

ECM PRIVATE HIRE/HACKNEY CARRIAGE TRADE REPRESENTATIVE MEETING

AGENDA - 8th January 2025 (11:00 – 12:30) AT BOLTON TOWN HALL

Cllr Haworth (SH)	(Chair) Executive Cabinet Member
Cllr Sajid Ali (SA)	Councillor
Garry Parker (GP)	Assistant Director
Patricia Clyne (PC)	Licensing Manager
Lisa Timmins (LT)	Senior Licensing Officer
Benjamin Brookfield (BB)	GMP
Mahmood Akhtar (MA)	BPHA
Zulfaqar Shah (ZS)	BHA
Sabir Hussain (SHU)	BHA
Nosipho Khumalo (NK)	Executive Support

Apologies:

Cllr Taylor-Burke (ATB)	Vice Chair LERC
Cllr Chadwick (DC)	Chair LERC
Joe Fox (JF)	Principal Engineer Highways
Andrew Bolan (AB)	Head of Regulatory Services
Yasif Khan (YK)	BPHA
Charles Oakes (CO)	BBHA

1. Apologies - LT:

As above.

2. Introductions - All:

Welcome and introductions to Mr Sabir Hussain (who will be working alongside Mr Shah).

3. Minutes from last meeting - SH:

Matters arising:

Amendments by SH to be done and the published minutes to be updated.

Train station, Highways and ECM Road Items: JF to attend the next meeting to address Highways actions. During the meeting GP confirmed that Assistant Director of Highways agreed that going forward when JF is unable to attend the meeting a delegate will be assigned.

Out of Town Taxis in Bolton that are licenced Elsewhere: SH referenced to the Minister of Transport's Parliament Speech. Explained that GM have acknowledged the

need for the new law and funding to local authorities, and that there are plans to review the deregulation issues in England, including the recent information shared on Devolution. SH will continue sharing updates as they arise.

Trade Reps. to send any Highways issues they want discussed at this meeting to JF and cc PC/LT.

4. Trade rep items – BPHA:

4.1 Door stickers

MA advised trade still want door stickers removed from livery or suggested changing to smaller door stickers to avoid being targeted. Licensed vehicles are being targeted opposed to privately owned vehicles.

Noted a recent incident during Christmas holidays where youths were throwing snowballs / stones at licensed vehicles. Specific areas where it is an issue:

- Winchester Way, Breightmet
- Lever Edge Lane near Essa Academy
- Deane Church Lane near Kirkebrok Road
- Crompton Way, opposite police station
- Elgin Street, Halliwell

MA advised drivers are not allowed to take any action and drive off from these locations and asked who will be responsible for passengers should they get hurt. SH sympathised and explained she had been in a vehicle when it has been targeted. SH explained door stickers have not progressed from recent Cabinet discussions but will draft a briefing note about this.

SH/GP/PC outlined how previous investigations and discussions deemed sticker removal a higher risk to public safety hence the reluctance to completely remove the stickers. Licencing have known cases where door stickers have helped identify and address driver issues affecting vulnerable passengers. Door stickers are a useful and safer option for the council.

BB updated re Taxi Watch GMP led initiative. Meetings have taken place but with low attendance and Taxi Watch App. will hopefully go live in February.

MA questioned as to why larger cities like London & Bristol do not have door stickers, GP advised it's important to do what works for Bolton and not compare to other authorities with different demographics.

SHU proposed larger licence number plates on the dashboard or stickers on the back window of the taxi with a clear incident reporting details/ instructions next to passenger seats. PC advised due to compliance and window size and reminded the meeting that previous livery had included window stickers, which were small and ineffective, and internally there are already notices in relation to both driver and vehicle displayed on the

front windscreen for passengers inside a vehicle, but size limitations and smaller stickers would be an issue related to public safety.

SH reassured Trade Reps that door stickers are being considered and asked Trade Reps to continue to recognise that Licensing Authority has to work to the rules of the safety of the public.

4.2 Taxi Marshals

MA reported that the taxi marshals are not completing the job sufficiently. In particular two of the marshals are acting inappropriately, arguing with the hackney carriage drivers and using foul language. MA expanded by saying they don't help with the queue management, assisting customers into vehicles and take regular breaks disappearing during busy times. Trade was asked to record incidents and forward to Licencing so that issues can be promptly addressed.

Actions:

MA to share with PC/LT recent incident information for investigation.

4.3 Train station

MA advised the issues at the train station are ongoing. MA has recently installed temporary cones which has helped to improve the situation however needs permanent barriers and larger signage.

Actions:

JF to implement barriers (wands) and arrange larger, more visible signage for the rank

PC to write to Wolverhampton, Sefton and Knowsley licencing departments to advise their drivers not to park on the Bolton train station hackney rank.

4.4 Drivers waiting for attending committee hearings

MA raised issue of drivers with minor offences who have ongoing investigations waiting for resolutions.

PC advised allegations are carefully considered before a decision is taken to stop a driver from working and won't be because of a minor offence. A driver is considered a risk to the traveling public and public safety while the charge/offence is investigated by police and the council. SH added that the Licensing Authority does not operate the same approach as the courts of innocent until proven guilty. The Licensing Authority are responsible for public safety and have to investigate and consider fairly for an informed decision to be able to conclude that a person is allowed and safe to drive members of the public.

MA acknowledged that in case of serious matters licences should be revoked but is interested in minor issues (known case) where suspension can be up to 6 months. PC advised that allegation in question is being considered and not a minor issue. MA encouraged to bring forward individual cases to be discussed with Licencing.

4.5 Uber fares

MA discussed complaints raised to him by customers about changes to fares. Surcharge for the same trip can range from £8 to £51 on any given day. Local firms are fined for overcharging.

LT explained that UBER and Bolt (app based operators) operate on different charging models. Customers are aware of fare to be paid prior to booking taking place and are able to use any service provider. Licencing are unable to set the fares used by private hire operators, as these are business decision, although they are informed when firms change prices.

SH suggested MPs would be interested in this topic as business practices are covered by a government department.

Action: MA meeting with his local MP to discuss.

5. Medical update – PAC

PC gave update, progress email circulated to drivers before Christmas. Guidance notes drafted and new declaration form has been completed, need to agree go live date with web team once online form has been amended. A second email to trade containing the links and guidance with go live date to be circulate in approx. 2 weeks' time. Difficult to give exact timeframe due to relying on other departments to implement parts of the process.

MA suggested a couple of GPs. PC confirmed any GP can be used if registered with the General Medical Council and lives and works in the UK. DVLA D4 will be used to ensure always the most current version and a separate medical declaration form.

6. Dual badges update – PAC

PC has drafted communication ready to send out at end January advising on the issue of new licences. Back office process to be signed off and changes implemented. Approx. 80 licences to be re issued and will be completed over an agreed period of time that these will be replaced to include private hire. A follow up email to those affected with instructions and guidance will be circulated once everything is in place.

7. Hackney Carriage Workshop update – PAC

A briefing to SH had been shared on the 6 items discussed at the workshop. Progress made on medicals and dual badges as above. Age comes under the emissions standard/Clean Taxi Fund approved before Christmas, updates to follow in due course.

SHU and MA attended the workshop. MA reported that drivers who attended found the workshop useful. Plans to hold another workshop in the future possibly in April. Dates to be confirmed.

8. Safeguarding training & DBS Update (standing items) - LT

LT gave update. 74 drivers left to complete the Safeguarding and Disability training. Last communication circulated in November sent a clear message about completing the training and renewal, including consequences if not completed. Non-compliant drivers will now be required to pay for the training. Further action will now be considered.

1649 drivers on DBS update service. 25 drivers yet to commence the DBS update process but will all be completed by end of February 2025. 58 no results found on last check. Usually due to not renewing subscription or changing details. 25 not engaging after last check and not resolving subscription issue. Further action will now be considered. The 83 drivers not on the update service will have to be investigated and contact by the licensing team.

SH highlighted the amount of work the licencing officers do to ensure the trade is compliant and asked Trade Reps. to do their part to ensure things get done. Licensing is a cost recovery service and drivers not engaging put additional tasks onto officers and increase costs.

9. Clean Taxi Fund update - SH/PC

Standing item. No update - position not changed and awaiting Government to agree funding before we can proceed.

Discussion took place regarding funding amounts. SH/GP confirmed that Bolton will not be allowed to negotiate or amend amounts. Central government likely to decide what happens to excess funds.

SH confirmed we will continue to make a case according to our position and needs and will do our best to ensure drivers are given updates.

Action - PC to enquire how funds will be allocated between 10 GM authorities and if grant amounts for purpose built hackney carriages could be looked at again.

10. AOB - All

None.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING: 19th February 2024.