

ECM PRIVATE HIRE/HACKNEY CARRIAGE TRADE REPRESENTATIVE MEETING - MINUTES

Wednesday, 31st JULY 2024, 11:00 – 12:30

Bolton Town Hall

Cllr Haworth (SH)	Executive Cabinet Member (Chair)
Andrew Bolan (AB)	Head of Regulatory Services
Patricia Clyne (PC)	Licensing Manager
Mahmood Akhtar (MA)	BPHA
Joe Fox (JF)	Principal Engineer Highways
Benjamin Brookfield (BB)	GMP
Nosipho Khumalo (NK)	Executive Support

Apologies:

Cllr Taylor-Burke (ATB)	Vice Chair LERC
Cllr Chadwick (DC)	Chairman LERC
Garry Parker (GP)	Assistant Director
Lisa Timmins (LT)	Senior Licensing Officer
Yasif Khan (YK)	BPHA
Charles Oakes (CO)	BTDA

1. Apologies
As above.

2. Introductions
As above.

3. Minutes from last meeting - SH

Item 6. feedback from the site visit at Bolton Interchange. Trade needs to be sighted on planned and ongoing works.

ACTION: JF to ensure Trade receive the weekly [Roadworks and Road Closures](#) that tables ongoing and planned works.

MA reported that private hire vehicles (PHVs) are parking on spaces allocated to hackney carriages (HCVS). Referred to recent lane-line redrawing work at the Bolton Interchange, that Trade feels that cycle and walker lanes are being prioritized over HC parking. Trade drivers want to see the same efforts on improving the hackney carriage (HC) parking area. JF suggested bollards to separate the parking areas would improve the issues and referred to the proposal he is working on, that could help resolve issues if approved.

MA said the Yellow Box Junction helps but cars tend to block the entrance. This is not ideal and enrages Trade because it affects traffic flow and means they lose business. Highlighted the dangers of drivers changing lanes at the same time. Suggested cycle lanes are not used much, that a portion of that space could be used for Trade parking. JF said that would not be possible because including cycle lanes in road planning is a requirement for road improvement. SH noted she needs to consider and raise the business of the cycle lanes if they are not being used – noting that all GM 10 areas have commitments to Active Travel which is walking and cycling.

The empty land near the interchange was discussed. All agreed it was not accessible. It would be difficult to enforce HC via camera from this land and road orders would be a challenge.

ACTION: Further discussion at the next meeting.

MA reported illegal parking on some taxi ranks. PC advised images sent to the Compliance Officers who will then send warning letters to the offenders. Cllr will think about how this would work. PC at a meeting with HC Trade next week and will discuss and outlined the dangers of road blockages.

ACTION: MA was advised to email both Bolton and Wigan Council attaching images of illegal parking incidents for both councils to take action.

MA suggested bigger and more visible signage for private car parking so that people can see and avoid illegal parking. JF was adamant the responsibility to avoid illegal parking sits with the driver. SH recognizes the challenges faced by trade and undertook to do her best to get issues resolved.

ACTION:

- **Keep item on the agenda for the next 6 weeks.**
- **SH/JF will check the signage.**

4. DBS update and next actions - **PC**

PC updated that of the 1800 drivers, 1572 have subscribed, 191 yet to apply, and 46 not yet made the annual subscription, so have lapsed. They have been provided with information on how to renew and update the annual subscription and DBS email before they take the payment.

ACTION:

- **For unsubscribed drivers, PC will prioritize getting everyone into the system to get a full picture of the subscriptions to date.**
- **Standing item going forward.**

MA reported that trade drivers are asking if it would not be easier to change their details rather than submit a new application and quoted lack of funds as one of the reasons why drivers are not renewing on time. PC noted the DBS system sends out reminders before payment is due, so expired bank cards can be fixed, so there is no excuse for not paying the annual subscription. The new system is aimed at easing the workload for trade and staff, so they do not have to submit forms repeatedly. Suggested people should make their own reminders to ensure subscription updates are done on time. There were considerations on dealing with non-compliance, compliance is conditioned on the licence. Licensing officers are working to get everyone on board to ensure full compliance by the end of the year. Less workload for everyone if bank cards do not lapse.

ACTION: MA to circulate a message to Trade that they need to be mindful that if DBS subscriptions and bank cards are not renewed/registered on time, this will affect their permission to drive, and this may be for as long as 16 weeks.

5. Disability and Safeguarding update – **PC**

PC updated that a final letter was sent on 12th July to remaining drivers giving the training deadline and penalties for not completing the training. 384 drivers have not completed training to date. Highlighted that the entitlement to free training will be removed at some point and the £36 training fee reinstated. SH added that it will be clear in 6 weeks' time (31st October) which drivers will have to pay the £36 training fee. Urged drivers to complete the training ASAP so it does not affect their licenses. PC is unable to provide MA with a list of untrained drivers due to DPA.

ACTION:

- **Standing agenda item going forward.**
- **MA to notify trade of the potential risk of not completing the free training and relay the importance of reading emails from Licensing Unit. MA concerned about the drivers that are not in his group. PC blanket email to all those not completed gone.**

6. Medical developments – **PC**

Also refers to Item 9. PC met with the D4 provider and discussed cheaper options, important information, suggestions and pitfalls, etc. Will draft a paper whether retaining current GP, or move to new D4 provider, and a new form to be used for annual and 5-year medicals. This may take up to 3-4 months through the governance process and once approved Trade will be notified. SH may bring the report forward to cut down on the waiting period.

ACTION: PC to confirm to Trade when the report will be approved.

7. Hackney working group – **PC**

PC has organized working groups for the HCV owners and drivers to discuss several topics. To gather input and feedback on issues like vehicle types, train station parking, fares and loss of business, policy, etc.

MA mentioned that age limit and vehicle turnover is a big issue at the moment. Affordability, rejection of HCVs at committee but they're ok and approved for PHVs is unfair. PC noted that private hire is challenging to manage due to large numbers and the HC working group should help identify the issues, but agreed the vehicle scenario was difficult.

ACTION:

- **Agenda item for next meeting.**
- **PC will feedback to Trade after the group session.**

8. Taxi Watch – **BB**

BB suggested to the Trade the BAND APP. to help with the problems of ASB. BAND APP. has excellent capabilities for organizing groups. Mostly used by pubs and bars for live updates and has information about neighborhoods. Noted that so far 6-7 companies are connected including, Metro, Haslam Taxi, First Call, PAL cars. BB arranging a meeting.

ACTION:

- **MA/BB to organize a meeting with Trade to go through the app and get everyone onboard and will share the invite with PC to circulate to operators.**
- **PC/BB to check if there are any areas i.e., Horwich, Astley Bridge, that could benefit from the BAND APP.**

Key Issues

MA raised concern about driver attacks suggested removing the yellow door stickers, leaving the ones on windows, to help mitigate the attacks. PHV details are displayed on the stickers which

makes them easily identifiable. Noted that other councils have removed door stickers. PC advised that this needs to be approved via the Council's governance route.

ACTION: PC to ask GM colleagues re door sticker issue, possible review of Bolton livery.

FEES increase

MA reported that drivers are complaining about the increase in fees. PC advised the licensing fee increased at the start of April was due to the increase in cost of living. Also noted the work being carried out on the cost of running the service and recharges. It's an ongoing piece of work looking at income and expenditure, but once completed, final accounts will be reviewed signed off and shared with Trade.

When MA suggested that high fees are likely to push drivers to register with other councils, PC reiterated that comparison to other councils is not beneficial because Councils operate on different T&Cs. SH suggested that the new Secretary of State is looking to improve licensing standards and other issues like out of town taxis for Trade.

9. Trade rep items (TBC)

Medical Developments – refer to item 6.

Discussed the Manchester airport taxi parking leaflet/notification received and shared by PC with Trade on 25th July. The airport is reducing maximum stay to 90 minutes charging £1.50 per visit. YK explained that this refers to the time taxis spend in the holding areas while waiting for other jobs. A short discussion in relation to the facilities available.

ACTION: PC to share the Manchester Airport notification with Trade.

Bus Lanes

MA asked why Bolton doesn't allow PHVs in bus lanes when other councils especially those in big cities do. JF advised it's a GM decision and it would be difficult to enforce on bus lanes due to the cost involved when generating traffic violations and it would impact negatively on bus times. JF said he has raised the issue with GM. SH advised that Bolton is one of the few councils getting the BEE network bus franchise and proposed it would be practical to roll out the BEE network first before tackling the bus lane issues as this may affect the trial of the new network. Bus lanes will be looked into but not within the first 3 years of the BEE network roll out.

MA raised the issue of fines with the new road system. JF advised of plans to make good the problematic areas, i.e. access lane to ASDA and other areas. That if the report that is going through governance is approved, this should help decrease the length of the bus lanes.

10. AOB – All. No issues noted.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING: 28th August 2024, 11:00 – 13:00, Artillery Suite.