

TAXI & PRIVATE HIRE FORUM MEETING

MINUTES

WEDNESDAY 30 September 2020 – 09:30am (Zoom)

Attendance

Barry Hussey
Steve Eckton
John Fairey
Imran Khan
Marouane El Mamouni
Carol Stefanczuk – Licensing Manager
Claire Humphreys – Licensing Officer

Apologies

Akeel Khan

1. Welcome

Claire Humphreys welcomed the group and gave apologies for Akeel Khan and Imran Khan (who joined the meeting a little later).

2. Taxi Policy – Next Steps

Claire advised the group that the draft proposals presented to the Licensing & Regulation Committee for consideration on the 15th September 2020 had been approved. These proposals will be presented to the cabinet for adoption on the 21 October 2020.

Carol Stefanczuk confirmed that the public can attend to speak under Public Participation for a maximum of 3 minutes. Carol will send the link to the drivers to register to speak. Drivers must register to speak with Democratic Services no later than 5pm on the 15 October 2020

Barry Hussey asked if the Cabinet will be aware of the points that were raised during the public participation at the L & R Committee meeting. Carol advised that they will be provided with a copy of the minutes but she can possibly include them in the report. John Fairry asked how much we can influence the Cabinet. He felt there was no sense in implementing the policy changes under the current situation and felt that even if the policy is adopted, there should be a delay for implementation. The situation with Covid has changed again and we should have their ear. Carol concluded that we do understand the difficulty for the trade and acknowledge that the timing is not ideal, however, this project has been ongoing for the last 2 years, and we need to give the drivers some clarity as to what will happen if these policy changes are adopted.

Steve Eckton spoke of the proposal of the introduction of permanent door signs. He felt that there should be a delay on the adoption of policy. Carol Stefanczuk suggested that we do not repeat what had already been discussed at the previous forum meeting. Steve Eckton had some comments prepared and said that he would email them separately to Carol. John Fairey felt that permanent door signs will not deter cowboys and unlicensed vehicles operating. Carol recognized that we need to be out on enforcement more, and hoped that now we have simplified a lot of processes, this should free up some time.

Mario El Mamouni and other members of the forum also were in agreement that permanent door signs should not be introduced in to policy. Carol to email the group a case law for HC and PH vehicles regarding permanent door signs. The case highlighted the fact that once a vehicle is licensed, it will always be a licensed vehicle first.

3. Medicals

Claire spoke of the problem that some drivers have experienced with regards to obtaining a medical from their GP due to the current situation with Covid-19. These drivers were required to complete a temporary self-certification form and were then issued with a temporary badge expiring on the 30 September 2020, It was hoped that that during this time they would be able to have their medical done. Some drivers have succeeded, although there are drivers whose GP's surgery are still not doing face to face appointments. These drivers have been advised to arrange for a copy/summary of their medical notes from their GP surgery and then find an alternative surgery or private medical company who are carrying out taxi medicals.

Mario El Mamouni informed the group that he had his medical done at a private surgery and it didn't cost as much as his surgery charged.

Carol mentioned that it is really important that the doctor signs and stamps the medical form with the surgery or medical company name and address. She also advised the group that we do have a medical provider in place should we have any concerns with a drivers medical. The group were also reminded that along with their medical notes, a Winchester City Council medical form must be taken with them to the appointment.

4. Sunday Market

Claire Humphreys asked the group for feedback regarding the Sunday market in the Broadway. Barry Hussey commented that the signage diverting traffic needs to be removed after the Market has finished. It was left up the first week and it caused havoc. Steve Eckton and Mario El Mamouni were in agreement regarding the signage.

Steve Eckton commented that he feels the council do what they want whatever the driver's feelings. Carol Stefanczuk said she felt that was unfair. We do share the driver's frustration at times and we don't always agree with decisions. There have been many occasions where we have spoken in favour of the drivers and we do try to support the trade when we feel there is just cause.

Steve Eckton felt that David Ingram should attend a Taxi Forum meeting to listen to the member's thoughts and feelings with regards to the changes. Carol said that she would arrange for David to attend the next meeting if possible. Steve Eckton agreed with Carol that it was very helpful that Cllr Jackie Porter attended the previous Forum meeting and that she had a good understanding and is well placed. John Fairey agreed but said he felt that there was a lack of understanding and empathy at the Licensing & Regulation committee meeting. Carol did point out that this Policy review started from our previous administration 2 years ago. However, the current situation with covid-19 was taken into consideration with the draft proposals that were put forward for consideration.

5. Uber

The group shared their concerns with the amount of Uber vehicles that are in the City. Carol shared a response from Southampton City Council with the group in response to an email sent to them from one of our Hackney Drivers complaining about Uber's presence in our City. Carol offered to share this information with the group.

Carol sympathised with the group, but advised it is out of our control, we can only act if Uber licensed vehicles are doing something illegal. We will be getting out there more and will engage with any Uber drivers if we feel they are doing something illegal. Imran Khan joined the meeting and asked if Uber don't have a booking can they wait in a carpark for another job? Carol confirmed they can.

It was suggested that there are Uber vehicles out there from Havant and the New Forest that do not have door signs or licence plates. Carol said it is down to the individual conditions of each Licensing Authority with regards to the door signs, but it was very worrying with regards to the plates. She encouraged anyone who sees a vehicle without a licence plate displayed to take pictures and email to Licensing, if they can. Barry Hussey made the point that the Uber drivers know where to park to be in the best position for a job. Barry also pointed out that Uber vehicles with no signs and plates could hold a plate exemption certificate. He concluded that although Uber are in the City, Covid is the main problem with regards to lack of trade at the moment.

Carol and Claire will look into the situation with regards to Havant and New Forest Uber licensed vehicles possibly being plate exempt.

6. Any Other Business

John Fairey asked us to look at Medway Borough Council in relation to their policy for Private Hire school run vehicles.

Imran Khan asked for an up to date out of hour's number for the Civil Enforcement Officers. It is a real problem when private cars are parking on the rank.

Barry Hussey asked if we could give some feedback to the Blue Lamp Trust from drivers who have to take the wheelchair assessment. He said that the Blue Lamp

Trust need to give some form of information sheet or information video for drivers to watch to help them understand what is required of them to pass this assessment.

A date for the next Taxi & Private Hire Forum meeting is provisionally booked for Thursday 5th November at 11am via Zoom.