

## TAXI WORKING GROUP

10.00 A.M.

13TH MAY 2021

**PRESENT:-** Councillors Colin Hartley (Chair) and Mel Guilding

Officers in attendance:-

Jennifer Curtis                      Licensing Manager  
Sarah Moorghen                      Democratic Support Officer

Members of the Trade:-

Kelvin Ellershaw and Marie Sparks

### 6        **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

There were no apologies however the Licensing Manager advised that the Chair of the Hackney Carriage Association had resigned and after contacting the secretary, they had decided not to appoint anybody as yet and therefore the Hackney Carriage association would not be represented at the meeting. 848 848 Taxi's had also declined an invitation.

### 7        **UPDATE ON MATTERS ARISING**

The Notes of the meeting held on 14 January 2021 were agreed by the Group as a correct record.

The Licensing Manager advised that, in relation to Hackney Carriage fares, the Guilford Model was now in place. Historically, the Council had used lots of different methods to justify fare increases but the Guilford Model offered a more scientific approach. Licensing were currently working on sourcing the statistics required to input into the model and this was now a priority.

It was reported that the Licensing Team now all had logins for the National Register of Taxi Licence Revocations and Refusals (NR3 Register). This would allow better communication and sharing of data between Licensing Authorities across the country.

The Licencing Manager advised that following a complaint of cheating the Driver Knowledge Test had been reviewed. The test was now completed online and comprised of randomly generated questions. Several updates had been included in the test with regard to safeguarding. The Licensing Team was also looking into how safeguarding messages and updates could be delivered to the wider trade more frequently.

It was also reported that a new booking system was being developed for vehicle testing and that a new member of the Licensing Team would be permanently based at the VMU to allow plates to be made up and collected there rather than requiring drivers to go to the Town Hall.

With regard to taxi ranks the Licensing Manager advised that contact had been made with Lancashire County Council as the Highways Authority and that a large piece of work on traffic flow in the town centre was currently being conducted. This was likely to take up to 12 months and no changes would be made to any taxi ranks until that work was

concluded. The Licensing Manager had requested that she be consulted directly on any changes to taxi ranks.

The Licensing Manager advised that the Highways Authority had been contacted about queries regarding signage in Brock Street and had confirmed that this signage was correct. In addition, the “new” taxi rank outside Morecambe Town Hall was more than likely the result of a historic TRO which had been re-painted. This would be considered as part of the wider review of taxi ranks.

The Group went on to discuss the Guilford Model and welcomed the mathematical approach. It was noted that there had not been a fare increase last year. The Guilford Model was not in place yet and therefore the Group considered whether a fare increase based on RPI be appropriate in the interim.

Mr Ellershaw advised that sometimes a small fare increase was not worth the cost of re-calibrating meters and that while the trade was recovering from the impact of COVID-19 there may be some concern about upsetting customers with a price increase.

The Licensing Manager advised that the tariffs set by Licensing were maximums and there would be no obligation on the Trade to increase their pricing. It was agreed that The Licensing Manager would re-calculate the fares based on RPI and assess the potential impact on tariffs.

The Chair ask about the low number of responses to the consultation and what could be done to make sure responses were received before the consultation closed. The Licensing Manger advised that she would circulate a reminder that to all consultees.

## **8 TAXI/PRIVATE HIRE LICENSING POLICY CONSULTATION**

The Licensing Manager introduce the draft [Taxi/Private Hire Licensing Policy](#), which was available to view on the Council’s website. Consultation was ongoing with the trade.

The Licensing Manager advised that alongside the consultation the Trainee Licensing Officer, as part of her coursework, was producing a number of templates for the trade to use as the basis of their own policies and procedures.

## **9 GROUP DISCUSSION**

Mr Ellershaw raised the requirement for all existing staff to be DBS checked and queried what the outcome would be if something was disclosed on a DBS check that had not been known about when the employee was recruited, especially if it related to a long serving member of staff with a exemplary employment record.

The Licensing Manager advised that this particular piece of guidance had come directly from the Department of Transport (DofT) and recommended that Mr Ellershaw make a formal submission to the consultation on this issue which could then be fed back to the DofT.

The Group discussed subcontracting. This was being used by some in the trade as a loophole where drivers obtained a licence from one Licensing Authority, usually where it was easier or cheaper to obtain a licence, and were then subcontracted to work in another Authority were they did not meet the required standards. Mr Ellershaw advised the Group

that Lancaster based operators had a policy of only employing drivers with badges from Lancaster.

It was noted by the Group that there were currently less drivers. This was, in part, a result of the higher standards being required. The Group discussed recruitment, possible incentives, and barriers to becoming a taxi driver, including the length and cost of the licensing process and training.

*(Note: following the meeting the Licensing Manager provided further information on training costs. The full cost of the course was currently £225 including exam fees and course material (with the Maths and English initial assessment free of charge). If the applicant was receiving universal credit and could provide a completed U1 form from the Job Centre, they were eligible to for a **full Waiver Fee**. Lancaster and Morecambe College had also noticed a dip in the uptake for the course and were looking at ways to promote it.)*

Mr Ellershaw noted that the draft policy appeared to allow for Public Service Vehicles (PSV) and the Licensing Manager advised that she would look into the interpretation of that part of the draft policy.

*(Note: following the meeting the Licensing Manager provided further information on the status of PSVs. A number of private hire operators also held PSV operator licences with the traffic commissioner. This was often for minibuses or similar. In effect a private hire operator who also held a PSV operator licence could dispatch a PSV even if someone had phoned the private hire operator number. "I've no cars available but I can send a minibus" etc. The PSV drivers were not subject to enhanced DBS nor would they have done a knowledge test. There were also circumstances where PSV operators were allowed to operate vehicles at 8 seats or less. That condition was only relevant if the Private Hire Operator, licensed with the City Council also held a PSV licence issued by the Traffic Commissioner.)*

The Group discussed the requirement for operators to report complaints to the Licensing Department. It was important that operators took responsibility for complaints but also that complaints were reported to Licensing to prevent drivers simply moving between operators when the most appropriate course of action was revocation of a licence.

The policy now required lost property to be dealt with by the taxi operator not the Licensing Department. The Licensing Manager advised that it should be easier for drivers to reunite lost items with their owners by taking them to their drop off or pick up locations. A log of lost and found items would be added to the templates the Trainee Licensing Officer was working on.

The Group discussed the Councils commitment to the Climate Change Emergency and the requirement for new vehicles to be Euro 6 compliant or zero emissions by 2025. It was noted that the cost of electric and hybrid cars would potentially put many drivers off making the change until they absolutely had to.

The Chair asked the trade representatives for their views on CCTV and whether this should be compulsory. It was felt that there were potential pros and cons to installing CCTV in vehicle's but on the whole it was a good thing. However, it was noted that camera's really needed to be professionally fitted for there to be any real benefit and there was a cost to this.

The Group discussed signage and the Licensing Manager informed the Group that Licensing was working with producers to make roof signs for Hackney Carriages that could all be the same. Mr Ellershaw advised the Group that there were a number of companies selling vehicle packages that included a fully integrated roof sign that could not be removed. The Licensing Manager advised that this could be taken into account and that an exception for purpose-built vehicles could be added. It was felt that there was no evidence that there was any need for a colour policy for vehicles in Lancaster at the present time.

**10 ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

Councillor Guilding raised a question about the use of card payments. Mr Ellershaw advised the Group that while some drivers had resisted having card machines, partly due to cost, and that there could be occasional issues with loss of signal, on the whole it was something welcomed by the Trade. There were a number of ways customers could pay by card and apps that allowed for payment without the need for drivers to have a terminal.

The Licensing Manager advised that the Department for Transport had sent surplus facemasks to the Council and these were being distributed to local firms for use by customers.

**11 DATE, AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING**

To be confirmed following consideration of the draft Taxi Licensing Policy by Licensing Committee.

(The meeting ended at 11.25 a.m.)

**Any queries regarding these Minutes, please contact  
Sarah Moorghen, Democratic Services - email [smoorghen@lancaster.gov.uk](mailto:smoorghen@lancaster.gov.uk)**