

Notes of the Trade Liaison Meeting
29th November 2017,10.00am
Large Conference Room, Manor House

Present:

Mumtaz Mohammed (MM) - BCC, Chair
Chris Neville (CN) – BCC, Head of Licensing
David Harris (DH) – BCC, Transportation
David Clayfield (DC) – BCC, Transportation
Amy Walker (AW) – Midland Metro Alliance
Amjid Afzal (AA) – A K Executive Cars
Lee Denny (LD) – E-Passenger
Tanveer Salim (TS) – P H Drivers Forum
Abdul Arshad (AA) – P H Drivers Forum
Imran Mirza (IM) – West Midlands Police
Tanvir Hussain (TH) – Broad Street Cars
Manawar Hussain (MH) – TOA Taxis
Imran Akram (IA) – TOA Taxis
Mohammed Rashid (MR) - Birmingham and Solihull Taxi Alliance & Elite Training
Mazatfar Khan (MK) - Birmingham and Solihull Taxi Alliance & Elite Training
Shiqal Bashir (SB) - Birmingham and Solihull Taxi Alliance & Elite Training
Chris Arundel (CA) – BCC, Licensing
Anne Bettison (AB) – Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council, Head of Licensing
Shawn Woodcock (SW) – BCC, Licensing
David Wilson (DW) – A2Z Licensing / Star Cars
Giles Bridge (GB) – A2Z Licensing / Star Cars
Martin Walker (MW) – Star Cars (later)
Dave Humpherson (DH) – West Midlands Police
Mozafar Ali (MA) – RMT
M Farooq (MF) – RMT
Kieran Harte (KH) - Uber
Rebecca Wilson(RW) – Notes

Apologies:

Clive Thompson
Rory McLaren

2. Transportation

PH in Bus Lanes (DH)

CN explained that DH had asked to attend the meeting at short notice after receiving permission to provide the meeting with the latest position on whether PHVs should be allowed to use bus lanes.

DH talked members through a report he had prepared on the advantages and disadvantages of allowing PH into bus lanes. The report is currently with the Cabinet Member for Transport and Roads who will make the final decision.

Some of the key points referred to were:

- Previous trials held in 2007 in Walsall Road and Hagley Road showed no major impact. However, the decision was made to uphold the current policy based on feedback from other stakeholders.
- The decision to allow PH to use bus lanes is down to each Local Authority (LA). Cities with a smaller numbers of PHVs are more likely to allow PH in bus lanes, whereas core cities are more likely to prevent it.
- Cost associated with additional enforcement, changes to signage, traffic regulations etc.
- Potential impact on road safety.
- Contravention costs.
- HC are easily identifiable. PH are currently harder to identify due to inconsistency in vehicle signage.
- Transport for West Midlands is currently reviewing bus lanes. They are looking at a standardised approach against key route network. This may influence the decision made.

DH added that consultation has been carried out with the trade and key stakeholders. He has received feedback from trade representatives representing both PH and HC, but nothing solely from HC trade.

MM asked members if they had any comments / questions.

IA commented that he had never received any information on the consultation. DH agreed to send this.

ACTION: DH

AA made the point that more surveys should be carried out on routes at various times of the day.

AA added that the PH signage is still under review. This gives us an opportunity to make signage really stand out and thus make PH identifiable.

MW asked DH to confirm that HC licensed by another LA lawfully can use the bus lanes. DH replied yes. MW then asked was DH able to disclose how many cancellation fees BCC has issued relating to this? DH replied licensing and traffic rules are not linked together; however he will seek this information.

ACTION: DH

MW commented that PH trade wish to emphasise that PH vehicles are not easily recognisable. He added that it is unfair that Birmingham licensed PH cannot use bus lanes when others can.

MW asked could PH be added to the white list? DH replied there would be administration fee to keeping it up to date (at the moment this does not happen). There are also other costs to consider eg infrastructure.

MW stated one of the evidential reasons was whether there was or wasn't impact on bus times. BCC's previous trials had shown no impact on this. DH replied that for Birmingham, we don't have the data to prove this. It is assumed it will have an impact.

MW felt that allowing PH into bus lanes would ease congestion around the City, particularly around the ring road.

MR suggested another meeting is held with the PH trade to obtain more feedback.

DH will feed back the reps' comments to the Cabinet Member and arrange a separate meeting with trade.

ACTION: DH

Taxis doing illegal U-turns in Bristol Street (DC)

Taxis have been observed doing U-turns despite signals showing it is prohibited. This has been reported to the Police.

Taxis illegally turning right into New St Station

Taxis have been completing illegal right turns into New Street Station from Smallbrook Queensway. This too has been reported to the police. CN has requested police enforcement in this area.

Issues with taxis in Digbeth (DC)

DH referred to the cones placed in Moat Lane / junction of Rea Street, where PH and HC drivers have been removing them to make their journey easier at certain times.

Congestion around Smallbrook Queensway

The temporary traffic lights will be taken off on 15th December to ease congestion. They will be reinstated in January 2018. DC anticipates they will remain in place for 3 – 4 weeks.

It was highlighted that the traffic lights only allow 6 seconds for movement of traffic. DC to look into this issue.

Any other Transportation Issues

Colmore Row taxi rank (query raised at previous meeting). DC explained that the rank is closed off from time to time due to the demolition works at NatWest Tower.

Traffic lights at One Stop (query raised at previous meeting). DC confirmed the timings fault has now been rectified.

DH asked why is there a barrier in Moat Lane opposite the Police Station? DC replied this is to ease congestion, and will be part of a permanent scheme early next year in which buses, cycles and taxis only will be allowed.

DC confirmed dates of when Smallbrook Queensway (Theatre Approach / Queens Drive) ranks will be suspended for rail replacement buses:

24.12.17 – 2.1.18 inclusive – no trains between New Street Station and Wolverhampton.

24.12.17 – buses will replace trains between New Street Station, Walsall and Rugeley whilst a new signalling system is being put in.

Reps raised concerns about the lack of stopping places for taxis when these ranks are suspended. They suggested an alternative solution needs to be considered.

DC reported that there will be a temporary road closure at Paradise Circus (south bound) for 2 -3 weekends in January for the erection of a crane and demolition of a building. The road will be open as normal for those travelling in the opposite direction.

Reps also highlighted the congestion around paradise circus and the impact on fares for customers. They suggested more consultation is needed before decisions on traffic works are made.

Midland Metro (AW)

From 8th January, the top of Bridge Street will be closed to accommodate metro works. Inbound traffic will not be able to turn right, and instead will need to turn into Granville Street. From there, access to Holloway Head can be gained via Gas Street

DC pointed out that the taxi ranks in Berkeley Street will remain in place. MA stated drivers are being told to move on. DC will look into this.

ACTION: DC

A discussion ensued as to whether information, such as on transportation issues, could be circulated in advance rather than being presented at the meeting. The general consensus was that Reps would like to receive information beforehand, but would still like Transportation to attend the meetings.

IA asked at what forum such decisions are made so that Reps can attend the meetings and be consulted. It was stated that anyone can log onto the Big City Plan portal <https://bigcityplan.birmingham.gov.uk/> and give their comments / objections on upcoming projects.

3. Specific Issues

Terms of Reference for Trade Meetings

CN circulated amended document with tracked changes. He talked Reps through the changes, asking for comments. If no comments were received, he would assume Reps are in agreement.

MR stated the word “Elected” (members) had been taken out which means anyone can attend the meetings. His suggestion was that “elected members” needed to stay. CN stated that at the previous meeting he felt the consensus was to remove

the word “Elected”. However, if Reps wish to reinstate the word he will do so. CN added that if operators are excluded, a significant chunk of the meeting will be lost.

MR suggested that paragraph 4 of the old ToR should remain (PH operator may attend by invitation of group).

DW stated paragraph 2 refers to representing other drivers, it should also relate to operators etc.

CN will include the amendments in the final draft and circulate.

Vehicle Emissions Policy

CN informed Reps that the recommendations contained in the report were approved at LPPC on 23rd October. Fundamentally, by 31st Dec 2019 all HC and PH will need to meet the emissions standards set by CAZ (Euro 4 petrol and Euro 6 diesel). After this date vehicles not meeting standards will not be licensed. CN is hopeful that a retro-fit product will be approved by Department of Transport, and that funding may be made available for this.

CN acknowledged that there is still a lot to do, including looking at an age policy for vehicles. For this, he will arrange a separate consultation meeting with trade reps before formulating a document for wider consultation.

ACTION: CN

TH asked does this include vehicles retrofitted with LPG by their owners, which are older cars but with better emissions. CN replied that we need to work out how to deal with this. Following tests, LPG vehicles came out with a minimum of Euro 4. We need to work out how we determine how it meets standards – this may be by measuring on an individual basis. However we also need to consider the age of the vehicle.

LD queried are we any nearer to licensing cars under 1600cc? CN replied that the report recognised the need to allow electric and smaller engine vehicles to be licensed. A small group of members and officers have been asked to write a policy. The group will then make recommendations to LPPC to enable smaller engine vehicles to be licensed.

LD asked can a driver suspend his licence with the council? CA replied that this is something being looked at.

DW was certain the decision of LPPC was that they would require euro standards or retro-fit systems that meet the standards. CN will check the minutes of the meeting.

ACTION: CN

MR asked if there was any news on the retro fits? CN replied that this is up to DEFRA. The Department for Transport have suggested a unit will be created this year called CVRAs and it will give guidance to local authorities on whether products achieve the necessary air quality improvements.

MH stated that he had asked for 3 items to be added to this agenda which are not on. He had also requested Cllr Dring attend the meeting. CN replied she was going to come, and was then asked to chair a Licensing Sub-committee meeting. The Vice Chair was also invited, but again, was requested to attend a Sub-committee meeting.

MH also said TOA had not been informed that they would not be allowed to give their opinion at LPPC (only questions were permitted). They had not been informed that an email would be acceptable to represent trade's view (referring to one presented at meeting). He felt this was an abuse of Chair's power for not allowing to trade to have their say. He then read out a statement reflecting this.

CN replied that the item was discussed for 2 hours and 30 minutes at LPPC. There were a lot of drivers and trade reps who spoke at the meeting. The written submission was equivalent to everyone else making their points known.

MA asked has the system for buses been looked at? CN replied he had asked about this – however it is a different system and not suitable for taxis.

MH read from a list of prepared questions above the emissions policy. MM asked if they were relevant to be an agenda item. CN confirmed that they were. MM made the point that they were matters that had been covered already in the consultation.

MH declared that he and IA would no longer be attending the trade meetings. They then left the meeting (12.03pm).

Licence Fees:

ER gave an overview and circulated a written note describing how the fees are calculated.

MR stated that what the Reps want is a breakdown of individual licensing costs and how they are calculated. ER replied that she is working on the fees and charges for

next year and will bring a breakdown to a future meeting. MR stated he would like a separate meeting to go through this.

ACTION: CN

LD made reference to the carried forward balance, suggesting this should be given back to drivers and thus no increase in fees incurred. MM stated that the accounts would be audited externally. The auditors would be very thorough in ensuring everything is above board.

Penalty Points Scheme

SW had previously sent out a briefing note on the proposal which aims to introduce penalty points for non-compliant taxis. A report has not yet gone to LPPC – however the LPPC Chair is aware we are considering it. SW added the proposal will also go out for consultation.

TH stated this is putting a nail in the coffin for the trade and sending drivers to Wolverhampton. Officers are not protecting the public by sitting at their desks; they need to be out deterring such drivers from the road.

MR agreed that the standards need to be raised, but that more enforcement was required. He felt some of the points incurred were harsh ie two occasions of someone not displaying licence = 12 points.

DW said that the penalty point scheme is separate to enforcement, although a tool. He was not against in principle, but we need to look at the details before the report goes to LPPC.

LD agreed that some of the vehicles are not good. However the proprietor should not be penalised for something out of their control ie someone smoking in the vehicle.

MR pointed out that the trade are missing that this is part of their licensing conditions (shared conditions).

AB commented that the 7 LAs in the West Midlands Combined Authority are working together on various issues, this being one of them. It would mean that if SW is involved in stop checks, he will know what the conditions are as they will be the same across the entire country.

MW stated the enforcement issue is down to money, but it is ring-fenced. He acknowledged that the compliance rate of 30% is terrible – if the scheme improves the rate and everyone is happy, he is all for it. He suggested that trade need to

consider how we can improve the 30% rate ie by working with enforcement and better educating the public.

Review of Hackney Carriage Vehicle Conditions

SW confirmed the first draft of the report is going to LPPC on 13th December. The report will be available on CMIS (the Council's Committee Management Information System) at the beginning of next week. SW highlighted that the biggest change is the requirements for meter testing; it has been proposed that BCC no longer arrange meter tests.

Review of PH vehicle signage

CA reported that consultation is available online until the end of December via following link:

https://www.birminghambeheard.org.uk/place/phv_signage_and_advertising/ .

4. **Enforcement Statistics (CN)**

Statistics for July – August previously circulated with the agenda.

5. **Minutes and Matters Arising from Meeting held on 25th September 2017**

It was reported that some amendments / corrections to the minutes had been sent via email to CN. CN to double check these against minutes for clarity.

ACTION: CN

Due to time constraints, matters arising to be discussed at the next meeting.

MM suggested that for future meetings, the minutes and actions arising be discussed at the beginning of the meeting.

ACTION: CN

CA wished to gain feedback from the reps on the TOA proposal for HC carrying credit card machines.

MR felt it should be optional for drivers; he was not in favour having it compulsory.

MF said he felt it would be more beneficial to the trade.

6. Any other business.

With regard to dual licences, CA stated we are looking at something to assist drivers and will need to persuade LPPC in principle to agree this. MR queried when will the report be ready? CA replied it is likely to be early next year.

MF reported that PH using Uber stickers have been observed illegally picking up outside clubs. KH asked if passengers were using the app to which MF replied no. KH will take this back to Uber.

IM stated he would like to attend the next meeting to talk about engagement with PH and HC in the event of a major incident. It was agreed this be added to the agenda.

ACTION: CN

SW to look into issue raised by LD whereby app users are not using meter (Gettaxi and TOA).

ACTION: SW

7. Date and Time of Next Meeting

TBC, Large Conference Room, Manor House