

TAXI & PRIVATE HIRE FORUM MEETING

Minutes

Tuesday 3 August – 10:30AM

Board Room, West Wing, Guildhall

ATTENDED

Drivers/Operators	Winchester City Council
Barry Hussey Steve Eckton Imran Khan John Fairey Akeel Khan	Briony Appletree – Interim Licensing Manager Claire Humphreys – Licensing Officer

APOLOGIES

Mario El Mamouni

Briony welcomed the Forum members and introduced herself as Interim Licensing Manager.

Feedback from drivers/operators following lowering of restrictions

Briony asked the Forum members how trade was. Members confirmed that trade is still quiet, explaining that now we are in summer season, trade always tends to be quieter.

Briony pointed out to members that come September there should be an increase in trade with the University students returning. The hope is that no more further lockdowns occur within the winter months.

Briony asked the group if customers are still in the main wearing masks. Members confirmed that a high percentage of customers are still wearing masks. Claire asked Operators if they were asking their drivers to wear masks when working. John Fairey confirmed that all drivers on School contracts are still required to wear masks by Hampshire County Council. Akeel advised members that it is up to the discretion of each individual driver, however, most vehicles have protection screens fitted for the driver's safety.

The question was asked when the temporary lanes in the city are being removed. Members commented that they are a hindrance.

Briony informed members that they will be removed by the end of August 2021.

Coach Park - Claire spoke to members of ongoing problems with Private Hire Vehicles at the Coach Park. Complaints have been received by Licensing with regards to Private Hire vehicles blocking the coach lanes and also intimidating people who have paid to park to get them to move so they can have the space. Claire has been monitoring and undertaking enforcement.

Action: Akeel to speak with his drivers and Claire to liaise with Shamus – Wintax.

Uber - Imran Khan spoke to the members regarding ongoing problems with Uber. They are getting as close to the ranks as they can and on occasions waiting on the rank. The worst of this problem happens late evening. Claire replied that evidence in the form a photo if possible and the plate number and Licensing Authority is required if possible, but reminded members we don't want drivers to put themselves in a compromising position or danger trying to secure evidence.

Members of the Forum asked if we could undertake enforcement using someone to get into the vehicles and pose as a customer. Briony informed members that test purchasing is not illegal, but it does come down to cost and resourcing. The more complaints backed up with evidence we receive the more chance we have of getting permission.

Claire mentioned that we had considered joining forces with Southampton City Council and we could perhaps approach other Councils that license Uber.

Akeel Khan asked if we could use video footage as evidence.

Action: Briony to contact Southampton City Council and the New Forest City Council to suggest late night joint enforcement.

Action: Briony to ask Southampton City Council if they would use video footage as evidence.

Permanent door signs - Briony informed members that 2 signage companies had been appointed and were ready for appointments. Briony also reminded members that all current Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Vehicles must have permanent door signs placed on both front doors by the end of September 2021 very latest.

Akeel Khan showed members doors signs that he could have made at approx. five pounds per sign. He asked that it be considered that we would accept the sign company that made them in addition to the two that we had in place.

Claire explained that it was too late to put this company forward in addition to the two we already have in place. Permanent door signs were adopted into policy in December 2020. The cost of the door signs has always been transparent, drivers members of the public in addition to Councillors that attended the Licensing & Regulation Committee hearing in September 2020 were advised the signage for both doors including fitting would be no more than £100. That is still the case.

Claire pointed out to members it wasn't just a case of letting another company print and fit signs, there was a specific type of vinyl, colour code and fitting procedure in

place to ensure the vehicles all looked the same. The cost of signs to drivers must be the same whichever signage company they choose to use. We would not be able to introduce another company who were using different materials and possibly a variation in colour plus having a price that did not match the other two companies appointed.

Claire informed the members that much research was undertaken before this came into policy. Visits were undertaken to Councils who had a livery. Guildford was one of them. One of the regrets they spoke of was allowing drivers to choose any company to print and fit their signage/wrap, as long as it was in line with policy. This led to the standard of the fitting and quality of vinyl varying between vehicles. Claire continued that they visited the ranks in Guildford and spoke with drivers of the vehicles, who pointed out the quality difference between vehicles that were on the ranks.

Claire used Windsor as another example to illustrate the variation in colour by using several different companies. On visiting Windsor back in 2019, it became very obvious that there was a massive variation in colour of vinyl when looking at a line of taxis on the rank. This is something that we wanted to avoid happening.

Akeel asked when the companies were appointed, why this was not open to everyone. Steve Eckton commented that it was brought up at a much earlier forum meeting where the previous Licensing Manager had indicated anyone who wanted to put their services/companies forward could.

Claire asked Akeel when permanent door signs were adopted into policy in December 2020, why was he only now asking for a company he knows to be considered. It is just far too late to change this now, when the 30 September 2021 is the deadline for all current vehicles to have the WCC approved door signs fitted.

Action: Briony to speak with David Ingram.

Barry Hussey informed the group that he had seen two Private Hire vehicles, without displaying plates at the rear of their vehicles and no Operator signs on the displayed. He also told members that there are some Hackney Carriage Vehicles whose roof lights are not working and unless there is a magical device he hasn't heard of, some have no wire coming from the top box.

Regarding no plates and Operator signs, Briony advised this could be a vehicle that has plate exemption. It was asked if they carried a letter or certificate. Briony confirmed that a certificate is used and is to be carried in the vehicle and also a small plate exemption card is used that is displayed in the windscreen. Claire also advised the members that previously we issued part plate exemption for licensed vehicles, Claire explained that part plate exemption certificate was issued for those licensed vehicles that had a small amount of executive corporate work but also had standard private hire work as well. We no longer issue part-plate exemption certificates due to the approved WCC door signs being permanent.

John Fairey informed the members that a Private Hire Operator has asked him to speak on their behalf, regarding the WCC approved door signs having to be

permanently placed on the front doors of the vehicle. The Operator licensed by Winchester City Council has had Operator signs put on all doors of the vehicle. Briony advised that all current vehicles must have permanent door signs affixed to both front doors by the 30 September 2021 and any vehicle that doesn't conform in line with current policy, will be suspended with 14 days' notice. Briony did inform members that she is happy to speak with the Operator direct, however, the outcome would be the same.

Members asked how the Council would know which vehicles hadn't had the signage affixed. Briony responded that the Signage companies will be forwarding on to us a list of all vehicles that they have printed and fitted signs to.

John Fairey pointed out to members that Hampshire County Council are requiring their signage to be placed on the vehicles front doors.

Action: Briony to follow up with HCC.

Steve Eckton commented that he felt that any vehicles due to be changed in 2022 should not have to have the expense of having permanent door signs then to have to repeat on a new vehicle.

Briony advised the members that any change has to follow corporate procedure and would have to go for consultation and then be put to the Licensing and Regulation Committee.

Moving of the Station Rank - Briony informed members that the move of the Station Rank was in a 28 day consultation period.

Steve Eckton commented that it was a shame that the new rank will have taxi's facing up the hill. Members pointed out that this would mean quite a walk up the hill for customers to walk to get to the front of the queue. Briony responded that HCC Highways would object if taxis were facing against the direction of travel. Briony also informed the group that if the existing rank is empty there may be a chance that South West Rail would use this for something else. Possibly Private Hire Drop off. Barry mentioned in response that when this was discussed previously, Ian Cherie has said that the land was leased to South West Rail by Network Rail and there was a condition in the lease that the taxi rank could only be used for Taxis.

Any Other Business

Barry Hussey reported that the Sunday Broadway Taxi Rank was in fact being used for market stalls leaving no room for Taxis. No taxis could get through to park. He felt that the signage should say "no entrance except for taxis".

Action: Briony to speak with Special Maintenance

Toilets - Briony informed the members that there are four 24 hour toilets available to drivers. The members felt there should be one more in the city centre, and perhaps installed with a key pad number that could be shared with all drivers. The coach

park toilets are closed at night due to Covid and sanitising of them as well as vandalism.

Increase in tariffs - Barry Hussey spoke of the need for an increase in tariffs. Briony told the group that we would need for drivers to demonstrate the want for this. It would then go to consultation and then to the L & R Committee to be decided. Briony said that she is happy to send an email out to the trade, but drivers must understand we would need responses from the drivers for it to be considered.

Barry Hussey, Steve Eckton and John Fairey informed Members they would be resigning from the Forum.

Both Claire & Briony thanked all 3 for their input and help over the years.

Action: The recruitment of a Rural Operator representative and two Hackney Carriage Drivers representatives to be started.

Next meeting - Date to be confirmed