

Business Operator Meeting

Tuesday 11th February 2020 – 10:30

1. Introduction/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
Philip Brook (PB)	Enforcement Officer
Samantha Kaye (SK)	Licensing Officer Service Support
PC Jamie Wilkinson (JW)	West Yorkshire Police
Andrew Whittles (AW)	Air Quality Officer
Sally Jones (SJ)	Air Quality Officer

2. Outstanding actions from the last meeting

There were no matters arising from the previous meeting.

3. Police Update

There have been no major incidents to report. The police in Bradford MDC are still working with the Licensing Service on multi-agency operations to uphold standards on the roads and protect all who use them.

During one of these operations there was a licensed vehicle that was found to be using red diesel; on a positive note the vehicle in question was licensed with Leeds City Council.

The police ran through a short presentation that outlined what hate crime is and what a hate incident is and the difference between the two. They also outlined the 5 main characteristics of hate crime, these are:

- Disability
- Race
- Faith
- Sexual Orientation
- Gender Identity

A high percentage of reported hate crime comes from licensed drivers, and around 70-75% of hate crime reported in Bradford falls within the race category.

If you feel that you have been a victim to hate crime, or have witnessed hate crime you can report this directly to the police through the following channels:

- Ring 999 if the incident is severe or happening at the time
- Ring 101 if the incident has passed but needs reporting

- Visit Trafalgar House and report the incident face to face
- Using the Online Reporting Form
- Visit one of the 21 reporting centres that are based across the district – the details of the reporting centres will be emailed out to the trade.

4. Air Quality

The Council are developing an Air Quality plan; this plan was submitted in October and outlines the steps Bradford would need to take to meet compliance.

There will be different standards for Hackney Carriage Vehicles, Wheelchair Accessible Vehicles and Private Hire Vehicles.

There are incentives for drivers to purchase an all-electric vehicle, one of these incentives is 2 years free electric up until 2021; there has been a request to extend this incentive to 2023, however this has not yet been agreed. There will be 80 charging points installed around Bradford District, 20 of these will be rapid charging points, and one socket from each rapid charging point will be dedicated to licensed vehicles.

Bradford MDC has requested £15.76million to put towards grants for proprietors to update their licensed vehicle or put towards a new more environmentally friendly vehicle.

There is going to be a drop in session at Margret McMillan on 19th February 2020. There will be various other drop in sessions across the district, these sates are yet to be confirmed and will be sent out by the Licensing Service once confirmed.

- Operator: Will Bradford be issuing interest free loans like they do in Leeds?
Response: No, Bradford will be concentrating on issuing grants rather than interest free loans. If you would like to apply for a loan you can apply through Leeds City Council.
- Operator: Is Bradford looking to go further than Leeds and include commercial vehicles within the air quality plan?
Response: The vehicles that will be included are; Buses, Lorries, Vans, Licensed Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Vehicles and Mini Buses. Licensed vehicles make up 10% of the vehicle movement in and around Bradford City Centre.
- Operator: Will LPG Vehicles be exempt from paying the congestion charge?
Response: LPG Vehicles are not currently included in the air quality plan; however this is something that can be looked at by the Air Quality team.
- Operator: The public won't be affected by the congestion charge but drivers use their licensed vehicle as a commercial vehicle too, is there going to be an exemption to the congestion charge?
Response: Once a vehicle is licensed as a Private Hire or Hackney Carriage vehicle it is licensed 24/7 365 days of the year that the licence will cover. This means even if you are driving your vehicle for a personal journey it is still a licensed vehicle and will still need to be compliant.

- **Operator:** How do you find out if you need to pay a CAZ charge?
Response: You can use the vehicle online checker by clicking [here](#) – if you enter your registration it will bring up your vehicle details and whether or not you are subject to the CAZ charge. If your vehicle does not meet the standard and you are required to pay a CAZ charge but don't, you could face a fine for non-payment.
- **Operator:** The proposed grants for mini-buses will only cover the conversion of the vehicle. If there any possibility of larger grant or an exemption as we need larger vehicles when covering school runs?
Response: There will be exemptions in certain situations for example social events and volunteers, licensed vehicles that are used for school runs can be looked into. Operators are advised to take part in the Consultation on Clean Air Zone proposals which can be found by clicking here: [Consultation on Clean Air Zone proposals](#) please also inform all Drivers and Proprietors to take part.

5. Transforming Cities Fund (TCF)

A communications was sent out to all Operators and Hackney Carriage Proprietors on Friday 10th January 2020 inviting you all to a meeting with Highways on Thursday 16th January 2020, regarding changes to the layout of Bradford City Centre. There were quite a few Hackney Carriage Proprietors attend however no Private Hire Operators attended. A question was raised as to whether this is something Operators would be interested in attending if another meeting was to be arranged, the consensus was yes, so we will speak to highways and arrange for the date of the new meeting will be emailed out.

- **Operator:** There are Hackney Carriage ranks for them to be able to pick up and drop off but there is nothing for Private Hire Vehicles, where are we supposed to pick up and drop off our passengers?
Response: The Service is only facilitating this and has no control over the changes. If you attend the meeting when it has been arranged the Highways team will be able to answer your questions.

The team that is fully responsible for this project is the Highways team, the Licensing Service will just facilitate the communications between Highways and the trade.

6. Enforcement Update

Results from Regulatory & Appeals Committee held on the 6th Feb 2020

In November 2019 the Licencing Service proposed a number of changes to the vehicle specification.

In December 2019 we held engagement with the both the trade and the public, this was answered by 383 people including Operators, Drivers and the general public. Following engagement the 6 proposed changes went before the Regs and Appeals Committee, the decision from committee is outlined below:

Proposal 1 - Vehicle proprietors be offered the option to apply for an extension to their current vehicle licence (as above) beyond the 10 (12 for WAV) years maximum age limit.

The committee agreed this proposal with an amendment to the date that extensions could run until 1st June 2021. The committee extended this proposal to allow for licenses to be granted for up to 12 months not going past 1st June 2021. This dispensation was submitted

to assist the trade and to prevent people from buying the wrong vehicle while the Clean Air Zone Requirements are still unknown.

This agreement means that if your vehicle is reaching its maximum licensing age, 10years/12 years for Wheelchair Accessible Vehicles then you can apply for an additional licence for the vehicle up until 1st June 2021. (The licence shall not exceed 12 months when issued)

To ensure full clarity on how to apply for this dispensation the Licensing Service will send out a separate communication to inform all licensees of the required criteria.

Proposal 2 - To reduce the minimum vehicle headroom requirement from 34 inches to 32 inches.

This was agreed and takes effect from 1 March 2020.

Proposal 3 - It is proposed that vehicles being considered for first registration be limited to a maximum of 5 years of age.

The committee added an amendment to this proposal exempting Hybrid (Euro 5/6 Petrol), Electric or Ultra Low Emission vehicles from this policy, meaning that these vehicles will not be subject to the 5 year maximum age limit at first registration. For example if you have a Hybrid (Euro 5/6 Petrol), Electric or Ultra Low Emission vehicle that is 7 years old you could still licence this vehicle as new.

This was agreed and will take effect from 1 March 2020.

With the exception of the above, new vehicles that do not meet the above specification will need to be licensed before the 1st March 2020. Vehicles not in licence on 1st March 2020 and which do not meet the new criteria will not be licensed.

Proposal 4 – To remove the section from the vehicle specification that requires Access to every seat to be unobstructed, without the need to tip forward, fold or remove seats for vehicles with more than 4 passenger seats.

This was approved and will apply from 1 March 2020.

Proposal 5 - To change the “requirement” to carry a spare bulb kit in licensed vehicles to a “recommendation”.

This was approved and will apply from 1 March 2020

Proposal 6 - To increase the minimum size for decals fitted to Private Hire Vehicles from A5 to A4 and the mandatory wording ‘PRE BOOKING ONLY’ to be a minimum of 80% of the largest letter on the decal.

This was approved and applies to all new decal applications immediately.

The committee also agreed that the results of the coming 5 Star Audit could be made public.

The committee also agreed that the results of the coming 5 Star Audit could be made public.

The 5 star audits will be implemented this year, we will be working with Operators for at least 6 months prior to publishing any results.

- Operator: Does the reduction in headroom cover all vehicles or just certain ones?
Response: This amendment to the specification will apply to all vehicles.

- Operator: If we have a licensed vehicle that has been modified to meet the current access/egress specification can the vehicle now be amended so all seats are facing forward?

Response: Please speak to STK regarding specific vehicles; however any changes that you make to a vehicle may result in you requiring a new IVA, vehicle licence and vehicle inspection resulting in further costs.

Vehicle Inspection Results

During the months of November, December and January there were 1072 vehicles tested. Of these vehicle inspections only 9% failed for a serious defect.

STK congratulated Operators for their involvement in lowering the failure rate significantly.

Tyre Safety Awareness

The Enforcement Team are working with the trade to educate and support all licensed personnel on the importance of tyre safety.

The Licensing Service will be sending out several communications with advice and information in relation to tyres. Enforcement Officers will also be offering advice in relation to checking your vehicle and tyres correctly as part of your daily vehicle checks, during our routine inspections.

The majority of licensed drivers and proprietors do ensure that their vehicle is safe and legal, however, while Enforcement Officers have been carrying out routine checks they have found that a small percentage of vehicles have had illegal tyres fitted.

Where illegal tyres are identified the Enforcement team will be taking action against the driver of the vehicle. This action can lead to prosecution and/or periods of suspension.

- Operator: I understand that if you have a bald tyre there is no excuse, however if you have a bulge or cut on your tyre you should be given time to correct this, legal action and suspensions should not be issued straight away.

Response: When a Tyre defect is identified the driver will be subject to our review process prior to a suspension being issued. STK advised that bulges and cuts in tyres do not appear from nowhere, they appear after some form of impact for example hitting a pothole or catching the curb. If this happens it is the driver's responsibility to ensure that the tyre is still safe and legal. The law is very clear with regards to tyre defects.

- Operator: Why would you suspend a driver if you are already taking legal action?

Response: To encourage drivers to check their vehicles regularly and prevent further instances of illegal tyres.

- Operator: The 5 Star results from this year won't affect next year will they?

Response: To ensure that everyone starts on a level playing field the previous vehicle failures will not count when 5 star is launched. They will remain on record for reference.

- Operator: When a driver brings in a new vehicle for inspection and it fails this should not count towards our 5 Star results as we as Operators have not seen that vehicle.

Response: Whether the vehicle is in for a new or renewal inspection it has to be linked to an Operator at the time of booking. If the vehicle fails we write out to the

Operator that is listed on the record. It is the Operators responsibility to ensure every vehicle is safe before being dispatched. As an Operator you should set out your own processes for all drivers to abide by when making the booking to ensure you have knowledge of every vehicle that is linked to your business when being booked in for inspection.

7. Licensing Update

Queues

The service is very pleased to report that since the implementation of the appointment system the number of drivers waiting to be seen has significantly reduced. This is because in all cases we are now booking an appointment for you to be seen. We have previously said that you should come to the counter if you have an emergency; this is no longer the case.

If you have an urgent matter, for example you require a replacement badge or plate, you will not be dealt with immediately at the counter. Instead please email the service on taxi.testing@bradford.gov.uk ensuring you include all your details. Once we receive the email the service will deal with your request and arrange for you to attend the office once the work has been done. This will ensure your matter is dealt with effectively with no down time to the driver/proprietor etc. If your matter is urgent then please mark the email as urgent and ensure it has all the relevant details we require enabling us to process your request, your email will be dealt with as priority.

Workshop tests

The service is currently booking vehicle inspections for around a week in advance. To be able to meet the demand for vehicle inspections we have facilitated some extra test slots and these will be monitored and run until they are no longer required.

Digital Forms

Digital Forms is the licensing application system that was introduced in January 2020, this is an online system and all applications are made via this system. When you apply online with Bradford MDC you will be asked to make payment and upload any required documentation at the same time.

You will receive an email confirmation that your application has been received as well as a receipt for the payment made.

At the Business Operator Meeting in August 2019 we informed everyone that training sessions on how to use Digital Forms would be held, and an email would be sent when dates and times had been finalised.

On 30th October 2019 we emailed all Operators advising them that we were going to be running some training sessions in November 2019 where we will demonstrate how Digital Forms will look and work so that you are able to help your drivers when they come to renew.

On 19th December 2019 we emailed all drivers and proprietors whose licence is due to expire between 17th February 2020 and 15th March 2020 to advise them of their expiry and invite them to some drop in sessions we were running where we could help them with their renewal and demonstrate how Digital Forms works. These started off well attended; however no one has attended the last two sessions.

If anyone requires further help with any of the application forms they can email taxi.testing@bradford.gov.uk and a counter appointment can be arranged where we will be able to guide them through the form and demonstrate how it works so they are more informed when submitting future applications.

Feedback from the engagement/training sessions was extremely positive with comments that the system was easy to use, quick and can be done anywhere. We also listened to the difficulties that were experienced during the sessions. The main issue was that drivers/proprietors are clicking on the link more than once; this will then open more than one tab and stop the form working correctly. If you do open the link more than once, you will need to close everything down and start again. You may also get a yellow warning box when completing the form, if you do you will need to close all internet tabs and start again.

Since the introduction of Digital Forms at the beginning of January 2020 we have received over 400 new and renewal applications. Digital forms are now the only way you are able to apply for or renew a drivers or vehicle licence.

Transfers

Since the introduction of Digital Forms we have been advising all licensed personnel that we will no longer be able to facilitate vehicle transfers. Following feedback from the trade who raised concerns the service has undertaken a review of this. The outcome is that you will be able to transfer a vehicle to a new proprietor but you will not be able to transfer the existing licence. The process to follow is set out below:

If you wish to sell your vehicle to another proprietor, you will need to send an email to taxi.testing@bradford.gov.uk advising that you have sold your vehicle. Once this email has been received we will contact you to arrange a counter appointment where both the current proprietor and new buyer will need to attend. At the appointment the current proprietor will be required to surrender the vehicle licence and the new proprietor will need to apply and pay for a new 12 months licence as normal procedure.

- Operator: If you still have time left on the plate do you get a refund as the new keeper is paying the fees again?
Response: The previous transfer process did not refund the previous proprietor so this has not changed.
- Operator: In the past when we completed a transfer we paid £54 and the new keep took over the remainder of the licence until it expired
Response: It is important that the new proprietor has full confidence that the vehicle they have purchased is fit for purpose. The new vehicle proprietor will then receive a full 12 month licence.
- Operator: Why is this being announced as a change when we have not had a consultation regarding the change?
Response: This is a procedural change to a process which has been introduced to ensure the mechanical standard of a vehicle is evidenced when a vehicle changes to a new proprietor.

- Operator: Transfers should be immediate; drivers buy plated vehicles so they can continue working as a lot of drivers have school runs, they do not want to be waiting a week for a vehicle inspection and licence to be issued.
Response: In these cases it may be necessary for drivers to hire a vehicle until their vehicle has been inspected and licensed.

NOTE: a further review of 'Vehicle Transfers' will be undertaken once the CAZ requirements are known.

New Vehicles

When booking in a new vehicle you are required to collect a black bracket and have this fitted to your vehicle before it is brought in for inspection. You are now able to collect these brackets from the Workshop.

8. Agenda Points

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

Point 1 – Would the Council look at the option to extend the age for hybrid and electric vehicles as an incentive for drivers to buy cleaner vehicles

Response: Incentives are being looked at by the Air Quality Team to encourage drivers and proprietors to purchase cleaner vehicles and extending the vehicle licence is something that could be looked at as another incentive. In the mean-time the Licensing Service are allowing vehicle extensions on current vehicles, until the Air Quality Team have finalised their Clean Air Zone (CAZ) requirements for Bradford MDC.

Point 2 – What is the logic behind reducing the age limit on vehicles to 5 years on a new plate

Response: The safety and engine emission features of newer vehicles are constantly and rapidly evolving to ensure that newer vehicles are safer for drivers, passengers and road users and also cleaner and more environmentally friendly.

In anticipation of the introduction of the Clean Air Zone it was agreed to limit the option for vehicles to be first licensed to a maximum of 5 years of age. This will be reviewed once the Clean Air Zone requirements have been agreed.

9. Dates of Next Meetings

Wednesday 27th May 2020
Wednesday 12th August 2020
Wednesday 11th November 2020

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