

Minutes of the Taxi & Private Hire Forum

Wednesday 8 July 2020 via Zoom

Attending

Carol Stefanczuk – Licensing Manager

Claire Humphreys – Licensing Officer

Barry Hussey

Steve Eckton

Marouane El Mamouni

John Fairey

Imran Khan

Carol welcomed the group and introduced herself to those members that hadn't met her before.

Claire explained to the group that there had been a taxi project meeting with the working party to discuss the consultation results. They had taken into account the current situation with Covid-19 and the financial implications this had had on the trade. Claire stated that the working party agreed that the current situation must be taken into consideration when deciding what proposals would be included in the draft review of the Policy.

Each section of the consultation report was discussed with the Forum members, reviewing the proposals being put forward for decision at the next Licensing & Regulation committee meeting on the 15th September 2020.

Livery

The consultation result was in favour by a slim margin. The response was undecided on the design of livery and the timescale for implementation. Claire informed the group that due to the current covid-19 situation, the livery of Hackney Carriages had been reconsidered and the proposal being put forward would be:

- 1. A standard base coat of white to be proposed for all new hackney carriage vehicles being licensed including any rear loading wheelchair accessible vehicles being licensed for the first time.**
 - 2. All existing and new hackney carriage and private hire vehicles proposed to have permanently fixed licensed plates and door signs which will include the council's coat of arms and the vehicle licence plate number.**
- Barry Hussey asked if the new policy would come into force immediately after the Licensing and Regulation Committee meeting. It was confirmed that the policy would be adopted and come into effect as soon as possible after the committee meeting and the trade would be notified of the effective date.

- Barry Hussey, Marouane Mamouni and Imran Khan all expressed their concerns , and pointed out that if the vehicle plate and door signs were permanently fixed, this would increase the likelihood of drivers living in Southampton or other areas having their vehicles broken into or damaged.
- Marouane requested that the door signs were not made permanent and more enforcement of non-display is undertaken by licensing officers. The group agreed that they thought points should be issued and drivers sent home if they were seen without door signs on their vehicles.
- Steve Eckton said he had heard from a driver in Guildford had also experienced this.
- Marouane told the group that he lived in Winchester and had his vehicle broken in to and damaged. He felt that door signs should not be permanent.
- Claire informed the group that she had asked the licensing manager at Guildford if he had received more reports from Guildford licensed drivers of their vehicles being broken into or damaged (since their signs were made permanent), and was informed that they hadn't.
- Carol said she understood the feelings of the group and explained that although the council sympathised and had made efforts to assist proprietors in the past, times had changed and the amendments proposed are to improve public safety. She advised the forum that they could attend the committee meeting and put their case across for consideration.

Vehicle Age

The consultation results reflected that the majority agreed that the start of vehicle age for both Hackney Carriage and Private Hire should be four years and the end of life be 12 years. The proposals to be presented to the L & R committee would be:

- 1. All new licensed vehicles proposed to be 5 (4 years) years or under from the date of first registration.**
 - 2. All licensed vehicles proposed to have a maximum end of life age of 12 years rom the date of first registration.**
- John Fairey commented that he felt the age requirements should remain as they are at present. He is a rural Operator just doing two school runs a day. He explained he would not be able to afford to purchase younger vehicles and then have to change them at twelve years, when his vehicles always pass their mechanical inspections and MOT, have a low mileage and are in excellent condition. John also stated that when tendering for school contracts he was up against companies with PSV's which are 20 years old.
 - Steve Eckton felt that the age of the vehicles should be 4 years for Hackney Carriages and 6 years for Private Hire, from the date of first registration.

- It was suggested that there should be three categories, Hackney Carriage, Private hire and school runs. A separate policy for vehicles that only carry out school contracts.
- Different door signs suggested for “School Contracts only”

Incentives for Electric/Hybrid Vehicles

The survey indicated a majority agreeing that there should be incentives for Electric and Hybrid vehicles. The proposals to be put forward are:

- 1. Electric/hybrid vehicles proposed to be 8 years or under from the date of first registration**
- 2. Electric vehicles proposed to have a maximum end of working life of 15 years from the date of first registration.**

- The forum members were in agreement that there should be incentives, but they couldn't see a benefit in putting this in policy. They pointed out that after 8 years the battery would be coming to the end of its life and at present the vehicle would end up being scrapped so they cannot see that anyone would want to purchase this type of vehicle.
- Carol explained that the policy was to encourage electric and hybrid vehicles as the district is not sufficiently able to cope, (i.e. enough charging points) with an all electric vehicles fleet. This would be reviewed again in future years.
- It was felt that extending the end of life age to 15 years could result in having an increase in vehicles on the road with poor body condition.

CCTV

The consultation survey results indicated that the majority agreed that with Public Safety as a key factor, CCTV should be installed in all licensed vehicles. However, Claire informed the forum members that the proposals for CCTV to be in all licensed Winchester City Council vehicles had been put on hold. This is a massive piece of work on its own and with the current climate it would be deemed too expensive and unfair to expect the drivers to install at this time. More research will be undertaken and this will be treated as a separate project. Claire also explained we are waiting to see what happens with Southampton and Portsmouth who have an ongoing case with the ICO. The forum members were in agreement with this.

- Imran Khan asked if the Council would be paying for half of the installation of CCTV. Claire replied that as CCTV has been put on hold for the moment, she could not answer this question. Imran replied that Southampton had contributed towards the cost of their driver's CCTV. Claire replied that different Councils have different priorities and funding available.

Wheelchair Accessible Vehicles – Side and Rear Loading

The forum members were informed that the consultation survey results showed that a clear majority were in agreement with having both side and rear loading. Claire informed the Forum:

1. Rear loading is to be proposed to be added to taxi policy in addition to the side loading vehicles we have at present.

- The forum members were all in agreement that this would be in the interest of the trade.
- Barry Hussey felt that a condition should be added to ensure the rear loading vehicles should carry a minimum of 4 people/3 passengers plus one wheelchair. He felt that it would cause problems with vehicles being licensed that only carry 1 passenger and one wheelchair. Claire did raise the point that in some cases this could be seen as a benefit rather than a larger vehicle being used for just two people.
- Claire advised Barry that this is something he could bring up at the committee meeting in September, if he wished.

Contactless Card Payment Facilities

The survey showed a clear majority of participants felt that contactless payment devices should be available to all passengers. With public safety in mind, the forum was advised that it was to be proposed:

2. All licensed vehicles by Winchester City Council have contactless card payment facility available.

- The forum was in agreement with this.
- Barry Hussey said that probably in the region of about 85% of drivers already had the facility for card payment.
- John Fairey commented that there was a small percentage to be payed on each transaction and that if it this was adopted into taxi policy, why should the driver have to pay this? If the Council wanted this they should pay it.

Driver training (BTEC)

The group were advised that it is proposed that more research is undertaken to find a local provider, possibly the blue lamp trust to undertake all training. Existing drivers have already completed separate modules already. The group was also advised that we will be reviewing our current knowledge test.

- The forum agreed with this.

- Imran Khan asked whether the deadline for completion of the wheelchair assessment had been extended. Claire confirmed it was now the 30th September.

Any other business

- John Fairy asked for clarification of guidance for face masks. He said that HCC guidance was different to Winchester.
- Claire advised that WCC had looked at Government guidance in relation to passengers on public transport having to wear masks; this guidance didn't include the taxi trade. An email was sent to all drivers from WCC setting out guidance on the wearing of face masks for drivers and passengers. It is at the driver's discretion to decide whether they require passengers to wear a mask.
- A separate email was sent informing drivers of those passengers who would be exempt from wearing a mask.
- The forum requested that there be another meeting before the committee hearing in September. Claire agreed to organise this.

Date of next meeting: 10am Wednesday 2 September 2020 (via Zoom)