

EX123. Outcome of the Taxi Licensing Policy Development Panel

The Executive considered a report by the Acting Director of Transformation, Communities and Corporate Services which presented the findings of the policy development panel, established to review taxi policies on a variety of areas. The recommendations related to the future vehicle specification and composition of the taxi and private hire car fleet and age policy. In addition, the report provided an initial update on the impending introduction of a new licensing regime for Short Term Lets.

The Panel was established in 2018 to review aspects of taxi/phc licensing policy, including taxi medicals and the taxi tariff process. The final aspect of the panel's work focused on the taxi/private hire car specification, composition of the trade, and vehicle age policy. The Panel held a series of meetings including evidence sessions with expert witnesses and stakeholders.

The Panel had regard to three main areas when considering the future composition of the trade:-

- The Council's obligations under the Public Sector Equality Duty – to ensure that any policy change would not adversely impact on WAV numbers;
- The Council's Climate Change Commitments – to ensure that the licensed fleet move towards complete decarbonisation, and
- Economic Viability of the Trade – to ensure that any suggested changes would be affordable to the trade.

Having reviewed the evidence given at two evidence sessions held in late 2021, together with previous evidence from Forum members, during meetings and in correspondence, the panel agreed the following draft recommendations for further discussion with the Taxi Forum:-

1. In 3 years, all new or replacement taxi and private hire cars must be either WAV, hybrid or fully electric.
2. In 5 years, all new or replacement taxi and private hire cars must be Ultra Low Emission Vehicles or WAV
3. Age policy will not apply to ULEV (with immediate effect)
4. (Internal Combustion Engine) WAV of up to 6 years old which adhere to appropriate emissions standard, will be permitted onto the fleet (with immediate effect)
5. The mixed fleet approach to vehicle composition would continue (The fleet would not transition to 100% WAV)
6. To maintain appropriate WAV numbers in 3 years all multi plate operators must ensure a move towards 15% of plates held are WAV
7. That the new vehicle specification will equally apply to both taxi and private hire car.

The panel met with the Taxi Forum to discuss the draft recommendations. The Forum were unanimous in its opposition to any requirement on multi-plate holders to hold a % of their licences as WAV vehicles. One

viewpoint offered, suggested that any such obligation should fall on new entrants only. The Forum did not favour an alignment of operator categories and questioned why the Council should be ambitious in its aims to decarbonise the licensed fleet in advance of the timescale set nationally. The Forum agreed that the mixed fleet approach should continue and offered no dissenting views on the proposed changes to the age policy.

Following the conclusion of the joint meeting, the Panel carefully considered the comments from the Forum. The initial draft recommendations considered at the meeting were subsequently changed to reflect a 6-year timescale for ULEV vehicles and that 10% of multi-plate holder licences should be WAV, with further exploration of how this could be implemented fairly to ensure numbers did not fall below current levels.

It was proposed that if the Executive agreed the recommendations, that these form the basis of further wider consultation with the public, affording all members of the trade an opportunity to input, including those not represented at the Taxi Forum.

The Scottish Government was introducing a licensing scheme for short-term lets. The Short-Term Lets Licensing Order was passed on 19 January 2022 and came into force on 1 March 2022. The scheme would come into effect from 1 October 2022 from which date existing operators must apply for a provisional licence to allow them to continue operating until their full application had been determined. A further report outlining the proposed licensing regime would be brought forward in due course.

Councillor Murtagh, Public Protection Portfolio Holder, addressed the Executive on the recommendations of the Policy Development Panel and commended these to the Executive. She also made reference to the difficult situation of the taxi trade in relation to fuel prices and recommended to the Executive that the tariff review was brought forward.

Having heard from the Portfolio Holder, Councillor Hughes, seconded by Councillor Bissett, then moved her proposals to the Executive. There was general agreement on this.

Decision

The Executive:-

- (1) agreed to progress the recommendations of the Policy Development Panel as detailed in section 2.1 of the report;**
- (2) requested that work on the recommendation point 2.1(8) was begun across the relevant departments and that a report was submitted to the Executive by the Director of Place Services and the Acting Director of Transformation, Communities and Corporate Services as soon as available;**

- (3) noted that following consideration of the aforementioned report a full consultation exercise would be undertaken with the public on the recommendations, with comments reported back to the Executive prior to recommendations 2.1(1-7) of the Policy Development Panel coming into force, allowing for any adjustments as necessary;**
- (4) agreed to instruct officers to review the Taxi Tariff, for a decision to be made by senior officers under delegated powers**
- (5) agreed to delegate the decision on the proposed tariff for public consultation to the Acting Director of Transformation, Communities and Corporate Services in consultation with group leaders and the portfolio holder that would enable the formal process of public consultation on any proposed adjustment to begin as soon as possible;**
- (6) agreed that in the event of any representations being made as a result of the public consultation that these were reported to the June meeting of Council for final decision and that in the event of no representations being made the proposed tariff would come into effect;**
- (7) noted the record increases in conventional vehicle fuel experienced since the onset of the war in Ukraine and acknowledged that while other industries had some possibility of making difficult decisions around passing on these cost increases, the Taxi Trade themselves had no ability to do so, as charges were set by Local Government, in a statutory process of several months which could not be truncated. The Executive therefore emphasised the need for officers to take full account of the present volatile circumstances, and progress these matters with every effort to maximise efficiency in the process, and**
- (8) noted the content within the report with respect to Short Term Lets and recommendations set out at 2.1(10-11) respectively.**