



<b>Subject:</b>	Presentation by Belfast Public Hire Taxi Association
<b>Date:</b>	3 February 2016
<b>Reporting Officer:</b>	Donal Durkan, Director of Development
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	Anne Doherty, Planning & Transport Officer

<b>Is this report restricted?</b>	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<b>Is the decision eligible for Call-in?</b>	Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>

<b>1.0</b>	<b>Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues</b>
1.1	Representatives from the Belfast Public Hire Taxi association are invited to attend the Committee to make a presentation on the recent issues regarding the public hire taxi ranks in the city centre. It was also decided to invite the Department for Regional Development to participate in the discussion. This report provides a summary for elected members of the Council's previous position to consultations covering issues relating to taxi operations and legislation.
<b>2.0</b>	<b>Recommendations</b>
2.1	Elected members are requested to note the previous responses as outlined in this report and Appendix 1 as the context for the presentation by the Belfast Public Hire Taxi association.
<b>3.0</b>	<b>Main report</b>
3.1	<p><u>Key Issues</u></p> <p>Previously the Department of the Environment and the Department for Regional Development have consulted the Council on a number of taxi related issues, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Taxi Licensing Arrangements;</li><li>• Taxi Fare and Taximeter Regulations;</li><li>• Use of bus lanes by taxis; and</li><li>• Increasing taxi rank capacity.</li></ul> <p>A summary of the issues and Council responses have been summarised below and the detailed responses are attached in Appendix 1.</p> <p><u>Taxi Licensing Arrangements</u></p> <p>Under the Taxi Act (Northern Ireland) 2008, Taxi Licensing arrangements were due to change from</p>

the current two tier system of public and private hire taxis with the introduction of a single tier system. Council has been supportive of the Taxi Act 2008 which outlines a move to a single tier system. The single tier system means that any licensed taxi will be able to be hailed or pre-booked however only wheelchair accessible vehicles will be able to stand at ranks within Belfast city centre. Currently Belfast public hire taxis have the exclusive right to be hailed down on the street and to stand at public hire taxi ranks. These arrangements have not been taken forward to date.

#### Taxi Fare and Taximeter Regulations

In 2012, the Department for the Environment consulted on the proposed introduction of minimum fare tariffs which would apply to all types of taxis in Northern Ireland. The Department had also proposed that all taxis in Northern Ireland would be obliged to operate a standardised taximeter which would be calibrated to the standard set tariff.

The Council was supportive of measures to promote fair competition and enhance consumer protection however, the Council had concerns that the maximum set tariff proposed would make travel by taxis unaffordable for individuals and families on low income. Council also highlighted potential community safety implications as individuals may opt to walk home at night time rather than pay the premium fare proposed.

The Council's response also noted that the proposed premium could have an adverse impact on the evening economy at a time when businesses are struggling to attract users.

#### Use of bus lanes by taxis

Under current legislation only public hire taxis can use bus lanes and the Council has been opposed to proposed changes to allow all registered taxis to use bus lanes. Previous responses have noted that such proposals would have a detrimental impact on the levels of cycling and the efficiency of public transport and would be incompatible with the Council's vision of Belfast as a sustainable City.

#### Increasing taxi rank capacity

Council has been broadly supportive of proposals to provide and extend ranks for public taxi hire as it would enhance provision for customers across Belfast. It was recognised that taxis provide vital community support and are essential for the night time economy in Belfast. Consultation with the various Council Departments indicated that the proposals were unlikely to adversely impact on council operations such as licensed street trading locations and street cleansing.

Council did however highlight the need to consider limiting the extension of taxi ranks which are in close proximity to residential areas due to the potential for adverse impacts arising from noise and potential disruption in these more sensitive locations.

<b>4.0</b>	<b>Appendices – Documents Attached</b>
	Appendix 1: Taxi Consultation Responses