

## ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

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|---------------------------|----------------------|
| <b>COMMITTEE</b>          | Licensing Committee  |
| <b>DATE</b>               | 19 February 2019     |
| <b>REPORT TITLE</b>       | Taxi Driver Training |
| <b>REPORT NUMBER</b>      | GOV19/179            |
| <b>CHIEF OFFICER</b>      | Fraser Bell          |
| <b>REPORT AUTHOR</b>      | Sandy Munro          |
| <b>TERMS OF REFERENCE</b> | 7                    |

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### 1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To provide the Committee with an update regarding potential customer service training for taxi drivers, including the operation of a satellite navigation system.

### 2. RECOMMENDATION(S)

That the Committee: -

- 2.1 note the contents of the report and agree not to proceed with any formal training programme at present.

### 3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The Committee on 12 September 2017 agreed to instruct the Licensing Team Leader to report on potential training required for drivers on customer care and disability awareness.
- 3.2 On 6 February 2018 the Committee agreed to instruct the Licensing Team Leader to include potential training on satellite navigation systems to ensure public safety as part of that report.
- 3.3 The Committee on 21 August 2018 noted that the report on customer care and disability awareness had been delayed to the meeting of the Committee on 19 February 2019, in light of the Committee's decision regarding the delayed implementation of the wheelchair accessible policy.
- 3.4 Investigations have determined that there do not appear to be any local training providers who currently run any suitable courses which would satisfy the three main elements of the training, namely customer service, disability awareness and satellite navigation system operation. Accordingly, any course would

require to be created bespoke and would require negotiation with training providers to establish the possibility and details of any such course.

- 3.5 A number of local authorities currently require taxi drivers to undergo this type of training. Some are provided by local colleges and others by private training companies. In almost all cases the driver is responsible for the cost of the course directly with the training provider. Costs vary across geographical areas. In the current climate it is likely that a further expense for drivers would not be viewed favourably by the trade. If the cost of training was to be included in the application fee, then this would require the application fees to be reviewed given that fees are required to generally meet all costs of the licensing system.
- 3.6 Although drivers are not employees of the local authority they are often a visitor's first point of contact with the city and therefore can influence the opinion of visitors, or indeed residents, if a poor service is provided. Currently the enforcement officers within the licensing department are dealing with six complaints relating to poor service, dating back to October 2018. There are currently in excess of 1200 licensed drivers however, which would suggest that the vast majority are providing acceptable service. Guidance is issued to all drivers whenever a complaint or series of complaints warrant a reminder of certain duties or responsibilities, as evidenced most recently by incidents regarding drivers' obligation to carry wheelchair bound passengers.
- 3.7 In the event that a bespoke training course is not deemed appropriate at the current time it may be possible to look to incorporate elements of the desired training within current procedures. For example, officers are investigating the possibility of incorporating the demonstration of any assistance equipment when a vehicle undergoes the twice-yearly tests. As well as ensuring the equipment itself was in working order this would ensure that the driver was fully versed in the operation of that equipment.
- 3.8 With regard to the element of satellite navigation it is suggested that this is of lesser importance given that all drivers are required to pass the Knowledge Test prior to obtaining a licence and so should be familiar with most journeys within the licensed area. In addition, whilst a number of modern vehicles will be fitted with navigation devices, not all vehicles will contain them, and they are not mandatory equipment in licensing terms. It may therefore not be reasonable to require training on a piece of equipment that is not required in order to hold the licence.
- 3.9 In conclusion, whilst a training programme would be desirable, evidence would suggest that the issue is not causing any particular concerns at present and the imposition of a further expense on potential drivers may prove counterproductive if standards can be maintained by other methods. The authority would also be looking for drivers to take individual responsibility for maintaining and improving standards. Should evidence be received that standards are falling or that there is an underlying issue that could be resolved by the introduction of training then the matter could be re-evaluated.

#### 4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 There are no direct financial implications as a result of the recommendation in this report. However, if officers are instructed to investigate the creation of a bespoke training course, there will be cost implications, currently unknown. There is currently no resource within the taxi budgets to cover the cost of any additional training. This would therefore be required to be paid directly by taxi drivers.

#### 5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 Customer service training is not a legal requirement in terms of the licensing legislation and so there are no direct legal implications arising from this report.

#### 6. MANAGEMENT OF RISK

|                     | Risk   | Low (L),<br>Medium<br>(M), High<br>(H) | Mitigation   |
|---------------------|--|--|--|
| <b>Financial</b>    | If there is to be a training course in the future, the cost of this would require to be met directly by the drivers              |  | Potential to look at other possible methods of ensuring standards are maintained   |
| <b>Legal</b>        | N/A  |  |  |
| <b>Employee</b>     | If no training course is established there may be more incidents which require the involvement of enforcement officers           | L                                      | Enforcement officers already carry out this function at present and the level of incidents is relatively low compared to the number of licensed drivers. |
| <b>Customer</b>     | If no training course is established there is a risk that standards of customer service may not be as high as could be expected. | L                                      | Standards can be maintained by other methods. There does not seem to be an issue at present regarding standards.   |
| <b>Environment</b>  | N/A  |  |  |
| <b>Technology</b>   | N/A  |  |  |
| <b>Reputational</b> | If standards of customer service fall this could provide a negative view of the city and authority.                              | L                                      | There does not seem to be an issue at present and standards can be maintained via other methods.   |

## 7. OUTCOMES

| <b>Local Outcome Improvement Plan Themes</b> |   |
|--|---|
|  | <b>Impact of Report</b>   |
| <b>Prosperous People</b>                     | The report aims to maintain customer service at a high level to ensure that residents and visitors have this mode of transport always available as a safe and trustworthy option. Delivery of Primary Drivers of “Safe and responsible” and “Protected from harm” |
| <b>Prosperous Place</b>                      | The report aims to maintain customer service at a high level to ensure that the taxi service available within the city is an asset to the area. Delivery of Primary Driver of “Safe and resilient communities” and “People friendly city.”                        |

| <b>Design Principles of Target Operating Model</b> |   |
|--|---|
|  | <b>Impact of Report</b>   |
| <b>Customer Service Design</b>                     | To ensure that standards remain high, via the most appropriate method in the circumstances. |

## 8. IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

| <b>Assessment</b>                                    | <b>Outcome</b>          |
|--|-------------------------|
| <b>Equality &amp; Human Rights Impact Assessment</b> | Full EHRIA not required |
| <b>Data Protection Impact Assessment</b>             | Not required            |
| <b>Duty of Due Regard / Fairer Scotland Duty</b>     | Not applicable          |

## 9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None.

## 10. APPENDICES (if applicable)

None.

## 11. REPORT AUTHOR CONTACT DETAILS

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