

EAST RENFREWSHIRE COUNCILCIVIC HOSPITALITY COMMITTEE24 April 2018Report by Deputy Chief ExecutivePROTOCOLS FOR USE OF COUNCIL CAR**PURPOSE OF REPORT**

1. To consider revised protocols for the use of the Council car.

**RECOMMENDATION**

2. That the committee consider the proposals as outlined in the report for the use of the Council car by Elected Members and approves the recommendations below:
  - a) The Council car will be available for use only by the Provost and Deputy Provost in the performance of civic and ceremonial duties. Use of the car would be extended to include anyone accompanying the Provost or Deputy Provost.
  - b) The Council car will from time to time be made available to the Lord-Lieutenant of Renfrewshire in the performance of his duties and as required in relation to Royal Visits in the Renfrewshire Lieutenancy area.
  - c) In the event the use of the Council car by the Lord-Lieutenant has been agreed and a subsequent need arises for the car to be made available for use by either the Provost or Deputy Provost in the performance of their civic or ceremonial duties, arrangements will be made for the hire of an appropriate vehicle to transport the Provost or Deputy Provost to the event in question.

**BACKGROUND**

3. The current protocols for the use of the Council car date back to 2002. The protocols set out which Elected Members can make use of the car and the circumstances in which it can be used by them.
4. The development of protocols emerged from one of the actions included in the Administrative Services Improvement Plan that accompanied the Best Value Review of Administrative Services. Administrative Services was a division of the former Central Services Department and amongst other things was responsible for the Members Services function including the provision and control of the Council car.
5. The action contained in the action plan was to review the use of the Council car to determine whether better use could be made of what was at the time considered to be an expensive and underused resource. At that time, the Elected Members entitled to use the car were the Provost, Deputy Provost when acting in a civic or ceremonial capacity and Leader of the Council, when attending meetings as leader on behalf of the Council.

6. Following the review, use of the car was extended to members of the Executive (predecessor to the Cabinet) when attending meetings in their capacity as a Council representative or as a Convener. This was on a “first come first served basis” but also on the understanding that priority for the use of the car still lay with the Provost, Deputy Provost and Leader of the Council, and that in the event a member of the Executive had booked the car only for it latterly to be required by either the Provost, Deputy Provost or Leader, the latter request was given priority.

7. The review also clarified the position regarding the use of the car, when members were attending meetings outwith the Glasgow area (for example Stirling, Edinburgh or London). The position was that the car could be used to convey Members to the main Glasgow train stations, the Glasgow bus station, or Glasgow/Prestwick Airport. This was subject to availability and to the transport being required during normal working hours. This arrangement did not include the use of the car by the Provost or substitute for civic engagements outwith the Glasgow area such as attendance at the appointment of the Moderator of the General Assembly in Edinburgh. In these circumstances the car would be used to transport the Provost or substitute to and from the event.

8. These arrangements were put in place for a 6 month period after which the availability of the car was extended to all councillors, still subject to the rules as set out above. Despite the availability of the car being extended, it has never been a facility that has been taken up to any great extent.

9. In addition to use of the car by Elected Members there has been a long standing arrangement in place which predates the protocol, that the car could be used from time to time by the Lord-Lieutenant when necessary for Royal/Lieutenancy duties.

## REPORT

10. It has been some time since the protocols for the use of the Council car were put in place and therefore it is considered prudent for Members to review the current arrangements for the use of the car.

11. The key issues for consideration are:-

- Should the car continue to be available to all Elected Members?
- If the car is to continue to be available for all Members, should the criteria for use be changed?
- If the use of the car is to be restricted, who should the use of the car be restricted to?
- If the use of the car is to be restricted, should the criteria for use also be changed?
- Should the priority booking arrangements for the Provost, Deputy Provost and Leader continue?
- Alternative arrangements in the event the car is being used for Royal duties but is also required to transport the Provost or Deputy Provost to carry out civic duties?
- Should the use of the car to convey Members to train/bus stations or airports for onward travel continue?

12. Examination of the vehicle log for the Council car shows that Elected Members have rarely used the car as permitted by the current protocols. Any travel by Members to meetings or to main transport hubs, including by the Leader of the Council, tends to be by public transport or taxi booked through the Council. As such, there would be little, if any negative impact in limiting the availability of the car to only the Provost and Deputy Provost in the performance of their civic and ceremonial duties.

13. Such a restriction would also reduce the potential for conflict on those occasions when the car is being used in connection with Royal/Lieutenancy duties.

14. Taking account of the above, the following protocols for the use of the Council car are proposed:-

- The Council car will be available for use only by the Provost and Deputy Provost in the performance of their civic and ceremonial duties. Use of the car would be extended to include anyone accompanying the Provost or Deputy Provost.
- The Council car will from time to time be made available to the Lord-Lieutenant of Renfrewshire in the performance of his duties and as required in relation to Royal Visits in the Renfrewshire Lieutenancy area.
- In the event the use of the Council car by the Lord-Lieutenant has been agreed and a subsequent need arises for the car to be made available for use by either the Provost or Deputy Provost in the performance of their civic or ceremonial duties, arrangements will be made for the hire of an appropriate vehicle to transport the Provost or Deputy Provost to the event in question.

## **FINANCE AND EFFICIENCY**

15. The annual costs of the car relate to the ongoing lease of the vehicle, the annual cost of fuel, and the proportionate salary cost of the officers who drive the car. The lease runs until June 2019 with a monthly lease charge of £214. This charge covers all repairs and maintenance. Whilst the lease costs are fixed, it is difficult to estimate fuel and salary costs with any degree of accuracy as these depend on the number of occasions the car is used and the distances travelled.

16. In the event the committee are minded to restrict the use of the car, bearing in mind earlier comments about the unpredictable nature of the use of the car, and the minimal use by other Elected Members at present there will be little impact on fuel or staffing costs. However it would ensure no significant rises in future in these other areas by restricting increased use of the car by other Members.

17. One further option that could be considered is to no longer provide a Council car. However an examination of this option has shown that it would not be practical. The current lease runs until June 2019 and there would be an early cancellation penalty were the Council to terminate the lease early. There would also be a requirement to hire a car each time the Provost or Deputy Provost was attending a civic event (on the basis that access to a car would be restricted). Based on current usage by the Provost, the costs of hiring a vehicle on an ad-hoc basis outstrip the monthly lease costs. Further this does not take into account that the car can often be required at very short notice when it would not be practical for a hire to be arranged. This would also compromise the Council's ability to support the Lord-Lieutenant and any Royal Visits in the area.

## **IMPLICATIONS OF THE PROPOSALS**

18. There are no implications in terms of property, legal, IT and equalities. Staffing implications relate to a potential reduction in staff costs in the event use of the car was restricted. Sustainability implications relate to reduced CO2 emissions from reduced use of the car.

## CONCLUSIONS

19. Changing circumstances within the Council suggest that the time is right for Members to review the current protocols in place for the use of the Council car. Complete removal of the Council car has been looked at but is not considered to be a practical solution. Records show that any restrictions on access to the car and the occasions when the car can be used will have very little impact on Elected Members but also most likely have positive budgetary implications.

## RECOMMENDATION

20. That the committee consider the proposals as outlined in the report for the use of the Council car by Elected Members and approves the recommendations below:

- a) The Council car will be available for use only by the Provost and Deputy Provost in the performance of civic and ceremonial duties. Use of the car would be extended to include anyone accompanying the Provost or Deputy Provost.
- b) The Council car will from time to time be made available to the Lord-Lieutenant of Renfrewshire in the performance of his duties and as required in relation to Royal Visits in the Renfrewshire Lieutenancy area.
- c) In the event the use of the Council car by the Lord-Lieutenant has been agreed and a subsequent need arises for the car to be made available for use by either the Provost or Deputy Provost in the performance of their civic or ceremonial duties, arrangements will be made for the hire of an appropriate vehicle to transport the Provost or Deputy Provost to the event in question.

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