

## ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

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COMMITTEE	Licensing Committee
DATE	18 April 2017
DIRECTOR	Richard Ellis
TITLE OF REPORT	Response to Consultation on Training for Taxi and Private Hire Drivers.
REPORT NUMBER	CG/17/019
CHECKLIST COMPLETED	Yes

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### 1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

To provide the Committee with analysis of the results of the consultation on training for taxi and private hire drivers.

### 2. RECOMMENDATION(S)

That the Committee:

1. Note the results of the consultation exercise.
2. Decide whether or not to proceed with further consultation and if so, the nature and content of such further consultation.

### 3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

This report simply informs the Committee of the results of a consultation exercise and accordingly will have no financial implications.

### 4. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

This report simply informs the Committee of the results of a consultation exercise and accordingly will have no other implications.

## 5. BACKGROUND/MAIN ISSUES

At its meeting of 1 September 2015 the Licensing Committee instructed officers to carry out a consultation exercise on potential training for taxi and private hire drivers. The consultation period ran from 8 July 2016 until 31 August 2016 and a copy of the questionnaire that was circulated is enclosed as Appendix 1. In total 44 responses were received, with the majority coming from taxi drivers (33) and private hire drivers (8).

From the list of potential topics, six topics received votes from over half of the respondents. In decreasing order the responses were as follows:

- Health & safety of driver and customers – 29 votes
- Passenger assistance – 28 votes
- Transporting children & young persons – 26 votes
- Customer service – 25 votes
- Relevant law – 24 votes
- Routes & fares – 23 votes
- Parcels and luggage – 20 votes
- Maintenance of vehicle – 16 votes
- Road signs – 14 votes
- Left blank – 9 responses.

It would appear from those responses that issues relating to customer experience were of most interest. The principal reason attributed to these responses related to competency, with others referencing health and safety. The converse view was expressed by those who left the question blank or simply stated that training was unnecessary. A total of 26 responses referenced competency, 7 stated the training was not required, 6 left the question blank and 5 highlighted health and safety.

The next question asked respondents to name potential benefits of training and similar themes emerged with the two most popular responses being customer care and consistency with 18 and 9 respectively. Again, those who disagreed did so by leaving the question blank (5) or stating that they could not see any potential benefits (6).

In terms of negative impact 19 responses indicated that there were no negative impacts whilst 12 highlighted the time and cost of additional training requirements. A possible consequence was deterrence of potential applicants according to 3 replies and 9 respondents left the question blank.

Taking all of the above into consideration it would appear that attitudes towards training are mixed and that perhaps there is more support for customer focussed training than other areas. Time and cost are factors that will have to be taken into account.

The survey then addressed individual elements of any possible training regime, beginning with whether or not there was a need or desire for a recognised qualification. The majority felt that this was not required (26 no, 16 yes with 2 blank) and the primary reason given (20 responses) was that it was unnecessary. Some respondents did consider a qualification might assist to evidence standards and improve consistency but these responses were very much in the minority, with 9 and 5 votes respectively.

There was also a considerable difference of opinion on whether or not training should be renewed. Almost half of the respondents indicated that it should not whilst those in disagreement had differing views on the timescales for renewal. These replies varied from every 3 years (9 replies), every 5 years (10 replies), every 10 years (1 reply) and 1 other unspecified period. The main reasons given against training renewal were that practical experience and enforcement were more important as well as cost implications and a simple lack of necessity.

There was general consensus on the question of whether or not any training should be the same for drivers of taxis and private hire vehicles with 38 respondents indicating that it should be the same training for both. The overwhelming reason given for this was that both jobs require the same basic skills.

Respondents were asked how long existing drivers should be given to complete any training and this received a mixed response from those who completed the question. The most popular option was on renewal of the licence, although a small number of votes were also received for a variety of other options including 2 years, 3 years, 5 years, dependant on experience and never at all.

Another area where there was no clear consensus of opinion was on the issue of the cost of the training and who should be responsible for bearing said cost. The most popular options with 11 responses each were an increase in the application fee for the licence and the costs to be borne by the council. The only other option to receive multiple votes (8) was a one off payment by the licence holder.

Respondents were also given the option to add any additional comments at the end of the survey and these comments covered a range of issues, including the current economic climate, the suggestion of targeted training, a wish to uphold standards and a danger of too much bureaucracy.

In conclusion, it is fair to say that there has been a mixed response to the suggestion of training, and as mentioned earlier, those in favour of the training seem to prefer that it be restricted to matters relating to customer experience. This would appear to be a sensible approach as other factors such as routes, fares and suchlike will all be covered in the Knowledge test which now requires to be completed by all drivers.

It is recognised that the number of responses to the survey was limited but it has provided a basis for discussion and further investigation should the Committee be so minded.

## 6. IMPACT

**Improving Customer Experience** – No changes are proposed in terms of this report. Were the committee to decide to implement a training requirement then there is the possibility that taxi and private hire drivers will be more knowledgeable about their profession and matters pertaining to improving the customer experience.

**Corporate** – No changes are proposed in terms of this report. Were the committee to decide to implement a training requirement then there is the possibility that users of taxis and private hire vehicles will experience an improved customer service and accordingly improve the city's reputation for visitors and commuters.

**Public** – Again, no changes are proposed in terms of this report. Were the committee to decide to implement a training requirement then there is the possibility that users of taxis and private hire vehicles will experience an improved customer service as a result.

## 7. MANAGEMENT OF RISK

There is a risk that seeking to introduce further requirements on the trade at a time of economic downturn will be viewed negatively by those primarily affected, particularly so soon after the introduction of the Knowledge test being extended to private hire drivers.

## 8. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None.

## 9. REPORT AUTHOR DETAILS

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