

## **Written Responses from Agenda Dated 15<sup>th</sup> February 2022**

### **1. Free Safeguarding course (1st one) some drivers complaining they are not getting the free code instead they have to pay £25 with blue lamp.**

The first safeguarding courses for all existing licence holders are being paid for by Southampton City Council. This is for all drivers licensed on or before 1<sup>st</sup> July 2019. In order to facilitate this I send to Personnel Checks Ltd a list of all those eligible drivers on the same day that I send out the renewals. This is at the latest ten weeks before these licences expire. Personnel Checks Ltd then add the badge numbers of these drivers on to their system within 48 hours. This ensures that they are ready when the first applicants get in touch with them, usually around five working days later.

Applicants are given details of how to contact Personnel Checks after we have received payment. Applicants are given clear instructions when applying for a course how to enter their badge number to obtain a free course. Personnel Checks will always have availability within four weeks.

We get a lot of instances of drivers leaving things to the last minute. Blue Lamp are capitalising on this by having late availability slots at £25 each. This is up to drivers if they wish to pay under these circumstances.

### **2. When will office open to normal service or is this normal service now?**

Building Services will still not allow us to open our office to callers. We have permission to have callers in for knowledge tests, transfers and driver interviews. We are allowing documents such as medicals to be submitted by hand. Drivers can simply call us from the bay and we will collect from them.

We don't yet have an indication when this will change. When it does, it is not envisaged that we will completely return to the previous way of working. We would like to keep some elements of remote working for the benefit of both the trade and licensing staff alike. It will take a while to change our system as we send out renewals for drivers ten weeks in advance and vehicles eight weeks in advance and the process to follow is stated in those letters.

### **3. Ranks abuse by the delivery drivers, Particularly Portswood and Shirley**

May I ask that all instances of rank abuse are reported to Parking services? They can be contacted at [civilenforcementteam@southampton.gov.uk](mailto:civilenforcementteam@southampton.gov.uk). Also if you could bring it as an agenda item at the next meeting if you are seeing no improvement and we can discuss.

### **4. Why we have different tests for Hackney and PH wouldn't it be easier to have the same test for both.**

The two trades are different and this is reflected in each test. The topography element of the hackney test is much more focused and detailed as hackney drivers get approached on ranks and have to be able to have detailed knowledge of the city in order to carry out an

immediate hiring. However, a private hire driver receives their booking in advance and therefore has an opportunity to check the route and destination should they need to. However, there is still a small amount of essential topography in the test to ensure that they know major trunk roads, major land marks and hospitals, police stations etc for safety purposes. If a rep would like to examine the test, they can get in touch with me and I am happy to walk them through it and take on board any comments or suggestions that they have.

**5. Can we have stickers mandatory for the drivers who take card payment. So customers and other drivers don't get into conflict.**

We think there is merit in the idea. It will require a slight change to hackney conditions if approved. Can we look at this at the next meeting?

**6. Spot check all hackney insurance**

We currently do this at renewal. We see no evidence of insurances being cancelled as we often see policies mid-way through their life. We also see that the policy has renewed at the same time as the previous year. An issue that we do have is that insurers will not disclose to us if a policy is valid and we have no power to demand that they do. The police have many ANPR units in Hampshire. If they see a licensed vehicle without insurance, it is likely to be stopped and proceedings brought against that driver. We will find out if this occurs and deal with it according to policy.

**7. Reconsider Toyota Prius Plus as a six-passenger vehicle in line with other councils.**

Our current policy states that we do not allow vehicles fitted with individual seats to have a seat width of less than 407mm per person and allow a person to be seated comfortably. The Prius Plus rearmost two seats fail to do both of these. There are no plans to change this policy.

Russell Hawkins  
9<sup>th</sup> March 2022