



Glasgow City Council

Licensing and Regulatory Committee

Report by Director of Legal and Administration

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Item 3

27th August 2025

**Civic Government (Scotland) Act 1982
Taxi and Private Hire Car Provision**

Purpose of Report:

To allow Committee to consider responses received to the public consultation carried out to consider views on the demand for taxi and private hire car services in the city and whether the Licensing Authority should continue to have policies limiting the number of such licensed vehicles.

Recommendations:

Members are asked to:-

- (i) Note the terms of this report;
- (ii) Consider the responses received to the public consultation; and
- (iii) Agree to instruct a full independent review of both the Limitation of Taxi Licences Policy and the Private Hire Car Licence Overprovision Policy, to include the consideration of the additional matters set out in section 5.4 of this report.

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1 Background

- 1.1 In terms of the Civic Government (Scotland) Act 1982 (“the 1982 Act”), the council, as licensing authority for the City of Glasgow, has responsibility for the licensing and regulation of taxi and private hire car vehicles within its boundary.
- 1.2 Section 10 (3) of the 1982 Act provides that the licensing authority may refuse the grant of a taxi licence for the purpose of limiting the number of taxis in respect of which licences are granted by it, but only if it is satisfied that there is no significant demand for the services of taxis in its area which is unmet.
- 1.3 In relation to private hire cars, amendments to the 1982 Act came into effect in May 2017 with the introduction of new sections 10 (3A), (3B) and (3C). These new sections allowed the licensing authority for the first time to refuse to grant an application for a private hire car licence on the ground that it is satisfied that there already exists (or will exist if the licence is granted) an overprovision of private hire car services in the locality or localities in which the private hire car is to operate.
- 1.4 In considering whether there is, or would be, an overprovision of private hire cars in any locality, section 10 (3C) provides that the licensing authority must have regard to:-
 - (a) the number of private hire car licences operating in the locality, and
 - (b) the demand for private hire car services in the locality.
- 1.5 In pursuance of the power under section 10 (3) of the 1982 Act, the licensing authority had a longstanding policy that 1428 was the maximum number of taxi licences considered necessary to meet demand for the services of taxis in the city, but that nevertheless there would be no significant unmet demand for the services of taxis unless the number of such licences fell below 1418.
- 1.6 Following an independent review and report by Local Transport Projects Ltd in relation to the demand for both taxi and private hire car services in the city, the Committee determined at its meeting on [17 April 2019](#) that the number of taxi licences considered necessary to meet the demand for the services of taxis in the City of Glasgow should remain 1428, but nevertheless there would be no significant unmet demand for the services of taxis until the number of taxi licences fell below 1,278.
- 1.7 In relation to private hire cars, the committee determined at its meeting on 17 April 2019 that there was an overprovision of private hire car services in the city and was satisfied that that there would continue to be an overprovision of private hire car services until such time as the number of private hire car licences fell below 3195.
- 1.8 Following a further review and report by Local Transport Project Ltd in April 2023, and taking into account a reduction in the number of taxi licences since the previous review, the Committee determined at its meeting on [26 April 2023](#)

that there was a significant demand for the services of taxis in the city of Glasgow which was unmet and that this would remain the case until the number of taxi licences reached 1420.

- 1.9 In relation to private hire cars, at that same meeting on 26 April 2023 the Committee determined that there was, at that time, a demand for private hire car services and that there would be no overprovision of private hire car services until the number of private hire car licences reached 3450.
- 1.10 At a meeting on [28 February 2024](#) the Committee agreed that a full independent review of both the Limitation of Taxi Licences Policy and the Private Hire Car Licence Overprovision Policy would be undertaken in June 2025. However, the Committee was aware of continuing concerns being raised regarding the availability of taxi and private hire cars in the city. In particular, recent reports by the Progressive Partnership and Glasgow Caledonian University Moffat Centre, which were commissioned by the council, indicated that the late night city centre economy continues to face a number of post-covid challenges, including a decline in footfall, with both reports highlighting issues relating to a lack of late-night transport options including the availability of taxi and private hire cars acting as a deterrent to people coming into the city centre area later in the evening.
- 1.11 The council has committed to responding to the findings of both of these reports in order to help ensure a strong and sustainable future for the city centre and the late night economy. At its meeting on [15 January 2025](#) the Committee agreed to carry out a public consultation to seek views on the current availability and demand for taxi and private hire car services recognising that the city's licensed taxis and private hire cars play a vital role in allowing people to get into and out of the city centre safely, particularly late at night.
- 1.12 In doing so, the Committee also recognised that the taxi and private hire car trades have undergone significant change over recent years, particularly in the period since Covid and with the growth in app-based technology.

2 Public Consultation

- 2.1 The consultation was carried out in the form of a survey hosted on the council's consultation hub between 19 March and 28 May 2025 and sought to capture views from the existing taxi and private hire car trade members as well as the public more generally and from those involved in the city's late night economy.
- 2.3 The consultation survey was promoted through the council's social media channels as well as being brought to the attention of taxi and private hire car booking offices, trade groups and various partners and organisations including Police Scotland, the Chamber of Commerce, NTiA Night Time Industries Association, Retailers Association, Glasgow City Centre BID Steering Group, Glasgow Tourism and Events Network and the Hoteliers Association.

- 2.4 In total, 4440 responses were submitted to the online survey through the consultation hub, with a further 12 responses sent into the licensing section via email. These included responses from the Glasgow Chamber of Commerce, Glasgow Taxis, Uber, Unite the Union, the City Centre Task Force and the Leader of the Council. Copies of these responses are included within Appendix 1 to this Report.
- 2.5 Of the 4440 responses to the online survey, 3592 respondents (81%) indicated that they were responding as members of the public. 565 (13%) respondents indicated that they were responding as taxi drivers or private hire car drivers, with 182 (4%) of respondents indicating that they were responding as taxi or private hire car operators.
- 2.6 Respondents identifying as elected members, community councils and other organisations each made up less than 1% of all responses.

3 Online Survey Results

- 3.1 Each of the questions asked as part of the online survey together with an analysis of the responses is set out in Appendix 2 to this report. A full list of comments made to the online survey is set out in Appendix 3.
- 3.2 4055 (92%) respondents indicated that they believed the Licensing Authority should continue to operate the current policy limiting the number of private hire cars in the city. 3650 (83%) of respondents believed that the policy has a positive effect on the availability of private hire cars in the city, with only 420 (10%) respondents indicating that they considered the policy to have a negative effect on availability.
- 3.3 When asked about whether there had been any change in the demand for private hire cars since the policy was first introduced in 2019, 3771 (86%) respondents indicated that they did not consider that demand had changed, with 437 (10%) respondents indicating that they believed that it had.
- 3.4 Of the respondents who considered that there had been a change in demand for private hire cars since 2019, 45% considered that demand had increased significantly, 17% considered that there had been a minor increase in demand while 11% believed there had been a minor decrease in demand and 16% considered that there had been a significant decrease in demand.
- 3.5 3906 (90%) respondents indicated that they believed the Licensing Authority should continue to operate the current policy limiting the number of taxi licences in the city. 3648 (84%) of respondents believed that the policy has a positive effect on the availability of taxis in the city, with only 295 (7%) respondents indicating that they considered the policy to have a negative effect on availability.
- 3.6 When asked about whether there any been any change in the demand for taxis since the policy was reviewed in 2019, 3665 (85%) respondents

indicated that they did not consider that demand had changed, with 502 (12%) respondents indicating that they believed that it had.

- 3.7 Of the respondents who considered that there had been a change in demand for taxis since 2019, 32% considered that demand had increased significantly, 12% considered that there had been a minor increase in demand while 13% believed there had been a minor decrease in demand and 30% considered that there had been a significant decrease in demand.
- 3.8 The online survey also sought information on respondents' usage of taxis and private hire car services, with 3297 (77%) respondents indicating that they used taxi services weekly and 3086 (72%) of respondents indicating that they used private hire car services on a daily basis. In both categories, over 75% of respondents indicated that they used taxi and private hire cars for evening or night time leisure, with the second highest reason for both categories (12%) noted as being for work, including commuting. The majority of journeys for both taxis and private hire cars were indicated as taking place on a Friday or Saturday night.
- 3.9 In response to a question about whether they had experienced any problems in obtaining a taxi or private hire car in the last 12 months, 3814 (90%) of respondents indicated that they had not experienced any problems. Of those respondents who indicated that they had experienced a difficulty, the most common reason was stated as being that no vehicle was available at the required time and that any difficulty most commonly occurred at the weekend, either in the evening or through the night.

4 Further Responses

- 4.1 While responses to the online survey were very heavily in favour of retaining the existing policies and indicated that respondents did not consider that either policy had had a negative impact on the availability of taxis or private hire cars, the written responses submitted by email were more mixed. The responses by the Glasgow Chamber of Commerce and the City Centre Task Force pointed to concerns regarding the growing evidence of unmet transport needs, especially in the city centre and during peak demand periods.
- 4.2 The Glasgow Chamber of Commerce highlighted that the policies in place in Glasgow are unique across the UK and are *"increasingly misaligned with the city's ambition for economic recovery, environmental leadership, and a thriving night time economy."* The Chamber of Commerce pointed to research which indicated that 45% of night time economy visitors rely on taxis and private hire cars to get home, with 28% citing transport difficulties as a key frustration. The Chamber of Commerce, endorsed by their member businesses and governing Council of Directors, supports the removal of the taxi and private hire caps as an intervention that will create competition to the benefit of consumers, reduce waiting times and associated public safety concerns and offer the ability to meet demand for large events or busy weekends.

- 4.3 Similar views were also expressed by the Leader of the Council who also indicated that in her view there had been changes in the sector and across the wider economy that meant that the policy limiting private hire car licences was no longer appropriate.
- 4.4 The response submitted on behalf of the City Centre Task Force, which is a public and private sector partnership focused on opportunities for change in the city centre, highlighted significant negativity of consumer perceptions around reliable transport for getting home, including the assertion that this factor is considered to inhibit the recovery of the night time economy post COVID. In particular the response noted that consumer concern over lower availability and higher costs of taxis and private hire cars has increased significantly.
- 4.5 The response also highlighted that the previous independent report on unmet demand and overprovision undertaken on behalf of the Licensing Authority in April 2023 indicated that there had been a drop in the number of people using taxis and private hire cars for evening and nighttime leisure, while the number of people who had reported experiencing no difficulties in securing a taxi has fallen. The response also pointed to the decrease in the numbers of both taxis and private hire cars since April 2019 and that against the backdrop of an increase in sales of food and drink and entertainment of 55% since 2019, the drop in the number of vehicles and drivers would appear to suggest that the reduced availability of taxi transport plays a part in inhibiting consumer behaviour.
- 4.6 The response from Uber was strongly in favour of removing the overprovision policy in relation to private hire cars and also highlighted that Glasgow is the only city in the UK to have such a policy. In their view the policy has resulted in a well-documented shortage of vehicles during peak times and that there are not enough licensed vehicles to meet growing demand, especially at busier periods. Uber also noted what they described as the “harmful impact” that the policy has on the nighttime economy and public safety, that it excludes new drivers, denying them economic opportunities, and that it constrains competition to the detriment of consumers. They also described the policy as anti-competitive. Their response highlighted what they considered would be positive impacts of removing the policy, including more flexibility for passengers and drivers, reduce waiting times and provide better coverage across the city. In their view the current policy does not serve the public interest.
- 4.7 However the response from Glasgow Taxis pointed to the previous report on unmet demand considered by the Committee in 2023 which found that there was no widespread evidence of unmet demand and that reported difficulties were typically linked to wait times and operational issues rather than a shortage of vehicles. In their view, declining footfall, limitations on public transport during the later hours, safety and the evolving nature of the night time economy mean that issues of late night travel extend beyond the simple availability of taxis or private hire car vehicles. They also highlighted their own rank survey findings carried out in early 2025 which observed first-hand the

level of service being provided by the existing fleet at one of the busiest locations and times for taxi demand.

- 4.8 Glasgow Taxis found that at no time was there an absence of taxis available at the rank and that they had concluded that the findings provided clear evidence that the current number of taxis in Glasgow is generally adequate, even at peak periods. In their view any issues with late night availability could be attributed to the industry no longer being able to attract as many drivers to work at night post COVID. In their view simply increasing the numbers of taxis and private hire cars is not the solution to Glasgow's late night transport challenges. They instead set out a number of measures which they believe could have a more positive impact on late night transport efficiency, including reviewing and improving taxi rank infrastructure, strengthening regulation of traffic and parking regulations, enhancing signage and introducing "*night-time specific licences if needed*".
- 4.9 The response from Unite the Union Glasgow Cab Section also expressed the view that the number of private hire car licences should be maintained at the current level and that in their view there is not sufficient evidence to support removing the cap. They noted concerns that removing the cap could flood the market with unlimited numbers which would not be in the public interest and that it would create a "*race to the bottom*" where vehicle and passenger safety would be at risk. In relation to the policy on taxis, they pointed out that the current number of taxi licences is significantly below the upper limit, with 200 taxi licences currently being "available". They believe that there is a shortage of opportunity and the council should remove barriers to enter the trade.

5 Conclusions on Consultation Responses

- 5.1 It is clear from a number of the written responses submitted to the licensing section that there is a very strong belief that the current policies, particularly the policy on overprovision of private hire cars, is having a significant and detrimental impact on late night transport options, particularly in the city centre, and that this in turn has had a negative effect on the city's hospitality and late night economy.
- 5.2 However, these views cannot be reconciled with the results of the online survey, in which over 80% of the 4440 respondents believed the policies had a positive impact on the availability of both taxis and private hire cars in the city.
- 5.3 Given the clear conflict in views and the need for licensing policies to be evidence based, it is recommended that the Committee proceed with the instruction of a full independent review of both the Limitation of Taxi Licences Policy and the Private Hire Car Licence Overprovision Policy. In doing so, the responses to the online survey and the written responses should be shared with the organisation commissioned to undertake the review.
- 5.4 In addition to considering the number of licences and the level of demand, it is suggested that the scope of the independent review should be extended to

consider a number of the issues that were raised in the consultation responses, including the impact of the policies on:-

- Competition and pricing
- Consumer attitudes and behaviour in relation to availability of taxis and private hire cars as late night transport options, particularly in the city centre
- Impact on the wider city centre economy
- Safety standards of vehicles
- Comparisons with other cities across the UK
- Impact on operator and driver earnings and the ability to attract new entrants
- Whether other barriers exist to attracting new entrants to the trade.

6 Policy and Resource Implications

Resource Implications:

Financial: There are no immediate financial implications arising from the proposed consultation.

Legal: The consultation was undertaken having regard to the requirements of sections 10(3) of the 1982 Act regarding taxis and sections 10(3A), (3B) (3C) of the 1982 Act regarding private hire cars.

Personnel: None.

Procurement: None.

Council Strategic Plan: Grand Challenge 4: Enable staff to deliver essential services in a sustainable, innovative and efficient way for our communities. Mission 2: Run an open, well governed council in partnership with all our communities.

Equality and Socio-Economic Impacts:

Does the proposal support the Council's Equality Outcomes 2021-25? Please specify. An equality impact assessment will be undertaken in order to support future decision making as to whether to retain the current policies.

What are the potential equality

impacts as a result of this report?

Please highlight if the policy/proposal will help address socio-economic disadvantage.

Climate Impacts:

Does the proposal support any Climate Plan actions? Please specify:

N/A

What are the potential climate impacts as a result of this proposal?

N/A

Will the proposal contribute to Glasgow's net zero carbon target?

Privacy and Data Protection Impacts:

Are there any potential data protection impacts as a result of this report
Y/N

If Yes, please confirm that a Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA) has been carried out

7 Recommendations

Members are asked to:

- 7.1 Note the terms of this report;
- 7.2 Consider the responses received to the public consultation; and
- 7.3 Agree to instruct a full independent review of both the Limitation of Taxi Licences Policy and the Private Hire Car Licence Overprovision Policy, to

include the consideration of the additional matters set out in section 5.4 of this report.