

TAXI & PRIVATE HIRE FORUM MEETING

Minutes

WEDNESDAY 21 April 2021 – 10:30AM (Microsoft Teams)

ATTENDED

Drivers/Operators	Winchester City Council
Akeel Khan Barry Hussey Imran Khan Marouane El Mamouni Steve Eckton	Carol Stefanczuk – Licensing Manager David Ingram – Service Lead - Public Protection

APOLOGIES

John Fairey – Meon Valley Services
Claire Humphreys – Licensing Officer

Carol welcomed the Forum members to the meeting.

Feedback from drivers/operators following premises re-opening

Carol asked the Forum members if there had been a pick-up in trade since some premises have reopened for outdoor use. Members explained that there was a noticeable increase in people in Winchester, especially on Monday 19 April 2021, but no increase in customers for taxi drivers or private hire operators/drivers.

There has been an increase in the number of Uber Eats drivers using the taxi ranks and delivery bays to park, in particular, the rank outside Turtle Bay around 9pm. There are often issues with delivery drivers parking on St George's Street during the day.

Action: Licensing to contact Mr So and Dim T. Carol has emailed the Parking Team Leaders to make them aware of issues in St George's Street and requested enforcement action for delivery drivers parking on taxi ranks.

Assistance dogs

Carol reminded the members of the legal requirement to take passengers with assistance dogs, unless the driver has been issued with a medical exemption by the Council. The members agreed that they understood the law and no further discussion was required.

Action: Licensing have sent an email/letter to all drivers reminding them of the law regarding assistance dogs and provide guidance and clarification during Ramadan.

Permanent signage on licensed vehicles – update

Carol updated the members on the permanent signage progress. The designs have been amended to ensure that the WCC logo and plate number on both signs are the same size. Some members expressed concerns at the difference in text size on each sign, however, Carol explained that as there was more text on the private hire sign, naturally this would reduce the font size to make sure that the overall sign wasn't too big. Carol explained that officers had taken into consideration that there are varying door shapes and sizes and only wanted one sign template for each licence type, hence the need to balance the need for clear, easily identifiable wording with the overall size of the sign. Elected members and senior officers have approved the signs and these are now finalised for distributing to the signage companies for their comments.

Carol explained that officers were mindful of the deadline for permanent signage to be displayed on current licensed vehicles by 30 June 2021. If this puts pressure on the signage companies and is unachievable, we would seek to extend this.

Members queried the cost of the permanent signage. This is yet to be agreed but is expected to be under £100 for the signs to be supplied and fitted to both front doors.

Station taxi rank – update

Carol updated the members on the progress with the proposal to trial the taxi rank on the opposite side on the road on Station Hill. The relevant Cabinet members have agreed to a trial of a temporary taxi rank where the current half an hour waiting bays are. This is in light of the financial impact of the Covid pandemic and the high cost of the Station permits. This needs to be formally approved in writing internally. Once this is complete, work will be carried out to arrange signage to direct customers to the rank.

Barry explained that an email had been sent from South Western Railway to all drivers stating that they could apply for their permit using a portal and now pay in instalments. SWR also notified drivers that they would be installing ANPR cameras covering the station taxi rank.

Wolverhampton vehicles – query

Carol asked on behalf of Claire if members had seen vehicles licensed by Wolverhampton Council over the last few months. Members stated that they hadn't seen vehicles licensed by them for a long time but often see vehicles licensed by Uttlesford Council and Southampton City Council. Akeel confirmed that Wessex Cars no longer have any vehicles licensed by Wolverhampton Council.

Any other business

- Sunday Market in the Broadway – signage directing customers to the temporary taxi rank are missing and haven't been displayed for several

weeks. Also, the 'road closed' signs near King Alfred Statue are often still up on the following Monday or Tuesday.

Action: Licensing to contact the relevant team at WCC requesting the signage is displayed directing customers to the temporary taxi rank.

- Roof lights – The Cabin in Southampton is no longer owned by the same person. Drivers are unable to purchase a roof light with the WCC logo.

Action: Licensing to arrange for a local supplier to have the WCC logo so that stickers can be added to standard roof lights, or as a package, to meet the Council's vehicle conditions of licence.

- Display of licence plates – discussion regarding how the Council would expect the external plate to be fixed to comply with being 'permanently displayed'. Members asked if the Council would allow the plate to be secured using registration number tape which is very strong, but not within the bracket.
- Driver grants – members believe that Southampton City Council are issuing grants to all drivers licensed by SCC, even if they live outside of the district. Members queried why WCC's Policy limits the grants to those who live in the WCC district. Carol explained that the funding is being dealt with by the Council's Economy team and that Licensing are only involved to pass on the information on their behalf. Drivers should expect to receive correspondence week commencing 26 April 2021.
- Members expressed their preference to return to 'in person' meetings in future. Carol agreed that if it was possible, in line with the lifting of Covid restrictions, that the next meeting could be in person.

Next meeting – TBC. Likely July 2021.