

**LICENSING AND SAFETY COMMITTEE  
5 FEBRUARY 2009**

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**BRACKNELL LICENSED TAXI FORUM  
(Chief Officer: Environment and Public Protection)**

**1 INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 Since the last meeting of the Licensing and Safety Committee on 2 October 2008, officers have met with representatives of the Bracknell Licensed Taxi Forum (BLTF) on two occasions: 14 October and 18 December 2008.

**2 SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

- 2.1 The minutes of the meetings held are attached as Appendices A and B.
- 2.2 As a point of clarification of the attendees of the meetings, Mr Watson and Mr Yexley currently own and drive hackney carriages in the Bracknell Forest borough, while Mr Hildreth and Mr Flanagan represent the GMB Union, Professional Drivers Branch.

**3 IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

- 3.1 There are no implications arising from this report.

**4 STRATEGIC RISK MANAGEMENT ISSUES**

- 4.1 There are no strategic risk management implications arising from this report.

Background Papers

Minutes of meeting held 14 October 2008

Minutes of meeting held 18 December 2008

Contact for further information

Laura Driscoll - 01344 352517

[laura.driscoll@bracknell-forest.gov.uk](mailto:laura.driscoll@bracknell-forest.gov.uk)

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## MINUTES


**Bracknell  
Forest  
Council**

**MEETING NAME:** Bracknell Licensed Taxi Forum

**MEETING DATE AND TIME:** 11.30 hours Tuesday 14 October 2008

**PRESENT:** Laura Driscoll (LD)  
Robert Sexton (RJS)  
Andy Watson (AW)  
John Yexley (JY)  
Mick Hildreth (MH)  
Terry Flanagan (TF)

1.	<p><b>Apologies</b></p> <p>None received.</p>	
2,	<p><b>Minutes of previous meetings</b></p> <p>Note to be added to minutes of meeting on 3 September 2008: Discussion was held regarding use of bus lanes by taxis; RJS had looked into this issue, and this is something that could be revisited as part of town centre redevelopment.</p>	
3.	<p><b>NVQ Road Passenger Transport</b></p> <p>BLTF feel there is not much benefit to existing drivers but maybe something that could be of benefit to operators as a selling point for their firm, or for new drivers. MH believes that Brighton use this as part of their 'knowledge' for new drivers. RJS explained that the training providers would be happy to do a presentation and this would be arranged at some point in the coming months.</p>	
4.	<p><b>Plying for hire</b></p> <p>BLTF say that there is a minority of the private hire trade who frequently ply for hire. This often happens at Après at night, including dispensation vehicles with advertising on the sides.</p> <p>BLTF also not happy with private hire vehicles using parking spaces next to the bus station rank. Some private hire vehicles bear the word 'taxi' in their door signs which could be misleading to members of the public. BLTF members are hesitant to make complaints as concerned</p>	

	<p>about maintaining anonymity but RJS explained Licensing need details of who and when to investigate as cannot be at the ranks 24/7, and cannot investigate anonymous complaints as cannot be sure that they are malicious complaints.</p> <p>TF feels that Council are failing in their duty of care to drivers and the new licensing officer must do their duty.</p> <p>BLTF says that main concern is with private hire vehicles moving up the parking spaces next to the rank as they become available, which makes it appear as though they are a taxi, which happens at all times of day, but more likely in quieter times and not rush hour.</p> <p>RJS will prioritise monitoring of rank areas, may be possible to obtain support from PCSOs (LD to check with TVP). Also problem with Après as on private land, so cannot enforce if they have contract with Wokingham firm for example. New licensing officer will hopefully be in post mid to late December.</p>	LD
5.	<p><b>First Aid Training</b> RJS explained that report went to Committee on 2 October and they requested further details to be considered in February, prior to implementation in April to implement for all existing drivers who have not yet done the course. At present, all new drivers since August 2001 have to do the course then refresher every five years.</p> <p>TF requested copy of risk assessment including hackney carriage trade relating to first aid training. Also enquired about the historical necessity and asked that Council meet with the GMB PDB health and safety officer. TF mentioned Colchester case where a driver stopped to help a hit and run victim but was beaten up by some jobs.</p> <p>RJS clarified that just because a driver has been trained, does not have to use it if they do not feel it is a safe situation. Council are happy to meet with health and safety officer and suggested may be useful for first aid trainer to attend also. TF to supply contact details.</p> <p>TF also concerned that drivers may fail on literacy/numeracy in first aid training but RJS confirmed that this not an issue as persons on course do practical examples, not written exam.</p> <p>BLTF asked whether drivers would be given any compensation for loss of time doing course. RJS explained that there are no funds for this but if drivers undertook as part of NVQ then possibility as Learning Skills Council do offer financial incentives.</p>	RJS          TF
6.	<p><b>Crime Prevention Leaflets</b> TVP have asked whether drivers can hand out crime prevention leaflets to passengers, BLTF have confirmed they are happy to do this. LD to confirm to TVP.</p>	LD
7.	<p><b>Unmet demand survey</b> As BLTF aware, issue was discussed at Committee on 2 Oct. Committee asked for details to be provided on options, costs etc for survey and decision to be made in February.</p>	

	<p>RJS confirmed that unable to put any temporary limit/stop on issuing hackney carriage plates without recent unmet demand survey in place. There is also a need for the survey to demonstrate that any restriction is in the interests of consumers.</p> <p>BLTF acknowledged there have been complaints about drivers, sometimes due to frustration as so difficult to earn a decent living at present and working very long hours, so this is not benefiting consumers as standards are slipping. BLTF will address issues with overranking and use of vehicle horns on ranks with their members.</p> <p>BLTF enquired re timescales for this issue, RJS confirmed report with full details to go to Committee in February and deadline would be mid January. RJS requested details of BLTF members to ensure that all drivers are consulted, BLTF cover approx 95% of vehicle owners but unable to provide list of members so Council will consult all drivers on the issue.</p> <p>TF said that the Committee's decision was ambiguous and it was not an appropriate response to a critical situation as new plates would be issued in the interim. Things need to be speeded up so the union will raise this directly with the Committee.</p> <p>MH stated that the DfT Best Practice Guidance was just that. BLTF wanted to get the message across that drivers are not greedy, but seriously struggling.</p> <p>GMB PDB will supply details of potential firms to carry out survey.</p>	<p><b>AW</b></p> <p><b>MH</b></p>
<p><b>8.</b></p>	<p><b>Any other business</b></p> <p>LD requested further details of private vehicles parking on ranks for passing to parking attendants for action – BLTF confirmed that targets could be Legion rank on Sundays, Point rank evenings and weekends and Red Lion rank on Fridays/Saturdays. LD to liaise with Parking Services.</p> <p>LD to email details to BLTF re options for Heathrow parking for vehicles which cannot fit under the height barriers.</p> <p>LD to email details to BLTF of website link to information about the town centre regeneration.</p> <p>BLTF raised issue of lack of public toilet provision in town centre at night, RJS to investigate and discuss at next meeting.</p>	<p><b>LD</b></p> <p><b>LD</b></p> <p><b>LD</b></p> <p><b>RJS</b></p>
<p><b>8.</b></p>	<p><b>Date of Next Meeting</b></p> <p>To be confirmed, mid to late November.</p>	

## MINUTES



**MEETING NAME:** Bracknell Licensed Taxi Forum

**MEETING DATE AND TIME:** 11.00 hours Thursday 18 December 2008

**PRESENT:** Robert Sexton (RJS)  
Laura Driscoll (LD)  
Mick Hildreth (MH)  
Andy Watson (AW)  
John Yexley (JY)

1.	<p><b>Minutes of last meeting</b> No amendments required. Outstanding actions as follows:</p> <p>RJS and MH to look into the issue of private hire vehicles displaying the word 'Taxi' in their door adverts.</p> <p>Monitoring of ranks by PCSOs to be requested.</p> <p>Details of GMB Health and Safety Rep to be provided.</p> <p>Re issue of over-ranking, RJS to look into whether a feeder rank at bus station is viable. BLTF will be campaigning to be able to use bus lanes, especially Bagshot Road to Crowthorne Road North.</p> <p>LD to check that Parking Services are monitoring ranks for private vehicles, especially evenings and weekends.</p> <p>RJS to investigate provision of public toilets in Borough.</p>	<p><b>RJS/MH</b></p> <p><b>LD</b></p> <p><b>MH</b></p> <p><b>RJS</b></p> <p><b>LD</b></p> <p><b>RJS</b></p>
2.	<p><b>Crime Prevention Leaflets</b> Leaflets with crime prevention advice given to BLTF to be passed out to public by the drivers. TVP are grateful to BLTF for their support.</p>	
3.	<p><b>Illegal Plying for Hire</b> LD explained that the bus station in particular is being monitored, no evidence of any offences yet. AW said it was only a tiny minority, but also reports of unlicensed vehicles from BLTF members. Any further information should be passed through to Licensing for action.</p>	

<p><b>4.</b></p>	<p><b>Complaints about drivers</b>  BLTF are concerned about the way a recent complaint was dealt with, as it was a trivial matter in their opinion but the driver was called into the office to see a Licensing Officer. BLTF feel all complainants should make their complaints in writing.</p> <p>RJS explained that the Council has a policy of taking all details at the first point of contact (at the Customer Service Centre) and avoiding the need for people to re-contact the Council wherever possible, so asking all complainants to put their complaint in writing would be contrary to this policy. Sometimes it will be necessary to obtain statements etc, and this would continue for the more serious cases.</p> <p>RJS apologised if the complaint was not dealt with in a satisfactory manner, and noted that the preference is not to summon drivers to the office immediately. Drivers are entitled to have a union rep present if they are required to attend. The main aim is to ensure that there is respect from both sides.</p>	
<p><b>5.</b></p>	<p><b>Extensions for existing saloon vehicles</b>  AW raised query re age of vehicle for plate S95, LD confirmed that vehicle must be replaced by end February 2009.</p> <p>AW mentioned an incident where a lady was injured while entering or exiting a wheelchair accessible vehicle (Euro 7), approx 4 weeks ago. It was raining and the lady fell and slipped on the step. No complaint had been received by Licensing and not aware of any issues with any particular model of vehicle.</p> <p>AW requested extension for existing saloon vehicles. RJS explained that there are currently 12 swivel seat vehicles (all due to be replaced by end of 2009) and approx 70 WAVs. RJS asked whether all BLTF members would be happy with extensions being provided, as a large number of drivers had invested significant sums of money in WAVs and there is a fairness issue.</p> <p>RJS explained that extensions are issued when a vehicle has an abnormally low mileage AND is in exceptional condition. Newer vehicles also have better safety features etc. The swivel seat vehicles have already had dispensation from the norm to help with the transition, including when these vehicles have been written off. BLTF will consider the argument for extension.</p>	<p><b>AW/JY</b></p>
<p><b>6.</b></p>	<p><b>Survey tenders</b>  Mouchel, Halcrow and TPI have all provided rough quotes so far of at least 14k. MH mentioned that it is best practice for local councillors to dictate their own terms, and is concerned that the Committee do not lose sight of the legislation which allows them to limit numbers. RJS asked whether any authorities who have not previously had a limit have introduced a limit, MH is not sure it is of relevance but will look into this. MH asked whether RJS supports the drivers, RJS explained that he has a neutral position but wishes to make sure the BLTF are aware of the issues e.g. OFT report so they can address them before the Committee makes a decision.</p>	<p><b>MH</b></p>

	<p>LD to chase DfT response to OFT report.</p> <p>RJS asked LD to organise sessions involving the BLTF and proposed survey firms.</p> <p>RJS to investigate whether BLTF will be able to speak at next Committee or whether comments will need to be received in writing.</p>	<p><b>LD</b></p> <p><b>LD</b></p> <p><b>RJS</b></p>
<b>7.</b>	<p><b>Safety Guidance</b></p> <p>LD drew attention to the safety guidance for taxi drivers released by the DfT available at <a href="http://www.dft.gov.uk/pgr/crime/taxiphv/">http://www.dft.gov.uk/pgr/crime/taxiphv/</a>.</p>	
<b>8.</b>	<p><b>Wheelchair Users</b></p> <p>A complaint was received that a number of hackney carriages at the Legion rank had refused to take a wheelchair user. JY is happy to provide support to any drivers who are not sure how to use their ramps etc. LD will be looking into the issue that meters are being switched on before the driver begins to assist the wheelchair user and will be seeking legal advice to ascertain whether this is an offence under Disability Discrimination Act, as the law says reasonable assistance should be provided at no extra charge.</p>	<b>LD</b>
<b>9.</b>	<p><b>Review of Guidance</b></p> <p>The Guidance notes will be reviewed at the next Committee. Some minor changes are being recommended, and also a review of vehicle specifications with regard to size of vehicles, which should not really affect hackney carriages.</p>	
<b>10.</b>	<p><b>Any other business</b></p> <p>The proposed licence fees for 2009/2010 are on display in reception and have been advertised in local press.</p>	
<b>11.</b>	<p><b>Date of Next Meeting</b></p> <p>To be confirmed.</p>	