

**TO: LICENSING AND SAFETY COMMITTEE  
22 OCTOBER 2020**

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**HACKNEY CARRIAGE AND PRIVATE HIRE TRADE MEETING UPDATE  
(Public Protection Manager)**

**1 PURPOSE OF REPORT**

To summarise the work of the Taxi Trade Group set up by the Licensing Team to advise on a way forward for issues raised by the trade.

**2 RECOMMENDATIONS**

**2.1 That the Committee:**

- i) Notes the content of the report and minutes attached, and;**
- ii) Makes any recommendations on matters discussed or for further discussion in the future of the Group.**

**3 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 3.1 The Licensing and Safety Committee asked that officer/trade meetings be set up to discuss issues of concern following representation of such from the trade with a further wish to receive feedback from the meetings.
- 3.2 Recent issues reported to the department indicate a need for an increase in dialogue with the trade during the uncertain times of COVID 19.
- 3.3 Request by the trade for a fare increase, mixed hackney carriage fleet, age of vehicle inspection process alteration and subsidy to licence fees.

**4 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

None.

**5 SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

- 5.1 Two virtual meetings were held, the first on the 23<sup>rd</sup> July 2020 which was attended by officers and 2 representatives from the trade, and a second on the 14<sup>th</sup> August 2020 which was attended by officers, Cllr Porter and 2 representatives from the trade. The following issues were discussed:

**5.2 Taxi Ranks**

- Additional rank at Morrison's, The Peel Centre. NK emailed the landowner a number of times but, as yet, no response has been received.
- Implementation of a rank outside Eagle House/old McDonalds. A meeting was held on the 25<sup>th</sup> August 2020 with Town Centre Management, Highways, Taxi Trade and Licensing Officers to discuss the possibility. Highways to investigate suitability.

## Unrestricted

- The Trade raised concerns regarding Waitrose Taxi Rank and vehicles, both licenced and unlicensed, blocking Bracknell Hackney Carriages from parking on it. NK advised we had no intel apart from “they all do it” so requested that all drivers pass her information to record frequency and numbers, as there is no recorded issue of any vehicles plying for hire or sitting at this rank.
- Also discussed for the future after “The Deck” is completed was the possibility of a number of taxi rank timed spaces (23.00 to 02.00) to facilitate the later opening of premises to be positioned opposite the Blue’s Smokehouse.
- The Point Rank was discussed with the options to offer it up if drivers are not using it or better sign posting from Morrison’s and the Peel Centre if landowners at the Peel Centre do not engage in discussions regarding a new rank.

### 5.3 Taxi Fare Rise

- The trade would like to increase the tariff from £6 to £6.80 per 2 miles. Officers sent West Berkshire’s current tariff and advised that the fare calculations done by West Berkshire work in 10/mile rather than yards.
- It was discussed the trade could increase the tariff every 3 years. This would not be so costly for the trade over this time frame and can raise with inflation regularly.
- The fares for licensed hackney carriage vehicles have not been increased since 2011.
- Taxi trade to present a Business case so the matter can be considered by the Licensing and Safety Committee
- UPDATE: The trade have been asked to provide the business case and a list of licence holders who have requested the rise but at the time of submission of the report this has not been received.

### 5.4 Campaign for Bracknell Forest Taxi Trade

- The group talked about promoting Bracknell Licensed Taxis to members of the public.
- The group talked about promoting the local licensing regime to members of the public and stressing the need to always use vehicles which are licensed locally and to promote local business.
- We will look at articles to be sent out via social media, to the local newspaper / newsletter promoting the local trade and reassuring them of the benefits ie they are licensed with Bracknell, tell people the checks taxi drivers must go through to get a licence. Promote the safety aspect.

### 5.5 Fees

- The trade asked if fees for courses (i.e. First Aid when the course content has not changed) could be charged as a lesser fee if just a refresher.

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- Fees go up by 4-5% every year, so is it possible to cap the increase? JOB advised that the CPI figure is added at an average of 2%, sometimes less, to the annual fee every year to be discussed if can be capped.

### 5.6 Mixed Fleets

- A discussion took place around possibly allowing a mixed fleet for Hackney Carriage vehicles.
- The trade were asked to put together a case to take to committee to include actual figures of how many wheelchair users were picked up in a month's period.
- It was agreed if a driver does not feel capable or safe escorting a wheelchair user into their vehicle then they can explain this to the member of the public explaining the safety elements and also send an email to [licensing.all@bracknell-forest.gov.uk](mailto:licensing.all@bracknell-forest.gov.uk) to advise so the team are aware in case of complaint.

### 5.7 Age of Vehicle Fee

- The trade spoke on how there was no charge previously for an age of vehicle inspection, the charge was just included in the new year's fees and they were never consulted.
- JOB explained the fees were part of the annual fee setting process of the Committee and full Council in 2019 and had come about as the PPP had been required to work on a full cost recovery and undertaking these inspections takes a considerable amount of time by officers. It was also thought to be a preferred method for drivers than an independent inspection which are considerably more expensive
- The trade has been saying for a while that there is less and less work now, especially with Uber on the scene, which in turn means the vehicles are not being used as much and mileage has been going down year on year.
- The trade suggested that the vehicles of this age already have an inspection/MOT every six months.
- It was suggested by the trade that perhaps the age when a vehicle is required to have an age of vehicle inspection be extended to 11 years instead of 10.
- Licensing to investigate if the age of vehicle can be extended to 11 years instead of 10 for a hackney carriage. Again, a business case should be provided from the trade

### 5.8 Licence Renewals – COVID-19

- The renewals of vehicle plates and driver badges was discussed where a driver has put their licence on hold due to COVID-19.
- A renewal form still needs to be submitted on expiry of the current licence.

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- The renewal fee can be paid once you start working again. If the full fee cannot be paid then Licensing can organise for you to make split payments over the rest of your licensed period.
- Your renewed licence will run from when it last expired.
- It has not been licensing's decision to ask for the full renewal fee even if some months have not been worked due to COVID, this decision has come from the authority.
- UPDATE: The Bracknell Taxi Drivers have provided an email, Attached in **Annex A** which requests the Age of Vehicle process and fee is changed and that the renewal process for driver's badges and vehicles who did not work during COVID-19 restrictions is granted an extension to previous and expired licences of the Committee for them to consider some type of fee relief.

### **7. Amendment to Guidance Notes and Conditions for Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Vehicle Owners, Operators and Drivers**

Attached in **Annex B** is the previous condition which has been amended to the new condition and approved by Cllr John Porter, the Chair of the Licensing & Safety Committee as a result of representation by the trade due to lack of work due to COVID-19.

### **8. ADVICE RECEIVED FROM STATUTORY AND OTHER OFFICERS**

#### Borough Solicitor

8.1 The relevant legal provisions are contained within the body of the report.

#### Borough Treasurer

8.2 None

#### Equalities Impact Assessment

8.3 There are no implications arising from the recommendation in this report.

#### Strategic Risk Management Issues

8.4 The Council has a duty to protect the public. To take no action could be criticised should there be a public enquiry into an incident in Bracknell Forest.

### **9.**

#### Background Papers

Trade Meeting Minutes from 23<sup>rd</sup> July 2020 and 14<sup>th</sup> August 2020

#### Contact for further information

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