

ECM Private hire/Hackney Carriage Trade Representative meeting

Minutes - 20 November 2024 11:00 – 12:30 at Bolton Town Hall

Cllr Haworth (SH)	(Chair) Executive Cabinet Member
Cllr Chadwick (DC)	Chairman LERC
Cllr Sajid Ali (SA)	ECM (Planning Committee)
Andrew Bolan (AB)	Head of Regulatory Services
Patricia Clyne (PC)	Licensing Manager
Lisa Timmins (LT)	Senior Licensing Officer
Benjamin Brookfield (BB)	GMP
Mahmood Akhtar (MA)	BPHA
Yasif Khan (YK)	BPHA
Charles Oakes (CO)	BBHA
Nosipho Khumalo (NK)	Executive Support

Apologies:

Cllr Taylor-Burke (ATB)	Vice Chair LERC
Garry Parker (GP)	Assistant Director
Joe Fox (JF)	Principal Engineer Highways

1. Apologies - LT:

As above.

2. Introductions - All:

Cllr Ali.

3. Minutes from last meeting - SH:

Trade Reps. submitted 18 agenda items. Due to time constraints, SH asked that they submit up to 6 items per agenda. Items not addressed today can be dealt with via email or at the 8th January meeting.

CO added that his intention was to highlight to members are the issues that are dragging on with no solution. SH suggested they could all be addressed under heading 'dissatisfaction'. PC commented that some headings under 5. where those covered in the recent hackney carriage workshop.

Update on actions:

Train station, Highways and ECM Road Items:

Problems at the train station including parking. SH has contacted TfGM and Urban Traffic Control, who handle junction requests. JF sent an update Highways are investigating. SH will check when the junctions are due to be completed.

Taxi spot checks:

Out of town vehicles spot checks – let SH know if any checks done by other licensing authorities. CO mentioned powers for Bolton officers to check out of town vehicles, PC

noted Greater Manchester GM are concerned about how this will be funded with a cost recovery service, Bolton licence holders would not be happy to pay towards checking other councils vehicles, YF & MA agreed with this and trade will not support.

Concerned about the implications of deregulation, discussed and how it affects the public, hackney trade and private hire. In addition to discussion about the ECM, Cabinet and Licensing Authority role on this matter, PC added advice that taxi reps can contact their local MP's to highlight the problem and that the Manchester Mayor had already written to the Minister.

Driver complaint – abuse and threats from gangs:

BB on the radar being addressed. Drug Watch operation in place. Discussed with MA offline ensure more drivers attend the next Taxi Watch meeting on 3rd December at Astley Bridge Police Station at 11:00. Cllr Ali (SA) will attend.

Food and drink consumption by night-time passengers in taxis:

PC Christmas communication being drafted that will include this, will be shared with SH, MA/YK & CO for quote before circulation.

Action: YK will forward details of the recent Minister of Transport statement about deregulation of the taxi industry.

4. Trade Rep. items – BPHA: MA/YK

4.1 Accepting jobs on phone:

Discussed a case where a driver was prosecuted for going through a red light while using/swiping his mobile phone. BB added that the fine is based on traffic light violation that took place. Trade Reps. acknowledges this is a distraction but unhappy with this because jobs are circulated via mobile and they must use their phone to view and accept jobs, usually while they are still on other jobs. BB suggested jobs can be viewed and accepted without contravening the road regulations when it's safe to do so. Suggested looking into voice activated options for accepting jobs. CO said jobs are trades livelihood, safety more important than losing a job.

4.2 Evidence submitted by police in committee meetings:

Unavailability of evidence from police for Trade Reps. when they support drivers in hearings. PC notified that in most cases evidence has already been considered in Court and sentence passed, or not considered by the Court yet, but we still have to consider fit and proper test. The Police also have to observe the Data Protection when divulging information. Licensing provides the information to Committee in the driver cases, but drivers also need to submit their own records/information to Committee and share the reports with the Trade Reps. representing them. LT reports circulated 10/14 days before the Committee, errors or mistakes need to be highlighted with licensing team before the meeting. BB confirmed the Police are not able to provide reports of verbal interviews and sometime no written evidence, Trade Reps. to alert licensing team in advance of errors so they can investigate/rectify prior to the hearing.

Actions:

- YK to forward details to BB to investigate.
- Trade Reps. to highlight errors on reports in advance of Committee if they are representing drivers.

4.3 Door stickers:

Discussions have taken place at Cabinet about doors stickers. SH to find an opportune moment to share with ECM's/Cabinet to consider and decide on any door stickers changes. SH is also learning how other authorities have handled this issue.

5. Trade Rep items – BBHA: CO

5.1 Update on rear loaders hackney & deferred from October meeting to allow CO to attend:

Item not discussed.

5.2 The Council to conduct an unmet demand survey to take on broad the state of the hackney service in Bolton deferred from October meeting to allow CO to attend: See 5.10 below.

5.3 Hackney carriage driver medicals:
PC hoping to land medical review January 2025.

5.4 Hackney carriage vehicle age:
See item 8. emissions report will be public in due course and will explain the age limit issues further. Grants will be available to support clean air initiatives.

5.5 Dual hackney carriage driver's licences:
CO is still concerned about issues being discussed with no solution. PC noted this was one of the issues raised at the recent hackney carriage workshop and she is working to resolve issues highlighted. Duals could decrease availability of hackney carriage vehicles in areas where users need them most. CO is of the opinion that whatever decision Bolton takes, hackney trade business will still be lost. Drivers are uninformed.

Why pay £300 /£500 when Wolverhampton offers a reduce fee. Bolton needs to ensure they meet their legal obligation to ensure adequate supply for hackney carriage vehicles, age limit, listen and address drivers' concerns; otherwise more business will be lost. Acknowledged by SH noting that APP based private hire have affected hackney carriage business, she will get an update on how to progress these issues. PAC commented that was the purpose of the hackney carriage workshop.

5.6 Hackney carriage vehicle type/specification:
Item not discussed.

5.7 Hackney carriage vehicle licence plate availability:
PC advised hackney carriage licence/plate availability, number of returned licence some are open applications, but reduced number of live active vehicles. YK asked licensing to look into the long-term risk of expired plates.

5.8 Rank provision:
Item not discussed. PC will bring to the attention of JF.

5.9 Paper licence, not email:
Item not discussed. PC updated hackney carriage workshop that we would not be moving back to paper licences.

5.10 Unmet demand survey:
CO/trade feel they should continue for the time being. The next one is overdue. PC is concerned there isn't enough hackney carriage working in Bolton. Last survey cost £9k+

which hackney carriage paid for. Don't think it's not appropriate at this point with Bolton losing 33 vehicles and want to avoid additional cost for drivers. PC is working on a document to cover areas of concerns outlined at the workshop and will suggest solutions and way forward for SH to consider.

CO Trade Reps. were not at this meeting. PAC MA attended both sessions. CO requests that demand survey continues so that the public and trade know the state of affairs. Expressed dissatisfaction with the non-resolution of issues. SH advised that Trade Reps. input is vital and valued for addressing issues. Asked for members to be supportive of each other, in particular with licensing teams heavy workload.

- 5.11 Loss of hackney trade:
Item not discussed.
- 5.12 Fares increased day and night - has there been a request if why have we not been sent a copy:
Item not discussed. PC this was mentioned in the hackney carriage workshop no increase request has been submitted to the licensing team.
- 5.13 Ranks marking Bradshawgate
update as to this request:
Item not discussed but PC will bring to the attention of JF.
- 5.14 Private hire parking on train station
on pick up point all time and switching beam lights directly to cab drivers eyes from opposite sides.
Item not discussed.
- 5.15 Picking and dropping off on zebra crossing on train station:
DC outlined continued difficulties in this area for Highways and relevant bodies.
- 5.16 On weekend we are using rank 1 outside Rock pub Bradshawgate
and all Private Hire drivers parking outside Swan, Kahaki, Yates, Bamboogy blocking cabs to approach the ranks blocking all incoming and outgoing traffic. needs weekend enforcement officers:
Item not discussed.
- 5.17 Picking unbooked job's, refusing card payments,
and small jobs we have to wait for a job 1 hour because customer coming from pubs and takeaways, they jump in private hire parking outside pubs:
Item not discussed.
- 5.18 Private hire also parking on rank 4
outside Nelson Square both sides and outside Mojo takeaway and food factory takeaway as well:
Item not discussed.
- 6. Executive Cabinet Member Items - SH**
- 6.1 Last meeting before Christmas and New Year – any issues to cover for this time of year?
Item not discussed.

- 6.2 Taxi trade representatives to be informed about a PDG at the council on the emissions policy. also about Emissions Standards and Medicals
See 8 below.
- 6.3 Removal of the date from the taxi plate:
See 4.3 above.
- 6.4 Disability and safeguarding training – becomes a licence condition:
Outstanding drivers who have not completed appropriate action now being considered.
- 6.5 Taxi watch – operator involvement so far:
Next meeting 3rd December operators invited.

7. **Safeguarding training & DBS Update standing items – LT:**

Item not discussed.

8. **Clean Taxi Fund - SH/PC:**

PC noted the emissions report has been developed for the emissions standard to be adopted by Bolton and all GM Councils. Plans for fleet compliance by 31st December 2025. Awaiting release of £30.5m Clean Taxi Fund for vehicle upgrades. Non-repayable grant to support vehicle upgrades. If emissions policy not approved risk is it will mean no funds are available to Bolton trade or GM trade. Government not approved funding can be released. Decision paper is published on line and the Trade will be fully informed once Committee has come to a decision and will share the report once live.

CO feels this will affect trade, no justification in spending large amounts of money where no clear understanding about plans for electric vehicles. How will this affect private hire and hackney carriage trade, and those who have to change their vehicles. Will they still get funded even if they change vehicles now. EV sites noted that TfGM have funded 3 sites with 2 charging points each in Bolton. Mostly diesel in Bolton impacted and will need to be compliant.

SH added that changing vehicles prior to the grants being announced would affect grant application. Drivers only need to prepare to apply for grants. Emissions Policy is before the committee and may be adopted in December 2024. The grants amount will be based on non-compliant vehicles. Decisions are still being made by central government. Funding amounts will depend on the type of vehicle and number of applications. No policy means exclusion from the funding.

Action: PC share report with Trade Reps.

9. **AOB – All:**

CO - Dissatisfaction to the Council due to lack of progress of the items raised under Item 5. medicals, dual badges being dragged out. SH acknowledge Trade Reps. concerns. That due to savings/cuts and historical decisions, it is a challenge delivering services with available funding and resources. SH fully recognises that taxi licensing is a cost recovery service. PC advised once the background work has been completed, Trade Reps. will be updated on changes, hopefully first rollout in January.

SH recommended a shortened agenda with a timeline on items rather than discuss them at every meeting. PC summed up that most items raised by CO are Highways' and JF Is progressing the train station issues, or the items were covered in the recent workshop.

Licensing will prioritise dual badges. Trade Reps. acknowledges this but are concerned because they also need to feedback to the drivers.
Next meeting will focus on medicals.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING: 8th JANUARY 2024