

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE	Licensing Committee
DATE	14 May 2025
EXEMPT	No
CONFIDENTIAL	No
REPORT TITLE	Taxi Fleet Composition
REPORT NUMBER	CORS/25/122
DIRECTOR	Gale Beattie
CHIEF OFFICER	Alan Thomson/Vikki Cuthbert
REPORT AUTHOR	Sandy Munro
TERMS OF REFERENCE	16.3

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To provide an update on the options for implementation of a mixed taxi fleet.

2. RECOMMENDATION(S)

That the Committee :-

- 2.1 consider the results of the public consultation;
- 2.2 retain the policy that all new applications for a taxi vehicle licence require to be for a Wheelchair Accessible Vehicle (WAV);
- 2.2 agree a mixed fleet with a 50/50 split between Saloons and WAVs;
- 2.3 stipulate a date by which all current licence holders can apply for access to the waiting list for a saloon plate;
- 2.4 instruct the Chief Officer – Governance to organise the list in order of length of licence held at that date and add applicants to the bottom of the list thereafter;
- 2.5 agree that each applicant on the waiting list be permitted one opportunity to pass on the chance to change vehicle before being moved to the bottom of the list; and
- 2.6 agree that an applicant who accepts the opportunity to change vehicle is given 6 months in which to do so before the opportunity passes to the next applicant on the list.

3. CURRENT SITUATION

- 3.1 The Committee agreed in December 2024 to hold a public consultation on the options for establishing and maintaining a mixed fleet of taxi vehicles.

- 3.2 A brief introduction explained the proposed policy and then asked a number of consultation questions. The consultation questions are listed as Appendix 1 under Related Documents at

<https://www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/services/services-business/licences-and-permits/taxi-licence>

- 3.3 The consultation was conducted online from 28 February 2025 until 11 April 2025. The consultation link was sent to the trade, the Disability Equity Partnership and other stakeholders direct and was advertised on the Council's social media platforms.

- 3.4 Approximately 464 responses were received.

- 3.5 Firstly, regarding the split of saloon vehicles and Wheelchair Accessible Vehicles (WAVs) the majority of respondents did not agree with the proposed 50/50 split. Within those that disagreed, there was no real consensus on a suitable level of split nor any kind of rationale for any particular level.

- 3.6 A list of the full responses to the question can be accessed as Appendix 2 under Related Documents at

<https://www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/services/services-business/licences-and-permits/taxi-licence>

There appears to have been a misconception that this increases the number of WAVs within the fleet but that is not the case. The current policy is that all new taxi licences must be WAVs with all vehicles to be WAVs by a currently undetermined date. This policy is looking to introduce a mix of saloons and WAVs.

- 3.7 Additionally, a recurring suggestion is that the split is based on the proportion of wheelchair users within the local population. It is questionable as to whether this would mean the Authority is meeting the Public Sector Equality Duty, however. In the English case of *R v Newcastle ex parte Blake*, this was addressed by one of the judges:

“The third consideration calls upon one to look at the situation through the eyes of the person who is bound to a wheelchair. It may be that there is an adequate number of wheelchair access Hackney carriages if one simply looks upon it as a statistical problem. If there are say five percent of wheelchairbound potential passengers and already ten percent of vehicles which have wheelchair access, one might say that is an adequate provision. But what of the person who is waiting on the rank in his wheelchair for a Hackney Carriage and he is fifth in the queue. The first two may be the older type of vehicle with no wheelchair access. Then along comes vehicle number three which has a wheelchair access. It may well be that the people who are number 3 in the queue may not be willing to stand down and let the wheelchair bound person take their place. They go off in the Hackney carriage with the wheelchair access and then it may be that another such vehicle does not come to that stand for a long time. The

disabled person has to keep standing back again and again in the queue. That is not an unreal situation. The mere fact that you have a set percentage of vehicles, if that is the way it is to be done, which have wheelchair access, does not always mean there is roughly a sufficient number of such vehicles waiting or arriving roughly at the right time at this, that or the other rank.”

- 3.8 Accordingly, it is suggested that a 50/50 split remains the preferred ratio as it introduces additional saloon vehicles to the fleet whilst retaining the likelihood that a mix of vehicles is regularly arriving at any given rank to avoid the situation detailed in the previous paragraph. WAVs currently comprise around 57% of the fleet.
- 3.9 On the subject of early access to the waiting list for a saloon vehicle approximately 18% voted for 10 years, 37% for 5 years and 45% for “other”.
- 3.10 There was no consensus for another figure, and there again appears to have been a misconception with a number of responses saying that a change of vehicle should not be necessary. The intention behind this question was to assess whether those current WAV drivers who have been doing so for a longer period of time gained an advantage from that experience when preparing the waiting list for a saloon plate. Full responses to the question can again be found as Appendix 3 under Related Documents at <https://www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/services/services-business/licences-and-permits/taxi-licence>
- 3.11 Investigation of the records held by the licensing department has since indicated that applicants could be prioritised by length of time a licence has been held. It is suggested therefore that applications for the waiting list are invited with a cut off date. After that deadline, applicants are listed in order of length of licence to form the waiting list, Subsequent applications after the deadline join the bottom of the list regardless of licence history thereafter.
- 3.12 The majority of respondents (79%) were of the opinion that the first person on the list should be allowed to pass on one opportunity to change vehicle.
- 3.13 The majority of respondents also considered 3 months not sufficient to change vehicle when the opportunity arose, although again there appears to have been a degree of misconception as a number of comments indicated licence holders should not be forced to change vehicle, which is not what is being proposed here. It is seeking an adequate length of time for an applicant to source a new vehicle when a saloon plate becomes available. The most popular suggestion from those who considered 3 months inadequate was 6 months so that is something the Committee may wish to consider.
- 3.14 There did not appear to be any recurring topics relating to the mixed fleet that were raised in answers to the last question. Responses tended to refer to other matters such as the hours of operation, the knowledge test and the overall number of vehicles. Full responses can be found as Appendix 4 under Related Documents at

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

4.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 There are no direct legal implications arising from the recommendations of this report.

6. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 There are no direct environmental implications arising from the recommendations of this report.

7. RISK

7.1 The assessment of risk contained within the table below is considered to be consistent with the Council's Risk Appetite Statement

Category	Risks	Primary Controls/Control Actions to achieve Target Risk Level	*Target Risk Level (L, M or H) *taking into account controls/control actions	*Does Target Risk Level Match Appetite Set?
Strategic Risk	No significant risks identified.			
Compliance	Failure to provide facilities for all could leave the Authority open to challenge under the Public Sector Equality Duty	Ensure the final policy means vehicles are accessible to all.	M	
Operational	No significant risks identified.			

Financial	No significant risks identified.			
Reputational	Departing from previous policy may result in reputational damage from licence holders who held a reasonable expectation that the policy would be implemented.	If the goal of 100% WAV fleet is disregarded there may be some operators who switched to WAVs in the reasonable expectation that the previous policy would have been implemented. That will have to be factored into the composition and maintenance of a mixed fleet.	M	
Environment / Climate	No significant risks identified.			

8. OUTCOMES

<u>COUNCIL DELIVERY PLAN 2022-2023</u>	
	Impact of Report
Aberdeen City Council Policy Statement <u>Working in Partnership for Aberdeen</u>	No significant impact from the recommendations of this report.
<u>Aberdeen City Local Outcome Improvement Plan</u>	
Prosperous Economy Stretch Outcomes	No significant impact from the recommendations of this report.
Prosperous People Stretch Outcomes	No significant impact from the recommendations of this report.
Prosperous Place Stretch Outcomes	No significant impact from the recommendations of this report.
Regional and City Strategies	No significant impact from the recommendations of this report.

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9. IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

Assessment	Outcome
Integrated Impact Assessment	New Integrated Impact Assessment has been completed
Data Protection Impact Assessment	Not required
Other	N/A

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

10.1 None

11. APPENDICES (Online)

- 11.1 Appendix 1 – Consultation questions (hyperlinked above)
- 11.2 Appendix 2 – Split options (hyperlinked above)
- 11.3 Appendix 3 – Waiting List Access (hyperlinked above)
- 11.4 Appendix 4 – Any other comments (Hyperlinked above)

12. REPORT AUTHOR CONTACT DETAILS

Name	Sandy Munro
Title	Solicitor
Email Address	AleMunro@aberdeencity.gov.uk