

## **TAXI AND PRIVATE HIRE CAR CONSULTATION GROUP**

ABERDEEN, 5 April 2023. Minute of Meeting of the TAXI AND PRIVATE HIRE CAR CONSULTATION GROUP. Present:- Councillor Al-Samarai, Chairperson; and Councillors Clark, Delaney and van Sweeden (as substitute for Councillor Henrickson); and Adam Catto (Independent Driver), Chris Douglas (Aberdeen Taxis), Stewart Duncan (Airport Taxis), Russell McLeod (Rainbow City Taxis), Luke Hulse (Independent Driver) and Hussein Patwa (Disability Equity Partnership).

In attendance:- PC Ian Duthie (Police Scotland), John Weir (Fleet Manager, Operations), Sandy Munro, Dave McKane and Daniel Wright (Licensing and Planning Team), Jon Henderson and Margaret Davidson (Taxi Marshalls, SGL) and Mark Masson and Gogo Okafor (Committee Services)

### **WELCOME AND APOLOGIES**

1. The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting, particularly Mr Hussein Patwa who was attending his first meeting as the representative from the Disability Equity Partnership.

An apology for absence was intimated on behalf of Councillor Henrickson.

### **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST OR TRANSPARENCY STATEMENTS**

2. There were no declarations of interest or transparency statements intimated.

### **MINUTE OF PREVIOUS MEETING OF 8 FEBRUARY 2023 - FOR APPROVAL**

3. The Consultation Group had before it the minute of its previous meeting of 8 February 2023.

#### **The Consultation Group resolved:-**

to approve the minute as a correct record.

### **UPDATE ON ROADS ACTIONS FROM PREVIOUS MEETING - VYCKI RITSON**

4. The Consultation Group had before it an update by Vycki Ritson, Traffic Management and Development Team Leader in relation to Signage at a Taxi Rank and the TECA Taxi Rank as follows:-

(1) Signage at Taxi Rank

With reference to article 10(i) of the minute of the previous meeting of 8 February 2023, it was noted that the Taxi rank signs were to be reviewed, standardised and revised however there had not been a resource available to carry out the work as yet. This would likely take another couple of months.

(2) TECA Taxi Rank

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With reference to article 11 of the minute of the previous meeting of 8 February 2023, it was noted that discussions were ongoing regarding the site operation for major events.

A review would be carried out of the 'gig n go', taxi stance and drop off/pick up provisions within the site with changes being considered. Actions from this review may require planning permission or amendments to existing planning permissions.

**The Consultation Group resolved:-**

to note the update provided.

**TAXI MARSHALLS PRESENTATION - ROLE & LOCATIONS**

5. The Consultation Group received a presentation from Mr Jon Henderson, Area Manager, SGL in relation to the service provided by the Taxi Marshalls in Aberdeen City centre.

Mr Henderson provided an overview of the service advising that the Taxi Marshalls were located on four key areas on Union Street, Fridays and Saturdays between midnight and 4am, working in conjunction with the Street Pastors and Police Scotland to aid the night time economy and to help people to return home safely.

Mr Henderson responded to questions from members and the following was noted:-

- that communication from the Council, Taxi Marshalls, Police Scotland and the Taxi Operators was key to ensure that people and taxi drivers do not use the side street ranks after midnight;
- that Taxi Marshalls could be positioned at side street taxi ranks providing advice to people to use the night-time ranks;
- that there was good communication between the police and Taxi Marshalls with frequent police patrols and drop-ins at the taxi ranks; and
- that a Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) was being investigated to prohibit taxis from stopping at the side street taxi ranks after midnight, although it was noted that a delay to proceed with this was likely due to a temporary TRO and the ongoing works in and around the city centre.

**The Consultation Group resolved:-**

- (i) to note that PC Ian Duthie would liaise with colleagues during the Weekend Police Briefings in relation to assisting the Taxi Marshalls by deploying officers earlier to ensure people were not queuing at the side street taxi ranks after midnight;
- (ii) to request that Vycki Ritson provide an update on the TRO for side street Taxi Ranks at the next meeting; and
- (iii) to otherwise thank Jon Henderson and Margaret Davidson for attending the meeting today.

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## **DEMONSTRATION OF SAFEKAB APPLICATION- CHRIS DOUGLAS**

6. The Consultation Group received a presentation from Chris Douglas and Gavin Johnson in relation to the Safekab Application.

Members observed two video demonstrations of the Safekab booking platform which provided a service to passengers and drivers, during which the following was noted:-

- that there were many passenger and driver safety features associated with the Application, including a unique 3-digit code being issued to the passenger when they book a taxi, which would then be shown to the driver to ensure they get into the correct taxi;
- that funds could be added to the account at anytime and passengers could choose their preferred driver;
- that passengers could share their journey information with family and friends;
- that there was an SOS button and a SafeWalk feature;
- that there were potential revenue streams for taxi operators with no running costs, including 100% automation; and
- that drivers could choose the fare and communicate and locate customers.

Chris and Gavin responded to a number of questions in relation to the various features, technical and software aspects of the Safekab Application including data protection issues, integration with taxi despatch systems and taxi driver opt-in process.

Gavin Johnson explained that the application had been in use in Inverness for approximately one month and had been well received by passengers and drivers, noting that PubWatch and the University had also been advertising the use of the App in their premises.

### **The Consultation Group resolved:-**

- (i) to thank Chris Douglas and Gavin Johnson for their presentation and demonstration of the useful taxi booking application; and
- (ii) that an update on the roll-out and use of the Safekab Application in Aberdeen be provided to the meeting on 6 December 2023.

## **ENFORCEMENT REPORT**

7. 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 Dave McKane highlighted the main issues from his report, making reference to (a) current numbers of licensed vehicles and drivers; (b) the street knowledge test statistics during the period 1 February to 31 March 2023; and (c) the Taxi Fare Review.

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During discussion the following was noted:-

- that the taxi trade members of this group had been asked to respond with proposals they may have regarding the Taxi Fare Review by 14 April 2023 in order that these could be considered by the Licensing Committee at their meeting on 3 May 2023, along with the calculations from the Taxi Fare Review formula;
- that there were concerns raised by the Taxi Trade in relation to the length of time that applicants awaited for a Street Knowledge Test appointment;
- that there were concerns raised in relation to the issuing of Taxi and Private Hire Driver ID badges, noting that badges have not been issued for three years; and
- that there were 6 or 7 Street Knowledge Tests undertaken per week, which excluded re-sits which were dealt with separately.

With reference to (1) the issuing of the ID badges, it was noted that this service was provided by another Team within the Council and efforts to re-commence this had been referred to the appropriate Manager; and (2) Street Knowledge Tests, it was noted that officers were looking at ways to reduce waiting times for applicants.

**The Consultation Group resolved:-**

- (i) to note the report and the information provided; and
- (ii) to note that the Chairperson would liaise with the appropriate officers to expedite actions relating to (1) and (2) above.

**DATE OF NEXT MEETING- 4 OCTOBER 2023**

8. The Consultation Group had before it the date of its next meeting, which was scheduled to be held on 4 October 2023.

The Chairperson proposed that the meeting be rescheduled to be held on 30 August 2023.

**The Consultation Group resolved:-**

that the next meeting be held on 30 August 2023 at 10.00am in the Town House.

- **COUNCILLOR GILL AL-SAMARAI, Chairperson**