

Taxi Consultation with SCC Licensing

Notes of Main Points

10am Tuesday 21st June 2022

Conference held via Microsoft Teams

Attendees SCC: Cllr Matt Bunday, Cllr Sally Spicer, Cllr Graham Galton, Cllr David Furnell, Cllr John Noon, Cllr Spiros Vassiliou, Cllr Sarah Vaughan.

Phil Bates, Russell Hawkins, Kate Aspinall, Stephen Elliott - SCC - Transforming Cities Project Lead for City Centre Scheme - Transforming Cities Fund (TCF), Simon May,

Attendees Trade - Private Hire Rep, Gino Piccinino, Hackney Rep, Ali Haydor, GMB Union Uber Driver Rep, Ian Loynes (SPECTRUM), Anwar Sumra, Hackney Rep , [Jay =] Jamilur Rahman, Private Hire Rep, Mohammed Sumra, Hackney Rep, Syed Rahman, Private Hire Rep, Perry McMillan, Unite Union

Apologies:

Rosie Zambra, Cllr Renyard

1) Notes of last meeting: agreed, no matters arising.

This meeting was recorded for minuting purposes. This was held for a short time and then delated.

Cllr Matt Bunday introduces himself as the new chair of the meeting.

No issues or problems arising from previous minutes.

This is a consultation a two-way exchange of information hearing everyone's views and comments. This is not a decision body simply to gather information.

2) Central Station – TCF Steve Elliot

SCC to present. Steve Elliot TCF project lead for the city centre projects. Presents presentation to the group.

TCF brief overview explained to the group.

Southampton central station interchange scheme explained- to improve the southern side of the station to try and reduce some of the conflicts between transport modes.

Infrastructure to include new bus facilities including bus shelters, waiting room, cycle parking, a new taxi rank, taxi parking a drop of facilities, car parking and loading facilities. (This was presented along with a map of the area indicating where they will be built.

SCC trying to cater for all different modes of transport and make everything more efficient for transport movement around the area.

Programme- detailed design will be finished in the autumn with the project due to start in January/February next year with completion due to happen in autumn 2023.

Cllr Sarah Vaughn- Taxi private hire where are they to pick up disabled passengers?

Steve Elliot- Presents map and explains the spaces in the design where the bus stops, private hire taxis, Hackney carriages and disabled bays will go. Also explained the new pedestrian walkways will go.

Key points raised in following discussion.

Cllr Sarah Vaughn- queries the distance between the entrance to the station and the disabled bays and how the distance may be a problem.

Steve Elliot TCF- Even though on the map it appears further away it is a more direct route from the entrance of the station.

Phil Bates SCC- Hackney carriages is still pavement side because the lead rank is still on the pavement along from there. The private hire's if they have disabled passengers to pick up it is part of the expectation for the drivers to help passengers with luggage etc.

Cllr Sarah Vaughn- Raised toilet facilities being worked into the design.

Steve Elliot TCF- On this design no as there isn't the space to accommodate this.

Point raised Trade- regarding full closure during the works as this is a important area from the trade.

Response Steve Elliot TCF- No definitive answer yet. Initially plan was to get off road works done first. The aim is to keep it as open as possible but no guarantee currently. When programme design is complete, we will have a more definitive answer on this.

Phil Bates SCC- raised the success of the re generation of the north side and the strong communication between works and the taxi trade. Same contractor will be being used. There will be some disruption but at the end of it, it will be more accessible for everyone involved.

Point raised Trade- can the public shelter be removed so two more taxis can park there?

Response Steve Elliot TCF- Highlighted on the plan where the shelter will be and highlights that it will be a dual-purpose shelter.

Point raised Trade- Concern during the work the high volume of taxis will be going to the northside of the station and has a Health and safety assessment been carried out due to the increase of vehicles and will there be a marshal on site.

Response Steve Elliot TCF- Still at the stage of doing the design at this stage it's a bit early for a definitive answer. Road safety audit has been carried out. More information will come to light when the design is finished.

Point raised Trade- feeder rank access. Easy access inside the drop off site rather than circling Southampton to get back to feeder rank.

Response Steve Elliot TCF- Appreciate the journey to get back to feeder ramp. Due to space, we have no capacity to widen area. Open to suggestions regarding this. Ability for taxis coming from westbound widening of the central reservation will help. Appreciate it does not help feeder ramp.

Phil Bates SCC- This has all been discussed with trade Reps and this is the best solution available with restrictions on the site.

3) Future consultation group- Licencing

Phil Bates- Draft document around the consultation has been discussed previously. Currently, we are at a point of agreement. The next steps will be after general agreement would be to have a consultation with the trade and then to bring a paper to the licencing committee to approve the process.

Hybrid process would retain elected trade reps, but we would only have two. All reps currently in forum we would expect to see out your three-year term you were elected for. (Explains the workings of this). Eventually culminating with one Hackney carriage rep one private hire. The rest of the group would be made up of bodies that meet criteria.

The chair would still be open to invite guests they felt necessary depending on the agenda.

Question/Responses-

Q: - Trade- Going from the DFT line we need to have someone representing the female members as they will provide valuable contributions to this meeting. Regarding election the tricky part is making sure transparency. A fee is used to carry out election. If we can bring the election in house this may be a better solution. Whatever the process is there should not be blame pushed on licencing.

Response SCC- Skills in department lacking so there would be a cost in getting qualified bodies to run the election be this hiring or sub-contracting.

Q: - Trade- Assumption two trade reps from each sector hackney/private hire. Has this now changed to one of each? Point raised over the workload of single trade reps.

Response SCC- Intention is to have one from each as there will be union reps SHO private hire association. This is down to number management, and we are confident there will be adequate representation. We would be directing drivers to bodies that could answer questions.

Q: - Cllr Sarah Vaughn- Taking the reps down will you be inviting each of the unions to each of the meetings?

Response SCC- Anyone who meets criteria will be entitled to attend the meeting, but we are ready for this. Someone from unite and GMB will be represented. Document has been circulated regarding the criteria.

Q: - Trade- Sickness and unavailability of reps how will this work?

Response SCC- You can still supply points on agenda items so points will be put across and debated. This will be under constant review.

Point: - Trade- We need to make sure wider aspect of trade is heard.

Summery SCC- Consultation process will begin, and correspondence will go out to trade.

4.Action against night buses. Gino Piccinino/Syed Rahman

Look into and take action against night buses subsidised by local and national government running late night with discounted fares (£1). Buses never paid the Itchen bridge toll. Like buses, taxis (HC) are classified as public transport and as such should cross the bridge without paying the toll. It could be the time to review the running of Night-time buses including the free crossing of the Itchen bridge by public transport.

GP-Issue raised over unfair competition. Buses being subsidised. Surcharging at different time having a big impact on work. Itchen bridge – Historically in 1979 it was free for public transport, so we don't understand why we must wait during peak time. Hackney carriage being hit substantially.

Point raised over the cost-of-living crisis so the £1 are necessary.

Point raised over private hire able to use bus lanes.

Clarification- Hackney trade very different to the private hire trade. Technology has advanced e.g., app bookings. Hackney cabs much like colleagues have had a very tough two years. Cost of living is also recognised.

Discussions regarding this will be carried forward

Summery- Phil bates SCC- sympathy regarding buses being subsidised. Government has not categorised taxis as public transportation. Unfortunately, this means that the authorities have

their hands tied. Cllrs will be going away with what they have learnt today to investigate as licencing is not in control of this.

4) Driver Amenities & rest rooms- Gino Piccinino

Point raised over the lack of facilities available to drivers through out the city. No toilets available after 1am for drivers to relieve themselves.

Health also comes into effect as toilets are needed for certain health conditions.

Understandably these facilities come at a cost, and we realise this would come from licencing fees.

Points raised.

Cllr Sarah Vaughn- Have had several constituency complains regarding drivers relieving themselves but I no way blame drivers for this. We should be providing toilet facilities for drivers. At this time all and any ideas would be heard.

Trade- Previous meeting with Steve Elliot this was mentioned.

Phil Bates SCC- Using licencing fees would not happen. Issue is recognised. Will speak to Steve Elliot. Will also speak to network rail regarding being able to gain access to platforms to use the facilities.

Point raised Trade- QR code lock could be used, and it would be a matter of goodwill.

Point raised Trade- Another solution could be approaching a few licenced establishments to see if I driver shows badge can they use the facilities.

Point raised SCC- Train station drivers do use facilities with showing the badge. If dialog could be made further to cater for all.

5) Transparency from licencing office- GP

Gino Piccinino- News letter from the licencing office could be useful to keep drivers aware of going on in the licencing office and to find out more about the licencing officers.

Point raised Trade- Communications does happen in asking for a newsletter will this come at a cost.

Russell Hawkins SCC- This is the forum where you learn what you need to know. As a trade rep it is then your responsibility to communicate this further. The point is noted and if things are appropriate and in the interest of drivers, this will be communicated.

Point raised Trade- Format is a good way for trade reps to go back to drivers. The only problem is communicating this to all the drivers. We appreciate this is more work for the licencing team but perhaps an annual news letter could be beneficial.

Phil Bates SCC- exploring use of social media to get information out to trade and public. We do publish notes of meetings on notice board. Creating a contact list of everyone's email would be useful.

6) More than a single MOT centre/ Meter and camera fitters not available on the weekend AS/GP

Anwar Sumra- Pressure on MOT centre due to the number of taxis. The turnaround contributes to loss of earning from the trade due to delay of MOT's being carried out.

Russell Hawkins- Test centres- They have a minimum service agreement with SCC that if a vehicle is left with them it will be tested by the end of the following working day. This has

been this way since the point was raised previously. No plans on expansion the contract is under review currently. Reason is some of test is subjective and having more than one centre may have them playing off against each other. Universal standard makes it a level playing field for everybody. We can govern their work and provide them with a constant stream of work. If we changed current system they would have more admin costs which would be reflected in the price.

Point raised Trade- Camera- Cost always go back to the drivers based on the current rate. New standards cameras must be installed in every Hackney and private hire. Current cameras are not cost effective to drivers. This needs to be looked at and fair to drivers.

Point raised Trade- Camera five hundred pounds and fitter cost a hundred. This is an issue to be brought back to legal in the council due as there are modern cameras that are far cheaper.

Point raised- SCC- the feedback regarding cameras. Having a screen to show camera is recording is also beneficial that it is live recording and offers extra deterrent.

Phil Bates SCC- Sent email 28/1/2021 it outlined the advantages and disadvantages regarding moving to more than one garage. It has been looked at in depth and I would still be resistant of having more than one. Any problems you encounter, please let us know so we can support you and follow this up.

Cameras- When a camera is fitted you have a choice of approved providers. At this moment we could consider providing 24 hours call out coverage, but this will come at increased cost.

Levels of encryption are set by government. Unfortunately, this adds to the cost. The ICO are in regular contact to make sure we are keeping standards.

Russell Hawkins SCC- Number of improved suppliers currently looking at increasing this as we speak.

7) Shortage of Hackney drivers due to insufficiency of new recruiting. AS

Since lockdown not a lot of drivers have passed the test. Either bring back a test for private hire that is equal or if you have worked as a private driver for three years you should be eligible to attain the hackney driver's licence.

Jamilur Rahman- point raised- Contradiction between lack of work for Hackneys how would it benefit moving across from private hire.

Anwar Sumra- Simply to supply the choice.

Russell Hawkins SCC- 51 new private drivers have been licenced and zero Hackney carriage drivers. Licences have been issued to some drivers with a legacy pass of the knowledge test, but we have none new passed the test this year.

Point raised Trade- Prior to the change of 2018 how many people still have multiple badges? Why are they not coming into the trade? Covid of course has been a big factor.

Cllr Sarah Vaughn- asks for clarification.

Phil Bates SCC- Summarises points raised- once a private hire has three years' experience, they should have a good knowledge of the city and therefore should be able to become a Hackney Carriage driver. Or making the test easier.

Cllr Sarah Vaughn- Making the test easier would become unfair to the drivers who have passed the knowledge tests in the past.

Russell Hawkins SCC- No new Hackney cab drivers passed this year. Will be down to committee if any changes come into effect. No complaint base to work off regarding drivers not knowing where they are going.

8) Electric Vehicle Scheme for Hackney carriages. Mohammed Sumra

Trying to get more information regarding the potential scheme for electric vehicles. Any information could we have an update so we can circulate this to other drivers.

Russell Hawkins SCC- At this time the clean air fund may subsidise up to 50% the lease cost of and electric vehicle. Different from the clean air scheme. This only pays for cost of lease of vehicle, but all other costs fall to the drivers. This has been highlighted and I will bring the trade more info when I have it.

Trade point raised- Any scheme that comes out private hire should not be left out of this scheme as this time it simply states Hackney carriages. Climate change a real problem and we all have personal responsibility surrounding this. Understandably the cost is there but this scheme could alleviate at least some of this cost.

Russell Hawkins- Oversight on the wording but private hire will not be excluded.

AOB- Future trade meetings are these happening online, or will they transition to face to face?

Russell Hawkins- A lot more member involvement online hence why they have been kept in this format.

Cllr Matt Bunday- Conversation will be had surrounding this but COVID case rates will also have to come into account due to the outcome of trades not being able to work due to covid so all factors will be considered.