

## FALKIRK COUNCIL

### Minute of Meeting of the Taxi and Private Hire Car Forum held in the held in the Municipal Buildings, Falkirk on Tuesday 15 November 2016 at 10.00 a.m.

#### Forum Members

##### Present:

Councillor Jim Blackwood; Laura McNelly (Bruce/Blue Star Taxis); Emma Bruce (representing private hire car operators); Alan McFadzean (McFadzean Taxis); George McBlain, Fourways Taxis; Lennox Ainslie (Bo'ness Community Council); Jennie McCartney, Falkirk Area Disability Access Panel; and John Kennedy, Stenhouse Taxis.

##### Convener:

Councillor Jim Blackwood.

#### Council Officers

##### Present:

Bryan Douglas, Licensing Co-ordinator; Brian Samson, Licensing Enforcement Officer; Brian Samson, Licensing Enforcement Officer; Sarah McKenzie, Assistant Manager, Falkirk Delivers; and Antonia Sobieraj, Committee Services Officer.

##### Also in

##### Attendance:

Sergeant Marie White, Police Scotland.

### 1. Apologies

Apologies were intimated on behalf of Gordon Spiers, Fleet Services and Roy Kerr (Grange Radio Taxis).

### 2. Minute

#### Decision

**The minute of the meeting of the Taxi and Private Hire Car Forum on 20 September 2016 was approved.**

### 3. Testing Station Update

The Licensing Co-ordinator provided an update on the operation of the Testing Station due to apologies having been submitted on behalf of Gordon Speirs, Fleet Services.

The Testing Station was working normally with a full complement of testers.

All testers were continuing to undergo the new DVSA training and the two charge hands were also undergoing quality control training.

The Testing Station was not aware of any issues being raised by the trade which required to be addressed by it.

The taxi/ private hire car test pass rates for the period April to October 2016 were detailed as follows:-

MONTH	PRESENTED	PASS 1 <sup>ST</sup> 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
SEPTEMBER 2016	120	107	89%	13	6
OCTOBER 2016	110	103	94%	7	4

## Decision

**The Forum noted the information provided.**

### 4. Eco Stars Taxi Scheme/ Electric Taxis

The Forum received a presentation from Paul Wilkinson, Eco Stars on the emergence of electric vehicles. The main points covered included:-

- The environmental benefits (no emissions);
- The economic benefits (free charging stations);
- The available models;
- The range capability;
- The connector and chargers/ cables;
- The taxi electric vehicles (references to taxi businesses in Fife and Dundee where pure electric cars were introduced);
- The funding – up to £35k interest free loan available from the Scottish Government, payable over a 6 year period and the possible financial contribution from the Scottish Government via the Energy Savings Trust; and
- The free domestic charging points

The Convener thanked Paul for his informative presentation.

## **Decision**

**The Forum noted the information presented.**

### **5. Taxi Tariff Fares and Scales**

The Licensing Co-ordinator referred to the information presented at the previous meeting on 20 September 2016 having stated that the process for reviewing the taxi tariff would commence at the next meeting. At the previous meeting the Licensing Co-ordinator asked the trade members to consult with their colleagues and bring forward any proposals for consideration to the next meeting. He reminded the Forum that any proposed increases sought must be clearly evidenced in order to justify them. This was in line with advice previously given by the Traffic Commissioner.

## **Decision**

**The Forum agreed following discussion that no increase in the taxi tariff should be sought at this time.**

### **6. Falkirk Town Centre Festive Arrangements**

The Assistant Manager, Falkirk Delivers indicated that the Safer Streets initiative would operate from Saturday 17 until Saturday 31 December 2016 in partnership with the British Red Cross and Street pastors. At New Market only. The Safe Base would be located at Park Street, Falkirk. The Falkirk Christmas light switch on would take place on Sunday 20 November. Police Scotland would have a significant presence in a combination of hi viz and plain clothes from Sunday 20 November 2016 until Sunday 8 January 2017.

## **Decision**

**The Forum noted the information provided.**

### **7. Wheelchair Accessible Vehicles**

The Licensing Co-ordinator confirmed that since the policy on vehicle types changed approximately three years previously, there had been fluctuations in the numbers of wheelchair accessible vehicles.

The Licensing Co-ordinator advised an analysis of Wheelchair Accessible Vehicles (WAV) figures for Falkirk since 2012 until the present day had been carried out and the figures were as follows:-.

Year	Taxis	WAVTaxis	%WAV	PHC	WAV PHC	%WAV
2012	441	95	22%	77	10	13%
2013	444	97	22%	83	9	11%
2014	437	101	23%	83	13	16%
2015	438	84	19%	88	10	11%
<b>2016</b>	<b>430</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>20%</b>	<b>129</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>9%</b>

The Licensing Co-ordinator explained that in terms of taxis and in particular WAV provision, the Council must meet its public sector equality duty under the Equality Act 2010. He said that the Civic Licensing Committee would be considering a report on 30 November 2016 that would provide details of the composition of the taxi and private hire car fleet and the trends in WAV provision in Falkirk. It was anticipated that any decision to revisit taxi policies would be done with the full consultation with the Forum.

## Decision

### The Forum noted the information provided

#### 8. Immigration Act 2016

The Licensing Co-ordinator advised the Forum of the provisions of the Immigration Act 2016.

The Act contained a range of measures to tackle illegal working by virtue of the immigration status. As a result all licensing authorities must be satisfied that an applicant for a taxi or private hire car driver licence was not disqualified because of their immigration status before a licence was granted.

Guidance had been issued to local authorities and covered the practical steps which licensing staff would have to undertake when conducting checks. These included:-

- (1) Obtaining the original versions of acceptable documents;
- (2) Checking those documents' validity in the presence of the document holder; and
- (3) Copying and retaining the documents.

The licensing section already checked the identity of applicants as part of the application process. This new requirement, for the Council to be satisfied as to immigration status, made the application process more stringent and this would increase the time taken to carry out checks.

The new measures would be introduced from 1 December 2016 and would apply to all new and renewal applications. Once the right to work had been established records would be updated and there would be no requirement to

check again, unless the status was temporary and in such circumstances the licence would only be granted for that period.

The Home Office was undertaking training for all appropriate staff and in due course the Falkirk Council website would provide updated information.

### **Decision**

**The Forum noted the information provided.**

## **9. Taxi Knowledge Test**

The Licensing Co-ordinator explained that elected members questioned officers at a recent meeting of the Civic Licensing Committee in respect the arrangements undertaken for the taxi knowledge test.

A report outlining current practice set in context with other local authorities arrangements would be considered by Members. The Forum would be kept fully updated as to what Members considered.

The Licensing Co-ordinator referred to the provisions of the Air Weapons and Licensing (Scotland) Bill which would enable Council's to test private hire car drivers. Elected members had not considered as yet whether this would be an approach that should be introduced.

### **Decision**

**The Forum noted the information provided.**

## **10. Denny Town Centre Regeneration**

The Licensing Co-ordinator, due to apologies having been submitted on behalf of Jacquie McArthur, Economic Development Office, provided an update on the Denny Town Centre Regeneration work. A copy of the autumn issue of the Denny Town Centre Regeneration magazine was circulated. The information highlighted included:-

- The completion of Phase 1 Town Square development;
- The progress of Phase 2; and
- The opening of the car park at Davies Row.

### **Decision**

**The Forum noted the information presented.**

## 11. Any Other Competent Business

### (a) Taxis at Falkirk High Station

Forum members raised concern that bus replacement services could be taking trade away from taxis at Falkirk High Station. In response the Licensing Co-ordinator advised that that these buses were solely to take passengers to Falkirk Grahamston due to on-going essential maintenance works which affected passengers travelling to Edinburgh.

### (b) New Forum Membership

The Licensing Co-ordinator advised that there had been interest from a private hire operator in Bo'ness and Larbert and Stenhousemuir Community Council in becoming new Forum members. He indicated that there would be no issue as there were membership vacancies.

### (c) Change of Taxi and Private Hire Car Plates

The Licensing Co-ordinator advised Forum members of the recently introduced change to the front plates for taxis and private hire cars. The plates would no longer contain test expiry dates and would only consist of the licence number.

### (d) Festive Closure of Municipal Buildings, Falkirk

The Licensing Co-ordinator advised the Forum that Municipal Buildings, Falkirk would close for over the festive period from Monday 26 December 2016 until Wednesday 4 January 2017.

### (e) Display of Taxi Tariff Information within Taxis

The Licensing Co-ordinator reminded the Forum members that all cars that had a meter must display within the taxi the required public information relating the taxi tariff. The display of the laminated sheet provided by the Licensing Office was essential.

### (f) Wheelchair Accessible Vehicles Drop off Point

Jennie McCartney referred to unsuitability of the designated drop off point for wheelchair accessible vehicles due to there being no dropped kerb. This caused wheelchair users great difficulty in alighting vehicles, in particular at Baxter Wynd. The Licensing Co-ordinator undertook to investigate the matter and report back to the next meeting.

**12. Date of Next Meeting**

The Forum noted that the next meeting would take place in February or March 2017 and the date would be confirmed in course.