

INFORMAL MEETING PRIVATE HIRE AND HACKNEY CARRIAGE MINUTES

Thursday 16th February 2023

Bolton Town Hall

Present:

Cllr Hilary Fairclough (HF) Deputy Leader
Patricia Clyne (PC) Licensing Manager
Lisa Timmins (LT) Senior Licensing Officer
Joe Fox (JF) Principal Engineer Highways
Andrew Bolan (AB) Head of Regulatory Services
Garry Parker (GP) Assistant Director Environment and Regulatory Services
Mahmood Akhtar (MA) BPHA
Charles Oakes (CO) BBHA
Eddie Shah (ES) BTDA
Accompanied by Majid Riaz (MR)

Apologies:

Yasif Khan (YK) BPHA
Benjamin Brookfield (BB) GMP

Didn't attend:

Cllr Hamid Khurram (HK) Chairman of the Licensing & Environmental Regulation Committee

1.	Apologies:
	Above.
2.	Minutes/actions from last meeting (ALL):
	<p>Action – PC to look into having face to face (F2F) meetings in future (requested by HK). Update - Completed.</p> <p>Action – PC to email the PH (private hire) trade to remind them not to park on ranks. Update – PC different direction:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Engagement with marshals and their weekly report now identifies registration numbers for offending PHV's (vehicles).• Enforcement 4 night-time sessions completed in November, which included engagement with licence holders parking on double yellow lines, ranks, etc.• Follow up action for those identified to be completed including those identified as not Bolton licensed.• Taxi marshals on Bradshawgate (Nelson Square) rank hopefully will be operational from 17th March.• Letter still to be sent to all PHV's once the next night-time sessions has been completed.• PC looking to set up plying for hire operation.

	<p>CO – Would Wolverhampton come and do some enforcement. Follow up action – PC suggested that CO contact them directly to request.</p> <p>MA – Suggested contacting PHO’s (operators) to ask them to share with PHV’s, not to park on ranks. Follow up action - PC will pick up following the next night-time sessions.</p> <p>Action – PC to email HC (hackney carriage) trade asking them to share information/photos relating to PHD (driver) parking on ranks. Update - Completed verbally, further actions outlined above, none received.</p> <p>Follow up action - Rollover to next meeting.</p> <p>Action – PC to do further engagement with Civil Enforcement Team/Officers (CEO). Update – CEO’s completed evening shifts in November, issued tickets to public & PHV’s, but challenging activity and needs police support. Being addressed in the meeting with the highways team.</p> <p>Follow up action - JF to transfer to that agenda.</p> <p>Action – HF to arrange a meeting for Trade Representatives (TR) to meet the leader. Update - Meeting held 7th November 2022.</p> <p>Action – TR to advise drivers to wear seatbelts when alone in the vehicle. Update – TR confirmed message had been shared.</p> <p>Action - PC to enter ‘changes in application process’ on the next agenda. Update – Completed.</p>
3.	Taxi/PHV charging points:
	<p>JF & PC – updated on the new charging points for PH/HCV, which are currently being installed by Transport for Greater Manchester (TfGM), at 3 locations: 1. Back Willows Lane, 2. Eagle St, 3. Egerton St.</p> <p>Action – PC to visit sites, once operational share the information across the trade, explaining how to register and use.</p>
4.	Changes in application process:
	Action - Item deferred due to KH not attending the meeting.
5	BPHA Agenda items:
	<p>1. Uber.</p> <p>MA – Uber still insisting drivers go to the hub. Action – MA to send the individual details to LT to raise with Uber.</p> <p>2. Bus Lanes.</p> <p>MA - Some areas allow PH in bus lanes.</p>

PC – Discussed this item at the highways meeting and confirmed it was a Greater Manchester Combined Authorities (GMCA) decision.
JF & PC - confirmed they'd taken an action from the highways meeting, to identify who MA needed to engage with at the GMCA, so the item could be revisited. Being addressed in the meeting with the highways team.

Action - JF to transfer to that agenda.

3. Fees.

MA - Last year we said we'd look into fees and reduce them.

PC – Ongoing piece of work. Last year, and the year before, are not typical years due to Covid, and the level of online support provided to the trade. If we calculate the fees now, they may show we need to increase. Due to the level of support and engagement with the trade. Fee setting work is ongoing annually. At the end of March we will look at the structure and the current fee levels. I never said they would reduce. F2F business has now moved to the back office, and the high level of support and interaction hasn't reduced. We need to run end of year figures, look at what this tells us, but will of course keep you in the loop.

CO - All the changes taking place to reduce fees, is that what we are striving to do?

PC – Last 2yrs has been difficult for both the trade and us. We had to move from F2F quickly, finding a quick fix to enable the trade to continue to work throughout Covid. It's not fully functioning. We're still waiting for the corporate solution and the move to client accounts. May reduce fees but there are no guarantees. As a cost recovery service, and during Covid, 90% of the officers time was spent dealing with PH/HC, this was possible due to other service provisions closing and not operating. We don't have a fully functioning system yet, and the current system still relies heavily on support from officers.

CO - We will continue to ask questions, and people not going out, etc. affecting trade and every penny saved is important.

PC – Fees are calculated against officer time and those percentages levied against overheads. We're fortunate that many years ago we split the income and expenditure across the service provisions, unlike other Councils, but we will keep you in the loop on how this is looking.

CO - I understand the requests from TR but we also incur costs so it's important.

4. MLS (vehicle age) (Minimum Licensing Standards).

HF - TR met with the leader (outlined in the actions above). Leader has also met with an all-party group in relation to the Stage 2 (S2) MLS, and agreed MLS will progress with amendments in areas of concern, related to age and livery:

- No on to fleet age but off at 10.
- Bonnet sticker not being progressed but other stickers will remain.
- The lead in time will be extended to 2028, which is a longer lead in time to complete the transition, longer than some of the other GM Councils.
- We believe the financial help includes funding for retro fit.

Still needs to go through Council for approval, but has been shared with GM and accepted, we feel it's a good deal, but needs to be done quickly in readiness for when funding becomes available. Final funding amounts are currently unknown, but the previous figures have been shared.

GP – Think its £20 million in the CTF for GM, and the PHV age is 10yrs and HC/PHV 15yrs for wheelchair accessible, can only access the funding if S2 MLS implemented.

HF – Report is going to full Cabinet on 6th March for decision.

MA – We want the other stickers gone.

HF – We don't feel that's reasonable, we still have PHO stickers on display, and the vehicles need to be easily recognisable. We don't deny that there have been issues around ASB, but in proportion these are low in comparison to the number of journeys, and not just taxis are targeted, buses, ambulances, and vans. We've looked at stickers and gone as far as we can.

MA - Technology has changed.

HF - We believe safety is a major factor and not everyone has the new technology.

PC – Police 'taxi watch' operation set up in Bolton, engaged really well with the trade, and significantly improved ASB by deploying officers to hot spots. Worked really well, if the problems starts to increase, engage with the Police again under the 'taxi watch' operation.

CO – When is the report going?

HF – Cabinet on 6th March.

CO - We've not touched on vehicles and the type. DFT (Department for Transport) made comments that licensing move from age limits.

PC – No age on to fleet is an improvement for HCV's, the current policy is 10yrs.

CO – DFT prefer Councils have emissions.

PC – DFT consultation on 'Vehicle Standards' concluded last year, and they received 600 responses, however they are still looking at the responses and are not ready to publish any comments or guidance, it was just consultation so no information or direction has been shared yet, which they recently confirmed with me.

CO - What vehicles will be allowed?

PC – HCV purpose-built vehicles. We've had dodgy conversions in the past and public safety is priority, but new vehicles can be considered.

CO – I want to have a cheaper version. Rear loaders are popular vehicles. You're going to be asking drivers to spend money. Can the trade offer cover even with a grant.

HF - No changes to HCV except its proposed older vehicles will be able to come on to fleet up to 15yrs.

RM – Price difference in vehicles for a 22 plate is £45k, Mercedes have a diesel to electric which is £80k, plus emission charges if buying an older vehicle, it's a dilemma, what to invest in.

CO - What about Doblo?

PC - If purpose-built vehicle then possibly, but its difficult due to it loading from the highways, and safety is paramount.

CO - You have already licensed a Fiat Doblo.

PC – No it was never licensed, but not appropriate to go into now.

HF - Current policy, but we believe public safety is a good reason, but nothing to say in the future it won't change, but not relevant to MLS.

CO - You keep putting the trade off.

HF – It's a priority to now progress, and we've been working hard, it's very new, but as soon as we get sorted we will share. (HF left the meeting due to a prior commitment).

CO - I would respectfully request a report before Council for the Doblo.

PC – Not appropriate to discuss a specific case today, and we've already discussed this case, the licence was revoked, due to not being correctly constructed.

CO – Gripe of this Council is rear loading, ambulances, Council vehicles and PHV's are.

PC - As previously advised, please put the request in writing, so it can be considered.

CO - I will want it before members.

PC – Put the request in writing and we will consider.

CO - Will we get a copy of report?

	<p>PC - You've already had a copy of the report, last year, it's the 'Stage 2 Minimum Licensing Standards' GM report, and HF has advised which parts are going to be amended.</p> <p>GP - GMCA completed the report. Cabinet will propose and accept with the following amendments to XY&Z. We will deviate from the original report put to the Chamber.</p> <p>CO - So accepting all MLS?</p> <p>PC – Yes, for S2, with suggested amendments outlined today by HF.</p>
6	BBHA Agenda Items:
	<p>1. Why since our last meeting with the Leader of the council we have had no updates on MLS?</p> <p>PC - Updated in actions and item 5.4.</p> <p>2. Why has there been no meeting with Highways over translation and Taxi Rank?</p> <p>PC – Updated in actions, meeting took place on 1st February 2023 and will reoccur every 3mths.</p> <p>3. We would like the removal of the age limit on Hackneys in Bolton. and that to be put before the committee.</p> <p>PC – Update in item 5.4.</p> <p>4. We would like a report going to Committee over Dule Badges asap. as this has matter taken so long to resolve.</p> <p>PC – We're still implementing Stage 1 (S1) MLS, and had to prioritise the actions, for example the new conditions and DBS update service, plus updates to the digital provision have taken priority. We're progressing dual badges for HCD's, as it formed part of the S1, but it will take some time due to other pressures. We will look at the fees and where appropriate refund.</p> <p>CO - Concerned will reduce HC.</p> <p>PC – Some HCD's already hold both, but it's a complex issue and I will try to resolve as quickly as I can.</p> <p>5. How many testing stations are allowed under the current policy of the council and what date was that policy put in place?</p> <p>PC – Currently 3 authorised testing stations, contract allows 6. The retender was carried out in Autumn 2021, awarded in 2022. The contract is for 2yrs, with an option to roll it over for a further 2yrs, if we're happy with provider.</p> <p>6. What savings have been achieved by the licensing unit up to Wednesday 11the January 2023?</p> <p>PC – Updated in item 5.3.</p> <p>7. What has the council done over mandatory CCTV for the protection of members of the public inc. children and the Taxi Trade this has now been going on now for years.</p>

PC - MLS commitment to create a GM policy. Progressing S2 has been very difficult and delayed progression. We need to develop a consistent GM policy and delays to S2 have prevented this.

CO - Is Council looking to bring CCTV in?

PC - CCTV would always be a bonus, if its mandatory, supporting both drivers and customers, and assisting the Council with investigations. But there's big cost implications, and drivers have not been earning during Covid. CCTV kit costs approximately £4-500, then there's the maintenance cost and data protection implications.

CO - It's safety of drivers and public, its getting bad out there, this is an all-win situation. I don't want drivers or livelihoods at risk, there's been a spate of driver murders by passengers, and a lot of drivers won't work at night.

PC - It's on the agenda for districts to develop as a group.

MA - Who has access to CCTV when car being used for personal use?

PC - Following problems in some areas in relation to audio and the ICO, most systems now have an emergency button, which can be pressed and then automatically activates the CCTV, this can be used by both passenger and driver. Activated when needed.

Action - PC speak to GM district to see if a timeline for development of policy can be agreed.

8. What is the council going to do about weekend enforcement?

PC - Covered in the actions but weekend enforcement completed over 4 dates in November. Covering a wide variety of tasks; ranks, moving vehicles on, premises visits. Further dates are being arrange, in addition I'll be looking to arrange unlawful plying for hire operations, but I don't have the resources for every weekend, it's a small team and we still have to do the day job. Police have been completing 'operation overspill', every weekend in the town centre, and we're getting good intelligence as a result of that.

CO - Have you asked marshal's to take information?

PC - As you know we started work with the marshals last year, following your feedback, things have greatly improved. We receive weekend reports, which outline footfall, incidents, details of PHV's on ranks, together with their role which is supporting members of the public to get home safely. CEO's have been out issuing tickets, but we can't do every weekend, we've order new flags and looking to man the other Bradshawgate (Nelson Square) rank.

RM - Train station?

PC - Being manned by CEO's.

RM - We need bigger signs and CCTV, plus plying for hire.

PC - We have had feedback regarding livery, etc. but send us the details; pictures, dates, times, locations.

CO - What is happening with this information, is it repeat offenders?

PC - Our PHD will receive a warning letter.

MA - Send to PHO's as well to put on data.

RM - Causing issues on Trinity Street.

PC - As being addressed in the meeting with the highways team we'll pick it up there.

Action - JF to transfer to that agenda.

9. Extension to Hackney Vehicle (1 year) this matter is urgent.

PC - Updated in item 5.4.

CO - Will current policy drop away for implementation?

PC - Yes.

	<p>10. Our members want Council to come out once a month Friday and Saturday.</p> <p>PC – Updated in actions and item 6.8.</p> <p>11. Our members would like bigger signs for Taxi Ranks Bradshawgate Nelson SQ.</p> <p>PC – Request needs to be discussed at the highways meeting.</p> <p>Action - JF to transfer to that agenda.</p> <p>12. Traffic wardens are to stay till 12 am and 4 am.</p> <p>PC – Covered in actions and discussed at the highways meeting. Actions agreed at highways meeting.</p> <p>Action - JF to transfer to that agenda.</p> <p>13. Taxi Marshals for the rank opposite the Food Factory Bradshawgate.</p> <p>PC - Bradshawgate (Nelson Square) rank hoping it will be operational for St Patrick’s Day. Currently working with the marshals to implement.</p> <p>Action – LT update TR when operational.</p>
7.	<p>AOB:</p> <p>MA - Concerned that applications are being rejected, corrected and rejected again, why not keep the application?</p> <p>PC - No, this is not an option. We shared the business rules in September, due to significant difficulties. Applicants not engaging, being abusive, there were so many issues. Applicants need to complete paperwork correctly. For reoccurring errors we’ll work with the team and TR, to see if anything can be improved. But the team share an email with the applicant, explaining exactly what is wrong, and they should be checking.</p>

Next meeting:

- **Trade and Licensing Unit 30th March (Microsoft Teams) agenda items required no later than 23rd March.**
- **Trade and Licensing Unit 27th April (Microsoft Teams) agenda items required no later than 20th April.**
- **Trade and Chair of Licensing & Environmental Regulation Committee 15th June 2023 (face to face). This is subject to change following the election. Agenda items required no later than 8th June 2023.**