

Business Operator Meeting
Thursday 10th February 2022

Officers Present:

Cllr Sarah Ferriby (SF)
Carol Stos (CS)
Steven Knighton (STK)
Elisabeth Spencer (ES)
Samantha Kaye (SK)

Councillor
Licensing Service Manager
Enforcement Manager
Customer Service Manager
Licensing Officer Service Support

1) Introduction

Cllr Sarah Ferriby opened the meeting and thanked everyone for attending. Carol Stos continued the welcome and advised that this is the first webinar Business Operator Meeting and we are hoping if the meeting goes well to keep the meetings online as this would make things easier for everyone and save travelling and parking within the city centre. Following the meeting we would appreciate any feedback you may have on how you feel the meeting went and whether you would be happy for the meetings to continue this way in the future.

2) Outstanding Actions

There was one outstanding action from last meeting:

1. Inform the trade on how often the DEFRA report will be updated to ensure vehicles no longer licensed as a PHV or HCV get charged for entering the CAZ.

Currently the DEFRA report is uploaded once a week. This is in discussion and may be uploaded more frequently in the future to ensure that once a vehicle licence is issued or surrendered the CAZ team will be made aware and drivers will not be charged for non-compliant vehicles. This has not yet been finalised and once there is an update we will communicate this with the trade.

3) Licensing Service Update

Department for Transport (DfT) guidance (continued from Oct 2021)

The DfT, following [consultation with trade, regulators and safety campaign groups](#), has issued these statutory taxi and private hire vehicle (PHV) standards to licensing authorities, outlining how they should carry out their licensing function.

The full document is here [DfT Statutory Standards](#)

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Following this the service set up workshops with Operators in October 2021 to discuss how they could be implemented in Bradford. A small group of Operators met with Licensing service and have also provided comment and feedback on the DfT guidance. Operators also submitted a recommendation for a condition in respect of complaints of a serious nature, that Operators should report these to the Licensing Service.

The service will look at amending current licensing policies to incorporate these new standards. The service is keen to engage with the Trade to ensure everyone has the opportunity to share their views.

We will continue to engage with the working party to produce recommendations for changes to conditions. When the proposed changes are available there will be opportunity for further engagement.

If any operators have any questions and/or comments regarding the upcoming changes that you would like to discuss please email taxi.testing@bradford.gov.uk and let us know and we can arrange a meeting.

Customer Service

We are currently working towards a new system that we hope to introduce to the trade within the next 6 months

The new system will give a licensee more visibility on all licences they hold with the service, making it easier to track applications and progress, upload required documents to help complete applications and when a licence is due for renewal. The new system will also allow the service to send text messages to applicants as well as emailing, and to inform of important updates e.g. renewal reminders.

There will be more updates to follow in the coming months as the system is developed, once we have a working system Elisabeth will be holding training seminars with the trade to demonstrate how the new system will look and work.

4) Enforcement update

Compliance

The service has seen an increase in the number of complaints received about incorrect decals being displayed on licensed vehicles. In response to this the service has tasked Enforcement Officers to increase patrol activities to help identify and educate drivers on the importance of displaying the correct decals. Displaying the correct approved decals on a licensed vehicle is of paramount importance. This allows the public to easily identify the licensed vehicles increasing passenger safety.

Q) Why are drivers displaying more than 1 decal?

A) This is likely to be when a driver works for more than one operator.

As above the team will continue to monitor this and carry on our efforts to help licensees understand the importance of displaying the correct decals.

Q) What's happening with drivers that work for more than one operator accepting a job and then abandoning the booking for a higher priced fare?

A) The service is aware that this may be happening, it is for operators to ensure that while a driver is working for their firm they are committed and complete the jobs they accept.

Q) Can the Licensing Service not add conditions to a licence ensuring that drivers offer a prompt and efficient service; also to make decals permanent so they cannot be swapped.

A) Standards of service are already a condition that an Operator must comply with. It is also the Operators responsibility to set out a suitable level of expectations of customer service for drivers to adhere to. (See conditions booklet 3.14)

Q) To second the previous comment, surging is a problem amongst the trade, drivers will work for 2 companies, but also at the same time. They will have both their PDA's on take a job for 1 company and then once they have dropped that fare off they will pick up another job for the 2nd company; either that or they will accept a job for 1 company and then a better job will appear on PDA of 2nd company so they will cancel the first job and accept the 2nd job.

A) Many questions regarding were raised around this subject. The Service has agreed to open separate discussions round this.

Q) Leeds only allow 1 operator per badge so why can't Bradford do the same?

A) See above.

Bradford Bid Project

The aim of this new project is to improve the nightlife in the city centre promoting safety for everyone. To achieve this the city of Bradford would gain what is known as 'purple flag' status. This is a nationalised standard which would help those outside of the district in their decision when looking for cities in the UK to visit. Given recent news safety is of the utmost importance to the British public and anything that can be done to help the city be safer as well as boosting the economy would be a beneficial step for Bradford. To help the project team progress further with potentially gaining purple flag status for Bradford they have approached the service to help them reach those that this would be relevant/ of interest to. There is a survey that can be completed, details below.

<https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/JPVHB2M>

Base Checks

Due to COVID 19 restrictions Enforcement Officers have not been visiting bases when carrying out base checks, now restrictions are being lifted we will start visiting bases again.

Highway Code

As you are all aware the highway code has changed, please ensure that you, and your drivers are following the new guidance. The service recently wrote to all licensees on 28th January 2022 to inform of the changes to the Highway Code. Could you please ensure anyone who you dispatch jobs to knows and understands the changes that came into effect; these can be found here: [The Highway Code Update](#)

Parking

The service has received an increased number of complaints regarding parking e.g. blocking crossings, parking on HCV ranks. Please can you remind all drivers to find somewhere safe and legal to park when they are picking up and dropping off fares.

Q) Can you not start prosecuting people who are parking illegally?

A) Parking matters are dealt with by the Parking Services team. They deal with all matters relating to parking including prosecutions. If you spot anyone parking illegally, please do your bit and send details of the vehicle along with time/date to ParkingServices@bradford.gov.uk. Parking Services will not be able to prosecute on the information you provide but they will be able work with this information and amend their working pattern day to monitor troublesome areas.

5) Licensing Update

Thank you all for attending this meeting, and we are hoping that meeting this way will become the new normal, this will make it easier for everyone and save on travelling and parking, especially for people from out of district.

Driver applications

We are hearing many operators advising that they are struggling for drivers, we can confirm that we have the same number of drivers we have always had and have many new driver applications that we are working to complete as quickly as possible.

HMRC Mandatory Check

When processing a driver application, the service makes a number of mandatory checks to ensure the licensee is fit and proper. With effect from 4th April there will be a legal requirement from HMRC to carry out a tax conditionality check.

What this means?

The HMRC requires everyone who is self-employed to declare the necessary tax information to them. Licensing authorities have been asked to complete a check to ensure this has been done. The tax information will need to be completed by the licensee themselves and the service will simply validate it has been done.

The licensee will complete the necessary information and get a 9-character reference which will be provided to the Licensing Service. We will not be able to view any tax, income, or personal details.

If a tax code is not provided, a licence will not be issued.

When further updates are received these will be communicated to licensees.

Q) What happens if a driver doesn't have a tax check code?

A) The service will be unable to issue a licence without the tax check code.

Q) Through COVID everything has been online, is this going to be the new normal going forward?

A) Yes, the service plans to stay online. We have received continuous good feedback regarding online services. As such the service aims to continue with this; the goal being to continue developing more efficient and streamlined solutions.

Q) Is processing everything online working for the service?

A) See above

Q) What about drivers? Is it working for the drivers?

A) See above

Q) If drivers have issues do they still need to email taxi.testing@bradford.gov.uk rather than attending the depot?

A) If there are any issues an email needs to be sent to taxi.testing@bradford.gov.uk where the appropriate Officer will pick up the query. Should there be a need to attend the Depot in person this will be pre-arranged at a set time and date.

Q) There are some drivers that would prefer to attend the depot and have a face to face appointment and be able to sort the issue while there for example, if there are errors on plates or plates have not been issued due to no insurance

A) If there is an error on the plate this is usually picked up at the vehicle inspection and a new plate will be printed and issued straight away. If a plate has not been issued due to no insurance this would be investigated to see when the insurance was received.

Q) If the plate is not in the workshop for whatever reason you post the plate out to the proprietor's home address rather than letting the driver collect so this is keeping them off work

A) Every licensee receives a letter confirming their vehicle inspection along with clear instructions regarding collection of a plate in the workshop. If the instructions are followed, then the plates are available to collect in the workshop.

Please note the workshop staff cannot print or create plates.

Q) Why are drivers waiting 2 to 3 weeks for a vehicle inspection and sometimes up to 5 days for a response to emails?

A) This should not be the case and we have test dates within the 2 weeks' period so drivers should not be waiting this long. If you can you email in with some example's we will look into this for you.

Q) When will we be getting an update in regards to dual operators on badges?

A) Many questions regarding were raised around this subject. The Service has agreed to open separate discussions round this

Q) When drivers apply for a badge there are a number of weeks wait, and if a driver applies late he is out of work. Is there any way of creating a fast track process these drivers, for an extra fee, so that their application can still be completed before they expire and they are not out of work?

A) Having a fast track would not work due to the checks that need to be carried out, if a driver starts their renewal application in plenty of time there should be no reason for them to be out of work. Starting your renewal early allows time for Officer to complete the necessary checks. Certain checks such as a DBS check can take a while to process, timescales that are not controlled by the service hence why we ask all licensees to start their renewal 6 weeks prior to expiry. It remains the responsibility of the licensee to ensure they complete all requirements in time as well as keep their DBS subscription on the update service.

Q) The fast track would be a one off for people who apply late so they aren't out of work

A) Please see above

Q) Drivers used to be able to attend the depot last minute and get their renewal sorted straight away

A) Many things have now changed, including some of the checks we must complete for a driver to be able to obtain a new licence. There is no difference to carrying out these checks online or face to face the outcome will be the same.

Q) Through COVID everything has been online, is this going to be the new normal going forward?

A) Yes, the service plans to stay online

Q) There are issues with Euro 5 cars, on the HPI check it shows the vehicle is a Euro 5 but on the website it shows that the vehicle will be charged £7 a day for entering the CAZ. The vehicle is a 2010 Hybrid

A) There are varying reasons this could be happening, the first thing to do is ensure that the DVLA have the correct information and your logbook is correct. We have also spoken to the CAZ team; they have advised that there are some unique cases. We are still working with the CAZ team and will bring this up in our next meeting. If you have any specific cases, you would like investigating please send the vehicle registration and VRN number to the CAZ team via the 'Contact Us' section of the website.

[Contact us about the Clean Air Zone | Bradford Council](#)

Q) I have sent you an email regarding one vehicle with a screen shot of the HPI check showing the vehicle as Euro 5 and the government list to show that it will be charged

A) Thank you, although we cannot discuss individual cases in meetings if the email has been sent to the service it will be looked into by the appropriate officer.

Q) Do we have an update on the CAZ grants where drivers are only allowed to apply for like for like vehicles?

A) Please direct any questions to the CAZ team using the link above.

Q) Can you clarify with CAZ team in your next meeting if a driver is still eligible for the grant if they are wanting to upgrade from a normal car to a wheelchair accessible vehicle and then provide us with an update as we keep getting bounced back and forth between services

A) We can ask the question and will provide you with an update.

Q) With the new system you advised there will be a portal to be able to track applications etc. is this just for operators or drivers as well?

A) Every individual that holds a licence with Bradford Council will be able to access their own licences whether this be a driver, vehicle or operator licence.

Q) This is a question for Cllr Ferriby – Will CAZ actually happen and where do we stand from a council perspective as drivers have paid a stupid amount of money for cars for CAZ to delayed/cancelled.

A) Yes CAZ will happen but there is no date for implementation yet, this is down to the council interface. Andrew Whittles will know more, once we have an update we will send out an email communication to the trade.

Q) This is a question for Cllr Ferriby – What was with the delay to the CAZ?

A) This was due to the council interface not working correctly, it has been delayed so we can ensure that this is working properly

Q) This is a question for Cllr Ferriby – The public's safety is paramount to the council, but allowing drivers to work for 2 operators is putting the public at risk, what is your input?

A) This is down to the service to look into as I am not a professional, they have said they will look into this and I'm sure they will.

Q) Can you confirm what changes have been made to the suitability policy?

A) The Suitability has been in place since March 2019 and has not changed since this date.

Q) Is there any chance of PHV's being able to use bus lanes same as HCV's as this is adding length and time to the fare which is costing passengers more.

A) PHV's do not have the same status as HCV's which is why they are not allowed to use bus lanes. Bus lanes are for public transport and HCV are classed as public transport as they can pick up passengers without a pre-booked fare.

Q) Can a license condition be put onto the driver/vehicle licence restricting it to operate within the borders of Bradford. This I believe will eliminate people having 2 operators on their badge.

A) We will address this question in the same discussion as drivers having more than one Operator on their badge

Q) Can the DBS annual fee be changed from an online subscription to a direct debit

A) Methods of payment are set by the DBS Service. I believe this is being looked into as they have had a lot of pressure put on them to change this, however we are not able to provide an update at this time as we are not involved in any decisions being made.

6) Close

There were a lot of questions to say that we did not receive any agenda points. Can we encourage all Operators to send in agenda points or questions before the meeting. This allows us time to get full answers to questions we may not know the answer.

The first online meeting we have held has gone very well and we thank those that provided feedback through the chat functionality about this way of conducting the meetings. If you have any feedback whether we should carry on with online meetings or if face to face meetings at City Hall would be preferred please let us know, we would love to hear from you.

Again we would like to thank everyone for attending our first webinar meeting. If the feedback we receive is positive we will look at moving the meetings to this format in future.

If any of you have any further comments or possible improvements please email taxi.testing@bradford.gov.uk and we will take these on board when arranging the next meeting.

7) Actions of Meeting

- Following meeting with CAZ Team - update trade on whether they will receive a grant if they are wanting to upgrade their vehicle to a minibus or wheelchair accessible vehicle from a normal saloon vehicle
- Form a working group with Operators to discuss drivers having more than one operator on their badge and how to tackle surging
- Continue trade engagement for DfT Guidance

8) Next Meeting

The next Operator Business Meeting will be held Thursday 19th May 2022.

The service will communicate closer to the next meeting date the format of the meeting; face to face or online.