

TAXI FORUM

Notes of Meeting held on 26 February 2020

Present (Taxi Trade): Arsham Ditta, Paul Bates, Makhmood Hussain, Harry Jones, David Williams, Colin Jones, Asim Ozden, Babar Nasim, Shabir Khan, Sam Ashforth

(SBC Officers): Julie Wallace, Katie McKinney, Bryony Williams, Leo Parkes

		ACTION
	<p><u>PART A</u></p> <p>1) Welcome and Introductions</p> <p>JW introduced members of the department and explained Emma Brigham's current status, and asked drivers to introduce themselves for anyone who did not know them.</p> <p>Apologies made for lack of December Forum due to General Election.</p> <p>2) Taxi Fare Increase</p> <p>The report was introduced; the main change is an increase of 8% on 410 yards. JW then explained the changes in more detail.</p> <p>This was passed by Political group on 24th February 2020 and will be going to Cabinet on 5th March 2020.</p> <p>PB queried this as he had seen nothing listed on the Cabinet_agenda; JW explained that this was because the report was originally refused and has now been re-submitted after the agenda was produced and sent out.</p> <p>HJ asked on what grounds was it refused - JW advised that Cabinet thought the increase was a little too high.</p> <p>It has been resubmitted with more detail including details of petrol /diesel price increases, the report now also includes details of insurance premium increases.</p> <p>Tamworth revealed to have the highest fares amongst the neighbouring authorities</p> <p>The 'call in' period runs until 18th March 2020.</p> <p>There will be an advertisement placed in either the <i>Staffordshire Newsletter</i> or the <i>Express and Star</i> on or around 25th March 2020.</p> <p>PB asked if fees and charges would be discussed in the same meeting as the fares - JW advised they would not be discussed.</p> <p>PB questioned the process going forward ref fees and charges, informed that discussions and meetings were taking place in March.</p> <p>AD asked if we disclose what has been increased regarding percentages,</p>	

		ACTION
	<p>etc. – details of this are in the report which will be going to Cabinet.</p> <p>3) Taxi Fare Meters – May Bank Holiday (Friday 8th)</p> <p>Bank Holiday Monday changed to a Friday; instead of Monday 4th May, the Bank Holiday has changed to the Friday 8th May to commemorate VE Day.</p> <p>Letters to be sent out regarding changes and the impact this will have on the meters- it is hoped that the fares increase will be sorted before the Bank Holiday date so the meters are re-programmed to accommodate the change as this will cause some confusion for passengers and may lead to complaints re overcharging.</p> <p>If increase approved by Cabinet and the call in period has ended, then all drivers were informed that meters would need to be changed as soon as possible. The MR320 meters are no longer having tariffs written for them by Cygnet, so any driver who has this model will need to invest in a newer model.</p> <p>PB asked for a copy of the new tariff as he does not use a Cygnet meter.</p> <p>JW requested that the drivers at the Forum inform the other drivers of this information.</p> <p>4) Cleanliness of Vehicles</p> <p>JW acknowledged that the weather has been bad; however it is obvious when vehicles have not been washed for a number of weeks.</p> <p>Hackney cabs are not too bad; JW indicated that private hire operators need to ensure their fleet are washed regularly to avoid being in breach of their licensing conditions regarding cleanliness. SA confirmed he would take this information back to Aerobrights and ensure this was done.</p> <p>JW informed that a number of vehicles had been spotted over the past few weeks and dealt with.</p> <p>JW asked drivers to spread the word amongst the trade; Kaminski and Smart Cars have also been advised.</p> <p>AD mentioned Shell Jet Wash provides a car wash for £1, so there is no excuse for not getting vehicles cleaned.</p> <p>5) Informal Consultation – Reviewed Taxi Policy</p> <p>This will go to full Council on 21st July 2020.</p> <p>JW advised this has been prepared in readiness for consultation.</p> <p>HJ asked if they can put across their points now or if they have to wait - JW advised this is an informal consultation and the Trade would need to wait for the formal consultation -there is a 6 week period for this – 18th</p>	

		ACTION
	<p>March to 30th April 2020 where comments can be received by EH Licensing email inbox from any drivers who would like to comment. Comments must be received in writing.</p> <p>HJ asked who has made the amendments – JW replied that she has over a number of months.</p> <p>JW gave details about the additions regarding information sharing, NAFN and the NR3 database.</p> <p>AD asked if convictions would be listed on there - JW replied that they would not – the NR3 database is just revocations, refusals with basic details of the car and driver.</p> <p>JW reminded drivers that CSE renewal training is due this year for many of them as it has been 3 years since last done, JW also advised that Dementia Awareness Training has been added into the training required for drivers this was a trial on the last session but it seemed to be very well received so this may be incorporated going forward.</p> <p>Passport style photos must be recent for renewals.</p> <p>Previous refusals/revocations must be disclosed.</p> <p>JW clarified the DBS Update Service subscription deadline of 30 days.</p> <p>Emphasised the importance of up to date contact details, as in the future there is the potential to switch to a text alert system that is common for a number of organisations.</p> <p>HJ asked if there was a points system for complaints/misdemeanors; JW advised not – explained the process we follow.</p> <p>PB asked how many committees have been held regarding drivers, JW responded with approximate figure.</p> <p>Timescale change for disclosure of convictions, penalties etc. – 48 hours.</p> <p>HJ and PB asked for process if they have been stopped by the police but received no caution- these situations are not applicable – it is only if action taken or even interviewed without action being taken then we would need to be made aware.</p> <p>JW spoke about the vehicle age and that some drivers are not getting a return on their investment due to them not being licensed after 8 years old.</p> <p>In brief, the changes to vehicle ages are as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -<i>all vehicles</i> to be licensed up to 10 years old -London Cabs to be licensed up to 14 years old -Electric Cabs to be licensed up to 12 years old <p>Also, transfer of vehicles can only occur up to 8 years old.</p> <p>AD asked if existing licensed vehicles will fall under the new rule - JW said she would consider that.</p>	

		ACTION
	<p>WAV vehicles that are purchased new and the list price is over £23,000 will be licensed up to 12 years old.</p> <p>Cheaper vehicles may not be granted this new extension.</p> <p>PB suggested that the old rules should apply to the existing vehicles.</p> <p>SK questioned the transfer process.</p> <p>HJ questioned the electric vehicle 12 year rule - JW replied that this is a way to encourage use of electric vehicles.</p> <p>HJ suggested that these rules could depend on the vehicle and operator.</p> <p>HJ advised some vehicles will not last 10 years, due to the wear and tear they undergo.</p> <p>HJ questioned level of technical skill involved in vehicle inspections, and also the level of detail used by MOT providers.</p> <p>AD suggested some providers may fail vehicles to make money - JW responded that the providers were chosen carefully by reputation but this will be investigated.</p> <p>HJ asked if the wheelchair test is done when a new HCV is licensed; there are NVQs that are available for this kind of training and may be worth looking at.</p> <p>PB suggested that a driver should re-take the practical assessment if they have a Hackney vehicle but did not do the assessment in it - this was seconded by the other drivers.</p> <p>HJ questioned the process if passengers are too large to fit in particular vehicles; JW advised they would have to carefully refuse the fare and report it to Licensing and we would deal with any complaints.</p> <p>MOTs to be carried out twice a year once the vehicle turns <i>7 years old</i>; for London style cabs this will be twice a year from 11 years old.</p> <p>PB highlighted the fact that, currently, all vehicles are MOT'd twice a year from the same age.</p> <p>SK asked if we will include a clause about not extending a vehicle's life if it is not found fit.</p> <p>HJ suggested that expiry dates on tyre repair kits should be checked as they do have a limited shelf life.</p> <p>Category S write off vehicles can go back onto the road- there are some provisos to this, however, and new guidelines must be adhered to if wanting to purchase these kinds of vehicles.</p> <p>Dashcams are not suitable as a substitution for a CCTV system. CJ asked for recommendations for CCTV - JW advised that we cannot do this – reiterated that drivers who are looking to purchase CCTV systems provide the specification beforehand to JW to assess whether the system is fit for taxi purposes.</p> <p>Lost property – the operator can take charge of this if they know who to</p>	

		ACTION
	<p>contact- if not, property should be brought into our Reception using the evidence bags system- drivers put their plate number, date, journey details as usually customers always report losses to the Licensing Dept. This system is working and customers have been positive re the trade.</p> <p>Panoramic roofs are not acceptable as taxi sign cannot be fixed permanently on the front of the roof.</p> <p>AD questioned definition of ‘at the front of the vehicle’ – this was discussed.</p> <p>JW mentioned new Hackney Carriage signage- the current signage designs were shown to the group. Door signage should be permanently affixed, as should the plates. A question was raised as to whether the current signs for hackney carriages were suitable for the London Cabs that are licensed currently– this is to be looked at.</p> <p>AD requested a transparent background on the Hackney signage, rather than black.</p> <p>MH suggested a different colour than yellow for PH vehicle signage as this is the colour of Stoke’s vehicle plates – this will be looked at.</p> <p>JW advised drivers do not have to administer first aid unless trained to do so.</p> <p>JW advised that private hire operators must operate from one address only, and must have a fixed landline.</p> <p>DVLA points system discussed, following the changes in the guidance from the Institute of Licensing that was featured in the PHTM magazine.</p> <p><u>PART B Open Forum</u></p> <p>AD highlighted the issue of cross border hiring.</p> <p>JW highlighted Star Private Hire using cars from Stoke for Stafford jobs</p> <p>JW advised she is in consultation with Legal Services about this - believed to be an abuse of the Deregulation Act 2015. Operators can subcontract under the Legislation, however this is when fares can’t physically be fulfilled – it shouldn’t be used as standard practice.</p> <p>Smart Cars – vehicles from Stoke believed to be used for Stafford jobs also, a blue Passat and a red Passat with Smart Cars signage with yellow Stoke plates.</p> <p>AD can provide evidence of this situation if necessary.</p> <p>AH suggested that byelaws could be put in place - JW replied that this would be a very lengthy process.</p> <p>Drivers are concerned that Stafford and Stone could become flooded with</p>	

		ACTION
	<p>vehicles from outside the area</p> <p>Star Private Hire have allegedly advertised 1-16 seater vehicles on Facebook.</p> <p>CJ suggested that both operators could be revoked/refused under the Fit and Proper route. It was also suggested that mystery shopper exercises could be done to gain evidence.</p>	
	<p>Date and Time of Next Meeting</p> <p>Wednesday 10th June 2020, 12pm– Craddock Room, SBC</p>	