

FALKIRK COUNCIL

Minute of Meeting of the Taxi and Private Hire Car Forum in the Municipal Buildings, Falkirk on Tuesday 20 September 2016 at 10.00 a.m.

Forum Members

Present:

Councillor Jim Blackwood; Laura McNelly and Emma Bruce (Bruce/Blue Star Taxis); Andrew Buchanan, Flemings Taxis; Roy Kerr (Grange Radio Taxis); John Kennedy, Stenhouse Taxis, George McBlain, Fourways Taxis and Jennie McCartney, Falkirk Area Disability Access Panel.

Convener:

Councillor Jim Blackwood.

Council Officers

Present:

Bryan Douglas, Licensing Co-ordinator; Brian Samson, Licensing Enforcement Officer; Jacque McArthur, Economic Development Officer and Gordon Speirs, Fleet Services.

Also in

Attendance:

Sergeant Marie White, Police Scotland.

1. Apologies

Apologies were intimated on behalf of Lennox Ainslie, Alan McFadzean (McFadzean Taxis) and Sarah McKenzie, Assistant Manager, Falkirk Towns Ltd.

2. Minute

Decision

The minute of the meeting of the Taxi and Private Hire Car Forum on 19 May 2016 was approved.

3. Taxi Testing Station

The Forum received an update from Gordon Speirs, Fleet Services on the operation of the testing station.

He advised that there had been changes to testing staff personnel with Bruce having left and Charlie being retired on ill health grounds. An additional tester had been employed and there were now 8 testers in total. It was hoped that

another tester would be taken on also. Reference was made to new testing arrangements by DVSA which would be rolled out. Gordon Speirs advised that testers were undertaking Continual Professional Development which amounted to a few hours per year and allowed staff to be kept abreast of new developments.

Figures relating to licensed vehicles presented at the testing station between April and August 2016 were outlined as follows:-

MONTH	PRESENTED	PASS 1 ST TIME PASS	%	RE-TEST & PASS	BRING BACK
APRIL 2016	117	104	89%	13	12
MAY 2016	117	105	90%	12	12
JUNE 2016	101	92	91%	9	8
JULY 2016	108	106	98%	2	12
AUGUST 2016	90	80	89%	10	9

There followed some discussion on issues regarding re-tests and Gordon confirmed he would take the comments back to the testing station.

Decision

The Forum noted the update.

4. Denny Town Centre Regeneration

Jacquie McArthur explained that work was nearing completion on the first phase of the new Denny Town Centre. The main contractor had confirmed that works were proceeding to programme with phase 1 on schedule for completion by October/November 2016. The second phase of works including the completion of the car park and town square will be completed during 2017.

Jacquie advised that three units were already committed with agreements in place. Responses to a marketing brief for the remaining vacant units would be considered by the Council in due course. She also confirmed that the Council was looking to introduce a public Wi-Fi scheme as part of the plans.

In response to questions posed by Forum Members, Jacquie confirmed (1) that there would be 5/6 spaces allocated for a taxi rank; and (2) that although there were no public toilets planned, the library would have facilities and would be fully wheelchair accessible

Decision

The Forum noted the update.

5. Taxi Tariff Scales and Fares

The Licensing Co-ordinator reminded the Forum that the “new” Taxi Tariff rate had been effectively set in February this year. He confirmed that the Licensing Authority must carry out a review of the taxi tariff every 18 months. The Taxi Forum is considered to be relevant stakeholders in this process and will be consulted.

The Licensing Co-ordinator stated that the process of a tariff review would commence at the next Forum meeting. He suggested that the issue should be duly considered during the intervening period by the trade in consultation with other trade colleagues. He reminded the Forum that any proposed increases sought must be accompanied by hard data to justify the increase. This was in line with advice given consistently by the Traffic Commissioner

Decision

The Forum noted the update.

6. Wheelchair Accessible Vehicles

The Licensing Co-ordinator advised that due to a recent upgrade to the taxi system, more accurate information in terms of the composition of the taxi fleet is able to be extracted. He explained that new upgrade will make it easier to extrapolate trends.

The Licensing Co-ordinator confirmed that as of today Falkirk had 428 taxis – with 84 Wheelchair Accessible Vehicles (WAV), 312 saloon and 33 Hybrid – the WAV percentage being 19.6%

The private hire car composition is 111 saloon cars, 9 WAV and 3 Hybrid – the WAV percentage is now 7%. He advised that there has been a marked increase in Private hire cars in the past 12 months and Elected Members had noted this increase in vehicles, which almost exclusively had been for saloon cars. The resulting effect has been to dilute the overall percentage of WAV private hire cars.

The Licensing Co-ordinator referred to the Council meeting in June 2016, and explained that the Councillors had considered a report on accessible transport linked to the “dial a journey” service. The report had raised wider questions in relation the amount of wheelchair accessible taxis and availability of the fleet.

The Licensing Co-ordinator said as a consequence of this report, he would be preparing a report for Members to consider at the meeting of the Civic

Licensing Committee on 30 November 2016. The report would provide an overview of the current taxi and private hire car fleet with an emphasis on any changes in composition and trends arising since the adjustment to the vehicle specification policy in 2013. It will be for Members to consider what changes if any should be made to policy.

Options for consideration could range from 100% WAV taxi or PHC fleet to relaxation to age of WAV perhaps allied to a phasing out of saloon cars to be replaced with WAV, Hybrid or Electric or maintenance of the status quo. He confirmed the Forum would be kept fully updated.

Decision

The Forum noted the update.

7. Any Other Competent Business

(a) Licensing Office Hours of Operation

The Licensing Co-ordinator referred to the recent development involving the licensing office opening in the mornings only. He advised that this was due to ongoing staffing difficulties and was a temporary measure.

(b) Municipal Buildings Christmas Closure

The Licensing Co-ordinator stated that it was likely that the practice of closing the Municipal Buildings in between Christmas and New Year would be replicated this year.

(c) Knowledge Test

The Licensing Co-ordinator advised that elected members had asked for a report to be prepared providing information on the Council's Taxi knowledge test. He stated that a report would be prepared for consideration by Members at the meeting of the Civic Licensing Committee on 30 November 2016. He confirmed that the Forum would be advised of Members thoughts.

8. Date of Next Meeting

The Forum noted that the next meeting would take place on Tuesday 15 November 2016 at 10.00 a.m.