

TAXI AND PRIVATE HIRE CAR CONSULTATION GROUP

ABERDEEN, 3 March 2022. Minute of Meeting of the TAXI AND PRIVATE HIRE CAR CONSULTATION GROUP. Present:- Councillor Reynolds, Chairperson; and Councillor Henrickson; John Clark (Unite), Chris Douglas (Aberdeen Taxis), Stewart Duncan (Airport) and Russell McLeod (Rainbow City Taxis).

In attendance:- Ian Duthie (Police Scotland), Arlene Dunbar, David McKane, Sandy Munro, Alan Thomson (Licensing Team), Derek Jamieson and John Weir (Fleet Services), Fiona Conti (Procurement and Commissioning) and Will Hekelaar (Strategic Place Planning), Mark Masson and Gogo Okafor (Committee Services).

MINUTE OF PREVIOUS MEETING OF 13 OCTOBER 2021 FOR APPROVAL

1. The Consultation Group had before it the minute of its previous meeting of 13 October 2021.

The Consultation Group resolved:-
to approve the minute as a correct record.

CITY CENTRE MASTERPLAN PUBLIC TRANSPORT FORUM MINUTES

2. The Consultation Group had before it the minute of the City Centre Masterplan Public Transport Forum of 16 January 2022, for information.

The Consultation Group resolved:-
to note the minute.

ENFORCEMENT OFFICER REPORT

3. The Consultation Group had before it for consideration, the Enforcement Officer's report which provided details relating to Taxi/Private Hire Car issues and information.

Mr McKane highlighted the main issues from his report, including (a) advising that full enforcement activity would commence within the next few weeks; (b) outlining the current numbers of Licensed Vehicles and Drivers; and (c) providing details of the current position in relation to taxi ranks in Aberdeen.

Dave McKane made reference to the recent Council decision on 28 February 2022 to reopen Union Street and to initiate the consultation process to re-establish the taxi rank stances on Back Wynd and the night time taxi rank on Union Street at St Nicholas churchyard.

The Chairperson advised that arrangements to reopen Union Street would likely take approximately 12 weeks due to the works at the previous British Home Stores building and Union Terrace Gardens.

During discussion, the following was noted:-

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- that new signage on Union Street Central/East should state “Authorised Vehicles Only” or similar, which would ensure entry for private hire taxi vehicles;
- that officers were currently preparing a report relating to the review of the street knowledge test, including benchmarking with other local authorities;
- that there was a current shortage of taxi and private hire car drivers in the taxi trade; and
- that further discussion would be required to investigate whether it would be appropriate to approach taxi drivers whose taxi driver licenses may have recently expired/lapsed as a result of the pandemic to encourage them to return to the taxi trade.

The Consultation Group resolved:-

- (i) to note that officers would consider appropriate wording for Union Street (Central and East) signage, which would include authorisation for private hire taxi vehicles as well as taxi driver vehicles;
- (ii) to note that a report on the review of the street knowledge test would likely be submitted to the Licensing Committee on 15 June 2022; and
- (iii) to otherwise note the information contained within the report.

ENFORCEMENT OFFICER VERBAL REPORT ON GROUP MEMBERSHIP

4. The Consultation Group heard from Sandy Munro, Licensing Legal Adviser in relation to the membership of the Group.

Sandy Munro advised that three independent taxi drivers had recently expressed an interest in joining the Group as members, however as there was only one ‘Independent Driver’ vacancy, it was unclear in the Group’s remit how we should proceed to make an appointment.

In addition, it was noted that the role of an ‘Independent Driver’ representative was less well defined in the remit of the group.

The Chairperson suggested that a change in the membership may be the way forward.

The Consultation Group resolved:-

to request the Licensing Committee to consider amending the membership of the Taxi and Private Hire Consultation Group to have representation from three ‘Independent Drivers’ and to invite those three members who expressed an interest to join the group.

VERBAL UPDATE ON LOW EMISSION ZONE - WILLIAM HEKELAAR

5. The Consultation Group received a presentation from Will Hekelaar, Senior Engineer, Strategic Place planning in relation to the Aberdeen Low Emission Zone (LEZ).

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The Group were provided with the following details in relation to Low Emission Zone Boundary which included the following factors to determine these:-

- Ongoing engagement with a range of stakeholders;
- 2 rounds of public and stakeholder consultation (Autumn 2020 and Summer 2021);
- Traffic and Emission modelling, including routeing considerations;
- Alternative futures testing; and
- Outcomes of the formal objection period in November 2021.

Will Hekelaar (a) advised that The LEZ would apply to all motorised vehicles other than motorcycle and mopeds and outlined which vehicles would be compliant; (b) explained that it was Aberdeen City Council's intention to introduce the LEZ on 30 May 2022, however there would be a two-year grace period (during which enforcement of the LEZ would not take place); and (c) intimated that this would apply for both residents and non-residents of the LEZ area and for all non-exempt vehicle types, meaning enforcement would commence on 1 June 2024.

Will Hekelaar responded to questions in relation to army/military vehicle exemptions and grants available for engine retrofitting.

The Consultation Group resolved:-

- (i) to note that Will Hekelaar would circulate details to the Chairperson in relation to LPG Console conversions;
- (ii) to note that details in relation to the Scottish Government Scheme to assist with retrofits had been circulated to the taxi trade; and
- (iii) to otherwise note the information provided.

VERBAL UPDATE ON ALTERNATIVELY FUELLED VEHICLES

6. The Consultation Group heard from Alan Thomson, Team Leader, Licensing, Planning and Environment and Fiona Conti, Commercial and Procurement in relation to Alternative Fuelled Vehicle Policy.

Alan Thomson made reference to the new Taxi and Private Hire Policy agreed by the Licensing Committee in October 2021, in which there was a change to restrictions on petrol/diesel vehicles. He advised that the Council was working on a Public Infrastructure Project to seek views on the infrastructure required across the city for Taxi/Private Hire vehicles, including the choice of suitable vehicles available for drivers. He indicated that it was hoped that within the next few years, technology would be developed, and the costs of electric vehicles would come down in price. He intimated that external organisations, particularly the energy sector, may contribute with the installation of charging stations.

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Fiona Conti made reference to the Council's Climate Change Plan and advised that the charging infrastructure was not yet in place, therefore sought the views of the members of the Group, including what help and support they may require from the Council.

During the discussion, the following was noted:-

- that the taxi trade required to be kept informed, particularly as the Council wished to be more ambitious to phase out petrol/diesel vehicles by 2030;
- that the taxi trade required to communicate their thoughts with the Council, specifically in identifying appropriate and suitable charging locations throughout the city e.g. taxi ranks and/or car parks;
- that the taxi trade required to be kept informed of any costs for the trade or any Government grants available to help with the transition;
- that Dundee City taxi fleet was largely running electric vehicles and that dialogue with them in this regard would be undertaken by officers;
- that the Energy Savings Trust were currently undertaking information/support sessions, specifically for the taxi trade; and
- that EV and Hydrogen charging stations, specifically for taxi trade use should be considered.

The Consultation Group resolved:-

- (i) to note that Fiona Conti would approach the Scottish Government to investigate whether any grants were available to support the taxi trade, and would advise in due course; and
- (ii) that any feedback or views from the taxi trade be submitted to officers at their earliest opportunity.

UP AND COMING QUEEN'S PLATINUM JUBILEE BANK HOLIDAY

7. The Consultation Group heard Russell McLeod seek the views of the members in relation to the Queen's Platinum Jubilee Bank Holiday, specifically whether it could be recognised as a public holiday within the taxi tariff, thereby allowing the taxi trade to charge an additional £1 to the journey fare.

The Consultation Group resolved:-

to request the Licensing Committee to consider incorporating the Queen's Platinum Jubilee Bank Holiday as a public holiday in respect of the taxi tariff, with a view to the taxi trade charging an additional £1 for each journey fare.

TAXI TARIFF METER CHANGE PLAN

8. The Consultation Group heard from Russell McLeod who sought consideration and confirmation of the forthcoming Taxi Tariff Meters Change plan.

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Alan Thomson advised that he was aware that there was a requirement for the change to the tariff meter, however due to Covid restrictions, an event for drivers to undertake the necessary change to the tariff meter had not been possible to arrange. He indicated that officers were investigating a suitable venue and had been in liaison with colleagues from Fleet Services in this regard, but the option to update meters at the Kittybrewster depot over a number of days, had not been well received from the taxi trade.

During discussion, a number of locations were suggested as possible venues, including TECA, the old AECC site and the Airport car parks, noting that (1) Park and Ride sites could not be used; and (2) a two day event was the preference for the taxi trade.

The Consultation Group resolved:-

- (i) to note that Stewart Duncan would contact colleagues at the Airport to investigate whether a car park in that area could be utilised;
- (ii) to note that Russel McLeod would investigate the use of a possible alternative location; and
- (iii) to note that Licensing and Fleet Service officers in consultation with the taxi trade would consider the options available and identify suitable dates and a venue for the Taxi Tariff meter change.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING - 22 JUNE 2022

9. The Consultation Group noted that the next meeting would be held on 22 June 2022, at 10am.

- **COUNCILLOR JOHN REYNOLDS, Convener**