

## MINUTES OF HACKNEY CARRIAGE FORUM HELD ON TUESDAY 20 APRIL 2010

ITEM		ACTION
1.0	<p>In attendance: - <u>Leeds City Council</u> John Mulcahy – Head of Licensing &amp; Registration Martino DePlacido – Operations Manager Martyn Johnson – Licensing Manager Mark Heap – Principal Enforcement Officer Joanna Mingham – Service Development Officer Alison Calvert – Temporary Management Support Officer (Secretary)</p> <p><u>Hackney Carriage Associations:</u> M Sabar – City Cabs Javed Akhtar – Streamline/Telecabs - LTOA Michael Utting – Telecabs/Streamline – LTOA Andy Howard – Streamline/Telecabs Khaliq Ahmed – City Cabs - LAPTA</p> <p><b><u>Welcome &amp; Introductions</u></b></p> <p>Prior to the start of the meeting Mr Akhtar advised the meeting that the JTC had requested a copy of Eurocabs constitution. This had not been provided. Mr Akhtar asked if TPHL had a copy of their constitution. JM advised the meeting that it was for the JTC to take up this matter with Eurocabs and that he was happy that Des Broster had examined Eurocabs documentation/representation at the time they applied to join the forum.</p> <p>JM advised the meeting that he had requested legal services to produce constitution/terms of reference for the forums. This would require all the associations to produce the relevant documentation at routine intervals which would help address the concerns of any other associations and enable Unite Leeds or any future hackney carriage associations to apply to join the forum.</p> <p>Mike Utting (MU) asked about the format for future meetings. JM advised that any representative body would be able to join the forum if they met the criteria laid down in the constitution/terms of reference.</p> <p>MU explained that there had recently been a meeting between JTC</p>	

and UniteLeeds. UniteLeeds were representing association of drivers and Proprietors. MU explained that there had been some animosity between UniteLeeds and the JTC in the past but that both City Cabs and Streamline/Telecabs had agreed to work with UniteLeeds. Eurocabs were not working with UniteLeeds.

Joanna Mangham then introduced herself to the meeting and explained her role within the Section.

## **2.0 Minutes of Last Meeting**

Changes to point 1 were required. They were then agreed as a true and accurate record of events.

## **3.0 Action points from the last meeting**

Arrow/signage at the Airport. MD advised the meeting that the Enforcement Team had visited the Airport and reviewed the use of the word 'taxi' both in the airport and on the way out of the airport to the booking office. MD explained the use of the word 'taxi' as internationally used symbol. MD advised that leading upto the booking office on airport owned barriers the word 'taxi' had been used. Planters around that area also used both taxi and Arrow Private Hire signage. MU recognised that 'taxi' is a generic term but was annoyed with the use of 'Amber taxis' and 'Arrow taxis'. Mark Heap thought that it might be useful to see what other airports are doing and to try and get a common standard/best practice.

Andy Howard thought that the use of the word 'taxi' at the airport would mislead visitors to the city who would then think that they could flag down a Private Hire in the street.

Discussions took place on people's general perception and use of the word 'taxi'. JM advised that people needed educating into the difference between 'taxis' and Private Hire vehicles. JM then went on to inform the meeting about the safety/education campaign that we were running at the bus station to highlight the differences. Leaflets were handed out to the meeting showing the message that was being given. The Trade thought that this was a good thing.

Discussion then took place on the Radio Aire advert by Arrow. MD advised that the advert only mention the domain name and that he had approached legal service for advice. JM advised that each case would have to be dealt with on a case by case basis. JA advised that he thought that this should be part of the Operators conditions. MJ suggested that when Operators renew their licences that they sign something to say that they will not use the word 'taxi' in advertising and signage.

MD advised that a permanent solution was needed and that is why legal advice on this was being sought. JM advised that clear legal advice was needed so that the Enforcement Team can be clear on what action can and cannot be taken.

MU advised that the Trade would like a decision on this by the next

**MD**

quarterly meeting so that the Hackney Carriage trade could get some sort of a resolution.

Mr Saber commented on the problem of Private Hire vehicles illegally parking on ranks. MD advised the meeting of the joint operations that had been taking place with the Police and Parking Services on a monthly basis. The trade welcomed this but MU advised that there was frustration within the trade regarding the continual problem of Plying for hire.

#### Music Festival/Elland Road

JM drew the meetings attention to the contact details for the Music Festival and Elland Road which were included in the minutes of the last meeting as post meeting notes. MU advised the meeting that a meeting had taken place with the organisers of the Leeds Music Festival being held at Bramham Park.

Discussions also took place around match day at Elland Road. The trade advised that they needed some Enforcement presence on match days. Private Hire vehicles were parking up on the opposite side of the road to the rank at Elland Road. Signage for the rank was also missing. MD agreed to take this up with Highways to ensure that the signage was put in place.

**MD**

Funding for the new technology to show spaces on the ranks was discussed. MD & JM advised that he was awaiting the results of discussions from the trade on the amount of funding they were able to provide to meet the estimate cost of £35,000. JM advised the meeting that once the level of funding available from the JTC and other sources was establish then matters could be progressed. JM also advised that this may also need to go to the Licensing & Regulatory Panel for approval.

MU asked if this could be discussed following the constitution/terms of reference work that was being undertaken so that it could be discussed as one body. Mr Ahmed advised that funding for the marshals on Boar Lane was only available until the end of May. MU asked if things could be speeded up. It was agreed that TPHL call a meeting between JTC to discuss this funding. JM asked that the JTC and UniteLeeds have a meeting prior to this so that there is a starting point. JM advised that TPHL is willing to consider part funding some of the new technology.

**JM**

**JTC/Unite  
Leeds**

#### Network Rail

JM advised that he had contacted Cllr Feldman with regard to the comments made at the meeting but that he had not yet discussed this with him. JM agreed to provide an update at the next meeting.

**JM**

KA advised the meeting that there was a problem with the drop off and pick up point at the station. Private Hire vehicles were waiting for 5 – 10 minutes for there fares rather than going to the short stay car park, as the Hackney Carriage vehicles do when picking up train crew. JM agreed that this would be raised at the next Private Hire forum.

**JM**

A Metro

MD advised the meeting that the Enforcement Team had visited and there was no evidence of touting, people were there to ensure an orderly queue. MD advised the Trade the Enforcement Team would continue to monitor the situation.

MD

Leeds Central cars

MD advised the Trade that there was a licence in force. AH advised that it looks closed down. MD advised that he thought that they were only allowed to take telephone bookings, so this may be why it looks as it has closed down. The trade asked for clarification on the parking available and MD advised that they had planning for 1 vehicle outside the door and the rest should be parked at the back of the building on private land. MD advised that he will check to see if Leeds Central cars are still operating.

MD

Age criteria

JM advised that it had now been printed and was being included in new application packs.

Arena ranks.

MD advised the meeting that the arena was to be completed in 2012 and that it was to be a 24 hour rank with room for up to 36 cars.

### **Agenda items**

4.0

#### **Unmet Demand Survey**

JM gave an update and advised the meeting that the Licensing & Regulatory Panel had agreed that there was no requirement to increase the number of Hackney Carriage Proprietor licences. The Panel had taken into account the best practice guidance and agreed to start the process in 3 years time i.e. 2012/13.

KA asked about the survey process and JM advised that it was put out to tender. JA asked about the total cost of the survey. JM advised that it was in the region of £60,000 for 15 months. He advised that in future years that it would not need to take as long and so the costs would not be as great. This recent survey had been the first for a number of years and needed to be much more comprehensive.

MU advised that the Panel had discussed the number of wheelchair accessible vehicles (WAV) within the Hackney Carriage and Private Hire fleet. JM advised the trade that the Panel had asked for TPHL to assess the number of WAV in the fleet and recognised that this may take over 12 months.

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Post meeting Note – The exact cost of the survey by Halcrow Fox was £59,166.

## **Staffing issues**

6.0

JM gave the Trade an update on Des Broster's hearing and advised the trade that the hearing had been concluded but the outcome of the hearing was not yet known.

## **Licensing**

MJ advised that he had a lot of people off work at the moment due to sickness and paternity leave. He advised that staff were working late on Tuesdays and Thursday evenings to process new applications. People were not turning up to these appointments so that this was having a knock on effect through the day. MJ also advised that the main problem still being experienced is people not having the correct documentation or not completing the forms prior to attending the office. This impacted on the length of time it took to deal with renewals etc. MU asked about the average length of waiting time and MJ advised that it had probably not changed for renewals, etc, but the receptionist was now directing people away from the main queue that were here to see someone or for a vehicle inspection, etc, and that was having a positive impact on the queues. Everybody agreed that the reception/waiting area was a lot more comfortable.

JM advised the trade of the issues surrounding the new computer systems and that a 2-3 year licence could not be issued until a new system was in place. The current VLE system was unable to process a 2-3 year licence. The supplier was at the moment trying to resolve a number of outstanding issues but that Leeds City Council would not accept the system until it was sure it would meet TPHL requirements.

7.0

Late renewals – MJ advised the meeting that following a Court case we had taken legal advice and been advised that the 30 days grace period should not be given. MJ advised the meeting that should there be genuine reasons that a licence could not be renewed on time then there was no reason that this licence could not be renewed. MJ outlined the process whereby drivers are required to write in with their reasons why they could not renew on time and that would be considered. Each would be dealt with on a case by case basis and on its own merits. This process could take some time.

## **Operations**

MD discussed the structure of the Enforcement Team and advised that based on the existing structure that there were 4 vacant posts. MD gave an update on the new Enforcement officer's job descriptions and advised the meeting of the process and consultation that needed to be followed to employ new Enforcement officers on a new contract. He advised the meeting that existing officers would have the opportunity to transfer to the new shifts/job description. MD advised that he was in the process of carrying out the work. MU asked when would a full Enforcement Team be in place? MD advised that he thought a full team of 8 people would be in place within 12 months.

Discussions took place on the frustrations of the trade with regard to plying for hire etc and the Enforcement Team being under staffed. MD

advised that the Enforcement Team had never had a full team of eight officers and it was agreed that the recruitment should be completed as soon as possible so the effects of a full team of eight could be assessed before any decision was made regarding further enforcement officers.

8.0

MU asked if there was anything that the JTC could do as a body to help TPHL. MD advised that the only sure-fire way to prevent/stop plying for hire was to prosecute. JM advised the Trade of the process that prosecutions follow before coming to Court. MD advised that as it took some time for a case to go to Court that could mean that a driver is unable to work, for in some cases, up to 2 years. MD advised that the length of time it took to go to Court was out of TPHL control. JM advised that we have an excellent success rate for prosecutions.

JA advised the meeting that he had suspicions of some operators charging £40/£45 and booking calls when passengers were in the vehicles. MD requested that details be provided so that this can be investigated.

9.0

### **Vehicle Inspections**

MD advised the meeting that counter staff had been instructed to book new vehicle in for 8.00 am tests. There had been a problem that the 8.00 am tests have not been utilised.

MU asked if the new age criteria had made a difference. MD advised that it would not take effect for 2 years.

### **Review of Taxi & Private Hire Licensing budget**

JM advised the meeting that a review of the end of year figures and a comprehensive review of the current budget had taken place. MJ advised that there were 1200 fewer licences than the previous year. Based on current expenditure and estimated income based on the current fee and the number of licence holders there was a shortfall. JM advised that taking this into account that an increase in fees was required. A document was circulated around the meeting showing the proposed increase in fees. JM advised that this represented a 2% increase in licence fees across the board. MJ advised that the last fee increase had been in 2005. JM said that the proposal also included that fees would increase by the rate of inflation every year in future.

JTC

JM advised that this proposal would also be put to the Private Hire Forum on 27 April 2010. JM advised that this would not need to go to Panel as this was a delegated decision made by Stuart Turnock as the service's Chief Officer. The process would be that a notice would be put in the paper with 21 days for objections/recommendations to be received. Stuart Turnock would review these and then make a final decision.

JM/MJ

JM asked the Trade to consider the proposals further and come back with any questions.

Discussion took place on the ISA check and MJ advised the meeting

10.0

that the costs associated with this had not been set and legal advice was being sought on whether the ISA check was needed at all. JM advised that Authorities had differing view and that NALEO had advised Leeds City Council to seek their own legal advice.

JA raised the point that Proprietors were expected to pay higher fees when the economic climate is poor and when fuel prices are at £1.20 per litre. Discussions took place on a fare increase and meter recalibrating.

JM advised that he was happy to consider a tariff increase if the trade wanted one and this could be calculated using the agreed formula. MU advised that he would like to see a fare increase on an annual basis in line with inflation.

The Trade agreeded to discuss the need for a tarrif increase and come back to JM if the Trade wanted to request one.

### **Any Other Business**

Temporary Taxi Rank – JM advised the meeting that he was also Head of Service for Elections and involved in the organisation of the election count that was due to take place at John Chares Centre on the night of 6<sup>th</sup> May. There would be a considerable amount of people attending the event and he asked if the trade would be able to supply a number of vehicles to the centre to populate a temporary taxi rank which was being established in front of the main entrance to the stadium and the Aquatics Centre. JM advised that some people would be leaving between 11 – midnight after the local govbernement verification and a greater number of people between 3 – 5am after the conclusion of the General Election count. The local government count would then take place at 10am on Friday 7<sup>th</sup> May and the temporary taxi rank would remain in place to help take people away after the conclusion of the count sometime between 11.30am and 12.30pm.

MU asked what size rank was needed; JM advised that he thought that there would be room for 20 vehicles. The trade welcomed the opportunity to be involved in the arrangements for the election and said they would ensure the temporary rank at John Charles centre was populated with hackney carriages.

Fiat Doblo and condition 9 – discussions took place on the new shape Fiat Doblo and securing luggage in accordance with Condition 9. MD advised that it was up to conversion companies who may be able to convert vehicle to meet our conditions. The conditions cannot be changed but a variation to the conditions could be applied for.

Fresher's week – MD advised the meeting about TPHL's involvement in Fresher's week last year. He hoped to do the same again this year but have a stand in the foyer as we have a serious message to get across.

LeedsCard scheme – JM advised that we had been approached by UniteLeeds about the scheme. MU advised that the Trade were aware of the scheme and were in favour of it.

Training Police Probationers – MD advised that the Enforcement Team had been involved in some training.

Thomas Danby College – MJ advised that having an A-Z test is having an effect on the numbers of people passing the Thomas Danby Literacy test.

NVQ Qualification funding – KA raised his concern about the reduction of funding for NVQ places. JM advised that the funding had never been guaranteed to last, as detailed in the Report that went to Panel. JM advised that TPHL was aware that there were very few fully funded places left and that this was being monitored. JM advised that when we were aware of any free or partially funded places were we circulating the details in our newsletter. JM advised that Kate Coldwell is reviewing the situation and that TPHL were preparing to take this back to Panel.