

Taxi Consultation with SCC Licensing

10AM Thursday 20th August 2020 Conference held by Microsoft Teams

Attendees: Cllr Catherine McEwing (Chair), Cllr Graham Galton, Cllr John Noon, Cllr Matthew Renyard, Cllr Toqueer Kataria, Sam Sahid (Hackney Rep), Simon May (PH rep), Ali Haydor (PH Rep), Les Slater (HC Rep), Phil Bates (Licensing), , Orbay Keskin (Highways)

Apologies from:

Cllr Sally Spicer
Cllr Beryl Harris
Cllr Streets
Pat Ross (PH rep)
Clive Johnson

Minute Taker: Sami Barrett

1. Introductions/Apologies (Cllr M)

As listed above.

2. Minutes from Previous Meeting and Action Points (Cllr M)

Minutes were agreed by all parties and signed off from previous meeting on the 21st January 2020.

3. Statutory Taxi and Private Hire Vehicle Standards (Licensing/PB)

PB advised that the department for transport (DoT) have now publish their documents. Licensing are currently working through current policy and conditions and comparing this to the standards issued by the DoT. One area for improvement is regarding DBS checks. Vehicle proprietors and operators currently do not have DBS checks, PB looking for a way to introduce this into the policy and conditions. Operator staff may potentially need DBS checks too due to handling and the access of sensitive data. PB advised there will be a full consultation before any policy change and any views regarding this are open for discussion.

AH commented regarding the sensitivity of customer details, due to an incident that has occurred on Facebook regarding a driver posting customers personal details. AH stated this did not involve a Southampton PH driver or customer. AH stated he is in favour of having drivers on the DBS update service due to positive experience with this.

SM advised their staff have a DBS check as this helps to protect passenger's information especially with regards to credit card/debit card details.

PB explained that there were originally 32 items on the agenda for this meeting. The items on the agenda have been lowered to 11, to enable time to have discussion for the topics. PB stated he will send out written responses to the other items that were raised as they were more questions rather than discussion points. PB also wanted to Comment further on the issue of DBS update service, he is aware there are a group of individuals that do not support the 6 monthly check, and this will be taken into consideration.

4. **Private Sector DBS Checks** (Licensing/PB)

PB stated that due to lockdown there were difficulties with DBS checks. This was due to drivers being unable to attend the offices to complete the DBS check. Personnel checks provided the Council with an online DBS solution, doing this at cost price. The system is faster than the process at the Council as they have a quicker route into the DBS system. Personnel Checks are taking 2 weeks or faster to return the DBS certificate. PB stated that Licensing have started a procurement process for DBS checks as the government standards have changed, meaning drivers will now have to complete a 6 monthly DBS check. PB advised these 6 monthly checks will either be a new check or a DBS update service check. PB stated that if this government change is to go through this will take place early next year.

Cllr M has asked if this will mean that there is a cost twice a year for DBS checks. PB advised that he believes the DBS update service is £13 a year. **Action** - PB will check the cost of the update service and will circulate details of price to the trade.

PB has advised that one failing with the DBS update service is there is no option to pay by direct debit. The only current form of payment is by credit or debit card. PB had advised this will work until the card expires, if the card is not updated before it expires then they lose the update service. PB has advised the DBS are aware of this and pressure has been put on them to change the method of payment. AH has informed he has been on the update service and has experienced the payment through cards. AH has advised that 2 months before the card is due to expire the DBS send a notification, by email, that the card is due for renewal.

LS has asked if PB would like proprietors to join DBS update service. PB advised that this is available for everyone however he is aware the DBS update service works with an enhanced DBS but is not sure if it works with a standard DBS. Proprietors and operators only need a standard DBS check.

5. **Emails between trade reps unprofessional** (SM)

SM has advised that he has been receiving emails from trade reps and wanted to remind everyone that these emails should be remaining professional. SM also advised that Trade Reps should be setting an example. SM asked if this could be investigated, Cllr M advised Licensing and Cllrs should not be involved with these emails. PB advised he had received a short exchange of emails that had been circulated and he has emailed these individuals regarding the emails. PB advised the individuals have since apologised and he has received no further emails. PB has stated that in future this can be addressed by having a code of conduct for this group, this can include the use of remaining profession when sending emails. PB has stated that discussions should be done between the Trade Reps and once agreed then Cllr's and Licensing should be informed. AH thanked Cllr M for

addressing this with all recipients of the email whereas PB only addressed him and Sam. PB noted

6. **Extend licence of Euro 5** (SM)

SM has advised that feedback from drivers are they are struggling due to the current situation. SM has asked what the circumstances are regarding licensing Euro 5 vehicles, as this could help cut costs for drivers. PB has advised he believes that Euro 5 vehicles can be licensed until 2022, after this date it will no longer be licensed. If it is a new vehicle that is being licensed this will need to be a Euro 6. PB has advised that the dates cannot be extended as this will breach the agreement with the clean air government strategy.

LS has advised that he did not think they could be re-licensed after 2021 as this would mean they would be licensed into 2022. PB has advised he would clarify this and inform everyone of the correct dates. PB has found the vehicle ages policy and conditions. PB has stated that under conditions 3.5 it states that a new vehicle Euro 5 (or lower) will be granted a licence until Jan 2020. PB advises that condition 3.51 states that a Euro 5 vehicle cannot be re-licensed on or after January 2022. In summary any new vehicle has to be Euro 6, any existing Euro 5 vehicle can be licensed next year but not after 1st January 2022. This will achieve the target of a Euro 6 fleet by 1st January 2023.

7. **PH drivers should be allowed to work for two operators** (AH)

AH has advised that drivers are asking to work for 2 operators. AH has advised that door signs on vehicles are stopping drivers working for 2 operators. AH has advised that Southampton should allow drivers to work with 2 operators as other areas allow this. Cllr M clarified that drivers can work for 2 operators and this has not been stopped. PB has advised that the conditions make this impractical to work for 2 operators as the vehicle needs to display the details of the operators, there is an exemption for school runs for this. PB has also advised that the door stickers are there for public safety. PB stated that he is speaking with other authorities regarding door stickers, Eastleigh and New Forest are in the process of amending their policies and conditions and he is starting that conversation with Winchester.

SM has advised that he agrees with Phil regarding door stickers and having 2 operators will cause issues with passengers' safety. SM has also advised that having 2 operators may mean that drivers accept more than 1 job, and this could adversely impact on the passengers.

AH has suggested that companies do not display their brand on the door sticks, instead they leave the Southampton City Council logo. This would then enable drivers to work for 2 operators without having to change their door stickers. AH has also advised that with regards to school runs, not all individuals are doing this instead they are running as operators. PB stated that it is important the operator details are displayed so the passengers recognises the car they have booked.

8. **Public/council site toilet access for drivers near city centre** (AH)

AH has advised that drivers are unable to find toilet facilities to use. AH has asked

if there is anything the Council can do regarding this. AH has also asked whether the drivers can use a toilet within the Civic Centre. Cllr M has advised that there are no legal requirements for the Council to provide toilets. PB has advised that the Civic Centre is currently not open to members of public, due to the pandemic, and he cannot see the Council allowing drivers into the building to use the toilet facilities. **Action** - PB has advised he will mention this to the night time economy to see if they can help the trade.

AH has asked if there can be something like London, where they have portable toilets near to the taxi ranks. PB has advised this may be an option, however funding may be an issue. LS has advised that Bitterne Triangle toilets have been removed due to the cost of up keep and damage to them.

AH has advised he does not expect the funding for the toilet facilities to come from the Licensing fee budget. AH has stated he will ask drivers if they are willing to pay for the up keep of the toilet facilities. PB has advised that if drivers would like to organise this, he can let the relevant departments know. Cllr M has asked whether planning permission would be needed, PB advised it may be that both planning and highway consent is required.

9. Driver badge wearing – More visible (AH)

AH has asked if there can be an option of drivers having 2 badges. PB has advised that he raised the issue of badges a few years ago with the option of having armbands (like SIA badges). PB advised that he has been in town for the past 2 weekends and has been to the taxi ranks to check whether drivers are wearing their badges. PB stated that except for one driver, the other drivers were not wearing their badges.

AH has asked whether drivers are able to display their badge in the windscreen rather than on their arm. SM has agreed with both PB and AH regarding issues with drivers wearing badges. SM has advised that they are launching a new sticker for drivers to put on their vehicle. The sticker will show the name of the driver and when the badge is due for renewal.

LS has asked PB what was being done to drivers if they were found not wearing a badge. LS has asked if they can use a clip for their badges. LS also advised that there may be more than one driver for a vehicle and who would be responsible for changing the badges. PB stated that the legislation states that drivers should be wearing their badge rather than it being on the vehicle. PB replied to LS stating that if a driver is consistently not wearing their badge they can be prosecuted under legislation.

SS has advised he will go out and speak to Hackney Drivers to ensure they are wearing their badge. **Cllr M has asked SS to remind drivers they can be prosecuted, and this can impact their licence.**

10. Tackling PH vehicles waiting at train stations without booking (AH)

AH has raised the issue of Private hire drivers sitting at the station on taxi ranks. AH has advised this is not just Southampton drivers but also out of town drivers. AH has asked Licensing/PB if something can be done with regards to this. PB has advised he is aware of the hot spots for this activity. PB saw this at the weekends and moved on several private hires that did not have a booking. PB has advised

that due to the pandemic activity at the train station had decreased. PB has asked that Licensing be notified if this is increasing. Cllr M has asked whether this was both sides of the train stations. AH has confirmed this is both sides. SS has also advised of one case, between a Hackney Carriage driver and a Private Hire driver, that has gone to the police. PB has stated he is interested in this case and could SS inform Licensing of this. Cllr M has asked PB to monitor this.

11. Coronavirus Update (SS)

SS has asked if there are measure in place should there be a second spike as the drivers are already struggling. PB has advised that work is in place to prevent a second spike. Other departments are also working together in order to prevent a second spike. PB has advise he would be unable to stagger payments as this may cause an increase in costs overall. PB has advised that he is looking carefully at reducing the Licensing fees as much as possible for the drivers.

12. Other business

LS has asked PB how the process has been via emailing documents to Licensing. PB has advised that he has spoken to the Licensing team who have stated that drivers are submitting incomplete applications, and this is causing difficult with processing licenses. PB has stated that any further incomplete application will be returned, and drivers will be advised what documents are outstanding. The driver will need to then email all the documents again. PB has advised other than the above issue, the overall message he is receiving is that the online system is working. AH has advised that he has experienced the process for renewing his badge and has advised the process was smooth and well handled. PB has advised that Sami Barrett will be leaving the team and staff levels will be less. PB also advised he is pleased to hear good feedback regarding the online system.

OK has explained the upcoming changes regarding cycle lanes, taxi ranks and the future of the City. **Action** - PB has asked for OK to provide a summary, in writing, of this and OK to send this to PB to circulate.

LS stated he had put forward a few items for the agenda however most of these have been replied to by PB in writing. LS has asked will this be discussed by everyone. PB has replied that the items that were not covered in todays meeting will be published in writing to everyone. If a discussion is needed regarding the items in writing this can be arranged for a future meeting.

SS has spoken with the HC trade and they have advised that some roads drivers are unable to turn right. Right turns are essential in some places. SS has asked OK the best route when collecting a passenger from the train station to Asda. OK has replied with the route of Commercial Road onto Havelock Road, advising this may add a little bit to the journey but that this is a feasible distance. PB has agreed with this and has replied that licensed drivers need to communicate with passengers regarding the route they will be taking.

Date of next meeting: 10am to noon on 12th November 2020