

Minutes of Hackney Carriage Meeting – 24th February 2015

Present

Carol Stos	Licensing Manager
Geoff Binnington	Principal Officer, Fleet and Transport Services
Matthew Bibby	Licensing Support Officer (Minute Taker)
Sara Poulter	Enforcement Officer
Shabbir Master	Bradford Hackney Carriage Owners & Drivers Association
Shabir Munir	Bradford Hackney Carriage Owners & Drivers Association
Tahir Riaz	Bradford Hackney Carriage Owners & Drivers Association
Shabir Ahmed	Keighley and Bradford Taxi Driver's Association
Zulfiqar Ali	Keighley and Bradford Taxi Driver's Association

Welcome and Introductions

The meeting was opened on time at 10.30am by Officers

Condition changes

Already agreed and have been sent out via email, letter to all licence holders and placed on website

Poor SNAP take up – only 62 received, 4 were void

Following requests from the trades for the service to consult with more drivers, the survey was the first attempt to engage actively with 3000+ people. The take up was very disappointing with less than 2% returns. Officers asked representatives to encourage drivers to put points forward.

Data retention – Reminder to all drivers of the use of data

All PH Operators must have data retention policy in place. There must be care about misusing data. Everyone should read and be familiar with the data protection act.

PH complaining about HC

There has been a complaint about HC drivers approaching PH drivers asking for proof of bookings. HC drivers have no jurisdiction though and are advised this is not good practice. Any concerns should be sent with specific details to HC/PH service for investigation. HC reps said that PH drivers block them at Bradford Interchange and park on give way areas at Omar's. Again, officers asked for specific details to be provided.

We recently issued 2 weeks suspensions – not carrying Assistance dogs

2 PH drivers were suspended for refusing to take an assistance dog. All drivers when approached to carry an assistance dog must comply with the law and take them.

Driver Training – discussion

Refresher training began last year for the 3000+ current drivers. The first 1000 have been trained in the first year and priority was given to those who do contract work. A further 1000 need to be trained in each of the next 2 years. The training is really important as it educates drivers and gives them more awareness and understanding.

It was thought by representatives that the best way is to write to all drivers and explain they need training and for them to contact the service. A reminder to all drivers, anyone not trained at the end of the 3 years will be suspended from working.

Bus Lane explanation

The practice of only allowing London taxis but not private hire vehicles to use bus lanes in London does not amount to the conferring of a selective economic advantage, the Court of Justice of the European Union has ruled.

The judgement, in the case of Eventech (Judgment) [2015] EUECJ C-518/13, the EU court said that London taxis and private hire vehicles were "in factual and legal situations which are sufficiently distinct to permit the view that they are not comparable and that the bus lanes policy therefore does not confer a selective economic advantage on black cabs".

The court also ruled that "only black cabs can ply for hire; they are subject to the rule of 'compellability'; they must be recognisable and capable of conveying persons in wheelchairs, and their drivers must set

the fares for their services by means of a taxi meter and have a particularly thorough knowledge of the city of London”.

The challenge to Transport for London’s policy had been brought by Eventech, a subsidiary of minicabs operator Addison Lee.

Commenting on the ruling, TfL Managing Director of Surface Transport, Leon Daniels, said: “Our policy on bus lanes was upheld by the High Court. We welcome the opinion from the Advocate General and now the European Court of Justice, but ultimately await the decision of the Court of Appeal. As this process continues we are maintaining our well-understood and effective policy that helps to keep London moving in the interest of everyone.”

Cabshield Insurance

Some bases and drivers have been approached by people who are smartly dressed offering cheap insurance. These individuals are keeping some of the premiums and not giving the drivers the insurance they believe they are buying. ‘If a deal seems too good to be true, then it is a bad deal’ BEWARE and do not get conned out of insurance.

People First presentation 29 May

There is a presentation from this group on May 29th. ‘Equitable Law’ are currently looking at fares for wheelchair users.

Rossendale update

Enforcement Officers will be working with colleagues from Rossendale and tackling the problems of ‘out of district’ vehicles/drivers. ‘Delegated Powers’ have currently been sent back to Rossendale for some changes.

Uber are coming and have approached officers to get a licence, their presence might raise standards across the district.

Ambassador update

There has been research done on getting support from tourist venues in the district. Some further ambassador courses will run, likely to be sometime in May and the service will pass on dates once we have them. The 2 courses that were run in November 2014 were pilots. There has been some work for drivers as a result and the more people who train and the more marketing that is then done, the better the chance for increased work.

Workshops Open Days - Format update (WAV/IVA/LOLER)

These were run throughout the end of 2014 but had no interest, perhaps due to the afternoon time slot. After discussions, the HC representatives felt that Wednesday mornings 10.30am – 11.30am would be a good time for future sessions.

The aim of the drop in sessions is for operators and drivers to discuss any queries regarding vehicle specification and mechanical information.

The 1st session will be on Wednesday 11th March at 10.30am – 11.30am

EO Update

Enforcement Officers have been carrying out multi agency initiatives since Christmas across the whole district. There will be further initiatives coming up, including the joint working with Rossendale Council.

HC raised concerns about normal vehicles being parked on ranks by ‘Flares’ as there are missing signs. Missing signs should be reported on 01274 431000 for action by Highways

Ranks

These need to be put on the spreadsheet as agreed previously so that progress can be tracked and monitored. All requests are dealt with by Highways. A meeting has recently been held between HC reps and Highways. Once Highways have agreed requests Fire / Police are contacted, an advert has to be placed for a month in the paper and then if no objections, lines and signs can be done.

CCTV

Following from allegations of unsuitable behaviour from officers and following from threats made to officers the Enforcement officers will now be wearing CCTV cameras

Cameras will be worn with immediate affect and will be used during all interactions.

Usage of cameras will be very positive for all individuals as it will ensure consistency with all transactions.

Late Agenda Points

6 very late agenda points (less than 24hours notice) were raised by Keighley and Bradford Taxi Driver's Association. The Association were asked to provide agenda points sooner for future meetings or they would not be considered for discussion.

1) Why is it the case that the Council favour private hire over hackney carriage vehicles? This matter relates to PH having full body wrap advertising

Officer response: This is not a case of favouring PH vehicles, its part of a process. PH made a request that was considered as part of the process and subsequently found to be a reasonable request. The hackneys did want full wraps, there was representation from Mr Hussain at the time but weren't allowed because of the distinction issue.

2) When can we remove the green stripe and crest logo from our vehicles, because this should have gone to the Committee for a decision, but has not done so? The association added they wish to propose the removal of stripe and crest from vehicles to allow full body wraps for advertising

Officer Response: The proposal is noted and shall be considered as part of the process.

3) We were told that we will receive the hackney carriage report prior to the Council going to the Committee, but no report was received. Why was this?

Officer response: This matter has already been dealt with and will be dealt with again separately after the meeting.

4) Why are there still delays with the IT system, when there has been ample time, i.e. over a year, to get sorted? Drivers pay significantly high fees for a service, which seems to be disrupted on a regular basis. The Department appears unfit for purpose, let alone run a licensing department for over 6000 drivers.

Officer response: The service only has just over 3000 drivers. IT takes a long time for implementation and there are usually inevitably delays.

5) From our research, the Department appears to be making substantial surplus, when can we expect a reduction in fees?

Officer response: 4% profit is very minimal. Fees have already been reduced and all individuals were notified after committee meeting in January, by letter and by email. All information can also be seen on line

6) As there is clearly insufficient demand for all hackney carriage vehicles to have disabled access, when can we expect a review? The report that the Department commissioned, does not demonstrate a need for the high number of vehicles to have disabled access. How much money is paid for such reports to private consultants, who failed to consult properly with the general public and drivers and/or their representatives? Previous uncovered report suggests a demand for only 21 vehicles in the District to have disabled access, so why is the Council insisting on all vehicles to have disabled access. There is no evidence or demand to support this.

Officer response: This question has been asked and answered several time in the past 6 months. There is no more to say. This matter should not be brought to the table in future meetings.