

Business Operator Meeting

Wednesday 14th August 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)	Licensing Service Manager
Steven Knighton (STK)	Enforcement Manager
Elisabeth Spencer (ES)	Customer Service Manager
Sadiya Patel (SP)	Senior Licensing Officer
Chris Scurrah (CJS)	Enforcement Officer
Clare Wild (CW)	Licensing Officer (Service Support)
Samantha Kaye (SK)	Licensing Officer (Service Support)

2. Actions from the last meeting

Request for the use of text messaging

We have asked the software supplier of Digital Forms (previously known and referred to as iApply) if 'text' messaging can be used to remind drivers/proprietors to complete their renewal application forms. We are still awaiting a response from them.

Although we have no definitive answer in regard to 'text' messaging, the service does expect to be able to send email 'reminders'. The details of how this works will be explained during the trade engagement days to be carried out throughout October and November 2019.

The system we use to book appointments at Shearbridge Reception is being upgraded in the next few months. Once this is in place it is understood that the system does facilitate the use of 'text' reminders for appointments. The service will update you with further details as this project progresses. This will not include workshop vehicle tests.

Out of Area Hackney Carriage Vehicles

Concerns have been raised that there has been 'Out of Area' Hackney Carriage Vehicles working in the Bradford District. This has been investigated and the service can report that there are no, none-compliant vehicles working in our District.

If anyone believes that there are, can you please provide full details by email to: taxi.testing@bradford.gov.uk

3. Police Update

The police sent their apologies for the meeting however they did send an update for the meeting. The update was given on behalf of the Police by CS.

Police have been patrolling in the Eccleshill Ward area on a Sunday afternoon, in regards to targeting Anti-Social driving matters, in particular motorbikes and quads. A week of action is coming up in early September where police will be working with partner agencies deterring Anti-Social driving.

If you have any concerns please email: bd.steerside@westyorkshire.pnn.police.uk.

4. Enforcement Update

5* Base Audits Progress

Thank you to everyone who attended the vehicle safety sessions in June. During these sessions Enforcement Officers provided information in relation to the 5* base audits, the operators responsibility with regards to vehicles, what operators are able to do if a vehicles fails an inspection and how to appeal a failure.

It was explained that to achieve the first 3 stars on the base audit, Operators must successfully pass the compliance and vehicle safety sections of the 5 star base audits. The Enforcement Team has been developing stars 4 and 5 which will include elements of equality, customer service, management procedures and environmental practices.

All supporting guidance around the 5* base audits will be made available on the website once it is finalised, in the meantime if anyone has any questions or would like any further information you can email taxi.testing@bradford.gov.uk

Vehicle Failure Appeals

At the vehicle safety sessions in June 2019 the appeals procedure was discussed in great detail. The key point included Operators taking all reasonable steps to ensure that vehicles are safe and suitable prior to being despatched for any customer journey and not just at vehicle test.

Vehicle failures are recorded against the Operator licence and can affect the 5 Star Base Audit. All appeals are considered based on evidence of a vehicles maintenance history which should include servicing (appropriate to the make, model & mileage of the vehicle), safety checks, daily vehicle checks etc. Other good practice that would be taken into consideration is to use a reliable and reputable garage, have a procedure which establishes the mechanical standard of a vehicle (including hired vehicles) before it is used for private hire work.

Subject to the above you can submit your appeal which will be considered in line with the evidence produced as above. A successful appeal could result in a refund and the vehicle failure not being held on the Operator record.

Any repeat serious mechanical failures will require additional review and actions by the Operator to make sure that vehicles are maintained to a reliable and high safety standard.

Decals Review

Concerns have been raised during vehicle tests and road side inspections regarding a growing number of vehicles displaying resized or unapproved decals. It has also been raised that drivers are not obtaining their decals from the Operator but are having their own printed from a print unit. This is concerning because Operators may not be aware of some vehicles displaying their decals.

The Enforcement Team will be arranging to visit all bases to update all decal records. If the decals on file do not match Operators will be required to complete an updated decal approval form and the Enforcement Team will require a copy of the Operators decals to keep on file.

Vehicle Specification Amendment

The vehicle specification was brought into effect in August 2013 there have been changes to vehicles available on the market, including the introduction of Ultra Low Emission and Electric Vehicles.

As a result the way vehicles are designed and built has changed to accommodate the battery and drive systems; this often reduces the available height and width within the vehicles.

The Licensing Service has received some requests to reconsider the vehicle specification, in particular relaxing or removing the requirements for access and egress. Following these requests the Licensing Service is reviewing the Vehicle Specification with the view to making some changes.

Any proposed changes would need to be approved by committee as it would be a change to policy. The Licensing Service will need to evidence any proposed changes and will be working with the trade and public to collect their views.

The Licensing Service will be advising shortly as to how Licensees can get involved with this engagement.

Additionally the Licensing Service has been asked if we can permit Hybrid, Electric and Wheelchair accessible vehicles to be licenced for longer.

STK answered this by explaining that at this time there is an on-going Clear Air Survey which is due to close on 19th August. The Council is exploring support packages and once this survey is complete we will have a better understanding of what vehicles will best qualify for any incentives.

Plying for Hire

The Licensing Service has recently advised all Operators of complaints have been received in relation to Private Hire Drivers and Vehicles loitering outside pubs and clubs plying for hire.

Following the complaints the Enforcement Team, along with colleagues from Operation Steerside conducted a Plying for Hire operation throughout the district.

The operation resulted in a number of drivers picking up test purchase officers illegally.

Operators are advised that legal action is now pending on those drivers and that Enforcement Officers are reviewing records and systems at the bases, this is due to concerns that staff at the base may have been assisting these activities by adding the illegal pick up to the booking records.

Operators are advised to review their policies and booking systems as they are ultimately accountable for the actions of the base staff.

Staff must not book in any illegal pick up sent to them by the driver; additionally drivers should not be able to book passengers themselves via their PDA.

National Register of Taxi and Private Hire Licence Revocations and Refusals (NR3)

Information was provided about the NR3 Register.

An explanation was provided which explained that this is a National register is set up by the Local Government Authority and the National Anti-Fraud Network to record details of Private Hire and Hackney Carriage licences that have been refused or revoked.

Bradford are developing NR3 policy's and processes that will allow the Licensing Service to record the details of any licence holder that is refused or revoked.

The register will only hold high level information and cannot state the reasons for refusal or revocation.

If a local authority would like this information for the reasons behind a refuse/revoke then this would have be requested through a DPA request.

If anyone would like to know more about the NR3 register you can find information on the following web page: [National Register](#).

5. Licensing Update

GDPR

SP advised that out of the 5000 drivers that are licensed with the Service we only need email addresses for 15 drivers after which we will have a registered email address for 100% of all licenses.

For Operators we hold both personal contact details and public facing contact details, which can be used by the general public and the trade to contact you. Shortly you will be receiving an email asking you to confirm that the details we hold for you are correct and up to date. If any of your details change at any time please notify us as soon as possible so we can ensure all details are correct.

Please remind drivers and proprietors if any of their contact details change we need to be informed as soon as they can so we can keep our systems up to date. Not doing this will result in reminders being sent to the incorrect email address.

Plate Collection

The plate collection is going well and the service is continuously receiving positive feedback from the drivers. Everyone attending Shearbridge is stating they prefer collecting their plates straight after their test at the workshop.

There are two things that are not working so well which has resulted in the plates not being collected straight after test. There has been no insurance sent for new vehicles a minimum of 3 days before the vehicle inspection date and drivers arriving for test with no badge. Please can operators emphasise to drivers that it is a legal requirement for them to wear their badge at all times. The above two examples are things that can be avoided and will result in the driver not having to make an additional trip to Shearbridge.

Vehicle Proprietor Application Form

An email was sent 2nd August 2019 informing all operators and proprietors that we now have a new Vehicle Proprietor Application form. This positive step forward will allow the service to send a reminder to drivers informing them their vehicle licence is due to expire; the reminder will be sent 6 weeks prior to the expiry date. This process went live on Monday 5th August 2019 and the first reminder emails were also successfully sent on this day.

This form is an application to licence/relicense only. A copy of the valid insurance certificate and page 2 and 3 of the logbook must still be sent to taxi.testing@bradford.gov.uk. This must be sent from the email address that we have registered on the system as we are unable to arrange a vehicle inspection until the documentation has been received. For new vehicles the test will be booked without an insurance certificate however it must be received a minimum of 3 days before the vehicle test date. Not doing so will result in not being able to collect their plate straight after test. If the insurance is not received, the plates cannot be collected after passing the vehicle safety inspection. An email must be sent to

taxi.testing@bradford.gov.uk requesting a plate collection appointment. Once the insurance is received an appointment will be made.

6. Customer Service Update

Digital Forms

ES updated that the iApply suppliers have changed the name of the software and it is now called 'Digital Forms'. The application will still look and work the same.

'Digital Forms' is almost at the end of its development and testing. We are looking to make plans to come out to the district to offer training and support while giving everyone a chance to see what the system looks like, how it works and to have a go yourselves. The sessions will include a chance to practice on the system so end users can see what the system looks like. There'll be web pages set up to include trouble shooting guides to help if something goes wrong, system pictures for memory aides when accessing it away from training, and a list of Frequently Asked Questions.

The Customer Service Manager is planning as many sessions as possible across the district throughout October and November. No dates have yet been finalised but we will be holding the sessions at places such as Richard Dunns, the Leisure Centre at Keighley and other easily accessible places with plenty of parking.

The Digital Forms project plan is to have the system fully available to all applicants in January 2020, so we would like as many people as possible to attend the training sessions to make the process easier.

If anyone has any questions about the new process they can email taxi.testing@bradford.gov.uk for the attention of Elisabeth Spencer.

7. Peer Review Update

There are 3 outstanding points from the peer review and they are all on-going longer term points such as updating the conditions book, devising flowcharts for customers so they can understand the processes better and the service is reviewing its approach to English comprehension and Literacy training.

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

8. Agenda Points

Point 1 – Booking Vehicle Appointments

Reason – With the new 5 Base Audit some Operators feel they are being punished when a car fails for a serious defect. Would it not be beneficial for Operators to book*

vehicle inspections on behalf of drivers like they do the modular training. This way they can ensure all documents are sent and the vehicle is checked by a reputable garage before the vehicle test.

Response: Reminder emails will be sent to the Licensee responsible. It is appreciated that Operators are asking us to help them facilitate the booking of vehicle safety inspections. When digital forms are introduced they will have a unique reference number that will be used to complete the application, upload documents and make payment, as this will all need to be completed at the same time. During the engagement period for Digital Forms throughout October and November the service will work closely with Operators, Proprietors and Drivers. Operators we will be working closely with

- ❖ Operator: We already have the driver details on our system and we can make payment and recover costs from the driver. So why are we not able to complete the process on the driver's behalf?

Response: As above it is the applicants' responsibility to ensure they have a valid licence. If you would like to help drivers independently you are able to do so, however we have to send the renewal link to the licensee. In regards to the 5* Base Audit we are not looking to punish the Operator rather we are looking at ways to work with Operators to help their drivers. Drivers also move Operators and sometimes work for two Operators. Our current conditions state we must be informed within 7 days. This would mean an Operator is inaccurately contacted about a driver that no longer works for the Operator. This would result in it being hard to track communications and would detract from the responsibility which ultimately lies with the Licence holder. Drivers also have an additional responsibility as part of their licence to maintain their subscription to the DBS update service. This subscription requires a valid credit/debit card to be registered which an annual subscription can be taken from.

Point 2 – Air Quality

Reason - What incentives/grants are in place to encourage drivers to buy hybrid or electric vehicles?

Response: The Air Quality team for Bradford Council is in the process of devising a plan for Bradford Metropolitan District Council which will need to be presented for approval to Central Government. Until this process has been completed the service and the Air Quality team will be unable to provide any feedback. When there are any developments to the Air Quality plan this will be communicated to the Trade by the Licensing Service. Only 10% of people have taken part in the Air Quality survey so far, we advise that everyone completes this survey to ensure their views are heard.

- ❖ Operator: The survey advises grants are available on a new vehicle which can save people up to £7,500. Please can you advise where we would find this information?

Response: A number of government grants are available to help drivers changing to electric vehicles. These are managed by the Office for Low Emission Vehicles (OLEV).

Home Charging Scheme

The Electric Vehicle Homecharge Scheme (EVHS) provides grant funding of up to 75% / £500 towards the cost of installing electric vehicle charge points at domestic properties across the UK. More information can be found by clicking on the following link: [Home Charging Scheme](#)

Plug in Vehicle Grant

The plug-in car grant offers up to £3,500 off the 'on the road' purchase price of eligible new pure electric cars, and up to £8,000 off the price of an eligible new van. The Plug in Taxi Grant will pay for 20% of the purchase price for these vehicles, up to a maximum of £7,500. More information can be found by clicking the following link: [Plug in Vehicle Grants](#)

West Yorkshire Combined Authority Electric Vehicle Charge Points

Bradford Council is also installing a network of rapid electric vehicle charging points across West Yorkshire. These will be free to use until October 2021, with a dedicated bay for taxis and private hire vehicles. You can register to use these dedicated bays by clicking on the following link: <https://ev.engie.co.uk/> Please don't forget to include your vehicle license number when you register.

If you require any further details, Kate Smallwood, Energy & Environment Officer can be contacted via email at eccu@bradford.gov.uk

Point 3 – 5* Base Audit

Reason – To be able to achieve more than 3 on the 5* Base Audit, you have to be able to evidence you have had no major fails within the last 12 months.*

Response: As previously explained the Enforcement team will be visiting all bases to update all the decal information the service holds. During the visit they will also be working with Operators to offer help and provide ideas. The service wants to see every Operator getting 5* and want to help every business achieve that.

- ❖ Operator: Can Operators be emailed a list of all vehicles due for inspection so we can ensure the vehicle has been checked by a reputable garage?

Response: This is a report that the service anticipates will be possible. We will be working towards this and will update on the progress of this in the future.

Additional Update

A business representative that attended the last Operator meeting voiced some concerns. The Service has addressed these concerns and the business representative has left positive feedback to confirm this. The service is thankful for this feedback and is working hard to ensure an effective and professional service is given to all.

9. Date of Next Meeting

Wednesday 13th November 2019.

This meeting will start promptly at 10:30am. Please remember to arrive from 10am for registration. The meeting will be held at City Hall, Bradford.