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09/05/2016

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Legal and Democratic Services
Corporate Governance
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Ref: Review Of accessible Vehicle Policy

Dear Convenor,

Aberdeen Taxi Group (ATG) would like to address the committee on the above issue.

We arrive back at committee on the above policy to see whether it is needed that further consultation is required on a committee decision from back in 2012.

In short ATG have not changed their mind on the policy and would still be an advocate of a mixed fleet operating with in Aberdeen City (not a 100% accessible fleet).

We are aware of all the consultation processes that have already happened and the results from this but currently we operate a mixed fleet within the city so it is not as if this option can't and won't work. I think there is a reluctance to continue like this due to how a fair system can be implemented to which drivers would be allocated the SALOON Hackney plate. This is something that would need further discussion but we are sure it is not a breaking point in the decision.

As a trade we have always looked at why a 100% accessible fleet would be beneficial.

The honest answer that we come up with is it would not be helpful to the stakeholders that use this part of public transport. Whilst we realise that there have been EHRIA forms done for this proposal we don't feel that it represents what the public actually need. There are a wide and differing range of disabilities and not all accessible vehicles are able to cope with these.

From the last set of reports and discussions it became clear that the only vehicle that gave full ambulatory access was indeed an ambulance. This was then and is now not the answer as clearly this is not an affordable option.

So on the back of this information we have a list of taxis that are deemed fit to pass the Councils Hackney testing.

These specifications of the cars and a list of vehicles are found in Appendix 2 and 3 of the 2012 report by Paul Connolly. This list is now slightly outdated but still gives a good indication of the different types of vehicles that have been adapted to try and fit the 100% accessible vehicle policy.

Does this list of vehicles fit the needs of all stakeholders?

We don't feel it does as not all disabilities are able to use all types of vehicles. We have gone over and over why not all cars are able to take all types of passengers over the years and I'm sure that all members here today have access to that information and will take that in to consideration when making a decision on whether further consultation is needed.

There is not one person that I have spoken to as Chairman of ATG that wants to discriminate against any part of our society which is why they all feel that a mixed fleet would work best as this would offer the widest variety of taxis to all.

I stand by my comments from the licensing committee on 6th April 2016 that 54 % of the taxi fleet being accessible is probably enough but I am not the person to decide that the consultation process was and is.

Also a number of drivers who have already moved to accessible vehicles based on the June 2017 date coming would have a potential grievance if the 2017 policy be overturned. What do the council do with these licences if further consultation takes place and 2017 becomes something different?

We ask that no matter what is decided that it is watertight in law and cannot be challenged in a court of law.

Regards

Graeme McColl

Chairman ATG