

Trade Liaison Meeting
25th September 2017,10.00am
Large Conference Room, Manor House

Present:

Mumtaz Mohammed (MM) - BCC, Chair
Chris Neville (CN) – BCC, Head of Licensing
Shawn Woodcock (SW) – BCC, Licensing
Clive Thompson (CT) – BCC, Transportation
Amjid Afzal (AA) – A K Executive Cars
Stephen Hull (SH) – PH Drivers Forum
Mohammed Rashid (MR) - Birmingham and Solihull Taxi Alliance & Elite Training
Manawar Hussain (MH) – TOA Taxis
Imran Akram (IA) – TOA Taxis
Muzafar Ali (MA) – RMT
Mohammed Farooq (MF) – RMT
Mohammed Halim (MHa) - RMT
Tanvir Hussain (TH) – Broad Street Cars
Kieran Harte (KH) – Uber
Martin Walker (MW) – Star Cars
Jackie Markham (JM) – Star Cars
Emma Markham (EM) – Star Cars
Rory McLaren (RM) – Elite Radio Cars
Vusumuzi Moyo (VM) – RMT
Rebecca Wilson (RW) – BCC, Notes

Apologies:

David Humpherson, Chris Arundel

CN opened the meeting by saying an extra hour has been allowed for the discussion of items. The agenda items have been broken down into time slots so that the meeting can finish at 1pm. MM will take a view at the end of the meeting as to continue with this format for future meetings.

2. Transportation

Taxis causing obstruction in Smallbrook Queensway (CT)

CT reported he has received complaints from bus companies about taxis blocking the U-turn in Smallbrook Queensway. This has resulted in buses getting stuck and causing congestion in the City Centre. He therefore requested an appeal is passed onto drivers to keep U-turn clear. It was pointed out that members of the public have

also been seen blocking the U-turn. CT will pass this information onto the Police.

ACTION: CT

It was highlighted that there are issues with the temporary traffic lights at Holloway Circus (taking right from Suffolk Street). As there is no appropriate signage, people are not realising and going through the red light; there have been a few near misses. CT will take this back to relevant team.

ACTION: CT

IA stated that the taxi rank in Colmore Row (near Council House) is often closed off without any notice. Also, the traffic lights at One Stop, Perry Barr (going onto Aldridge Road) will only let out 4 vehicles at a time on Sunday afternoons, causing congestion. CT will look into these issues.

ACTION: CT

AA said that he reported a major traffic light issue to Amey, and it had taken 4 days to rectify. CT confirmed that the correct number for Amey is 303 6644. However he will check to see if there is an alternative emergency number.

ACTION: CT

MHa felt that the signage for Holloway Circus (temporary traffic lights) needs to be located further back on Bristol Street. CT replied he has received comments about this and will look into it.

ACTION: CT

It was also reported that the signage (no right turn) in Navigation Street is on the wrong side of road. CT to look at.

ACTION: CT

MR referred to Bridge Street (opposite Hyatt) taxi ranks which he understands are to be reduced from 5 to 3 and moved further down the road. CT will look at.

ACTION: CT

AA queried could a camera be placed at the traffic lights at Bordesley Circus where people are turning right when they shouldn't be? CT will speak to Gavin Maciel to see whether any funding is available for this.

ACTION: CT

As there were no further queries, CT left the meeting at this point (10.15am).

3. **Specific Issues**

Terms of Reference

Following a complaint about the way meetings are managed, CN circulated draft Terms of Reference for members to comment on. He wishes to ensure people attending the meetings are aware of them and that we comply with them. CN then talked attendees through the documents.

Purpose of Meetings

CN acknowledged that it needs to make reference to “communication with Transportation”.

ACTION: CN

Trade Representatives

A conversation ensued around whether the meetings should be open to Operator Reps and consultants, as well as trade reps. It was agreed that all parties offered valuable input; therefore meetings should continue as a mixture of all. It was felt that the word “elected” (first paragraph) should be removed and replaced with more appropriate wording. Otherwise private hire operators could not fit into this category and would be prevented from attending. Attendees could be described as “representative of” or “representative from”.

ACTION: CN

It was also discussed whether the meeting should continue as a joint PH and HC meeting, or whether there should be separate meetings for each trade. The general consensus was that this is a good forum for discussing issues relevant to both trades. Therefore it should remain a joint meeting. However it was recognised that PH drivers are generally under-represented compared to the HC trade.

It was noted that some reps represent both trades. MR suggested that if there was anything specific for a particular trade, a separate meeting could be had with that trade.

Attendance by Individual Drivers

In view of previous discussion, this paragraph is no longer relevant and will be removed.

ACTION: CN

Meeting and Agenda

CN to change the frequency of meetings to bi-monthly.

ACTION: CN

CN emphasised that he would encourage the submission of agenda items from members.

Members requested that the minutes be circulated earlier so that members have chance to look at them prior to the meeting.

ACTION: CN/RW

Behaviour at Meetings

CN will add in some wording to clarify the role of the Chairman.

ACTION: CN

A query was raised about what would happen if a member goes against the rules. It was clarified that the Chairman can take appropriate action, and in some circumstances, ask the person to leave the meeting.

A suggestion was made to give the Chairman more power – ie to ensure action points are circulated. MM suggested action tracker could be completed, showing actions and when due / completed by.

CN to amend Terms of Reference to reflect the comments made, and recirculate them prior to the next meeting.

ACTION: CN

Database of Reps (MR)

MR stated that the database of Reps should be revisited. Those that are not appropriate or are no longer working should be removed. He added that reps who do not attend 3 consecutive meetings (without giving a valid reason or nominating a representative) should be removed from the database. CN to add this to Terms of Reference.

ACTION: CN

A conversation ensued around whether the notes of the meeting could be made available on the Licensing website, once ratified. This would encourage more interaction and dialogue with drivers. It was agreed the minutes would be circulated and Reps given 2 weeks to comment and the minutes then placed on the website.

ACTION: CN/RW

Vehicle Emissions Policy (CN)

Following feedback from the special trade meeting with reps to discuss the draft emissions policy of 6th September, the revised policy will be presented to LPPC at 10am on 23th October. A large room has been booked so that drivers may attend.

The deadline to meet the required standards has been moved to the end of December 2019 (previously December 2018). This is the longest possible time that can be allowed before a fine would be incurred. It is not certain that a Clean Air Zone (CAZ) would definitely be imposed. However a licensing emissions policy would be part of a range of measures to improve air quality by January 2020, irrespective of whether a CAZ is in place.

CN attended a meeting last week with other Licensing Authorities and briefed them on the policy. They are very interested to hear about the impact on their own drivers. Some are also considering policies.

CN is hopeful that DEFRA will soon announce details of products that can be fitted to engines to achieve the required EU emissions standards. He referred to the LPG Project, which paid for 63 HC to be converted. The vehicles are being independently assessed and now meet the minimum standard equivalent to a Euro 4 petrol engine. He is hopeful that DEFRA will provide more funding for LPG conversions. A query was raised could not this funding be used for retro-fit products? CN replied that if any more funding does become available, we will apply for it. However DEFRA will determine what specifically the funding is for.

Another query was raised about how the number plates of taxis licensed outside of Birmingham will be obtained. CN anticipates the Local Authorities will give us this information. The Department of Transport are also working on a national database of taxi drivers, so we might also be able to get the information through this.

CN confirmed he is also speaking to Transport for London (TFL) for guidance as to what they do in terms of vehicle engine sizes. He hopes there is something we can add to the policy that would free up the restraint on engine sizes.

SH reported that his vehicle has a London licence, and he can continue using it until 2022. Therefore this proposal pre-dates London. He added licensed vehicles will move to another local authority whilst we are awaiting the setup of the number plate recognition system. CN replied that we are doing what the Supreme Court has requested. He is not fully sighted on what is happening in London.

CN was asked would drivers be allowed to convert diesel engines into petrol. CN replied yes, as long as done properly and safely.

A suggestion was made that drivers need to be made aware of the CAZ standards - perhaps by way of a notice on the website. CN stated that all drivers were written to as part of consultation, and hoped trade reps would advise drivers of this. He will write to all drivers at first opportunity if the Policy is approved.

ACTION: CN

Safety Campaign (CN)

CN has been contacted by What's On magazine, offering a deal to promote a safety campaign around the use of taxis on the run to Christmas. This would include full page advert in the magazine's October – December issues and a social media campaign. We have run similar campaigns in the past, but the trade felt this was not a good use of money and that past campaigns have been pro-taxi. CN would therefore like reps' feedback as to whether to proceed with this.

The general consensus was that this would not be a good use of money. A cheaper solution would be to produce leaflets that could be placed in taxis and taken away by passengers. A social media campaign could also be done through the Licensing webpage.

In relation to taxi safety issues, it was raised how difficult it is to email video footage taken of drivers acting illegally / irresponsibly to BCC officers because of the firewall. It was suggested this is taken up with relevant IT Team.

ACTION: CN

VM asked that safety campaigns should include warnings about drivers who take more passengers than is permitted by their vehicle licence.

Dual Licences (MR)

MR brought up the issue of having dual licences for HC as he holds PH licence too. CN confirmed he has asked Chris Arundel to produce a report for this to go to LPPC. He will chase up progress on this.

ACTION: CN

Newsletters (MR)

MR stated that he is aware that regular newsletters to drivers are not being sent out. He feels that the Trade needs to know about issues such as the emissions standards, and therefore a newsletter should go out every 6 months.

CN agreed with MR's comments and will look into this.

ACTION: CN

A comment was made that we should also consider highlighting key issues on the Licensing Social Media pages.

ACTION: CN

Licence Fees (MR)

MR thanked CN for sending him a more detailed breakdown of the licensing fees. He queried some of the charges that he thought were excessive eg £33 for a replacement paper licence.

CN replied that a trade related publication (Private Hire Monthly) had produced a table to compare licencing fees from across the country. Birmingham is nowhere near the dearest.

A conversation then took place around the charges. CN agreed that for the next meeting, he will invite a colleague to explain to Reps how the fees are calculated.

ACTION: CN

MR queried does the trade have a say on how funds in the Reserve Account (currently £600,000k) are spent? CN replied no, it is the decision of LPPC, but the bulk will go into calculation of fees. MR stated this should be used towards more enforcement.

4. Enforcement Statistics (CN)

Statistics for March – June previously circulated with the agenda.

5. Minutes and Matters Arising from Meeting held on 28th June 2017

Clean Air Zone (page 1 last paragraph) – CN confirmed that the mailing company had sent out the mailshot to drivers.

Edgbaston Cricket Ground (page 5, 3rd paragraph) – CN has not been invited to a meeting since, but will raise issue of a Plan B for Test Matches as the next meeting.

ACTION: CN

Access for Wheelchair Users (page 6, 3rd paragraph) - CN confirmed a report was sent to LPPC. Government guidance on the minimum size that a wheelchair accessible vehicle (WAV) must be capable of carrying has been placed on the website. CN to circulate this with the minutes

Issues on Brunel Street (page 7, 1st paragraph) – It was reported that the pay and display spaces are to be temporarily moved.

Fare increase (page 9, 2nd paragraph) CN stated that a report will not be submitted to LPPC until wider consultation has been carried out.

Meter testing (page 9, 5th paragraph) – a list of drivers who have overpaid has now been obtained. Affected drivers will be reimbursed.

6. Any other business.

A conversation ensued about the issue of Uber having its licence removed in London due to being “not fit and proper”. CN pointed out that the licence holder in London is a different legal entity to that in Birmingham; therefore the issues would not affect us.

MW referred to statement put out by the Council that said they are “entirely satisfied”. CN replied that he had agreed some words for a press release, but not these words. (MW later realised this was an oversight on his part, and sent an email of apology to CN). MW criticised the Council for printing a statement before it had received the full reasons for the TFL decision.

Metro: It was highlighted that taxi ranks have been removed in Corporation Street, but not replaced. SW said there was a separate meeting regarding Metro works, and this point was raised by the Trade and taken back to Transportation. CT to give an update at the next meeting.

ACTION: CT

The issue of out of town vehicles / deregulation was raised. CN reported that he had met other Licensing Authorities last week. CN had drafted a letter to Chris Grayling, the Transport Minister, calling for changes to be made to deregulation and cross border to try and ease some of the problems created for drivers and enforcing officers. This was agreed at the meeting. A Memorandum of Understanding was also agreed that officers can come into Birmingham to take enforcement action against drivers they have licensed. Representatives of Walsall and Wolverhampton were not present, and so this will be emailed out to them, and hopefully, signed up to.

CN to resend the total cost of taxi meter testing per vehicle to MH and MR.

ACTION: CN

Reference was made to an email from SW regarding the above, which had contained an inappropriate comment. SW stated he had attempted to recall the email and apologised for this.

CN stated that taxi meter testing is really an issue for Cygnus and not Licensing.

It was highlighted that last week was Fresher's Week. Police were out in numbers, but there were no Enforcement Officers. This could have been the perfect opportunity to make students aware of the Trade / safe use of taxis. CN replied that Teresa Wilding is liaising with the Universities to see what the best way is of promoting this.

PH access to bus lanes – reps have not heard back from this. CN replied that concerns raised by reps were formulated into a response by consultants. This was then fed back to the Cabinet Member for Transportation, who he believes is soon to make a decision. A briefing note can be circulated in the meantime. CN look to invite consultants to next meeting.

ACTION: CN

A query was raised about the consultation around signage. SW reported that CA is working on this. There will be something put out online and the reps will all be notified of this within a couple of weeks.

It was reported that there has been confrontation between PH and HC drivers outside Digbeth Coach Station. SW replied we receive regular complaints from both PH and HC Trade – we will investigate it.

ACTION: SW

A comment was made that when fees came up earlier this year, they were to be reviewed when the accounts were available – which is about now. CN stated that Emma Rohomon has not yet started the fee calculation – will speak to her re this.

ACTION: CN

7. Date and Time of Next Meeting

29th November 2017, 10.30am, Large Conference Room, Manor House