

TAXI FORUM

Notes of Meeting held on 6 October 2021

Present (Taxi Trade): Graeme Jenkins, James Butler, Bill Armstrong, Artur Adhami

(SBC Officers): Julie Wallace, Katie McKinney

	ACTION
<p><u>PART A</u></p> <p>1) Welcome and Introductions</p> <p>2) Taxi Policy and Licensing Conditions 2021</p> <p>JDW explained that the statutory standards had to be implemented by all local authorities. Private Hire Operators had been hit hard with new changes to make their records more robust, etc.</p> <p>Comments stickers were given out to those who had not already received them, as well as the offer of face masks that had been ordered for the taxi trade, to ensure their protection as well as their passengers’.</p> <p>It was explained that the stickers had been introduced as this was part of the statutory standards; customers are required to have a means of complaining to/contacting the Council.</p> <p>AA stated that there was no other language other than English on these stickers. It was explained that there was no room on them, due to the size they are, for multiple languages, there is a QR Code on the sticker and phone number which will provide any help required.</p> <p>AA also stated that the taxi policy was now too long when it was previously only two or three pages.</p> <p>3) Appointments</p> <p>JDW explained to those present that officers were not back in the office full time; the Team has an officer in each day Monday- Friday however no ‘drop-in’ appointments would be accepted.</p> <p>Due to the restructure in the Licensing Team, officers now have compliance visits to do for all aspects of Licensing and are out for parts of the day, therefore members of the trade turning up without pre-booking an appointment are being turned away and asked to make appointments going forward. The service has still been provided during the last 18 months, despite working from home, and it was acknowledged by GJ the team had done a great job.</p>	

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	<p>4) CCTV Recommendations</p> <p>Due to a number of queries regarding CCTV systems, JDW has made a list of companies that are able to assist drivers with installing CCTV in their vehicles. Contact Licensing for further information.</p> <p>5) Taxi Issues – arising from Stafford Pubwatch meeting</p> <p>Following reports from licensed premises at Stafford Pubwatch that there was a severe shortage of taxis available to clear the town during the night time economy, it was asked of the group that more taxis were made available. It was stated that some drivers had stopped working on Friday/Saturday evenings as there was increased disorder and numbers of incidents involving taxis and/or drunk passengers.</p> <p>The new driver application process was also discussed, and the possibility of a BTEC qualification.</p> <p>6) Stafford Station</p> <p>JDW informed the group that since Avanti’s takeover at the station, Licensing have not been able to obtain full contact details for a liaison between us and them, however confirmed the Station was visited on 5th October and Licensing were given a contact telephone to try by a member of staff.</p> <p>AA stated that it was disappointing that Licensing have not yet managed to obtain any contact details. It was suggested that JDW email HR through Avanti’s website.</p> <p>Out of town vehicles were discussed, and as such the Deregulation Act 2015. One member of the group asked if the Licensing Authority had powers to challenge the Act or contact the Member(s) of Parliament about the current abuse of these rules. This will be taken into consideration.</p> <p><u>PART B Open Forum</u></p> <p>BA: Questions and queries regarding electric vehicles. JDW to chase up infrastructure/funding queries with relevant staff at SBC. JB confirmed Kaminski Hire were looking at purchasing electric vehicles in the near future.</p> <p>A point was also raised regarding executive hire cars and that they weren’t allowed to do private hire jobs. JDW confirmed policy had been amended to acknowledge this, therefore if a ‘normal private hire’ journey was needed and the customer was prepared to pay a much higher price for an exec journey then that is ok however it was pointed out that if an exec vehicle wanted to undertake normal private hire jobs at the usual</p>	

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	<p>rate then there would have to be two licences in place as standard private hire plates have to be displayed.</p> <p>AA: it was suggested that a better method of communication between Licensing and the taxi trade was found as several drivers are not members of the STA (even if they were on the WhatsApp Forum group). It was pointed out that it was impractical to notify each driver individually in certain circumstances. The STA Forum was deemed an efficient way to communicate important issues. One of the members that attended stated that if drivers had access to the WhatsApp Forum, these issues would be ironed out.</p> <p>Illegal plying for hire reports were also discussed.</p> <p>AA commented that JDW and KM appeared infrequently at the taxi ranks in Stafford, and that they had been seen twice in 4 years. JDW refuted this as we have been regular visitors of the ranks for years which was supported by BA. It was stated that we do as much as we can with the staff we have; taxis are only one of the areas of work covered by the Licensing Team; The Team have all licensed premises, gambling premises and envirocrime to deal with, as well as the day-to-day queries.</p> <p>GJ: reiterated that the taxi industry needs to work together to improve their image and educate the public in order to improve services for all.</p>	
	<p>Date and Time of Next Meeting</p> <p>Wednesday 9 February 2022 – 12pm Craddock Room, SBC</p>	