

## **For publication**

### **Taxi Consultative Committee (A000)**

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Meeting: Appeals and Regulatory Committee

Date: 17 March 2021

Cabinet portfolio: Health and Wellbeing

Report by: Licensing Manager  
Democratic & Scrutiny Officer

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### **1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 To consider responses received from members of the Taxi Consultative Committee and relevant officers and partners as part of the recent review of whether there continued to be a role for the Committee and to determine the best practical approach for the future of the Committee.

### **2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1 That meetings of the Taxi Consultative Committee scheduled in April and July, 2021 be suspended.

- 2.2 That the appointment of the three trade representatives who have been involved in the Committee over the last two years and who have responded to this recent review be extended for a temporary period of six months from May, 2021.
- 2.3 That a further review be undertaken in September / October, 2021 of whether there continues to be a role for the Taxi Consultative Committee, in order to enable the Appeals and Regulatory Committee to consider whether it should continue or whether it should be recommended to Council that it be dissolved.

### **3.0 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 3.1 To take account of responses from members of the Taxi Consultative Committee to the recent review.
- 3.2 To provide further opportunity to assess whether there continues to be a role for the Taxi Consultative Committee.

### **4.0 BACKGROUND**

- 4.1 The annual report of the Taxi Consultative Committee for 2019/20 was presented to the meeting of the Appeals and Regulatory Committee held on 25 November 2020 (copy attached at Appendix A).
- 4.2 The annual report referred to the difficulties which had been experienced during the year of not having filled all of the trade representative appointments and of low attendance at meetings by trade representatives.
- 4.3 The report explained that the meeting of the Committee held on 8 July, 2020 had concluded that any issues were currently being satisfactorily addressed through direct communication between drivers, operators and the Licensing section without the need for formal meetings of the Committee. The

Committee had therefore agreed to suspend the meetings scheduled for October, 2020 and January, 2021, and to then review in early 2021 whether there continued to be a role for the Committee or to recommend to Council that it be dissolved.

- 4.4 The Appeals and Regulatory Committee meeting on 25 November, 2020 endorsed this approach.
- 4.5 As part of the review, at the end of January, 2021 members of the Taxi Consultative Committee (trade representatives and elected Members) and relevant officers and partners were asked for their views on whether:
  - a) there had been any issues since July, 2020 which they had not been able to deal with by contacting the Licensing section directly;
  - b) there had been any issues which would have benefitted from being considered at a meeting of the Taxi Consultative Committee;
  - c) they would support the Taxi Consultative Committee being dissolved permanently.
- 4.6 A summary of the responses received is shown at Appendix B.
- 4.7 Of the total of seven responses received, no issues were identified which had not been able to be dealt with by contacting Licensing directly or which respondents felt would have benefitted from being considered at a meeting of the Committee.
- 4.8 However, three respondents (two trade representatives and one elected Member) expressed reservations about the Committee being permanently dissolved, partly due to the Covid pandemic having disrupted the normal working of the trade and partly due to the resulting lack of elected Member input and opportunity to hold the County Council Highways function to account.

4.9 The two trade representatives who had expressed these reservations requested that meetings of the Committee be suspended for a further six months, by which time it was hoped that the trade would be operating more normally. This would then enable reconsideration at that stage of whether there continued to be a role for the Committee.

4.10 If this were to be done, the appointment of the trade representatives on the Committee would need to be temporarily extended, as they are currently appointed for a two year period from June, 2019 until May, 2021. It would not seem practical to seek new nominations for trade representatives at this stage if there is the possibility of the Committee being dissolved within six months of new appointments, especially given the difficulty of sufficient nominations being made in 2019.

4.11 It is the view of Councillor Caulfield, Chair of the Taxi Consultative Committee, the Licensing Manager and the Legal and Democratic Services officers advising the Committee that this is the most practical option at this stage, i.e.:

- a) to suspend meetings of the Taxi Consultative Committee scheduled in April and July, 2021;
- b) to extend the appointment for a temporary period of six months of the three trade representatives who have been involved in the Committee over the last two years and who have responded to this recent review. These representatives have confirmed their willingness for their appointments to be extended. It is not proposed to extend the appointment of the fourth trade representative who was appointed in June 2019, as he has had no involvement with the Committee since then and he has not responded to this review;
- c) to undertake a further review in September / October, 2021 of whether there continues to be a role for the Taxi Consultative Committee, in order to enable the Appeals and

Regulatory Committee to consider whether it should continue or whether it should be recommended to Council that it be dissolved.

4.12 It is recognised that the Taxi Consultative Committee has provided a forum in which trade representatives, Council officers, elected Members and other agencies such as the Police and the County Council Highways have been able to engage with each other on relevant matters. However, there has not appeared to be any detriment from this forum having only met once since January, 2020, and this recent experience would suggest that appropriate levels of engagement can be maintained as required without this forum in the future.

4.13 Alternative options which have been considered are outlined at section 5 below.

## **5.0 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS**

### **5.1 Continue scheduled quarterly meetings of the Taxi Consultative Committee**

5.2 Under the current terms of reference of the Committee this option would require nominations of trade representatives for the six positions available for appointment for a two year period from June, 2021. This nomination process is time consuming, there were less than six nominations received in 2019 and there has been no indication since that other licence holders wish to be nominated.

5.3 No issues have been identified since July, 2020 which would have benefitted from being considered at scheduled quarterly meetings of the Committee.

**5.4 Continue the Taxi Consultative Committee without scheduled meetings**

5.5 This option would require the terms of reference to be revised to remove the requirement for quarterly meetings and would also require the nomination of trade representatives (as in paragraph 5.2 above).

5.6 Although this option would enable meetings of the Committee to be arranged as and when issues arose, the experience since July, 2020, and to a large extent for the 12 months prior to that, has shown that issues have been satisfactorily dealt with by direct contact between the trade and Licensing.

**5.7 Recommend to Council that the Taxi Consultative Committee be dissolved**

5.8 Whilst no issues have been identified since July, 2020 which would have benefitted from being considered at meetings of the Committee, the comments received from trade representatives regarding the Covid pandemic having disrupted the normal working of the trade have been noted.

5.9 It is therefore recognised that it may be appropriate to reconsider the situation again after a further six months, rather than recommend that the Committee be dissolved at this stage.

**6.0 EQUALITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

6.1 A full equalities impact assessment has not been completed but the recommendations within this report have neither a positive or a negative impact on any of the groups with protected characteristics. There continues to be opportunity for any licence holders with protected characteristics to deal with the Licensing section direct or to be nominated to fill one of the vacant trade representative appointments.

## **7.0 RISK MANAGEMENT**

7.1 Risk management implications of the recommendations within this report are summarised below:

Description of the Risk	Impact	Likelihood	Mitigating Action	Impact	Likelihood
No scheduled meeting to consider issues if they arise.	M	L	A meeting of the Committee could be arranged if necessary.	L	L
Lower level of engagement from the trade if new nominations not sought.	M	L	Scope for nominations to be made to fill vacant appointments at any stage.	L	L

## **8.0 RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 8.1 That meetings of the Taxi Consultative Committee scheduled in April and July, 2021 be suspended.
- 8.2 That the appointment of the three trade representatives who have been involved in the Committee over the last two years and who have responded to this recent review be extended for a temporary period of six months from May, 2021.
- 8.3 That a further review be undertaken in September / October, 2021 of whether there continues to be a role for the Taxi Consultative Committee, in order to enable the Appeals and Regulatory Committee to consider whether it should continue or whether it should be recommended to Council that it be dissolved.

More information about this report is available from  
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