

REPORT

To: GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE		Subject: TAXI LICENSING – VEHICLE SPECIFICATIONS
From: DIRECTOR OF ADMINISTRATION		
Date: 28 April 2004	Ref: WBK/KH	

1. Purpose of Report

1.1. To advise the Committee of certain representations that have been received in respect of its policy that all taxis in the North Lanarkshire area be of the purpose-built, wheelchair accessible variety by 31 December 2005.

2. Background

2.1. Members will be aware that current Council policy dictates that all taxis operated in the North Lanarkshire area are required to be of the purpose-built, wheelchair accessible variety by 31 December 2005. Since that policy was formulated, there have been numerous representations from the taxi trade seeking a change to the policy. The taxi trade argues that there is no demand for a 100% purpose-built, wheelchair accessible fleet in the North Lanarkshire area and that the financial implications of the policy will be devastating for taxi operators.

2.2. Since the Council's policy was formulated, there have been national developments that impact on taxi licensing. There have been further government announcements in respect of taxi accessibility regulations under the Disability Discrimination Act 1995. The timetable for full implementation of taxi accessibility regulations is now 2020 and both the Scottish Executive and the Westminster Government will be consulting on draft regulations in future, although there is no timescale available in respect of that consultation at this time. It is reasonable to anticipate that final taxi accessibility regulations are still some years away.

2.3. The Office of Fair Trading has also recommended to the government that numerical limits on taxi licenses are anti-consumer and there have been a number of detailed announcements on the issue from the OFT, the Scottish Executive and various Westminster government bodies. The operation of numerical limits on taxi licences impacts on a number of other taxi licensing issues.

3. Issues for consideration

3.1. Taxi trade representatives have called for a further meeting to discuss the possibility of a change to the policy on purpose-built, wheelchair accessible vehicles. Given that there have been national developments in the area of taxi licensing, it is desirable that the Convener, Vice-Convener and relevant council officers meet with taxi trade representatives to review and update respective viewpoints particularly in light of the changing national position. Ultimately it is possible that such discussions may lead to a report to the Committee recommending policy amendments. However, it is considered important to stress that any discussions with the taxi trade will be entirely without prejudice to the Council's policy on taxi specifications and that the manner and timetable for implementation will be unaffected by any discussions unless the Committee decides at a future date to make policy changes.

4. **Corporate considerations**

4.1. This report should have no significant impact on Council policies or positions at this time.

5. **Recommendation**

5.1. The Committee is asked to sanction further discussions between the Convener, Vice-Convener, council officers and taxi trade representatives in respect of both the purpose-built, wheelchair accessible policy and taxi licensing overall with a view to a further report to Committee on those discussions in due course.

Walker B. Kilgour

W.B.K. **Director of Administration**

Members seeking further information on the contents of this report are asked to contact Kenny Hannaway, Senior Solicitor (Licensing) on Extension 2214.