

## **AGENDA ITEM 5 (a)**

### **FALKIRK COUNCIL**

**Subject: REFERRAL FROM SPECIAL ENVIRONMENT AND COMMUNITY SAFETY COMMITTEE – 19 MARCH 2013 - REVIEW OF THE TAXI/PRIVATE HIRE VEHICLE LICENSING ARRANGEMENTS**  
**Meeting: EXECUTIVE**  
**Date: 7 MAY 2013**  
**Author: CHIEF GOVERNANCE OFFICER**

#### **1. INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 The following report was submitted to the Special Environment and Community Safety Committee at its meeting on 19 March 2013. The purpose of this Report is to refer the recommendations made by the Environment and Community Safety Committee to the Executive for approval.

#### **2. REVIEW OF THE TAXI/PRIVATE HIRE VEHICLE LICENSING ARRANGEMENTS**

- 2.1 Committee considered a report by the Chief Governance Officer advising of the taxi review which had been undertaken, detailing the key outstanding issues and enclosing the Council's Licensing Conditions for Taxis, Private Hire Cars, Taxi Drivers and Private Hire Car Drivers.

- 2.2 Councillor Dr C R Martin seconded by Councillor Paterson moved the following recommendations:-

(1) Taxi Numbers

That the current approach continues and that no numerical cap is introduced for taxi operator licences;

(2) Licence Conditions

That the conditions appended to the report are approved (subject to allowing operators to continue to display their company name on the sign on top of the taxi) and that the conditions come into effect on renewal of the relevant licence;

(3) Vehicle Types

That the current policy on the age of vehicles is changed to reduce the age at which a vehicle can first enter the fleet from 6 years to 3 years but that this is done progressively by a reduction of 1 year each year starting on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2014 and that the current policy requiring that each new operator licence is in respect of a wheelchair accessible vehicle be modified to the requirement being for a wheelchair accessible vehicle or for a hybrid or electric vehicle;

(4) Driver Standards

That a training requirement is introduced for new taxi and private hire drivers only (with the option for the Civic Licensing Committee to attach the condition in other cases where it considers it necessary) and that officers are instructed to bring proposals on the content of the training requirement following discussion with training providers to a future Committee;

(5) Advertising

That advertising is allowed on all taxis (but not private hire vehicles) subject to the restrictions set out in paragraph 6.4 of the Report and in accordance with a procedure to be determined by the Chief Governance Officer which would include a fee of £35.00, and

(6) to refer the above recommendations to the next appropriate decision making committee of the Council.

2.3 By way of an amendment, Councillor Jackson seconded by Councillor Oliver, moved that a numerical cap for taxi operators licenses be implemented at the limit suggested by Halcrow of 444 and that this matter be referred to the next appropriate decision making Committee of the Council and for the remaining issues to be continued for further consideration.

2.4 On a division, 5 members voted for the motion and 5 members voted for the amendment.

There being an equality of votes and in terms of Standing Order 21.6 the Convener used his casting vote for the Motion.

2.5 Executive is therefore invited to consider the recommendations contained in paragraph 2.2 above if the recommendations are adopted it is proposed that the newly revised licence conditions (with the exception of the condition relative to training for new drivers) would be introduced with effect from 1<sup>st</sup> June 2013.

2.6 With regard to training, discussions are ongoing with Forth Valley College and other providers to explore the potential for relevant training that can be delivered at a reasonable price. It is anticipated that details on course delivery and content will be brought before a future meeting of the Executive with a view to training being introduced this calendar year.

2.7 The advertising procedure has been prepared and it is recommended that the ability to request consent for advertising will commence on 1<sup>st</sup> June 2013. This will apply to all licensed taxis.

2.8 The second part of the recommendation on vehicle types which allows a hybrid or electric vehicle to be provided for a new operator licence as an alternative to a wheelchair accessible vehicle requires the Council to advise on the definition of hybrid or electric vehicles for the purpose of the policy. The proposed definition is:-

- Hybrid – Hybrid Electric Vehicle (HEV): A vehicle that contains a conventional combustible engine propulsion system with an electric propulsion system
- Electric – Electric Vehicle: A vehicle that uses an electric motor and is powered by stored electricity

It is proposed that this change in the policy will have effect from 1<sup>st</sup> June 2013. The impact of this change on the proportion of wheelchair accessible vehicles (WAVs) in the taxi fleet will be carefully monitored. The issue of numerical cap was the subject of an Equalities Impact Assessment the outcome of which was reported to members of the Environment and Community Safety Committee. This provides adequate material to assess the likely impact of the present proposed change to policy. It is considered that the change will not have the effect of decreasing the proportion of WAVs in the taxi fleet.

### **3. RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **3.1 The Executive is invited to agree:-**

##### **(1) Taxi Numbers**

**That the current approach continues and that no numerical cap is introduced for taxi operator licences;**

##### **(2) Licence Conditions**

**That the conditions contained in the volume of appendices are approved (subject to allowing operators to continue to display their company name on the sign on top of the taxi) and that the conditions come into effect on renewal of the relevant licence;**

##### **(3) Vehicle Types**

**That the current policy on the age of vehicles is changed to reduce the age at which a vehicle can first enter the fleet from 6 years to 3 years but that this is done progressively by a reduction of 1 year each year starting on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2014 and that the current policy requiring that each new operator licence is in respect of a wheelchair accessible vehicle be modified to the requirement being for a wheelchair accessible vehicle or for a hybrid or electric vehicle;**

**(4) Driver Standards**

That a training requirement is introduced for new taxi and private hire drivers only (with the option for the Civic Licensing Committee to attach the condition in other cases where it considers it necessary) and that officers are instructed to bring proposals on the content of the training requirement following discussion with training providers to a future Committee;

**(5) Advertising**

That advertising is allowed on all taxis (but not private hire vehicles) subject to the restrictions set out in paragraph 6.4 of the Report and in accordance with a procedure to be determined by the Chief Governance Officer which would include a fee of £35.00, and

**(6) That the changes to the license conditions (other than the training requirement) and to the policy have effect from 1<sup>st</sup> June 2013.**

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**CHIEF GOVERNANCE OFFICER**  
**24 April 2013**

Contact Names: Bryan Douglas, Licensing Co-ordinator (Telephone 01324 501262)

**LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS**