

Operator Association Meeting

Council Chambers, City Hall, Wednesday 27th July 2016

10.00am registration for a 10.30am start.

1) Introductions

Officers briefly introduced the new HCPH Licencing portfolio holder, Councillor Sarah Ferriby, who has taken over from Councillor Slater. It was explained that the Councillors had discussed the previous meetings and Councillor Ferriby was supportive of the meetings and direction of travel.

Councillor Ferriby then thanked the audience for their attendance and handed over to officers to begin the official agenda items.

2) Previous Minutes

Officers ran through the previous minutes to update on the action points as follows:

Statement of accounts was distributed with the last meeting summary

CCTV draft document – no comments had been received

Ultra Low Emissions Vehicles (ULEV) – no expressions of interest were emailed to the service but the item is on today's agenda for further information.

Red; Amber; Green (RAG) Rating Proposal – this item is on today's agenda

Cascaded information – this related to information being sent to the trade. Around 50% of the trade replied, thank you to those who did. 50% of respondents have no issues with opening attachments on mobile devices and the remaining 50% of respondents did. Officers explained that the attachments issued can be accessed from a desk top, laptop or a tablet. If anyone is having difficulties accessing via these they should contact the service by emailing taxi.testing@bradford.gov.uk and officers will assist.

Working party (vehicle inspection failures) – One Operator responded and wished to work with the Service on this critical issue.

Trade Agenda Submission Points

3) 1 x Operator proposes removal of WAV side step

This point was raised by an operator and it was explained that it was under discussion with the Service.

Service Agenda Submission Points

4) Rag Rating Proposal

A handout was provided to all parties present – it is also attached with these minutes.

Action: Officers to issue RAG rating document for operators to see.

Officers explained that following feedback and suggestions from previous meetings a number of categories had been produced for comment. They explained that work will now follow on establishing a scoring matrix to support each category.

An operator suggested that this is good and asked if it could be done for drivers. Officers confirmed that this could be done but that it is more complex for drivers and therefore the rating system needs to come in for operators in the first instance. After that then a driver RAG rating can be explored.

A suggestion was made to include a scoring mechanism to ensure operators informing the service each time a driver / vehicle left their employment.

5) Ultra Low Emission Vehicles

A hand out was issued.

Officers explained that the government is promoting low emission vehicles and are looking to provide grants where people wish to purchase etc. The grants are quite generous and the vehicles once purchased cost about half as much to drive and maintain as a petrol driven vehicle. The vehicles help reduce greenhouse gases.

An operator raised concerns over the cost of such vehicles, the mileage they can cover and recharging facilities as many taxis and private hire vehicles cover a lot of miles. Another operator said they are aware compressed natural gas vehicles but that these are too costly.

A third operator commented that he felt the council are trying to force these vehicles on to the trade but the vehicles are not yet suitable - ULEV has been on the agenda for the past two meetings.

Officers explained they are not driving the initiative but they have a duty to bring such schemes to the wider audience. They are encouraging the trade to feedback to the people who run the scheme in order to have a voice that will in turn help shape future requirements. This is vital and was reiterated by Cllr Ferriby. Officers explained that they fully understand the points the trade are making as they are currently running a ULEVs. However by the trade having a voice and explaining its points it can shape the future.

Work with the West Yorkshire Combined Authority is likely, in the future, to see an emissions policy whereby greener cars will be essential. Leeds for example is looking at green air zones and possible charges for vehicles that don't meet the desired criteria.

Action: Officers to send ULEV document for all Operators for information

6) Conditions Proposals / Points of interest

Proposal one:

The proposal is to look at a way of ensuring the operator has measures in place for recruiting staff who are not licensed by the service, e.g. radio / telephone operators, but who have access to sensitive and privileged information. Operators have a duty of care for staff and to ensure consistency across all operators a minimum criterion is needed. It was recognised that some operators are already doing a great job in this area. Ideas are for reference requests, declaration of criminal convictions, training programmes including data protection and shift rotas to be formally established.

An operator commented that the RAG rating should help this as they will want to ensure that the customer service side is well dealt with. Officers replied by saying that whilst customer service is important there is a need to be able to ensure the people being employed do not have convictions. Whilst it is not possible for operators to carry out a DBS check it is possible to ask employees to declare any criminal background and therefore take action should they prove unsuitable.

One operator had a programme in place where his company train staff, monitor work, audit phone calls to see how staff deal with customers and they also restrict information, i.e. no sensitive information. Staff have log in details to start work. Several other operators agreed that this was the type of practice they also adopt at their businesses.

Officers reiterated the need to work together to ensure that companies protect their good names and standings as no company wants bad news stories.

Action: Officers to send out 4/5 points for comment.

Proposal two:

There is a proposal to increase the level of English language requirement to a higher minimum standard. The service has already recognised the need for clear communication and revised its communication test in 2015 for all new applicants.

One Operator explained that he had contacted the service to discuss concerns over new drivers who have poor quality English. The operator was concerned the service had taken no action. Operators were asked to submit the badge number of any driver who was newly licenced who they believe could not speak adequate English.

An operator said that applicants and the trade should be able to write. Officers reiterated the current process that was passed by elected members was the test consists of a basic verbal communication and receipt completion exercise. In the future as there is work within West Yorkshire Combined Authority there might be a push for ESOL level 3 which is of significant standard. it might be that it is

applied retrospectively which means anyone who does not have sufficient English skills might have to work over a period of time to improve in order to reach the required minimum standard and therefore continue in the trade.

An operator asked if this applied to Rossendale drivers and referred to the conditions on out of area vehicles, i.e. separate phone lines that should be in by 16th August. Officers explained that they are working with all WY LAs on this proposal and moves are being made to establish common policies and procedures. They explained that their focus will be on ensuring Bradford is safe but they will be taking whatever actions they deem necessary to ensure Licence holders from other LAs do not present problems to the people of Bradford. They are looking to work with Operators on this.

Proposal three:

Issuing of a 5 year Operator's Licence – This is an option which can be delivered and the service is working up the details and costs of the change.

Proposal four:

Equality act – A private member's bill is expected to receive its second hearing in November 2016 which is aimed at drivers of WAV vehicles being required to assist passengers in wheelchairs.

One operator had concerns over the current standard of Wheelchair training but officers explained that there are over 60 types of wheelchairs and therefore people have to be given generic training. The operator would then be responsible for ensuring specific training depending on the wheelchair types in use. Officers did add that they are happy to hold a meeting to look at the Wheelchair training and that emails should be sent to taxi.testing@bradford.gov.uk by operators who have concerns over wheelchair training.

7) Training Update

Modular Driver training – 3 years ago, in August 2013, a condition was introduced which requires all drivers to be trained by 31st August 2016. Those drivers who had not attended training by this date would be suspended. In the 3 years, this requirement has been communicated through newsletters, meetings, website updates, email and postal methods etc. to all licensed members. It is evident that many operators did not act in the first year or even two years and are now trying to get drivers trained at the last minute – which is unacceptable. As a goodwill gesture, officers have been given permission to put the deadline back to December 2016 and will provide extra course dates between now and then. Any driver who has not attended training by December will be revoked and action taken against their Operator/Proprietor. The deadline will not be extended again though.

Notwithstanding above, Officers do wish to reiterate their thanks to the operators who were organised and booked their drivers on early and have met the requirements.

CSE Training – This has been a great success, with circa 95% of drivers having already attended sessions. Around 200 drivers have not yet acknowledged or attended and the service is taking action to deal with these remaining individuals. The service wishes to express thanks to you and your drivers who attended these sessions promptly.

Reminder: Training must be booked by Operator/Proprietor only via PTS (not via HCPH Service).

8) **Vehicle Test Results**

An update was given on the figures for the first quarter of financial year; circa 1000 vehicles have been tested with a first time pass rate of 60% and circa 200 vehicles (20%) have failed and had to pay increased fees.

The service has worked for 4 years educating operators on vehicle safety and results have not improved. Therefore follow up action is being taken.

At the last meeting officers asked for operators to declare interest in working parties to look at the vehicle failure issue. One operator (Leap) replied stating they wish to do so. The service will be meeting with Leap on August 17th at 2pm and again extends this invitation to all Operators.

Action: Operators to email taxi.testing@bradford.gov.uk prior to 10th August 2016 to confirm their acceptance to attend the meeting on 17th August at 2.00pm at Shearbridge.

Current licensing conditions state that Operators can have action taken against their licence if they receive three warning letters. The service would like to work with Operators to assist in their compliance to ensure they do not receive three warning letters as this would put their Operator licence at risk of revocation.

Q – An operator asked how he can be expected to go under cars to check.

A – Officers reiterated as per previous replies, Operators are not mechanics but that they must demonstrate that the vehicles they dispatch are serviced and maintained in accordance with the vehicle handbook and do this using reputable dealers. The operator is the legally responsible person who takes the booking and must be able to demonstrate that the vehicle is safe.

9) **Date of next meeting** – October 26th 2016 at City Hall, Council Chambers, 10am registration and a 10.30am start time.

Footnote: After the agenda points were completed but prior to the closure of the meeting DCH minibus who had raised the agenda point about side steps on a vehicle wished to have clarification having spoken yesterday to an officer. Officers explained that the request would need further investigation in order to provide a full detailed answer and therefore the operator was also asked to bring his vehicle to Shearbridge at 2pm this afternoon for further investigations to begin.

The meeting was officially closed by Cllr Ferriby at 11.45am