

TAXI AND PRIVATE HIRE CAR CONSULTATION GROUP

ABERDEEN, 3 October 2018. Minute of Meeting of the TAXI AND PRIVATE HIRE CAR CONSULTATION GROUP. Present:- Councillor Reynolds, Chairperson; and Councillor Delaney; Tommy Campbell (Unite the Union), Chris Douglas (Aberdeen Taxis), Stewart Duncan (Airport Taxis), Roy McHardy (GMB) and Russell McLeod (Rainbow City Taxis).

In attendance:- Sheila Barclay and John Weir (Fleet Services), John Clark (Unite the Union), David McKane, Lynn May and Jennifer Wilson (Licensing), Kate Lines and Allison Swanson (Committee Services) and PC Steve Sharp (Police Scotland).

APOLOGIES

1. Apologies were intimated on behalf of Councillor Donnelly and Mr Graeme McColl (Aberdeen Taxi Group).

INTRODUCTION AND WELCOME

2. The Chairperson welcomed Mr John Clark, Unite the Union to his first meeting of the Consultation Group. Mr Tommy Campbell, Unite the Union advised that Mr Clark would be the new representative on the Group for Unite the Union following this meeting.

The Taxi and Private Hire Car Consultation Group resolved:
to concur with the Chairperson's remarks.

MINUTE OF PREVIOUS MEETING

3. The Consultation Group had before it the minute of its previous meeting of 27 June 2018.

The Taxi and Private Hire Car Consultation Group resolved:
to approve the minute.

ASSISTANCE DOG USERS AND DRIVER TRAINING

4. The Consultation Group had before it an email received by the Clerk to the Group from Ms Mary Rasmussen, regarding the proposal that disability equity training be a requirement for all taxi and private hire car drivers to enable them to recognise, amongst other things, the difficulties experienced by assistance dog users, particularly with regard to the comfort and safety of passengers and their dogs.

Ms Jennifer Wilson, Solicitor advised that a report regarding all aspects of taxi and private hire driver training was scheduled to be considered by the Licensing Committee at its meeting on 19 February 2019 and confirmed that disability equity training would be considered as part of that wider report and consultation would be undertaken with the Disability Equity Partnership prior to submission of the report. Ms Wilson also advised of

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the process for a taxi or private driver applying for a medical exemption for carrying assistance dogs wherein she confirmed that refusal to carry assistance dogs or wheelchair users without a medical exemption would be a breach of legislation under the Equality Act 2010 and an application for a medical exemption had to be considered by the Licensing Committee. Trade representatives on the Group asked for correspondence to be issued to each driver to make them aware of the aforementioned process.

In response, Ms Wilson referred to the Taxi Trade Account and advised that the cost of postage would further increase the existing deficit. She advised that the Licensing Team was actively progressing digitisation of the service delivered and as part of this were seeking email contacts for all drivers, however at this time they were not able to communicate electronically with all drivers. The Licensing Team would circulate the requested information via the trade representatives, booking offices, the Council's website and at the test centre to minimise costs.

The Taxi and Private Hire Car Consultation Group resolved:

- (i) to note that a report regarding taxi and private hire car driver training would be submitted to the Licensing Committee meeting on 19 February 2019 for consideration;
- (ii) to note that the Licensing Team was exploring the further digitalisation of the taxi and private hire service; and
- (iii) to note that the Licensing Team would circulate an information note regarding allergies and the process for applying for medical exemptions through the taxi trade representatives, booking offices and through signage at the test centre.

REPORT TO TAXI AND PRIVATE HIRE CAR GROUP ON TAXI DEMAND SURVEY SUGGESTIONS

5. With reference to the minute of the Licensing Committee of 21 August 2018 (article 14 (Taxi Demand Survey) refers), the Consultation Group had before it an information note which contained a breakdown of results from the Taxi Demand Survey.

Ms Lynn May, Solicitor highlighted the current pattern of working hours which the survey found had led to a perceived limited availability of licensed vehicles on Friday and Saturday nights and sought discussion on the survey recommendations to address this matter, such as a revision of the fares tables, with a new higher distance based tariff during the late night peak periods. In this regard, those present felt that an increase to the fare tariff would not encourage drivers to work during the hours outlined but would merely increase costs to customers, however they agreed that the taxi trade should be encouraged to work unsocial hours if possible.

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The Taxi and Private Hire Car Consultation Group resolved:

to note the report and to request that the Group's view that a new higher distance based tariff during the late night peak periods on Friday and Saturday nights should not be explored be reported to the Licensing Committee.

REPORT TO TAXI AND PRIVATE HIRE CAR GROUP ON TAXI DEMAND SURVEY SUGGESTIONS REGARDING TAXI RANKS IN ABERDEEN CITY

6. With reference to the Licensing Committee of 21 August 2018 (article 14 (Taxi Demand Survey) of the minute refers), the Consultation Group had before it an information note which (1) advised of the Licensing Committee's decision that the Chief Officer-Governance be instructed to consult on an informal basis with the Chief Officer-Operations, as a representative of the Council as Roads and Planning authority, the Chief Constable, Police Scotland, the Taxi and Private Hire Car Consultation Group, and the Disability Equity Partnership regarding the suggestion for establishing new taxi ranks at Upperkirkgate and Guild Street and discuss the under use of the ranks at St Andrews Street and Dee Street; and (2) summarised the results from the Taxi Rank Survey.

With regard to the underuse of the rank on St Andrew's Street, it was noted that signage was poor which possibly lead to its lack of use. Ms May advised that Police Scotland had raised no objection to its removal and that the roads department had advised it could improve signage to promote the rank, however prior to installing additional signage assurance would be needed that the rank would be used by the trade to justify the expenditure.

In relation to the rank on Dee Street it was noted that the rank was split into two separate bays, split by the junction with Langstane Place and that the usage, albeit light was concentrated on the section of the rank between Union Street and Langstane Place which was highlighted for a potential reduction in capacity beyond Langstane Place. Members discussed the rank and the potential road works to be undertaken in this area and Ms May advised that the roads department were supportive of a change of use for the second section of the rank to allow for additional public parking capacity. The Group felt that no action should be taken in respect of this rank until further information on the road layout in that area had been received.

With regards to potential new ranks, the survey had suggested two locations which might be suitable, and Members discussed these both, namely, Upperkirkgate and Guild Street and Ms May advised of the responses received from Police Scotland and the Roads Department regarding those options. In light of the responses regarding the Upperkirkgate site, the Group agreed that the location suggested would not be suitable, however agreed that there was demand in the Marischal Square area and that a rank in this area was desirable for customers and the trade. A rank on Upperkirkgate on the north side and Queen Street were suggested as possible locations for a rank and the Group requested that the general area around Marischal Square be considered for suitable rank locations.

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In response to suggestions that a rank be introduced on Guild Street, the Group were advised that objections had been received from Police Scotland and the roads department on the grounds of public safety, however it was recognised that provision for non-station zoned vehicles was limited to using the College Street car park which did not offer the best service possible for passengers.

The Taxi and Private Hire Car Consultation Group resolved:

- (i) to request that the following view of the Consultation Group be reflected in the report to the Licensing Committee on the future provision of taxi ranks in the city:
 - (a) no action be taken to remove St Andrew's Street until suitable rank locations were identified at Marischal Square and Guild Street;
 - (b) no action be taken to reduce the rank on Dee Street until works to pedestrianise the area around Langstane Place, Dee Street and Crown Street had been finalised;
 - (c) that further work be undertaken to determine suitable rank locations to serve the railway station and the area around Upperkirkgate / Marischal Square; and
- (ii) to note that a report would be submitted to the Licensing Committee in due course.

ENFORCEMENT OFFICER REPORT

7. The Consultation Group had before it an information note which provided an overview of the activity of the Enforcement Officers regarding taxi enforcement operations since the previous meeting. Mr McKane, Enforcement Officer, made reference to the following specific enforcement actions contained within the information note and the Consultation Group discussed these.

Station Hotel Layby

Mr McKane reinforced the no waiting restrictions in place to cover the layby outside the front entrance to the Station Hotel and circulated a recent photograph to highlight the issue. PC Steve Sharp advised that Police Scotland would oppose any application to convert the layby in to a taxi rank on the grounds of public safety and it was highlighted to the Group that on occasion, traffic had been prevented from driving round the corner from Wapping Street due to overspill from the layby. Access to the station was raised as a concern; it was suggested that the College Street car park was not an ideal location to drop off and collect passengers and the Group suggested that alternatives should be explored. In this latter regard it was noted that provision of drop off / collection points for taxis serving railway station customers was a matter for the railway and outwith the scope of the Council.

In response to advice that passengers could be dropped off within the station, Mr Roy McHardy, GMB advised that drivers were being pointed to the layby by station staff and

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that parking for station zoned taxis would be further restricted during redevelopment of the station.

Carrying of Passengers

Mr McKane, advised that there had been cases where wheelchair passengers had been refused conveyance and he reiterated that refusal, unless exempt for medical reasons (where an exemption certificate has been issued by the licensing authority) or it would not have been possible for the wheelchair to be carried safely in the vehicle was a breach of Section 165 of the Equality Act 2010 and drivers could face prosecution. The Group discussed the design of some wheelchair accessible vehicles and the restrictions on luggage space and impact this had on carrying passengers. Members also discussed the importance of training for drivers to ensure that all drivers had full knowledge of how to use the equipment within their vehicle as there was concern that not all drivers had the required knowledge and suggested that a practical test for drivers to demonstrate use of the equipment would be beneficial. Ms Wilson advised that all aspects regarding training would be covered in the report to be considered by the Licensing Committee in February 2019.

Hackney Test MOT Failures

Mr McKane advised that vehicles were still being presented for testing with minor faults that should be rectified prior to testing. Mr John Weir, Fleet Compliance Manager, was unable to confirm that access equipment was tested as part of the hackney test as he had only recently joined Fleet Services; he did state that whilst working for the Driver Vehicle Agency in Northern Ireland when conducting Hackney tests access equipment was tested.

Mr McKane further advised that the manual had been updated to reflect the position of the insurance disc on the windscreen, a sign was on display within the test centre, published on the Council's website and a guidance note was available for drivers to take away.

Street Knowledge Test

In response to a query from Mr Campbell, the Group was advised that some licence holders still had to pass the street knowledge test within the next round of three year renewal applications. Mr McKane advised that he did not have the pass / fail statistics to hand.

The Taxi and Private Hire Car Consultation Group resolved:

- (i) to request Fleet Services to confirm whether access equipment was tested as part of the Hackney test; and

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(ii) to otherwise note the update.

VALEDICTORY

8. On behalf of the Group, the Chairperson thanked Mr Campbell for his contribution to the Group over the years and wished him well in retirement.

The Taxi and Private Hire Car Consultation Group resolved:
to concur with the remarks of the Chairperson.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

9. The Consultation Group noted that the next meeting would be held on 27 March, 2019 at 10.00am in the Town House
- **Councillor John Reynolds, CHAIRPERSON.**

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Wednesday, 3 October 2018

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