



**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
LICENSING SUB-COMMITTEE OF THE CABINET**

**THURSDAY 9 JUNE 2016
COUNCIL CHAMBER, TOWN HOUSE, HADDINGTON**

Committee Members Present:

Councillor J McNeil (Chair)
Councillor J Williamson
Councillor D Grant
Councillor J Caldwell
Councillor S Currie

Council Officials Present:

Mr I Forrest, Senior Solicitor
Ms G Herkes, Licensing Officer
Ms M Winter, Licensing Officer

Others Present:

Insp A Harborow, Police Scotland (Items 1-6)
PC H Bowsher, Police Scotland (Items 1-6)
Mr G Brooks, Chair of East Lothian Taxi and Private Hire Association (Item 7)

Clerk:

Mrs F Stewart

Apologies:

Councillor J McMillan

Declarations of Interest:

None

Public

SUMMARY OF PROCEEDINGS – EXEMPT INFORMATION

The Licensing Sub-Committee unanimously agreed to exclude the public from the following business containing exempt information by virtue of Paragraph 6 (information concerning the financial or business affairs of any particular person other than the Authority) of Schedule 7A to the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973.

1. APPLICATION FOR RENEWAL OF TAXI/PRIVATE HIRE CAR DRIVER'S LICENCE

The Sub-Committee had received one application for a licence and it was refused.

2. APPLICATION FOR RENEWAL OF A PRIVATE HIRE CAR OPERATOR'S LICENCE

The Sub-Committee had received one application for a licence and it was granted.

3. REQUEST FOR THE SUSPENSION OF A TAXI DRIVER'S LICENCE

The Sub-Committee had received one request from Police Scotland for the suspension of a licence and this was refused.

4. APPLICATION FOR THE GRANT OF A WINDOW CLEANER'S LICENCE

The Sub-Committee had received one application for a licence and it was granted.

5. LETTER FROM GEORGE KEREVAN MP RE ELECTRIC CAR

The Sub-Committee agreed that the current policy of the Council regarding wheelchair accessibility of taxis should be maintained, in line with the aims of the Equality Act 2010, and that the proposal outlined in the said correspondence be refused.

6. PRIVATE MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 12 MAY 2016 FOR APPROVAL

The Sub-Committee agreed that the minute of 12 May 2016 was a true record of the meeting.

PUBLIC

7. RESPONSE TO A CONSULTATION DOCUMENT FROM SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT REGARDING 'THE IMPACT OF MODERN TECHNOLOGY ON TAXI & PRIVATE HIRE CAR LICENSING'

The Depute Chief Executive (Resources and People Services) had submitted a report to advise the Sub-Committee of the current consultation by Scottish Government on the impact of modern technology on taxi and private hire car licensing and the proposed response thereto. The Council's proposed response to the Consultation was attached to the report.

The Chair thanked George Brooks, Chair of the East Lothian Taxi and Private Hire Association, for attending the meeting and speaking on behalf of his members. Mr Brooks informed Members that he was now the sole Chair of the Association as Colin Paxton, previously co-Chair with himself, had retired from the business.

Ian Forrest, Legal Adviser summarised the report. He stated that the Scottish Government were presently consulting on a number of issues that impact on Licensing matters. In particular, one consultation was looking at the current taxi booking Office regulations and the fact that these regulations were specifically premises based and did not take account of booking by mobile phone or booking apps. The Consultation questions related to whether Booking Office Regulations required to be amended to take account of modern booking methods. The Consultation also sought views on whether bookings should be regulated and centrally controlled. Views were also sought on whether all taxis should have a taximeter fitted. The closing date for consultation responses was 15 June 2016.

The Chair invited Mr Books to comment on the Council's proposed response to the Consultation. Mr Brooks stated that he and his members were aware of the advances in technology in the taxi business. His primary concern was the proposal to install taximeters in all private hire vehicles. He had eight vehicles which carried out school runs only and were in operation for only 2 hours per day. These vehicles were only insured for school run and had no meters. If the current proposal was to go ahead, it would cost £300 - £400 to install a meter in each car and be of no use. He would therefore strongly urge that the status quo was maintained in respect of taxi meters. He also argued that having a meter installed in every taxi vehicle would not deter unscrupulous operators.

The Chair referred to the Council's response on the installation of meters in all taxi vehicles which underlined the financial impact on operators which did not currently need to have a meter in their vehicles. The Chair shared Mr Brooks' view that there were clearly examples where a meter was not required in vehicles. Having a meter installed unnecessarily would also have an impact on the cost of school transport. The Chair stated that the Sub-Committee had listened to Mr Brooks and would be advising the Scottish Government that the Council did not support the installation of taximeters in all vehicles.

Decision

The Sub-Committee agreed to approve the proposed response to the Consultation on behalf of the Council, which was included as an appendix to the report.