

TAXI AND PRIVATE HIRE CAR CONSULTATION GROUP

ABERDEEN, 6 February 2024. Minute of Meeting of the TAXI AND PRIVATE HIRE CAR CONSULTATION GROUP. Present:- Councillor Delaney, Chairperson; and Councillors Al-Samarai, Boulton, Clark, Henrickson and Lawrence; and Alan Catto (Independent Driver), Chris Douglas (Aberdeen Taxis), Stewart Duncan (Airport Taxis), Russell McLeod (Rainbow City Taxis), Luke Hulse (Independent Driver), Peter Cambell (Railway Station and Unite Union) and Amanda Foster (substituting for Hussein Patwa - Disability Equity Partnership).

In attendance:- PC Gary Forbes (Police Scotland), John Weir and Derek Jamieson (Fleet Services, Operations), Sandy Munro, Alexa Last and Daniel Wright (Licensing Team), Vycki Ritson (Engineering, Operations) and Mark Masson and Gogo Okafor (Committee Services)

WELCOME AND APOLOGIES

1. The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

The Clerk advised that Hussein Patwa had intimated his apologies, and that Amanda Foster would be substituting for him.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST OR TRANSPARENCY STATEMENTS

2. There were no Declarations of Interest or Transparency Statements intimated.

MINUTE OF PREVIOUS MEETING OF 6 DECEMBER 2023 - FOR APPROVAL

3. The Consultation Group had before it the minute of its previous meeting of 6 December 2023.

The Consultation Group resolved:-
to approve the minute.

UPDATES FROM ROADS REGARDING HADDEN STREET AND FEEDBACK RELATING TO CRUISE ARRANGEMENT - VYCKI RITSON

4. The Consultation Group heard from Vycki Ritson, Engineering Team Leader who provided an update in relation to the closure of Hadden Street and sought feedback from the Taxi Trade regarding cruise arrangements.

Ms Ritson advised that there were some major changes coming to the city centre and some pieces of work would be starting in the next few months, one being the Aberdeen Market redevelopment. She indicated that discussions had been held and it was acknowledged that space would be required to carry out those works, including the location of office buildings for the Management Team that would be supervising the works. It was noted that they would be using Hadden Street as that was the only space that would be available for deliveries in the area. In that regard, Hadden Street would be

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closed to traffic for the duration of the works and that included the use of the taxi rank during that period of time.

Ms Ritson advised that the taxi rank on Exchequer Row would be available as an alternative in the area, and the intention was that the Back Wynd taxi rank would also be available. She explained that the confined nature of the site meant that there would be limitations into the alternatives that would be available in that area and Hadden Street was one of those streets that they would have to close as a result.

During discussion, the following was noted:-

- that consultation should be undertaken prior to closing any taxi rank around the city, noting that it was not possible on this occasion due to the request to close Hadden Street coming at short notice;
- that in relation to the central Union Street works, it may be the case that the taxi rank remained in use on Back Wynd, with vehicles going via Gaelic Lane, back up Belmont Street and onto Schoolhill that way, noting that further discussion on this was required with Police Scotland prior to any decision being made;
- that the Night Time Taxi Rank on Union Street would close during the works, however officers were looking into the possibility of having the Back Wynd Taxi Rank in operation 24/7, noting that further discussion with the Police and the Taxi Trade would be undertaken in this regard;
- that it was the intention to re-open the taxi rank on Union Street after the works were completed;
- that additional media for members of the public was planned in relation to the closures of the taxi ranks including an indicative timetable of the works in the area; and
- that in relation to the South Harbour cruise arrangements, it was noted that a taxi rank in the area should be considered, however it was acknowledged that Management at the Harbour Board were concerned about safety within the South Harbour area.

The Consultation Group resolved:-

to note the information provided.

**THE IMPACT OF TAXI AND PRIVATE HIRE CAR SHORTAGES IN THE CITY CENTRE
- ABERDEEN INSPIRED**

5. This item was deferred to the next meeting of the Consultation Group.

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ENFORCEMENT OFFICER REPORT

6. 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.

The report provided details of (a) the current numbers of licensed vehicles and drivers compared to February 2023; (b) street knowledge test statistics during the period 5 December 2023 to 23 January 2024; (c) information regarding a number of complaints relating to drivers not accepting Card payments; and (d) the number of tests booked, sat and passed.

The Consultation Group resolved:-

to note the information provided.

MIXED TAXI FLEET - VERBAL FEEDBACK FROM THE TAXI TRADE

7. With reference to article 5 of the minute of the previous meeting of 6 December 2023, the Consultation Group considered issues relating to a mixed Taxi Fleet, including: -

- Arriving at a reasonable split percentage;
- Method of maintaining the split;
- Reasonable length of notice of availability of a saloon plate; and
- Means of ensuring saloon plates were properly surrendered.

During discussion, the following was noted:-

- that a 50/50 (Wheelchair Accessible Vehicle/Saloon Car) split percentage would be reasonable;
- that there would be difficulties in maintaining a mixed fleet, particularly as there seemed to be a move away from drivers purchasing WAVs due to the cost of these vehicles; and
- that an incentive to maintain the number of WAV vehicles was required, possibly by not taking payment when renewing licences.

Mr Douglas suggested that the taxi trade could produce some key points and suggestions to be submitted to the next meeting.

The Consultation Group resolved:-

- (i) to note the information provided; and
- (ii) that this item be added to the next meeting of the Group, noting that the taxi trade would submit suggestions/proposals relating to a mixed Taxi Fleet.

- **COUNCILLOR STEVE DELANEY, Chairperson**