

Minutes of taxi forum Monday, 09 January 2012

Attendees:

David Pattison (DP) Director of Legal & Public Health Protection Services
Jenny Rhodes (JR) Environmental Health Manager
Graham Colling (GC) Senior Environmental Health Officer
Michael Sullivan (MS) Food Safety & Licensing Enforcement Officer
Joan Cox (JC) Licensing Officer
Representatives of the Private Hire/Taxi trade

1. Introduction

DP apologised for not holding a forum earlier and confirmed that dates would be set for future meetings to ensure that they are held on a regular basis.

2. Matters arising from previous forum

V Festival

With regard to the V Festival DP confirmed that he has been raised with the organisers and we are pushing them to improve the facilities for taxis.

Improvements were noted on the Sunday evening following concerns in 2011 on the previous night.

Policies

DP explained that he has made draft changes to 'The Taxi Handbook'. DP stressed that they were only draft proposals and that member approval would still be required before any changes were made.

He explained that one of the reasons for today's forum was to consult on the proposed changes in order to obtain people's views and opinions.

3. Draft Policy Changes



Amendments to
consider - Taxi ...

A copy of the draft proposals were made available. A summary of the main proposals are as follows:

3.4 Vehicle requirements

It is proposed that automatic acceptance to licence a vehicle as a Hackney Carriage will be given to any vehicle that meets the design criteria specified by the Public Carriage Office. Other vehicles to be licensed as Hackney Carriage will be assessed on a case by case basis.

[No comments]

3.5 Vehicles over 10 years old

Vehicles over 10 years old to be plated provided they have additional garage tests and are able to provide evidence that there has been a regular inspection and maintenance regime on application or renewal.

[It was suggested that evidence of maintenance regime be provided for all vehicles and not limited to those over 10 years old. DP confirmed that he would prefer to introduce system for those vehicles over 10 years old initially as a pilot and then consider expanding to cover all vehicles.

A prescribed form to deal with type of maintenance checks required e.g. weekly, monthly checks so that it was consistent for all vehicles. DP confirmed that he was happy to consider this.]

3.6 Vehicle Testing

For larger vehicles that cannot be tested at Shires Garage it was proposed that the test must be paid direct to the garage and will not be refunded.

[DP explained that this would be considered in relation to the fees that will also need to be reviewed and may result in an increase in the fee for older vehicles in view of the fact they are required to have 3 tests.

The review of the fees is to be undertaken with the new fees likely to take effect in April. DP did not envisage any significant increase in operator, driver fees but the fee for vehicles was possibly going to have to change to address the issues associated with the increase in costs for the testing of larger vehicles and the extra tests required for older vehicles.

The point was raised with regard to wheelchair buses that don't do normal private hire work and therefore do not do high mileage. DP confirmed that he would take this into consideration when reviewing the fees although could not commit to what the decision would be.]

3.7 Signage

All private hire vehicles to display signs approved by the Council inside and outside of the vehicle that the vehicle can only be booked through the operator.

[DP explained that he would like vehicles to prominently display signage inside the vehicle that states office booking only.]

It was suggested that all roof signs be capable of being illuminated for the protection of the general public. DP confirmed that he was happy to consider this suggestion.]

3.8 Transfer of Vehicle plates

When plates are surrendered it will only be possible to consider a refund where a new vehicle is being plated at the same time.

[DP explained that it was hard to keep track where a vehicle is not being replaced straight away and the proposal was to simplify the procedure.]

4.2 Length of licence

The Council normally grants a 2 year licence although best practice states it should be a 1 year or 3 year licence and views are sought from the trade.

[There was not a general consensus from those present as to the preferred length of licence and further views are to be sought.]

4.4 Test

It is proposed that the test be modified to include certain mandatory questions that must be known in order to obtain a pass mark.

[The general consensus was that there was no problem with this approach, but that further consideration should be given to the level of English that a driver needs to know in order to communicate effectively.]

4.5 Medical Examination

The medical cannot be more than 1 month old at the time the licence is issued.

[This proposal is only applicable for new applicants and is to ensure that information is not out of date when the licence is issued, which may be the case if there is a delay in the CRB being received.]

4.8 Criminal Records Bureau Checks

Government are looking to move back to Enhanced CRBS and questions on application form have been amended to ensure that

the Council are covered as the majority of drivers will regularly transport children or vulnerable adults alone.

[No comments]

4.9 Immigration Checks

Applicants with limited period to reside and work in the UK only be granted a licence for that period if it is less than 2 years.

[No comments]

4.11 Hackney Carriage Drivers

Applicants wishing to become Hackney carriage drivers who live outside of the district are to provide evidence what proportion of business is to be carried out in South Staffordshire.

[DP explained that this was to ensure that there is not an increase in the number of drivers wishing to become licensed who do not intend to work in the District, but merely want to take advantage of cheaper fees.]

5.1 Applications

Operators who do not pay their annual fee on time will have their licence suspended until payment has been received.

[This is to ensure annual fees are received on time as the licence will not lapse unless it is due for its 3 year renewal.]

ANNEX 2 – EXEMPTIONS POLICY

It is proposed that a fee be charged to cover the cost of the additional works associated with administering vehicles granted exemptions.

[General consensus was this was fair but would like to see more spot checks on the vehicles where exemptions have been issued to ensure compliance.]

4. Consultation

DP explained that this was an opportunity for anything that anyone felt needed to be changed to be raised for consideration.

Comments about the proposals or any other considerations should be emailed to D.Pattison@sstaffs.gov.uk within the next 2 weeks.

5. County Council Social Care Transport

DP advised that there is a tender process currently open for Social Care Vehicles to transport people to day care centres in Locality 4 & 5 i.e. Wombourne, Perton, Kinver etc which ends on 20 January 2012.

The vehicles must be 14 seats with wheel chair access. Day centres have priority but there will also be a service similar to 'Ring & Ride' for a certain period of the day.

There is to be a maximum of 2 vehicles operating in each locality and booking of the vehicles for transport will be on a first come first serve basis.

6. Amisafe

Amisafe is now operational in South Staffordshire. Details of all licensed vehicles are available via their website: <http://www.amisafe.co.uk/>.

This is proposed to safeguard the general public and promote the licensed trade.

7. Date of Next Meeting

5 March 2012
7 May 2012
6 August 2012
5 November 2012

All the meetings will be held in the Council offices and will commence at 12 noon.