

Business Operator Meeting Minutes

Tuesday 18th June 2019 – 10:30am

1. Introductions / Welcome

Councillor Ferriby opened the meeting and thanked everyone for attending.

Officers present:

Sarah Ferriby (SF)	Councillor
Geoff Binnington (GB)	Principal Officer
Carol Stos (CS)	Service Manager
Steven Knighton (StK)	Enforcement Manager
Phil Brook (PB)	Enforcement Officer
Elisabeth Spencer (ES)	Customer Service Manager
Yousaf Hussain (YH)	Licensing Manager
Sadiya Patel (SP)	Senior Licensing Officer
Clare Wild (CW)	Licensing Officer (Service Support)
Martin Topham (MT)	Licensing Officer
Nicola Thompson (NT)	Technical Service & Support Officer
PC Jamie Wilkinson (JW)	West Yorkshire Police
Andrew Whittles (AW)	Air Quality Officer
Sally Jones (SJ)	Air Quality Officer

2. Minutes from the last meeting

There were no matters arising from the previous meeting.

3. Police Update

The police in Bradford MDC carry out various operations to keep the district safe. A particular operation, 'Steerside' is an on-going operation to uphold standards on the roads of Bradford MDC and protecting all who use them.

If you have any footage that the police can use in the initiative, you can email: bd.steerside@westyorkshire.pnn.police.uk

You can use this email address to:

- Send dash cam footage of anti-social behaviour
- Pass on information about illegal drivers or cars
- Tell the Police about areas where you think they need to patrol

Questions raised by trade with Police responses

- ❖ Where can we get dash cams from?
Response: Dash cams can be purchased from various retailers. If a Bradford MDC licensed vehicle decides to install a dash cam in their vehicle they must ensure they comply with the [ICO CCTV code of practice](#)

4. Air Quality

Bradford Council

The Council are developing an Air Quality plan, along with 20 other Councils. Leeds City Council (LCC) has already developed a clean air plan. LCC is independent – every Council is responsible for their own clean air commitments. The Air Quality Team (AQT) is keen to communicate with Operator, drivers and proprietors and can be contacted by email at: airqualityplan@bradford.gov.uk The AQT advised consultation with the trade is important whilst the plan is still being devised.

AQT advised looking to help the trade transit smoothly. Points suggested;

- Potential to allow drivers to test drive electric cars.
- Electrical charging points throughout the district
- Potential to provide free electric for two years
- Trade to engage with consultation
- Further notification will be given promptly

Questions raised by trade with AQT responses

- ❖ Euro 6 cars in Leeds, do they have to pay £12.50 for this?
Response: Leeds City Council are responsible for their own clean air strategy. As such any queries regarding the clean air plan in Leeds City Council can be found on the Leeds website [here](#)
- ❖ Why don't Nottingham, Derby and Southampton charge for Air Quality?
Response: The High Court has instructed the Government to review air pollution. As a result the Government has instructed 28 Councils to implement Clean Air Zones. Every Council will have a different timescale of when they have to achieve this. Every local Authority is responsible for their own clean air plans.
- ❖ Only 4% of taxis causing clean air issues and you are asking us to replace our vehicles which is a cost
Response: As above Bradford MDC has been instructed by Government to implement a Clean Air Zone. The Air Quality strategy will also initially affect buses and commercial vehicles. It is important to take part in the consultation as the Government has a fund of £475 million for Air Quality strategies. Bradford MDC will have to ensure they devise a good plan to secure as much funding from this fund as possible.

- ❖ You are unable to refuse a fare from a disabled passenger, if they wish to go into Leeds who pays the £12.50 charge drivers will have to pay?
Response: A Licensed driver can decline a fare if the destination is outside of its licensed area. A fare cannot be declined for any Equality Reasons.
- ❖ Is the £50 for the week charge in Leeds just for Hackney Vehicles?
Response: The £50 weekly charge in Leeds is only for those that are licensed with Leeds City Council.
- ❖ When will the Clean Air Zone apply in Bradford?
Response: There is an instruction from the High Court to implement this plan in the shortest time frame.
- ❖ When will the loan to purchase a vehicle be available in Bradford?
Response: Once the clean air plan has been devised and agreed for Bradford MDC further information will be available.
- ❖ How is the money that is being charged for driving in a clean air zone going to be used?
Response: Any charges that are paid for driving in a Clean Air Zone will be reinvested in Air Quality.

5. Plate Collection

During May a trial was conducted to allow vehicle plates to be collected from workshop after passing their test. The feedback from those involved in the trial was very positive. Following a review of the findings from the trial and after making some amendments this was rolled out to the trade on Monday 10th June 2019.

Questions raised by Trade with Workshop responses

- ❖ When documents have been provided, why do they need to be sent every renewal?
Response: Documents do not always remain current and as such licensing officers must ensure documents are still valid with no changes that we have not been made aware of. As a regulatory service we are required to carry out appropriate checks for any licenses that we issue.
- ❖ If a vehicle fails, do you have to pay again?
Response: A retest fee is payable dependent upon the failure reason.
- ❖ We used to collect plates on the same day several years ago, why has the process changed again?
Response: Drivers were required to park up their vehicle after test and wait, sometimes for considerable amounts of time to collect their plates. The

current process is more efficient, no re-parking or waiting, a driver can leave the depot immediately after passing their test.

- ❖ When sending in emails to the Council, you are not getting back to us straight away?

Response: The Licensing Service aim to read, evaluated and allocate within 4 hours of receiving it.

The request type will determine which workflow it will be allocated into. Road traffic accidents and lost/stolen plates and badges are priorities and are allocated, prioritised and dealt with urgently when received by the service.

- ❖ Why do vehicle proprietors not get renewal reminders?

Response: The service is aware and working towards being able to send renewal reminders to vehicle proprietors. There is a new system iApply that is being developed and currently tested which will allow for this. Operators also have a responsibility towards their drivers to remind them of what is required of them as licensed personnel.

6. Enforcement Update

Vehicle test statistics from Q1

- 1,126 PH vehicles tested.
- 76% of vehicles passed first time with no defects
- failure rates for serious defects are averaging at 9%
- April they dropped to just 5% - an all-time low for serious defects

- 28 foot patrols including joint partnership working with parking services
- 270 vehicles were checked
- 21% were suspended due to the following which could have been avoided with daily safety checks
 - Tyres
 - Decals
 - Visors
 - Missing paperwork

Questions raised by Trade with Enforcement responses

- ❖ When you are on foot patrol, what are you checking?

Response: Everything a driver inspects that easily visible on a daily check.

- ❖ Is the service aware that Metro Private Hire has Craven Hackney Carriages working for them?

Response: Service is not aware, Enforcement will look into this and action as appropriate.

Modular Training:

Good feedback received for Modular training such as being informative and valuable knowledge when you are a new driver. The Service strives to continue an excellent service and welcomes feedback.

Vehicle Safety Seminar:

Held at Grange Interlink to inform Operators about vehicle safety aspect of the 5 star audit. 5 star base audits trialled since April 2019 – positive feedback received.

Trials confirmed many Operators would not achieve this star. Enforcement officers provided information re:

- Appeals process
- What to do if a vehicle has a major fail
- How Operators can achieve a 5 star rating.

7. Licensing Update

Communications:

Last communication sent was regarding GDPR & importance of email addresses Confirmation that less than 1% of email addresses still outstanding. This will be achieved by contacting drivers and operators.

Thanks given to trade for co-operation and assistance.

Plate collection email was sent regarding information required. Communication with Trade has improved with people sending in documents in plenty of time before their expiry. Ensure all vehicle proprietors send their documents 6 weeks in advance of renewal and from their registered email address.

Of the approx. 3,400 emails received every month, there's some positive feedback including a poem from a driver

Ode to Shearbridge

(Sent in by a licensed driver)

I would like to say some words of praise
To the Shearbridge staff who spend their days,
In office high (and most likely dingy)
Sorting problems for, the drivers' whingy!

They keep their cool with utmost grace
And wear a smile upon their face,
No doubt their lives, dream to enhance
With a villa in the South of France!

Yet should the drivers all peruse
All missives sent, (not just one they choose!)
Then life for all, would sure run easy
And make Shearbridge work, so easy-peasy!

And that day is sure to come
When drivers and staff, function as one,
With every car in perfect condition and
Shearbridge life is not perdition!

So I would like to say a big "Merci"
To all the staff who were helping me,
Renew my licence on the net
(No easy task, I'd like to bet!)

If I had my way it would be just fine
To supply the staff with loads of wine,
With chocolate by the bucket loads!
(But money's short, that's the way it goes!)

So I'll just say thank you once again
And hope the drivers spare you pain,
But there's one dark cloud, alas I fear.....
....I'll be back again this time next year!!

In response to the above the Licencing Service felt it only polite to reply in kind. The team worked in their own time to come up with a response.

Ode to Customers (Response HC/PH Licensing Service)

A message to our cheery chap, who speaks in heart felt rhyme,
How kind it was to note your thoughts, in your own precious time.
I have to say it's very nice, to know that we've been praised,
And with your words of wisdom, our bar should now be raised.

One happy soul is just the start; our aim is to increase,
We want to work in harmony and aim to keep the peace!
We sometimes opt to run with plans, to help the "trade" get by,
We hope all will embrace the change and willingly comply.

Yet often ceases raise their heads, to then be ironed out,
With a positive approach like yours, without the need to shout.
Year on year the stats improve and drivers continue to learn;
The better service they provide, the more they stand to earn.

A missing bolt, a warning light is not the place to be,
A pristine car and smiling face, is often just the key.

The reason we all come to work, remains the same each day;
We all have hungry mouths to feed and mortgages to pay.

It's not a case of us an them, we're all on the same side,
We're here to serve our customers, with dignity and pride.
We both are Bradford Council, just with a different mask,
We always try to meet the needs, of customers who ask.

And when we can't facilitate, we always try our best,
Until we reach perfection, our plight will never rest!
We're always here to help the "trade"; you are the heart and soul,
Of Bradford's wide community..... We share a common goal.

There's no dark cloud as you suggest, you're always welcome here,
So do us proud and spread the joy..... We'll see you in a year.....

Confirmation that both previous poems will be available in the next newsletter

iApply:

Current situation – only drivers can apply to renew their Private Hire or Hackney Carriage drivers' licenses on-line.

Future goal – to offer all drivers and proprietors the facility to apply and renew all licences on-line through a system called iApply.

This will include

- 6 weeks in advance of a renewal a reminder will be sent
- Payments will be made at the same time
- Documents will be uploaded and sent securely at the same time

Awareness and training sessions will cover the following but will not be limited to;

- How to access systems
- What it looks like
- Taking photographs of documents
- How to upload documents

Support plan will be in place to help go through process of change.

- All records to have personal email addresses to conform to GDPR – currently being addressed by service support
- Test environment to be built and used for training and awareness sessions
- Customer Service Manager (Elisabeth Spencer) working with the trade

Positives will include no backward and forward emails, everything done securely in one place. Reminders will be sent for vehicles as well as drivers.

Questions raised by Trade with licensing responses

- ❖ When a reminder is sent out to drivers, can this be in text message format?
Response: The Service will look into whether this is a possibility.
- ❖ There is no way of getting in touch with the service urgently, other than coming to the office?
Response: The request type will determine which workflow emails are allocated to. Road traffic accidents and lost/stolen plates and badges are priorities and are allocated, prioritised and dealt with urgently when received by the service. Forgetting to renew on time is not classed as a priority.
- ❖ Is an email that is sent in, looked at on the same day?
Response: The Licensing Service aim to read, evaluated and allocate within 4 hours of receiving it.
- ❖ When you have a general issue and you come in to Shearbridge, we are turned away and asked to email in?
Response: Every email is looked at and allocated to specific workflows. Every email will get a response from the Service. General queries can be answered by visiting our website as well as by emailing and receiving a response via email. Visits to Shearbridge without an appointment should only be for emergencies.
- ❖ Do you work emails in date Order?
Response: Every email is allocated in the order they have been received. Once allocated into the appropriate workflow officers work in date order.

In addition to the response, the Principle Officer advised Licencing Officers sometimes make mistakes, we are all humans. It wasn't great a while ago, 75% of all transactions are working well. We have less than 10% of email problems. By Christmas you won't recognise the service with all the automated services that we will have.

- ❖ We want the Council to work with Operators and drivers for drivers not to be off the road, as something needs to be done about this we are being told that there is a back log?
Response: The Licensing Service allocates work into the appropriate workflows. There is no backlog at the Service as work is carried out in a timely manner. A message will be given to all staff to ensure customers are not given incorrect information when discussing workloads. iApply will create a smoother process for renewals.
- ❖ There should be a separate email for renewals?
Response: With the introduction of iApply this would not be necessary. All emails are currently looked at and allocated into specific workflows. Creating an additional email address would have no benefit to this process and may create delays.

- ❖ The trade should have been educated in advance of having a registered email address, rather than now just sending a template out stating that we should have a registered email address?

Response: The process to have your own registered email address with the Service was an existing process that was in place. This was further reiterated to ensure we comply with GDPR 2018. The Service always makes a conscious effort to inform the trade of any changes. As part of the iApply update the customer services manager will be working with the trade to assist with all elements of the process.

8. Peer Review Update

The updated peer review is published on the website. You can find the updated peer review on the website [here](#)

9. Agenda Points

The Licensing Service received agenda points prior to the meeting. Thanks given for sending these in before the requested deadline.

Point 1 - Bradford Council's email system for booking plates and badges

Response: Acknowledgments given that there may be times when there are delays, usually around Bank Holidays. Investigations for reason fell in to 3 main categories;

- Applicants using multiple email addresses
- Applications submitted too late
- Documentation requested at the start of the process not supplied correctly.

Reasonable to expect the process of renewing a licence commences in plenty of time. All drivers are sent a renewal reminder 6 weeks in advance of the licence expiry date; the process should be commenced within a few days of the reminder. The new licence can be issued without any loss of time or money 1 month in advance. There is no reason for any applicant, except in exceptional circumstances, not to commence the process in good time.

A 'priority' service operates which deals with circumstances such as a lost badge; these are looked at separately and without delay. Late applications are not considered priority.

Point 2 - Driver working for two firms

Response: The Council are responsible for licencing drivers but cannot restrict who they work for, provided the driver and vehicle meet the required licensing conditions.

Drivers are required to inform each operator if they wish to work for another company. It is the operators' choice whether they allow drivers to work for their firm as well as another. Some operators have confirmed that drivers can only work for them, other operators are quite happy for a driver to work for another company as well. Note: It is each Operator's responsibility to ensure that the vehicle has the correct decals/visors when working for them.

Point 3- MOT £100 fine

This is a fine that is given to a driver on a serious fault within the car. This fine is due prior to receiving the vehicle licence

Reason -This fine the driver should have 28 days to pay. Like other fines such as parking, etc. A driver should have the opportunity to appeal this in that period before paying the fine.

There are many drivers that are being penalised even though they have done an MOT only days before. They have done their visual checks. The fine is paid and they don't have the trust on the appeal.

Response: All vehicles licensed by Bradford Council must pass vehicle safety inspections, normally annually. In cases where vehicles fail they may be issued with a retest fee. This is not a fine, it is a retest fee which is payable before a retest may be conducted. All proprietors must ensure the vehicles they dispatch are safe and this includes regular service and maintenance. This information can be used and considered as evidence through submission as mitigation during an Appeal process. Proprietors have a right to appeal to ensure a fair policy and the outcomes from Appeals are monitored by senior managers.

Point 4- Agenda points - *Agenda points for operator meetings we have to describe the agenda point and then also explain the reason for that point.*

Reason - we should not be needed to provide an explanation of the reason for agenda points. Agenda point is to discuss in a meeting and put out concerns to officers involved. Not for the meeting to be biased where the department have already looked into what the point is and have an answer for it. Completely wrong.

Response: To be able to assist and answer Operator agenda points satisfactorily, the service needs an appropriate amount of information. The Operator is required to explain the reason for their agenda point(s) to provide context and detail. Historically there were many occasions in which Operators raised the same or very similar

agenda points at each meeting despite the points being asked and answered at previous meetings. This was inefficient and a waste of Operator and Officer time.

Point 5- SERVICE + communication - Email

Reason - Due to back log. Many drivers are waiting many days to communicate with the department. Many drivers are off the road which has never happened in the trade before. Drivers are missing calls due to driving and then waiting again.

Response: As per point 1 - Acknowledgments given that there may be times when there are delays, usually around Bank Holidays. Investigations for reason fell n to 3 main categories;

- Applicants using multiple email addresses
- Applications submitted too late
- Documentation requested at the start of the process not supplied correctly.

Reasonable to expect the process of renewing a licence commences in plenty of time. All drivers are sent a renewal reminder 6 weeks in advance of the licence expiry date; the process should be commenced within a few days of the reminder. The new licence can be issued without any loss of time or money 1 month in advance. There is no reason for any applicant, except in exceptional circumstances, not to commence the process in good time.

A 'priority' service operates which deals with circumstances such as a lost badge; these are looked at separately and without delay. Late applications are not considered priority

Point 6- phone - Council phones.

Reason - Why the phones are not being answered

Response: Asked and answered in previous meetings. To reiterate - volume of calls from licenced personnel was huge and would have required a dedicated team of specialist Licencing Officers to keep pace with such volumes. The cost of this would have been extremely expensive and would have resulted in increasing fees.

Answers to a significant proportion of incoming calls are available on the website. The decision was made to further increase the use of the website for the provision of information and to move to electronic communications which could be managed cost efficiently. The Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Service no longer has an incoming phone line. The Licensing Service communicates via email only in the first instance and this is working well. However there are delays at times and these are usually the result of customers emailing numerous times regarding the same issue, and/or not sending in readable copies of documents or personnel leaving their questions/applications until the last minute possible before running out of

licence. Each of the aforementioned is being addressed via educational campaigns and the future use of email is looking very positive.

Point 7- appointments online -booking appointments online

Reason - online booking as promised for months/years. Rather than emailing in if this is in place will save the back log.

Response: Development work is currently being carried out regarding this and we will keep Operators appraised accordingly.

Point 8- customer service manager - The role

Reason - what has this role brought to the business so far

Response: The post was introduced to support both licenced personnel and the Service and the benefits of this are now becoming apparent through improvements to customer service processes. The next phase will include the Customer Service Manager offering assistance to Operators and proprietors etc.

Point 9- Licencing manager - The role

Reason - what has this role brought to the business so far?

Response: Customer demand on the Service has grown significantly over recent years and to keep pace with this additional Licencing Officers have had to be recruited. The Licencing Manager post was introduced to manage Licencing Officers.

Point 10- Future Operators meetings - proposal for Meetings to be held including elected members

Reason- meetings are biased. Further discussions to take place in operators meeting.

Response: The Portfolio Holder, an elected member, attends and Chairs Operator meetings which are tailored specifically for Operators and matters relating to them.

Point 11 - Clean air zone charges by Leeds City Council

Response: A specialist team in Bradford Council is currently devising a plan for Bradford MDC and how cleaner air will work in Bradford. There is an update as to the current position at the next Operator Meeting (18TH June 2019) by a speaker from the Clean Air Team. Information is also available on the website [here](#)

In your agenda point you are concerning a Leeds City Council policy. Bradford Council has not been involved in the clean air strategy for Leeds as every local authority is independently responsible for their own. As such Bradford Council cannot answer any questions posed about the policy of another local authority.

Questions raised by Trade with responses

- ❖ The Agenda points raised should be addressed and discussed with the Operators at this meeting?

Response: This will be discussed and looked at further. A new team has come in and we are dealing with new processes continuously.

- ❖ Can drivers write in and ask for permission for Operators to send all documents in on their behalf?

Response: Due to GDPR 2019 the driver has to send in the documents on their registered email address that we hold on the system.

- ❖ There is a lack of communication with drivers and licencing, how are we working with Operators?

Response: We deal with any feedback that we receive from the trade in a positive and productive manner and action all matters raised.

All drivers and proprietors are responsible for their own licences. When all information is sent in correctly and in a timely manner, work is dealt with efficiently and effectively.

10. Date of Next Meeting

Wednesday 14th August 2019.

Wednesday 13th November 2019.

All meetings will start promptly at 10:30am. Please remember to arrive from 10am for registration. All meetings will be held as usual at City Hall, Bradford.

Action Points for the next meeting

- ❖ The room will be set up in a conference style, as it makes communication easier.
- ❖ Enforcement - To look in to OOA HC vehicles working for PH Operators.
- ❖ Customer Service - The Service will review if a text messaging renewal service is possible.