

**ANGUS COUNCIL**

**CIVIC LICENSING COMMITTEE – 4 JANUARY 2018**

**INSPECTION OF TAXIS AND PRIVATE HIRE CARS**

**REPORT BY SHEONA C HUNTER HEAD OF LEGAL AND DEMOCRATIC SERVICES**

**ABSTRACT**

This Report relates to the inspection of taxis and private hire cars in the Angus area.

**1. RECOMMENDATION**

It is recommended that the Committee:-

- (i) note the progress made in consulting with local MOT garages about the possibility of vehicle inspections being carried out within Angus;
- (ii) determine whether to progress using local garages to conduct taxi and private hire vehicle inspections in Angus; and
- (iii) if the Committee determines to progress using local garages to conduct taxi and private hire vehicle inspections in Angus, instruct the Head of Legal and Democratic Services to:-
  - (a) scope the extent of the requirements of the Council;
  - (b) draft a specification and associated tender documentation;
  - (c) formulate a procurement plan; and
  - (d) explore with Dundee City Council the possibility of retaining their services to offer the taxi and private hire trade the option of having their vehicles inspected in Dundee.

and prepare a report on (a) to (d) above for consideration and approval by a future meeting of this Committee.

**2. BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 All vehicles licensed as taxis and private hire cars must pass a vehicle inspection test prior to being licensed, and annually thereafter, to ensure that they meet required standards. This testing was previously carried out by Tayside Police at the Forfar Police Station Garage. When the Forfar Police Station Garage closed in April 2015 agreement was reached with Dundee City Council that the testing would be carried out by them in Dundee.
- 2.2 This Committee, at its meeting on 23 February 2017, considered a report by the Head of Legal and Democratic Services in respect of the inspection of taxis and

private hire cars (report 95/17 refers). Having considered the terms of that report, this Committee agreed:-

- (i) to note that Tayside Contracts had advised that they were unable to undertake taxi and private hire car vehicle inspections in Angus;
- (ii) to note that arrangements with Dundee City Council to use their testing facilities for Angus vehicles had worked well and would continue;
- (iii) to note that agreement has been reached with Dundee City Council to offer MOTs at the same time as vehicle inspections at a cost of £11; and
- (iv) that a consultation exercise be undertaken with the trade to ascertain their views on the current service and the possibility of local garages being used to carry out vehicle inspections.

2.3 Between 10 March 2017 and 10 April 2017, a consultation was undertaken regarding the inspection of taxis and private hire cars via the "Have Your Say" section of Angus Council's website. Representations were invited from Taxi and Private Hire Car Operators in Angus regarding:

- 1. The current arrangements with Dundee City Council to use their testing facilities,
- 2. The agreement that has been reached with Dundee City Council to offer MOT's at the same time as vehicle inspections,
- 3. The possibility of local garages being used to carry out vehicle inspections,
- 4. The agreement reached with Dundee City council to offer MOT's at the same time as vehicle inspections at a cost of £11 representing a significant financial benefit to the trade; and
- 5. Should Angus Council adopt Dundee City Council's vehicle inspection checklist.

2.4 This Committee, at its meeting on 1 June 2017, considered a further report by the Head of Legal and Democratic Services in respect of the Inspection of Taxis and Private Hire Cars (Report 165/17 refers). Having considered the terms of this report, the Committee determined:-

- “(i) to note the responses received in relation to the consultation exercise undertaken with the trade to ascertain their views on the current vehicle inspection service provided by Dundee City Council and the possibility of local garages being used to carry out vehicle inspections;
- (ii) that the Head of Legal and Democratic Services consult with local businesses permitted to conduct MOT Testing to ascertain their willingness to provide vehicle inspections within Angus;
- (iii) to defer adopting Dundee City Council's Vehicle Inspection check list to allow clarification on a number of issues; and

- (iv) that a further Report be submitted to a future Civic Licensing Committee detailing the responses received in relation to the forthcoming consultation exercise.”

2.2 All MOT garages identified from the list of MOT stations for the Angus area held by the DVSA were written to in July 2017 and invited to express an interest in providing vehicle and MOT testing within Angus. At the same time, posts were placed on Angus Council’s Twitter and Facebook pages directing expressions of interest via the “Have Your Say” area of Angus Council’s website. A closing date for responses was fixed for 31 August 2017. 16 responses were received. All respondents expressed an interest in carrying out vehicle inspection checks on behalf of the Council.

#### **4. CONCLUSION**

4.1 Members are invited to consider whether it wishes to progress using local garages to conduct taxi and private hire vehicle inspections in Angus.

4.2 Discussion amongst officers has identified a number of potential issues. These can be summarised as:-

- (i) Angus Council currently has one supplier of vehicle inspections. Moving to local vehicle inspections will create more suppliers which will result in an increased administrative burden on staff. In order to meet any additional administrative workload, the Licensing Team may require to recruit additional administrative support, the cost of which would be passed onto the trade. Having more than one supplier of vehicle inspections could result in disparity in standards across suppliers. Legal and Democratic Services do not employ staff with expertise in motor vehicle inspection and maintenance (particularly from a quality control perspective) and, therefore, at this point will not be able to monitor and ensure compliance with the vehicle inspection checklist; and
- (ii) The current arrangements with Dundee City Council have worked well. It is submitted that Dundee City Council provide an excellent service to the Council at a reasonable cost. This arrangement is also a good example of joint working between two local authority areas.

4.3 If the Committee is minded to progress using local garages to conduct taxi and private hire vehicle inspections in Angus then it is submitted that it should instruct further work to be undertaken to scope the extent of the requirements of the Council, draft a specification and associated tender documentation and formulate a procurement plan. Officers will also explore with Dundee City Council the possibility of retaining their services to offer the trade the option of having their vehicles inspected in Dundee in addition to local garages.

#### **5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 Using local garages to conduct taxi and private hire vehicle inspections in Angus could result in additional resources being required to monitor contractual arrangements with local garages, address any additional administrative requirements that may arise and ensure consistency in the application of standards across suppliers. This may result in additional costs which will require to be reflected in increased fees to the trade.

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