

TAXI/PRIVATE HIRE CAR CONSULTATION GROUP

NOTE OF MEETING OF 16 NOVEMBER 2009

Present:

Councillors Reynolds (Convener), Bouton, Clark and K West

Alistair Rose (ARTDA), Roy McHardy (ARTDA), Russell McLeod (ATG), Gordon McKay (Rainbow), Lynne Smith (Central Taxis), Angelina McKenzie (ComCab), Fraser Bain (BAA), Yvonne Birch (BAA), Derek Lumsden (Airport Taxis), Alastair Williamson (DAG), Nick Fay (Union Square Development), Sgt Keith Middler (Grampian Police), Brenda Flaherty (Office of City Solicitor), Jacqui Wallace (Office of City Solicitor), Paul Connolly (Office of City Solicitor), Scott Ramsay (Enterprise, Planning and Infrastructure) and Katherine Purvis (Enterprise, Planning and Infrastructure)

1. **Note of Meeting of 17 August 2009**

Approved.

2. **Matters Arising**

Licensing of Booking Offices – The group was advised that today, 16 November, is the date that applications must be made by persons/companies of taxi booking offices that fall within the Licensing regime.

3. **Airport Zoning**

The Licensing Committee deferred consideration of the report to its meeting to be held on 02 December 2009, to allow it to be considered by this group.

Russell McLeod stated that it was the view of ATG that it's imperative that there remains in place a dedicated airport fleet, supplemented when necessary by city drivers, therefore the best option is an overlapping zone. Lynne Smith agreed with this.

Councillor Clark was of the opinion that the green light should be controlled by Aberdeen Airport Ltd and not the managing agent. Angelina McKenzie stated that marshalls operate the light in accordance with agreed waiting times, stipulated by the airport.

Fraser Bain said that too much emphasis is placed on the green light. Aberdeen Airport Ltd are prepared to look at all the issues and try to find what works best for passengers, once the Licensing Committee makes its decision in respect of zoning.

4. **Taxi Fare Review**

There was a request from ATG to delay the fare review to the first quarter of 2010, with a view to it being implemented in the third quarter of that year.

5. Provision of Taxis at Union Square

Russell McLeod stated that the trade's preference would be for a rank within the Union Square development but if this was not possible then it would like to see one close by. In a report to the Licensing Committee on 02 September 2009, Palmerston Road had been ruled out as a possible location but Russell stated that he had been at a meeting since then and was informed that location was being reconsidered.

Alastair Williamson (DAG) stated that there were a number of issues in relation to access to the railway and bus stations for people with disabilities.

It is widely recognised that there are problems with access to the railway station, which is supposed to be restricted to taxis and Blue Badge holders. Scott Ramsay stated that to change the signs for greater clarity is a process that can take up to 9 months to complete.

Councillor Boulton said that she had received quite a few complaints from people who were picking up elderly or disabled persons from the rail station and that it was not satisfactory to restrict access to taxis and blue badge holders. She was advised that there is disabled access to the railway station together with a drop off point at the South College Street car park.

The consensus was that the signs around the Union Square development, bus and rail stations were confusing and Scott Ramsay agreed to take this matter back to colleagues for review.

Nick Fay, Union Square took each of the issues in turn:-

Taxi Rank Location – Palmerston Road is Hammerson's preferred location for a rank to service the Union Square development. Hammerson has built a pedestrian walk-through and would be prepared to install additional lighting and CCTV. Footfall to the area has increased considerably since the opening of the development, particularly TK Maxx which is located closest to the Palmerston Road.

Bus / Train Stations – the issue of a drop off point at the bus station is one for Stagecoach Bluebird to investigate although Hammerson are willing to facilitate discussions.

Access signs at Bus Station – Hammerson is willing to review the signs in respect of the railway station with First Scotrail. There could be the introduction of signs on Hammerson's land making it clear that access to the rail station is for taxis and blue badge holders only.

College Street Car Park - Hammerson built lifts to improve access to the railway station. They bought the car park some time ago and decks 5 and below are leased to First Scotrail as the station car park. Decks 6 and above are for Union Square.

It was agreed that the Licensing Committee should be asked to re-visit Palmerston Road as a location for a taxi rank and they would also be asked to consider putting a temporary rank there meantime

6. **Review of Existing Taxi Ranks in the City Centre**

The Convener suggested to Scott Ramsay that recommendation (b) in his report be amended to instruct officers to attend meetings of this group to consult on relevant issues.

7. **Procedure for Approval of Taxi Meter Types**

Brenda Flaherty informed the group that this report was going to Committee to authorise a procedure for approving taxi meters.

8. **Taxi Inspection Centre**

Brenda Flaherty stated that it is proposed that Fleet services will take over the day –to – day management of fleet services. There is no definite date but it may well be before the end of the year. From the trades point of view there should be little change, all policy decisions will still go through the Licensing Committee and the Licensing Team will still be responsible for policy and procedure. The only impact should be positive in that opening times would be increased and there should be fewer cancellations than at present.

9. **AOCB**

Wheelchair Accessible Vehicles

Roy McHardy wanted to know why saloon cars had been allowed to be licensed for partnerships by the Licensing Committee at its last meeting. Councillor West explained that the licence holders who were requesting to be allowed to form partnerships all had saloon cars at present so they were not substituting wheelchair accessible vehicles with saloon cars. Some requests had been refused, others accepted because in each instance the Committee decided that the request was a legitimate one.

Review of Taxi Ranks

Scott Ramsay wanted to know what was the best way to actively engage with drivers over matters impacting on taxis. Last time he sought their views 1300 persons were written to and the response rate was about 7%. Russell McLeod stated that it was difficult, and perhaps the best way was through the consultation group.

10. **Meeting Dates for 2010**

The meeting dates for 2010 are:-

08 February

17 May

16 August

15 November