

**MINUTES OF PRIVATE HIRE FORUM
HELD ON 27 JANUARY 2011 AT 225 YORK ROAD, LEEDS LS9 7RY**

ITEM		ACTION
	<p><u>In Attendance</u></p> <p><u>Leeds City Council:</u> Des Broster – Section Head Martino Deplacido – Operations Manager Joanna Mingham – Service Development Officer Mark Heap – Principal Enforcement Officer Lynn Flanagan – Licensing Officer Alison Calvert – Temporary Management Support Officer (Secretary)</p> <p><u>Private Hire Operators</u> John Nyarko Jason Kotchie – SJK Shelley Johnson – SJK H Bennett – Stanningley Cars A Pennock – Amber Cars D Richmond – Arrow Private Hire J Howard – Wheels M Hanif – Ace Cars JA Waheed - Gee Gee Cars Helen Huscroft – Yeadon Private Hire Gemma Huscroft – Yeadon Private Hire Tanvir Younis – 1st Apollo Marvyn Hurst – Easy Travel</p>	
1.0	<p><u>Welcome and Introductions</u></p> <p>Des Broster introduced himself and welcomed everyone to the meeting.</p> <p>DPB advised that Lynn Flanagan had been asked to attend the meeting as the requirement for driver to obtain letters was causing a problem for the licensing office, as some drivers were unable to provide letters from Operators whom they were leaving. Lynn advised that Licensing Officers were calling Operators to check, this was taking time. Often Operators were unwilling to provide letters as they were owed money. DPB advised that the Section were not</p>	

“debt collectors” and couldn’t get involved.

DPB advised that he would look into the circumstances where we transfer without a letter and advise future meetings.

DPB

2.0 Minutes of the last meeting

The minutes of the last meeting were agreed as a true and accurate record of events.

3.0 Action points from the last meeting (not covered elsewhere in the meeting)

Late night opening – this have proved very expensive for the Section as staff were paid overtime to work late. DPB advised that Howard Stobbs had been tasked with producing a report on the trial. DPB advised that the Section may consider opening on an evening for new applications only.

HS

DPB advised that 482 appointments had been missed last year. Many people make an appointment and then do not turn up. DPB advised that the time lost on missed appointments equated to nearly 12 weeks on an Officers time.

DPB advised that the Section was considering taking a non-refundable deposit from applicants when they made an appointment. This would be taken off the full fee when they attended their appointment. DPB advised that the section would consider timescales for cancelling and changing appointments.

Discussion took place on changing Proprietor details on vehicle licences (when vehicle rented out from on Company to another) – not all staff were accepting letters from other Companies and DPB advised that he would ask Howard Stobbs to clarify this.

HS

Q & A sessions - DPB advised that the Hackney Carriage Associations had advised that they were happy just to meet with Councillor Armitage at Forums so that questions could be put to her rather than holding Q & A sessions.

DPB advised that there were problems when Q & A sessions where held before – it was difficult to control and objectivity was often lost. DPB advised that this was a health and safety issue. Discussion took place on other ways that questions could be answered for example paper questionnaire, web-forums/chat rooms.

Late renewals - DPB advised the meeting that there was no such things as a late renewal. Once a licence had expired then drivers would have to go throught the new application process again. That was unless a driver could demonstrate, with evidence, a good reason for a licence to be renewed. DPB advised the meeting that this did not mean backdating the licence and that each case was looked at on its own merits.

Response from Nicole Jackson - DPB asked if this had been received, Mr Pennock advised that no response had been received but that it should not be pursued as Mr Broster was now back at work.

Wheelchair Accesible Vehicles - Discussion took place on the new Peugeot Premier. Operators were pleased that this vehicle had been approved but were unhappy about the screen between the driver and passengers. DPB agreed to take this to the disability groups.

DPB

Post meeting Update – This issue has been raised with the Access Committee and the vehicle manufacturer so that they could make arrangements to consider an alternative solution to the screen and storage issue.

4.0 **Staffing issues**

DPB advised that he thought that the Section's staffing would not be affected by Leeds City Council's plans to reduce staff numbers in order to save money.

Enforcement Officers – DPB advised that he hope to finalise the Enforcement Officer shift pattern within the next 2- 3 weeks. These Officers when recruited would be working more nights through the week and working much later. The shift pattern would also try to reflect the seasonal changes in demand. DPB advised that there was no recruitment freeze on employing Enforcement officers.

Service Development Officer – DPB advised that Kate Coldwell would shortly be going on materninty leave and that a temporary position would be advertised to cover this post.

5.0 **Licensing Update**

DPB advised that MD was to look at a new licensing system which was already in use by other licensing sections. DPB explained it was problematical getting a system which would do everything we wanted it to do. DPB advised he had look at the system being used elsewhere in the Council and further investigation into this systems was needed before the Section made a decision to go ahead with this system.

6.0 **Operations**

DPB advised that MD was unable to attend the meeting but was available to answer quations if needed. DPB advised that the Section had taken part in some multi agency road side checks.

DPB advised that Section were continuing to prosecute drivers for unlawfully plying for hire/no insurance. He also advised the meeting that more and more drivers were being prosecuted for Construction & Use offences i.e. tyres. DPB advised that in some cases costs and fine were amounting to nearly £1000.

7.0

Vehicle Inspections

DPB gave the meeting an update on the numbers attending and those failing to attend etc. He advised that overall standards were improving.

8.0

NVQ/VRQ Qualifications Policy Review Consultation - update

DPB advised the meeting that the Section was carrying out a market testing exercise. This was accessible from the procurement page of Leeds City Councils web-site. DPB advised that he had been asked to do this by the Licencing Committee he did not know the result of the exercise at this time.

Discussion took place on the NVQ/VRQ and DPB advised that the original report which went to Panel in 2008 with alternative recommendations about who should attain this qualification. The Panel that decided that all drivers needed to attain these qualifications having heard all of the information.

Some Operators advised that they had arranged for all their drivers to undertake the qualification. DPB advised that Operators had a choice on whether to take on a driver who had not attained this qualification and that an NVQ/VRQ meant a better quality of driver – more professional.

DPB also gave an update on the schedule of other policies which the Section was consulting on.

DPB advise the Trade to look at the policies which we were consulting on (KC had sent them an e-mail to advise them of the policies and the deadline) and asked them to put any comments/suggestions they might have in writing to us.

9.0

Trade Q & A Session in Civic Hall

This item was covered earlier.

DPB

10.0

Any Other Business

Suspension of vehicles – Operators advised that they were made aware when a vehicle was suspended for not attending a vehicle inspection but were not advised when the suspension was lifted. Operators would like to be advised of this vis e-mail. DPB agreed to look in to this.

Post meeting update – Staff would deal with this issue by e-mail with a simple abbreviated message.

Cocoon in the Park – Discussions took place on the problems encountered last year and the two Operators concerned advised that they would like to work with the Section in order that problems did not occur at this years event. Discussions also took place on Hackney Carriage vehicle who were ranking up and who did not have permission to have a temporary rank. Operators advised that

they wanted the Section to make sure that Hackney Carriage vehicle had the necessary permission to set up a rank at the event this year.