes to roads infrastructure and traffic control measures would fall within the remit of Communities Housing and Infrastructure.

(ii) Private hire fleet

Although the survey report on unmet demand had highlighted the ratio of private hire cars and taxis in Aberdeen as being unusual compared to other cities in Scotland, the trade representatives did not see that as a contributory factor to the issue of unmet demand.

(iii) Rank operations

It was noted that the operation of the Graveyard rank in Union Street had been highlighted in the report as poor. However the representative from ATG pointed out that in view of the layout of Union Street there was no other alternative and this had been examined by the Committee on previous occasions.

(iv) Accessible Vehicle Policy

The representative from ATG expressed the view that the 100% accessible vehicle policy could result in taxi licence holders moving to private hire licences in order to retain a saloon car. This may impact on demand. It should be noted that there is currently a waiting list for taxi licences.

## 6. IMPACT

Corporate – The monitoring of data will assist the Committee in making informed decisions regarding any limit on taxi licences and will align with the recommendations in the survey report on unmet taxi demand.

Public – The report will be of interest to both the taxi trade and members of the public.

Equality – The report aims to provide information to the Committee to inform its policy on the limit on taxi licences. There is no impact on groups with protected characteristics; therefore, an impact assessment is not necessary.

## 7. MANAGEMENT OF RISK

The Committee can refuse applications for taxi licences for the purpose of limiting the number of taxis in the city but only if it is satisfied that there is no significant demand for taxis which is unmet. In the event of a challenge to any decision to refuse a licence on those grounds the Committee must be in a position to establish that it has first satisfied itself that there is no significant unmet demand. Monitoring data will assist the Committee in gathering relevant data to provide an evidential basis for its decision making.

## 8. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Survey on Unmet Taxi Demand in Aberdeen, CTS Traffic and Transportation Ltd,  
November 2014

9. REPORT AUTHOR DETAILS

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