REVIEW OF TAXI LICENCE NUMBERS AND TAXI STANCES

1 SUMMARY

1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek the agreement of the Regulatory Functions Panel that the review of the Taxi Licence Numbers and Taxi Stances be undertaken as part of the City Transport Strategy, and that the involvement of the Safer Cities Initiative, as lead partner, be concluded in this respect.

1.2 Over the past two years, with the approval of the Panel, one strand of the Stirling Safer Cities Initiative Work Programme, has been the review of Taxi Licence Numbers and Taxi Stance locations within the City Centre.

1.3 In undertaking this review particular cognisance has been given to the broader impact taxi provision has within Stirling's' growing evening economy and on a range of associated community safety issues.

1.4 In light of the City's emerging Transport Strategy, it is proposed that the involvement of the Safer Cities Initiative in this review process be concluded and that this ongoing review of taxi operations process be taken forward by Environment Services – Roads & Transport Service.

2 RECOMMENDATION(S)

It is recommended that the Regulatory Functions Panel agree:-

2.1 That this ongoing review process be taken forward by the Interim Director of Environment Services, as part of Stirling's City Transport Strategy and emerging Traffic Management Plan, in the form of an independent assessment of Taxi Vehicle Licence Numbers and Taxi Stance locations;

2.2 To receive future papers on the review process and outcomes.
3 CONSIDERATIONS

3.1 As part of the Scottish Executive’s Safer Cities Initiative, Stirling’s Safer Cities Programme Co-ordinator, had met with Stirling Licensing Board, to discuss issues in relation to the City Centre’s evening economy. During discussions the Board had raised transportation issues as a concern and in particular, Taxi Numbers and Taxi Stance locations.

3.2 In addition Stirling Council’s Corporate Plan 2004 gives an undertaking to, "review the arrangements for the taxi fleet in Stirling, including the number and location of stances in the City Centre".

3.3 On 29 April 2004, the Regulatory Functions Panel (RFP) agreed that a review of both the number of Taxi Vehicle Licences and Taxi Stances be undertaken, as part of the Stirling Safer Cities Initiative.

3.4 At the RFP meeting of 4 November 2004, the Safer Cities Programme Co-ordinator presented findings from research undertaken in conjunction with Central Scotland Police, which highlighted the peak periods of unmet demand for taxis within Stirling City Centre, (i.e. midnight – 4.00 am on Saturday and Sunday mornings).

3.5 In light of these findings, the RFP agreed to the implementation of a pilot project over nine weeks from 19/11/04 – 16/1/05 inclusive, which was designed to address this demand.

3.6 On 31 May 2005, a full evaluation of the pilot project was presented to the RFP, which recommended that an additional 25 Taxi Vehicle Licences be issued. After due consideration, the RFP agreed to issue an additional 10 Licences, which were to be allocated from the existing waiting list. The RFP requested that a report be submitted after 12 months, showing the effects of granting these extra Licences.

3.7 Following detailed consultation with Stirling Taxi Association, Central Scotland Police and Stirling Council (Licensing Services and Roads & Transport Service), the Safer Cities Programme Co-ordinator submitted a report to the RFP on 1 November 2005, recommending the designation of areas on Dumbarton Road and Goosecroft Road, as Taxi Stances and the revoking of the existing stance on Murray Place (outside Poundstretcher Store). These proposals were introduced on an experimental basis, with an agreement to report back to the Regulatory Functions Panel on their effectiveness or otherwise after a 12-month trial period.

3.8 At the RFP meeting on 4 October 2006, the Roads Manager (Improvement) gave a brief presentation, detailing the impact of the Taxi Stance changes. It was recommended that the Taxi Stance on Dumbarton Road be reduced from 11 to 5 spaces and the former taxi rank on Murray Place (outside Poundstretcher Store) be reinstated in part, comprising a Taxi Stance for 4 taxis. The Taxi Stance in Goosecroft Road would be retained.
This arrangement would reflect user demand for taxis and ensure a balance of provision across the City Centre. It was proposed that these changes be implemented on a temporary basis and be subject to a detailed independent review of taxi provision within the City Centre as early as practicable.

3.9 Recent additional research undertaken by the Safer Cities Programme Coordinator, found that there remain periods of unmet demand for taxis, as detailed at Paragraph 3.4 and an average waiting time for a taxi during these periods is between 45 and 60 minutes. There could be benefit in the issuing of additional Taxi Licences to address this demand. However, an independent review, undertaken as part of a broader Traffic Management Strategy, would offer a more complete picture to the RFP in terms of 24-hour taxi provision within Stirling.

4 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Equalities Impact

4.1 None.

Sustainability

4.2 The Corporate Plan and City Transport Strategy support alternative and sustainable forms of transport, to reduce traffic congestion and improve the environment within the City Centre, and enable accessibility for all. Taxis are an important element of this.

Other Strategic or Policy Implications

4.3 None.

5 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Financial

5.1.1 Any costs associated with undertaking an independent review of taxi operations would be met from the funding made available to Environment Services as part of the Stirling City Transport Strategy.

5.2 People

5.2.1 The Council would require to engage the services of a suitably qualified Transportation Consultant to assist with undertaking the review.

5.3 Other Resources

5.3.1 None.
6 CONSULTATIONS


6.2 Stirling Taxi Association would need to be made aware of the undertaking of an independent review. It should be noted that this is a course of action that the Taxi Association specifically requested in a letter to the Chair of the Regulatory Functions Panel dated 27 May 2005.

7 BACKGROUND PAPERS

7.1 Review of Taxi Ranks within Stirling City Centre – Report to Regulatory Functions Panel of 4 October 2006.


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Date 8 November 2006 Reference RFPPW11