

MINUTES OF HACKNEY CARRIAGE FORUM HELD ON TUESDAY 2 FEBRUARY 2010

ITEM		ACTION
1.0	<p>In attendance: - <u>Leeds City Council</u> John Mulcahy – Head of Licensing & Registration Martino DePlacido – Operations Manager Martyn Johnson – Licensing Manager Mark Heap – Principal Enforcement Officer Alison Calvert – Temporary Senior Management Support Officer</p> <p><u>Hackney Carriage Associations:</u> Michael Utting – Telecabs/Streamline - LTOA Khaliq Ahmed – City Cabs - LAPTA Zulfiquar Din – Eurocabs - LITDA Quadir Hussain – Eurocabs – LITDA G. Khan – City Cabs</p> <p><u>Welcome & Introductions</u></p> <p><u>Minutes of Last Meeting</u></p> <p>Changes to the attendees were required. They were then agreed as a true and accurate record of events.</p> <p>Arrow booking office at the Airport. It was reported to the meeting that there is still a sign at the airport near the barriers that says “Taxis” this way. MD agreed for the Enforcement Team to visit the booking office to check on the signage. Discussion also took place on the Portacabin used at the airport. MD advised that this land was private land owned by LBIA and that an application for the portacabin would have had to be approved by the planning department.</p> <p>MD advised that resources were very thin on the ground but the Trade associations felt that the Enforcement Team needed to spend more time up at the airport. MD agreed to visit the airport.</p> <p>Amber Cars in NHS areas – MD advised that The Section has been assured that they have been removed. Any signage that is being used incorrectly needs to be reported to The Section and that the Section would look into it. MD advised that investigations are ongoing into</p>	<p></p> <p>MD</p> <p>MD</p>

Amber's use of inappropriate signage.

Boar Lane – Station Marshals

This had proved successful but only up until the marshal finished work which was around 11pm. The cost of the marshal was being met by members of the taxi associations and this was proving costly. The associations ask if the Section could help part fund a marshal. MD recognised that there was a more permanent solution needed – he has had discussions with highways about a technological solutions which would be signs rather like car parking signs which tell you when car parks have free spaces, these signs would indicate when there were spaces available so that cars could move round the feeder ranks into New Station Street. MD advised that some of the funding may come from the Safer Leeds Partnership. The cost was discussed and the taxi association representatives were keen to help fund the technological solutions rather than marshals as it was a cheaper option. This technology was still being investigated and the length of time it took to be up and running depended on how long it took to develop the technology and the funding available. Further meeting could be arranged to discuss this once further investigations had taken place.

Music Festival

The Taxi Associations advised that they would like to get involved in the organisation of this event. JM advised the meeting that plans for a licence are beginning now. JM is to raise this matter with Entertainment Licensing and provide contact details for the appropriate event organisers.

The trade raised the subject of “events” generally especially key events e.g. football events. JM advised that he would look into who the trade should speak to with regard to Elland Road events.

Post meeting note

The contact details for Leeds Festival is Harmony Blake
hblake@festivalrepublic.com.

The contact details for Elland Road is :

The Football Liaison Officer, Insp Melvin Stubbs Tel: 2855485.

Late renewals

MJ advised that there was no such thing as a late renewal. He advised that there were exceptions to this policy, drivers would need to write into him and if there was a genuine reason why they could not renew their badge on time then this should be put in writing. Each case would be viewed on its own merits. He advised that it was not a forgone conclusion that drivers would get their licence back and that if a late renewal was granted then there may be conditions attached to that licence i.e. new CRB, signed declaration attending and passing a

seminar. MJ also advised the meeting that to renew their Hackney carriage licences it was not necessary for drivers to bring their vehicles with them.

Network Rail

The Trade had received information that Network Rail has threatened to close access to the station for the Trade. It is alleged that this discussion took place between Helen Dawson from Network Rail & Cllr Feldman. JM agreed to talk to Helen Dawson to find out what was discussed.

JM

Leeds Central Cars

MD advised the meeting that 12 months planning permission & an Operators licence had been given to Central Cars. This was about to run out and another planning application to go in. The current planning application was for 1 vehicle outside the door and the rest of the vehicles to park within the boundary. Any concerns regarding parking etc should be raised with the planning department.

Other matters.

Operators were not allowed to tout for business outside premises. This is happening by A Metro outside 'Gatecrasher'. JM advised the Trade that the Enforcement Team would look into this.

MD

Agenda items

2.0 Consultation Processes

JM reminded the meeting of the consultation process. The section was currently consulting on the Unmet Demand Survey.

3.0 Unmet Demand Survey

JM advised that the section was in the middle of consulting of this and that the result of this were on the Sections web-site www.leeds.gov.uk/taxiconsultation, details of it are included in our newsletter which is to be distributed to drivers shortly. The deadline for consultation is 12 February 2010. The results of the consultation exercise would go to the Licensing & Regulatory Panel in March. Halcrow who undertook the survey would be attending that meeting. JM advised the meeting that if they had any comments regarding the survey they should make them so that they can be included in the Report that goes to The Licensing & Regulatory Panel.

JM also advised the meeting that conducting the survey was a statutory requirement and that Halcrow was invited to do the survey after a procurement/tender exercise had taken place. Each tender was valued and consider on its merits.

It was Best Practice that this survey be carried out every 3 years, however it is up to the Licensing & regulatory Panel to decide when the next survey should be carried out. Any representations regarding this

should be made and would be included in the Report that goes to Panel.

4.00 Building developments

JM gave thanks to the Trade for the difficulties and disruption caused through the building work. The extension had now given the Section a larger public area and a specific reception counter to point people to the right queue/area. The Trade asked for longer opening hours as Leeds was a 24/7 city with drivers who services that city. Discussions took place and the Trade agreed that longer opening hours and at least a 1 night late opening to around 8pm. JM advised the Trade that the opening hours were to be discussed, MJ also advised that he is reconsidering a drop off/pick up point, and this was used during the building work and worked well.

MJ

It was also noted that the counter staff had been under tremendous noise and pollution pressure inside and had extended opening hours to deal with issues and it had been a really hard time for the staff but it was now back on line and hopefully the building work would be completed in the next 7 or 8 weeks.

5.0 Staffing issues

JM gave the Trade an update on Des Broster's suspension and advised that the Section was awaiting the results of a decision on conclusion of the investigation and that the decision was being taken by an officer outside of Legal, Licensing and Registration which is normal Council practice. As soon as a decision is known then JM said that the Trade would be informed as soon as reasonable practicable.

Concern was expressed by the trade that DPB's absence was affecting the running of the business and that workloads had increased. JM assured everybody that there had been no adverse affect on services but agreed that workloads had increased and the current situation could not be sustained for the medium to long term.

Recruitment – MD advised that there are 4 Enforcement officers' posts which are vacant. JM advised the Trade of the process that needs to be gone through before any external recruitment can take place.

Discussions took place on the effect that more staff may have on the licence fee. In response to a related question, JM advised the meeting that any revenues derived from the Section were 'ring fenced' to the Section and could not be used by the Council for other unrelated services.

Once the Enforcement Team were up to their full complement then the working patterns could be looked into and this may alleviate the Trades concerns over plying for hire that took place through the day and when the Enforcement Teams were not working

6.0 Licensing Update

The issue of a 2 or 3 year licence was reliant on a new computer

system. JM updated the meeting on this system and advised that issues still need to be resolved with the supplier and that any changes that were made to the system meant that testing all areas needed to be done to see how the change impacted on the processes. This had obviously taken resources away from the Section. JM advised that the Council was working with the supplier to resolve the outstanding issues but was unable to accept the system until these were resolved. It was hoped that a resolution to the issues could be achieved by end of March. If these were not resolved then the Council would be unable to accept the system. Payment under the contract would be made when the system was accepted by the Council.

Independent safeguarding Authority/CRB's

MJ & JM gave the Trade a brief rundown on this new process. It follows from Government legislation and is to protect vulnerable adults and children. MJ advised that from November 2010 all new applicants were to have this ISA check, this would be done alongside the CRB check and meant that all drivers would have a unique ISA reference number. MJ advised that there was a cost implication to doing this but that this would need to be assessed. The timescale given for existing drivers to complete this check was 5 years. The issue had been referred for legal advice before any final decision is taken regarding drivers need to register with ISA.

7.00 VRQ/NVQ Qualifications for Drivers

JM advised that this qualification is still mandatory for drivers. The funding/free places were drying up. Some providers still had free or partly funded places available. Details of these places would be in the next newsletter which was being issued shortly. The Trade advised that the VRQ was at too high a level for many drivers. JM advised the Trade that the Panel had decided that it should be mandatory for all drivers and that any change to this would have to go via the Panel. In response to a related question, JM advised the Trade to put any concerns that they have regarding this in writing, so that he could consider going back to Panel with them.

8.00 Operations Update

MD gave the Trade an update on plying for hire operations. MD advised the Trade that with the better use of technology that they hoped that The Section could successfully prosecute drivers who were plying for hire without video evidence. The Section would need to get legal advice on this and to take a case through the Courts.

The plying for hire operations targets hot spots rather than target Private Hire Companies.

The Trade suggested the Section undertake a campaign to highlight to the public the difference between Hackney Carriage and Private Hire. MD advised that we had attended the fresher's week at the University to get this message across. We were also looking to put this message across on the display screens at the bus station. A leaflet and mousemats and coasters were distributed so that the Trade can see

the latest safety message.

Discussions took place on limiting the number of drivers to Operators based on planning permission. MD advised that this would be very difficult to monitor due to the shift patterns of drivers etc.

JM gave the Trade an update on the LACORs review of existing hackney carriage and private hire legislation and advised that it was still in the very early stages.

9.00 Vehicle Inspections Update

MD gave an update on the inspections and advised the meeting that the age criteria had not impacted upon the failure rate and the categories.

He advised the meeting that following a transfer of ownership every vehicle is inspected.

MD advised that going forward there will be a clamp down on people displaying their livery incorrectly or in the wrong place on the vehicle.

10.0 Age Criteria

MD advised that the revised conditions still need to be printed up to go into packs.

MD

11.00 Any other business

JM & MD showed the Trade the proposed plans for the Leeds Arena. JM advised that the site was still at the proposal stage and had not yet been finalised. JM advised the Trade where the dedicated access road and rank would be for the Arena. The Trade asked about the number of spaces and whether it would be a 24hr rank. MD agreed to clarify this matter and report back at the next meeting.

MD

Mike Utting also asked for a clarification of Group II medicals. MJ advised that The Section preferred that their own GP's do this, but understood that some GP's would not do a Group II medical. MJ advised that the Section would not be able to refuse a Group II medical form if not completed by the driver's own GP.

The Trade advised that they had had a meeting with Keith Darch at Highways and reported that they were hoping to get a rank at the airport on White House Lane. This was outside the airport grounds but would be beneficial and gave them spaces for 26 cars. This would cost around £75,000 and would need to go through planning.

MD advised that complaints regarding specific safety concerns needs corroborated information before The Section can take action

The Trade advised that the Joint Trace Council (JTC) at the moment just covered central Leeds; they planned to cover the greater Leeds district including the airport and wanted to know if the Section had any objections to this. JM advised not.

