

**ANGUS COUNCIL**

**CIVIC LICENSING COMMITTEE – 20 FEBRUARY 2020**

**WHEELCHAIR ACCESSIBLE VEHICLES**

**REPORT BY DIRECTOR OF LEGAL AND DEMOCRATIC SERVICES**

**ABSTRACT**

The purpose of this report is to provide an update to the Committee in respect of progress in assessing and addressing unmet need for wheelchair accessible taxi and private hire cars and vehicles and to seek authority to appoint consultants to assess and advise the Council in relation to this, including to recommend measures to address assessed unmet need.

**1. RECOMMENDATION**

It is recommended that the Committee:-

- (i) note the motion moved and approved at the meeting of Angus Council at its meeting on 5 December 2019;
- (ii) note the response received from Ash Denham MSP, Minister for Community Safety at the Scottish Government;
- (iii) note that steps are being taken to advise taxi and private hire operators in Angus of the interest free loans available through the Energy Savings Trust and funded by Transport Scotland;
- (iv) approves the appointment of consultants to assess and advise on the extent and nature of unmet need for wheelchair accessible vehicles in Angus and to recommend to the Council measures to address assessed unmet need; and
- (v) agree that progress in respect of this matter be reported to the Committee in due course.

**2. BACKGROUND**

2.1 On 31 October 2019, the Committee considered Report number 363/19 in respect of wheelchair accessible vehicles. This report advised members of previous reports, and progress made, in respect of this matter. Having considered the terms of that report, the Committee agreed:-

- (i) to note the work previously undertaken and progress in connection with the commencement of Sections 165 and 167 of the Equality Act 2010 and in relation to assessing and addressing unmet need for wheelchair accessible vehicles in Angus;
- (ii) to note that officers had commenced maintaining a designated list of wheelchair accessible vehicles following the Committee's decision of 13 September 2018;
- (iii) to note that on the designated list there were currently seven vehicles declared as wheelchair accessible vehicles (as determined by the current assessment criteria for appointing vehicles to the designated list approved by the Committee on 13 September 2018);

- (iv) to note that the current number of wheelchair accessible vehicles per licensed zone was as follows:-

Arbroath/Carnoustie 1 taxi 0 private hire  
Forfar/Kirriemuir 4 taxi 1 private hire  
Monifieth/Sidlaw 0 taxi 0 private hire  
Montrose/Brechin 0 taxi 1 private hire; and

- (v) to consider imposing requirements on the trade in the future to address the unmet need for wheelchair accessible vehicles in Angus but agreed not to impose such requirements on the trade until a scoping exercise had been carried out; and
- (vi) to instruct the Director of Legal and Democratic Services to investigate the availability of suitable consultants to assess and advise on the extent and nature of unmet need for wheelchair accessible vehicles in Angus and to recommend measures to address assessed unmet need and to report back to advise of the outcome of those investigations and the likely costs involved.

### 3. REPORT

- 3.1 Following the meeting of the Committee on 31 October 2019, Councillor Lois Speed submitted a motion to the meeting of Angus Council on 5 December 2019. The motion by Councillor Speed and seconded by Councillor Fotheringham was that:-

“This Council:

request that Margo Williamson, Chief Executive writes on behalf of Angus Council to UK and Scottish Governments highlighting:

1. the issues that Angus Residents with a physical disability experience particularly with regards to accessing suitable Accessible Vehicles that accommodate wheelchairs and provide door to door service, and the economic, health and wellbeing benefits and the potential to increase growth through catering to the needs of the accessible tourism market.
2. (i) the essential work of the Taxi/ Private hire workforce, which has a higher percentage of single operators; and  
(ii) the current demographics in Angus, our aims and objectives as a Local Authority and request additional funding to enable Angus Council to financially support/ incentivise operators in order to increase the numbers of accessible vehicles to full capacity in Angus.
3. that the Civic Licensing Committee will still continue to progress the recommendations (1 (i) – (iv)) already agreed at their last meeting on 31/10/19) in particular (iv) regardless of the letter or response.”

Angus Council resolved to approve the Motion.

- 3.2 Following approval of this motion, the Chief Executive issued letters to the Right Honourable Elizabeth Truss MP, Minister for Women and Equalities of the United Kingdom Government, Ash Denham MSP, Minister for Community Safety and Christina McKelvie MSP, Minister for Older People and Equalities, both at the Scottish Government. To date, no response has been received from the Minister for Women and Equalities of the United Kingdom Government. On 30 January 2020, the Chief Executive received a response from Ash Denham MSP, Minister for Community Safety. This response is attached as **Appendix 1** to this report.

- 3.3 In light of the response from the Minister for Community Safety, steps are being taken to advise taxi and private hire operators in Angus of the interest free loans available through the Energy Savings Trust and funded by Transport Scotland.
- 3.4 Following the decision of the Committee on 31 October 2019, procurement advice was taken and a market engagement exercise undertaken with consultants who officers ascertained had been involved in similar work for other local authorities in Scotland. Eight consultants were contacted. Each consultant was asked if they would be able to assist the Council by assessing and advising on the extent and nature of unmet need for wheelchair accessible vehicles in Angus and to recommend measures to address assessed unmet need. If the consultants could assist the Council then they were asked to:-
1. explain the process their organisation would undertake to complete this work,
  2. advise on the likely timescales for undertaking the work from the date of instruction; and
  3. advise on the likely cost of this work.
- Two consultants responded. The process each consultant would undertake is set out in **Appendix 2** to this report. The estimated cost of this work is set out in **Appendix 3** to this report.
- 3.5 In light of the above, it is submitted that there are available suitable consultants to assess and advise on the extent and nature of unmet need for wheelchair accessible vehicles in Angus and to recommend to the Council measures to address assessed unmet need. It is, therefore, recommended that the Committee approves the appointment of consultants to assess and advise on the extent and nature of unmet need for wheelchair accessible vehicles in Angus and to recommend to the Council measures to address assessed unmet need and that progress in respect of this matter be reported to the Committee in due course.

#### **4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 Engaging external advisers will represent a cost to the Council which will be contained within the revenue budget for taxi licensing and shall be approved within Director's delegated authority.

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#### **List of Appendices:**

Appendix 1 – Response from Ash Denham MSP, Minister for Community Safety dated 30 January.

Appendix 2 – Two responses received from Consultants

Appendix 3 – (EXEMPT) Cost of works.