

**MINUTES OF PRIVATE HIRE FORUM
HELD ON 29 JANUARY 2010 AT ST GEORGE HOUSE**

ITEM		ACTION
	<p><u>In Attendance</u></p> <p><u>Leeds City Council:</u></p> <p>John Mulcahy – Head of Licensing & Registration Martino Deplacido – Operations Manager Martyn Johnson – Licensing Manager Kate Coldwell – Service Development Officer Alison Calvert – Temporary Senior Management Support Officer (Secretary)</p> <p><u>Private Hire Operators</u></p> <p>A Pennock – Amber Cars David Richmond – Arrow A Waheed – Gee Gee Cars Jason Kotchie – SJK Jason Pearce – Easy Travel Nadeem – Highways Naeem Azam – Highways John Askham – Sandla Transport</p>	
1.0	<p><u>Welcome and Introductions</u></p> <p>John Mulcahy introduced himself and asked everyone to introduce themselves. JM also asked that in future if everybody could confirm their attendance for these meetings it would be appreciated as then we can ensure a sufficiently sized venue is booked.</p>	All Operators
2.0	<p><u>Minutes of the last meeting</u></p> <p>The minutes of the last meeting were agreed as a true and accurate record of events.</p>	
3.0	<p><u>AGENDA ITEMS</u></p> <p><u>Consultation/representation</u></p>	

JM advised that in the past the Section had always relied on Operators to get their message across to drivers and would like to consider what the section could do so that drivers could be represented. I.e. should they have a separate forum or a joint forum with the Operators? Discussions took place and the Operators were against this they felt that it would be a 'free for all'. Drivers have completely different issues as compared to Operators and it was felt a separate forum was needed.

JM advised the forums that terms of reference are need for all the forums and that he was taking this forward with LCC Legal Team to see if this could be drawn up.

JM

JM advised the meeting of the consultation process that has to be undertaken when any changes take place.

KC advised the meeting that any consultation was usually a 12 week process and included:

- e-mails to Operators
- Writing to licence holders
- Details of any consultation are on our web-page and included in our newsletter
- Open days

4.0

Unmet Demand Survey

JM advised the meeting that carrying out an unmet demand survey was a statutory requirement. Most of the Operators had seen the report. The report suggests that there is no need to increase the number of licensed Hackney Carriages. JM advised that this report was being put to the Licensing & Regulatory Panel in March for them to make the final decision on the number of Hackney Carriages. JM asked the meeting for any comments. The Operators present were in agreement with the report. A question was asked whether the number of licensed Hackney Carriages could be reduced and JM advised that this could be done but believed it would have to be through natural wastage.

JM advised that there was a link on the Section's web page to the unmet demand survey – www.leeds.gov.uk/taxiconsultation

5.0

Building update

JM advised the meeting that in the last week there had been a few changes within the Section. The Enforcement Team were now in the main building and the receptionist counter was being staffed. JM advised that having the receptionist in place should help with the queues and would point people to the correct waiting area, rather than having everyone in the one queue for the counters. The Receptionist would also be able to inform the Licensing Manager if there was a particular demand for any service so counters could be prioritised (eg if there was a high number of drivers attending for renewals, some counters could be dedicated to renewals only so people get seen quicker).

KC agreed to put an item in the newsletter to advise drivers that coming early in the month to renew did not mean that drivers lost any days/weeks.

KC

6.0 **Staffing**

JM advised the meeting that the allegation surrounding Des Broster was still being investigated and that hopefully a decision would be made shortly.

7.0 **Licensing Update**

Discussions took place on web-based forms (or eforms). JM advised the meeting that this was currently being taken forward as a corporate project and that the technology would be made available to T&PH along with other services. JM said the service was keen to move to eforms where they could be used.

MJ advised that counter staff were regularly turning people away as they did not have the correct documentation or had incomplete forms. This did not help the queues and it would help if Operators could check that the forms were completed and not just 'stamp' them.

It was also suggested that a message be put on the renewal form that the form was completed and checked prior to visiting the Section. Operators could assist their drivers with this.

JM advised the meeting that the closing time had been changed from 3.30pm to 3.00pm during the building works. JM thanked everyone for their patience through the building works. Discussions took place and Operators felt that they would like longer opening times and/or a late night opening one day per week. JM advised that changes to the opening times would be discussed with MJ.

JM

MJ advised that he is considering a 'drop off and pick up' service to help alleviate the queues as this was introduced during the building works and worked well. But it relied on people having the correct documentation and to use this service it would have to be 'chip and pin' or cheque only.

MJ

JM also updated the meeting on the latest position on the new licensing computer system. He advised that the Section was working with the suppliers to resolve the outstanding issues but were unable to sign off on this system until they were resolved. He advised that it was important to make sure that the system worked properly before it was installed.

Once signed off there would be an implementation phase which could take 6-8 months.

MJ and JM advised the meeting about the new Independent Safeguarding Authority (ISA) register. They advised that from

November 2010 that all new drivers will be required to register with ISA. This will be done alongside the CRB check. They also advised that existing licence holders will need to have an ISA registration completed with 5 years. This had been referred for legal advice before any final decision on the need for drivers to register with ISA is taken.

Operators asked about the costs and MJ advised the meeting that this was being looked into as was the impact on the staffing levels for this additional work.

8.0 VRQ/NVQ Qualifications for drivers - Update

KC advised the meeting that obtaining this qualification was still mandatory despite the rumours that have been circulating. That is new drivers have to complete this qualification with 12 months and existing drivers by end of December 2011.

KC advised the meeting that there were still some funding available and that details of the providers with these places would be included in the next newsletter. KC further advised the meeting that drivers could take this qualification with any provider.

JM reminded everybody that LCC had advised that the funding was never going to last forever when the report was approved and that we had advised drivers to obtain this qualification whilst the funding was available. Unfortunately it was expected that the funding would last longer than it did.

JM also advised the meeting that details about the qualifications and modules were available from the Section's web-site www.leeds.gov.uk/taxis and available on request.

9.0 Operations - Update

MD gave an update on the Enforcement Teams. He advised the meeting that plying for hire was still a big issue that was being prioritised. He advised that complaints and Police notifications were taking up a lot of Officers' time.

Discussion about Operators who flout certain rules took place and JM advised the meeting that if they were aware of any Operator who flouted the law they must report it to the relevant agency for investigation,.

MD advised the meeting that all the Operators had not been visited and that it was hoped that these checks would take place annually from now on. MD advised that any Operators who did not comply with the conditions were revisited.

10.0 Vehicle Inspections - update

MD also advised that the Section was dealing with 20 – 30 inspections following a transfer of ownership each week. This

inspection was being conducted after the transfer but was of help to the new owner of the vehicle.

MD gave a brief update on the work still being undertaken by the Section and gave a breakdown of fail/pass figures of the vehicles inspected.

11.0 Age Criteria Condition saloon vehicles

MD gave an update on this and advised the meeting that this had not yet impacted on the figures.

12.0 Any Other Business

Operators asked if it was possible for them to be notified when a driver changes Operators as they do not always know. Discussions took place and JM advised that we would look to include this when the new licensing system was in place.