

## **Minutes of taxi forum 4 July 2011**

### Attendees:

David Pattison (DP) Director of Legal & Public Health Protection Services  
Jenny Rhodes (JR) Environmental Health & Licensing Manager  
Graham Colling (GC) Senior Environmental Health Officer (Pollution Control)  
John Littleton (JL) Litter/Enforcement Officer  
Joan Cox (JC) Licensing Officer  
Representatives of the Private Hire/Taxi Trade

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### **1. Introduction & Minutes from last meeting**

DP provided a brief update with regard to issues from last forum.

He confirmed that unlicensed limousines were still a major priority as apart from the safety aspect they are also taking away the livelihood from the trade. As the prom season approaches more enforcement action with the police and VOSA is to be carried out.

With regard to the 10 year age limit DP is to recommend to members that the council adopt a sensible approach in that if vehicles are regularly maintained the age limit be suspended for a period of 12 months. It was confirmed that the rule has currently been relaxed pending approval by Licensing Committee, but no future guarantees could be given.

Shires garage was discussed and generally feedback was positive with no real problems. K Transport are still providing tests for Class 7 vehicles and there would have to be an adjustment to fees at some point.

A separate meeting to be arranged to discuss V Festival to be held next Monday, 11 July 2011 and anyone interested will be welcome to attend. The V festival is thought to be critical for local trade.

With regard to Licensing Committee there was not much to report with one driver approval since last meeting.

The trade confirmed that they did not have any problems with the introduction of the new cash desk.

DP asked if the Health & Safety training had been useful. The trade said that apart from a few incidents generally e.g. bookings from Perton petrol station but that there were no real problems in the area although the trade were mindful of the dangers faced by drivers at night in the cars.

### **2. Policies**

DP confirmed that he will be looking to review existing policies in the near future and asked the trade if there was anything they wished to be considered.

## ***Driver tests***

The time period before drivers were able to take the knowledge test was mentioned. It was explained that the current practice was to obtain the Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) disclosure before inviting drivers to pay the full application fee and take the test. The option of using computer and doing the test directly on line was something that may possibly be considered.

## ***Hackney Carriage Vehicles (HCV)***

HCV & the type of vehicles that are licensed was an issue. The trade felt that if the vehicle was a type 1 approved HCV then it should be allowed to be plated as a HCV. DP said he was happy to look at the issue and address if necessary. DP explained that his main concern was the need to differentiate between Private Hire Vehicles (PHV) & HCV and that he did not want to involve the introduction of colours again into the policy as it was too onerous.

## ***Plate Exemptions***

The trade were concerned with regard to the exemptions for chauffeur type work and the non display of the plate.

DP advised that to be granted an exemption the type of work had to be "high risk" passengers, such as Government ministers, corporate bookings rather than simply day to day private hire work or airport trips for general members of the public. If general work was being carried out the obligations with regard to the display of plates still applied.

The type of vehicle had to be of a high quality in terms of brand and condition & each vehicle would be considered on its own merits.

DP assured the trade that checks were carried out on the type of work that was carried out and that if an operator were to not fully comply with the terms of the exemption they would be liable for prosecution.

The question of work for Social Services was raised where they request 'discreet' vehicles to undertake the transport of vulnerable adults and children. DP confirmed that if the trade is able to provide evidence then he would consider allowing a dispensation to the displaying of plates for specific incidences.

DP concluded by asking the trade to advise us if they see any operator who they feel is not complying with the grant of an exemption so that we can investigate and take action if needed.

## ***Fees***

DP confirmed that he is not planning any significant changes to the fees charged. He confirmed that at the moment the Council's expenditure was in the region of £110k and that an amount of £90k was being received. He advised that there is a £20k gap but that it is not possible to recover all costs and it did not include the costs of enforcement against drivers.

DP anticipated a slight increase in spending 2011/12 and would need to tidy things up but confirmed that there would be no increase in the Operators annual fee or driver fee. However, the fees for the CRB & driving assessment have both increased. Vehicles over 10 years old require an additional test & Class 7 vehicles tested at K transport are charged a higher fee so the Council will need to look to recover these costs.

Fees for plate exemptions is also something that may have to be considered as it involves more work for the Council checking the type of work and vehicles used. However, one off situations for Social Services work would be exempt and it would most likely be an additional fee for an annual exemption.

### **3. Any other business**

Enforcement issues were discussed. DP explained that if offences are committed outside of the district then the authority in the area where the offence occurs is required to take action rather than the council that issued the licence.

The trade reported that they see people picking up passengers with sign writing on vehicles, but not displaying plates particularly at airports. One of the operators inferred that the council were not doing enough enforcement to address these issues. DP asked for the trade to help the council by telling us when they see what they perceive to be irregularities so that the enforcement team can investigate.

The enforcement team do carry out regular base checks and follow up any complaints received.

### **4. Date of next meeting**

TBA