



TAXI AND GENERAL COMMITTEE

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD IN THE SIRHOWY ROOM, PENALLTA HOUSE ON
MONDAY, 25TH MARCH 2019 AT 10.00 AM**

PRESENT

Councillor D.W.R. Preece – Chair
Councillor J. Simmonds – Vice-Chair

Councillors:

W. David, M. Davies, K. Etheridge, Ms J. Gale, D.C. Harse, J. Ridgewell, J.E. Roberts,
R. Whiting, W. Williams

Together with:

J. Morgan (Trading Standards, Licensing and Registrars Manager), L. Morgan (Licensing
Manager), T. Rawson (Solicitor), R. Barrett (Committee Services Officer)

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors J. Bevan, P.J. Bevan, D. Cushing and
Mrs D. Price.

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest received at the commencement or during the course of
the meeting.

3 WELSH GOVERNMENT CONSULTATION DOCUMENT - IMPROVING PUBLIC TRANSPORT - LICENSING OF TAXIS AND PRIVATE HIRE VEHICLES

The Licensing Manager presented the report, which provided information in respect of Welsh
Government's (WG) White Paper "Improving Public Transport", and sought Members' views
on a draft consultation response in respect of Part 2 of the White Paper (taxis and private hire
vehicles).

Members were advised that following commencement of the relevant provisions of the Wales
Act 2017, licensing of taxis and private hire vehicles will be a matter within the legislative
competence of the National Assembly for Wales. WG carried out a consultation exercise with
stake holders in September 2017, with the intention of replacing the existing legislative
framework with new primary legislation for Wales. Following on from this consultation, a
White Paper has now been published on proposals to legislate for reforming local bus
services (part 1) and licensing of taxis and private hire vehicles (part 2). The report therefore

sought the Committee's views on a draft CCBC response to the consultation in relation to part 2.

It was explained that Part 2 of the White Paper sets out 4 proposals, namely:-

1. **National Standards** - Welsh Government is proposing to set national standards for taxi and private hire vehicle licensing ensuring that these standards would have to be met in order to obtain a licence.
2. **Enforcement** - Welsh Government is proposing to allow a licensing authority to take enforcement action against any vehicle operating in its area.
3. **Information Sharing** - Welsh Government is proposing to allow the creation of a mechanism by which relevant information can be shared, for the purposes of safeguarding.
4. **Joint Transport Authority** - Welsh Government is proposing to redirect all of the existing taxi and private hire licensing functions away from the Local Authority and into a national licensing authority (a Joint Transport Authority).

A draft response to Part 2 of the White Paper has been developed by a working group on behalf of the All Wales Licensing Expert Panel, and it was explained that the draft response from CCBC (appended to the report) closely mirrors that of the Panel. The Committee were asked to note that CCBC is generally in support of the majority of the proposals, except for the transfer of "taxi" licensing functions to the Joint Transport Authority (JTA). At this stage there is no detail in the White Paper as to how the JTA would undertake the licensing function, and additional information is required to make an informed comment. The Committee were also advised of comments on the draft response received internally from Cabinet Members. In respect of National Standards, Cabinet Members had expressed a view that there should be independent testing facilities for taxi/private hire vehicle MOT's / Compliance Tests, that furthermore there should be an age restriction on vehicles first plating, and finally that the take up of Electric Vehicles should be encouraged by the licensed trade.

During the course of the ensuing debate, the Committee expressed concerns around the proposal to establish a Joint Transport Authority and remove the taxi and private hire vehicle licensing functions from local authorities. They felt that it would be more conducive to keep these functions in-house, particularly given that each local authority has specialist knowledge and expertise regarding the taxi trade in their particular area. The Committee expressed reservations about supporting the establishment of a JTA, given in particular the lack of information to date on how this body would administer the licensing function. They were also of the view that there needed to be further information and clarity on a national minimum level of driver and vehicle standards across Wales, together with detail on who will have responsibility for specific elements of the licensing function.

It was noted that consultation on the proposals had taken place across the trade and the proposals had been included in the trade newsletter. WG has widely publicised its White Paper on "Including Public Transport" and a seminar on the proposals was recently held in Cardiff. In response to Members' queries, Officers also provided further information on the rationale behind the White Paper and how part 2 relating to the licensing of taxis and private hire vehicles will feed into the overall proposals.

A Member enquired as to the next steps following the consultation process. Officers explained that once WG have collated the views and responses (after the closing date of 27th March 2019), their intention is to carry out further work surrounding the proposals to form a Joint Transport Authority. This will include a regulatory impact assessment, which will seek to identify the likely costs, impacts and benefits of the proposed legislative changes.

Following consideration of the report, Members indicated that they were supportive of the first 3 proposals but were reluctant to support the transfer of licensing functions to a Joint Transport Authority at the present time, given the lack of information available. Members were reminded that at this particular stage, the report was merely seeking endorsement of

CCBC's draft response to the proposals. However, Officers gave assurances that the draft response would be updated to reflect the concerns of the Committee over the remit of a Joint Transport Authority, prior to its submission to Welsh Government

It was moved and seconded that subject to the inclusion of Members' comments in respect of the Joint Transport Authority, the draft response as appended to the report be endorsed and submitted to Welsh Government. By a show of hands, this was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED that subject to the inclusion of the aforementioned comments, the Council's draft response to part 2 of the White Paper on "Improving Public Transport" be approved and submitted to Welsh Government ahead of the consultation closing date (27th March 2019).

The meeting closed at 10.27 a.m.