

*Excerpt from Minutes of Meeting of the
Licensing Committee held on Wednesday, 6 September 2006.*

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**SURVEY OF DEMAND FOR TAXIS INCLUDING WHEELCHAIR
ACCESSIBLE TAXIS**

With reference to the Minutes of the Meeting of this Committee held on 7 June 2006 (page 2486 paragraph 9210 refers) a further report was submitted by the Head of Legal and Administrative Services on the outcome of the survey of demand for taxis, including wheelchair accessible taxis, which had been undertaken by consultants on behalf of the Council.

In addition, a paper by Mr. Tom McEntegart of Messrs Anderson Fyfe LLP, Solicitors, detailing the response by Dumbarton and Alexandria Taxi Trade Association to the West Dunbartonshire Taxi Study undertaken by the Transport Research Institute Taxi Studies Group of Napier University was submitted.

Having heard the Principal Solicitor it was noted that Mr. McEntegart wished to address the Committee on behalf of the Trade Association. The Committee agreed to hear Mr. McEntegart.

Mr. McEntegart addressed the Committee in relation to the Taxi Study Report and it was noted:-

- (i) that the Association acknowledged that the study had involved a comprehensive assessment of the demand for taxi services and accepted the conclusion contained in the report that there was no significant unmet demand for taxi services either in the Dumbarton & Vale of Leven or Clydebank Taxi Licensing Zones;
- (ii) that the Association also accepted that the Taxi Studies Group had carried out a detailed assessment to determine the number of fully accessible taxis required to meet the needs of taxi users in the Dumbarton & Vale of Leven Taxi Licensing Zone and accepted the conclusion that there is an immediate need for 23 fully accessible vehicles;

- (iii) that the Association contested the conclusion that a fully accessible fleet in the Dumbarton & Vale of Leven Taxi Licensing Zone would be a desirable long term goal and that the study supported the concept of a graduated introduction of accessible vehicles as being the most appropriate method of achieving a fully accessible fleet;
- (iv) that it was the contention of the Association that the approach taken by the Taxi Studies Group when commenting on the merits or otherwise of a fully accessible fleet was in marked contrast to the analytical approach taken in assessing the demand for taxi services for the public as a whole and for taxi users with ambulant impairments;
- (v) that the Association contended that the perceived benefits of having a fully accessible fleet which were detailed in the report were questionable, that the potential advantages and disadvantages had not been properly considered and that the study did not indicate that public opinion supported a move to a fully accessible fleet; and
- (vi) that in the opinion of the Association, very little consideration had been given to the economic impact which may be associated with a move to a fully accessible fleet.

Mr. McEntegart concluded by confirming that the Association accepted the recommendations contained in the Taxi Study Report that there is no significant unmet demand for taxi services in West Dunbartonshire and that 23 fully accessible taxis are required in the Dumbarton & Vale of Leven Taxi Licensing Zone to meet the needs of taxi users with ambulant impairment, although further consideration would require to be given to how this number would be achieved and the timescale. With respect to the issue of moving to a fully accessible fleet, Mr. McEntegart indicated that the Association strongly urged the Committee to defer taking a decision to allow meaningful consultation with all interested parties and a detailed assessment of the potential advantages and disadvantages of introducing a fully accessible fleet to be undertaken.

Thereafter Mr. McEntegart responded to questions from Members in relation to various points which he had made in his address.

After discussion and having heard Councillor McColl, it was agreed that consideration of the matter be continued to allow relevant user groups to be consulted and a report on the outcome of that exercise to be submitted to the Committee.