

TAXI AND PRIVATE HIRE CAR CONSULTATION GROUP

ABERDEEN, 8 December 2025. Minute of Meeting of the TAXI AND PRIVATE HIRE CAR CONSULTATION GROUP. Present:- Councillor Al-Samarai (Chairperson) and Councillors Clark, Henrickson and Lawrence; and David Alaita (LeadRyde Booking Office), Peter Campbell (Unite Union), Alan Catto (Independent), Chris Douglas (Aberdeen Taxis Booking Office), Craig Falconer (Aberdeen International Airport Booking Office), Matthew Freckelton (Uber Booking Office), Iain Hamilton (Airport Taxi Drivers), Luke Hulse (Independent), Russell McLeod (Rainbow City Taxis Booking Office) and Hussein Patwa (Disability Equity Partnership).

In attendance:- Sandy Munro and Daniel Wright (Licensing Team); Kevin Flannigan (Fleet Services); Sergeant John Webster (Police Scotland) and Mark Masson and Gogo Okafor (Committee Services).

Please note that if any changes are made to this minute at the point of approval, these will be outlined in the subsequent minute and this document will not be retrospectively altered.

WELCOME AND APOLOGIES

1. The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Councillor Delaney.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST OR TRANSPARENCY STATEMENTS

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

MINUTE OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING OF 24 SEPTEMBER 2025 - FOR APPROVAL

3. The Consultation Group had before it the minute of its previous meeting of 24 September 2025.

The Consultation Group resolved:-
to approve the minute.

ENFORCEMENT OFFICER REPORT

4. The Consultation Group had before it a report by the Enforcement Officer and Civic Licensing Standards Officer in relation to general Taxi/Private Hire Car issues and information.

TAXI AND PRIVATE HIRE CAR CONSULTATION GROUP

8 December 2025

The report provided details of (a) the current numbers of licensed vehicles and drivers compared to August 2023; and (b) street knowledge test statistics during the period 10 December 2024 to 26 November 2025.

Daniel Wright provided a summary of the report and responded to questions from members.

During discussion, it was noted that the total of active drivers was 896, which was an increase of 95 from the same period last year.

The Consultation Group resolved:-

- (i) that officers amend future reports to provide comparison figures from the previous report; and
- (ii) to otherwise note the report.

PROVISION OF TAXIS CRUISE SHIPS

5. The Consultation Group had before it a paper which sought the views of the taxi trade on options for a potential taxi rank or pick-up/drop-off zone at Aberdeen South Harbour.

Sandy Munro advised that the Licensing Team were approached by the Port of Aberdeen in this regard.

The Consultation Group resolved:-

that there was general agreement not to have a taxi rank given that private hire drivers would not be able to use the rank, therefore a pick-up/drop-off zoned area would be the preferred option.

NEW TESTING MANUAL - GRAB HANDLES

6. The Consultation Group had before them a paper which (1) advised that they had serious concerns about the new specifications for taxis, specifically relating to the fitting of grab handles and the danger of compromising the structural integrity of the vehicle; (2) indicated that the requirements stated were likely a cause for concern as well as causing risk of injury to passengers in the event of an accident; (3) explained that the trade were disappointed that there was no consultation with them on the recent updated Taxi & Private Hire Testing manual, given they were the ones who operate within these parameters; (4) intimated that, moving forward, they noted that there was some dialogue started between Fleet Services and the Taxi trade, however when an issue arises, there should be an avenue to arrange discussions for a joint common-sense approach.

TAXI AND PRIVATE HIRE CAR CONSULTATION GROUP

8 December 2025

Sandy Munro made reference to the meeting on 30 April 2025, where the updated Inspection Manual had been attached to the agenda and was considered by the Consultation Group.

During the discussion, Alan Catto advised that he had sent an email to Fleet Services to arrange a meeting to discuss the issues specifically relating to the Grab Handles but had not received a response.

The Consultation Group resolved:-

- (i) to note that Kevin Flannigan would make arrangements for an early meeting with the taxi trade to discuss the Grab Handles issue; and
- (ii) to note that, via the Clerk, Kevin Flannigan would advise all members when the date/time of the above meeting would be held.

NEW TESTING MANUAL - TAXI METERS AND SEALS

7. The Consultation Group had before them a paper which (1) advised that the updated inspection manual now stated that any vehicle presented for a hackney test without the meter being sealed would be a failure and that it had always been the responsibility of the Council to seal the meters following any updates or checks; (2) indicated that the idea of the driver asking a third party to seal the meter prior to presentation was undermining the requirement for sealing the meter in the first place noting that most drivers do go to the meter suppliers immediately prior to the vehicle being presented for inspection to have the clock set; and (3) intimated that this process required the seal to be broken and as the meter was part of the inspection, the required seal should be refitted following the necessary checks being approved by the local authority.

Alan Catto provided details of the current process, as follows:-

- that over a 6-month period, most meters would lose time accuracy, either fast or slow and the driver would be required to visit the meter dealer prior to the test and would get the time set accurately;
- the meter dealer should not re-seal meter, for reasons already stated;
- the driver would then present their car at the testing station, the car would be tested with the meter being checked, however the tester would issue a failed certificate, due to the meter not being sealed when the driver arrived; and
- the tester would then seal the meter and the driver had to present car for test, at which time tester checks the meter, seals it and issues a pass certificate, costing the driver £40.

Alan Catto suggested that if the meter had been properly calibrated at original test, the tester should just seal it. He also suggested that hologram security stickers could be used at the sealing point of the meter which would likely solve the issue.

TAXI AND PRIVATE HIRE CAR CONSULTATION GROUP

8 December 2025

Kevin Flannigan advised that unless appropriate documentation was received from the third party who undertook the calibration, then it was impossible to determine whether the meter had been tampered with.

The Consultation Group resolved:-

to note that drivers should obtain appropriate documentation from the third party (meter dealer) which undertook the calibration of the meter and submit this to the Fleet Services tester to avoid a failed test.

METER REGULATIONS AND PROCEDURE

8. The Consultation Group had before them a paper which (1) outlined concerns regarding some drivers who had recently joined Uber and still had meters in their vehicles; (2) advised that to operate under Uber's fare structure, the meter should/must be removed; (3) sought confirmation whether these drivers were breaking their licensing conditions, and if so Compliance Officers should investigate this, however noting that, as far as we can see, unless it occurs between 9am and 4pm, Monday to Friday, then the Compliance Officers were not active; and (4) sought confirmation on the process for drivers wishing to remove their meters and whether they would need to apply for a variation of their licence.

Sandy Munro advised that due to a contradiction in the current conditions within the policy, the Licensing Sub Committee had recently approved the amendments to the Taxi and Private Hire policy and Private Hire Car licence conditions.

Mr Munro outlined the following:-

- a private hire vehicle did not need to have a meter installed, however if one was installed then it must be used to calculate the maximum fare for any particular journey, the reason being that legislation stated that it was an offence to charge more for the hire of a private hire car fitted with a meter than the fare tariff;
- that if the private hire vehicle has a meter and was not being used, then it should be removed and the driver must let the Council know that it has been removed in prior to arriving for inspection;
- similarly, if the driver wished to refit the meter in their private hire vehicle, then they should contact the Council in order to get it checked and sealed;
- that there would not be a requirement for drivers to apply for a variation of their licence; and
- that the operator/driver would be held responsible for any breach of the new conditions around the meters installed within private hire vehicles.

The Consultation Group resolved:-

- (i) to note that the Licensing Team would shortly be issuing correspondence to all operators in relation to the amendments to the Taxi and Private Hire policy and Private Hire Car licence conditions; and

TAXI AND PRIVATE HIRE CAR CONSULTATION GROUP

8 December 2025

- (ii) to otherwise note the information.

HATE CRIME INCREASE

9. The Consultation Group had before them a paper which advised that following a recent rise in hate crimes directed at taxi drivers, guidance and support was being sought on effective ways to raise awareness and ensure that drivers were informed about how to report such incidents through the appropriate channels, whether they had experienced any incidents personally or witnessed them amongst colleagues.

Sandy Munro advised that although this was not a consideration for the Licensing Committee due to its remit, the Licensing authority would be keen to add weight to any programmes, proposed leaflets or by means of signposting to the Community Safety Team or Police Scotland to raise awareness.

It was suggested that specific wording from the Taxi trade could be submitted for consideration and be displayed in vehicles.

During discussion, there were queries in relation to the right to refuse a hire, particularly if there were incidents of hate crime.

Sergeant Webster reiterated that any hate crimes should be reported to Police Scotland for investigation.

The Consultation Group resolved:-

- (i) that the Taxi trade submit to the Licensing Team appropriate draft wording to be potentially displayed within taxi/private hire vehicles; and
 - (ii) that this item be added to the agenda for the next meeting for discussion.
- **COUNCILLOR GILL AL-SAMARAI, Chairperson**