

Taxi Consultation with SCC Licensing

**9:30am Wednesday 2nd September 2019
Conference Room 3**

Attendees- Cllr Catherine McEwing (Chair), Cllr Sally Spicer, Cllr Beryl Harris, Cllr Graham Galton, Cllr Matthew Renyard, Cllr Toqeer Kataria, Sam Shahid, Faisal Iqbal, Simon May, Pat Ross, Ali Haydor, Les Slater, Phil Bates (Licensing), Russell Hawkins (Senior Licensing Officer).

Apologies from: Rosie Zambra, Clive Johnson, Cllr Sue Blatchford

1. Apologies

As listed above.

Cllr McEwing is standing in for Cllr Blatchford at this meeting and welcomed all parties.

2. Minutes from Previous Meeting and Action points - August Licensing Committee Meeting (SCC)

Minutes are agreed by all parties and are to be signed off.

3. Code of Conduct for Trade Reps

PB has drafted a new set of Code of Conduct papers for Trade Reps after a lot of discussion. There had been concerns about conflict of interest and concerns raised by individuals about the previous meetings. The new code will cover common principles, provide advice, information of breaches and the appeals process. This should address concerns raised by individuals in the trade. The piece of work should be completed over coming weeks. PB cannot commit to timescales due to his current workload.

4. Downside Train Station Development

There is currently a rank for 6 vehicles on the town side of the station and an unofficial gathering of a further 9. In this area, there is understandably a high demand for spaces. There are developments for across the road into West Quay (old Toys R Us site) at present. In a recent meeting about the developments, the invites went out to trade reps but no taxi trade reps

attended with the meeting developers. The attendees at the meeting came up with an idea which was not a great solution. A resolution email was then sent which included a rank and feeder rank which allowed up to 15 vehicles. SS appreciated the effort put in by PB and RH and is in favour of the developments being managed the way PB has suggested as there is already enough issue with the buses in that location. PB has spoken with individuals who deal with the developers who were going to look into this issues. PB added that he would like the trade reps to be involved in what is being planned. AH agrees with SS and explained that there is only currently one place for disabled persons to access a taxi which needs to be taken into consideration for Hackneys. RH recognised that there have been issues and not exclusively for Hackney Carriages or private hire. There is only two spaces for pickup/drop off which is inadequate and likely to cause PH's to overflow into the premium parking bays.. AH understands that this is policy but it does not suit private hire drivers as they have often had to wait for up to 20 minutes. The large turning drop off/pickup semicircle on the upside works well. PB assured that he will do all he can to address this.

5. Safeguarding Training

RH explained that trade reps will be aware that the committee decided that all licences issued from 2020 must complete safeguarding training. SCC have gone out to procurement and through this process have chosen Personnel Checks Ltd who previously did the Safeguarding training for all the Winchester drivers. There will be an online booking system and they will be a phone number contact as well. The final parts of this process are likely to be thrashed out on a meeting on Monday 07/10/19. SCC will cover the cost of the initial course for all drivers that held a current licence on 1st July 2019. This will come into effect for all licences issued January 1st 2020 and drivers will receive the training at their renewal. There is a requirement that drivers are re-trained every 3 years but looking to making this an "update course" which will be shorter, quicker to attend and more efficient. SM asked if this something trade reps can do and then pass it to drivers. PB explained that there is work that needs to be completed before passing onto partners.. SS asked whether this could be just done online. PB understands the frustration but the Safeguarding Board have asked for this to be done face-to-face. RH stated that there is likely to be 20-30 students per class to one trainer. RH offered to trade reps the chance to attend one of the workshops and experience it for themselves. AH asked how this would work for those who speak different languages. PB explained that the only option would be to book individual translators which would not be reasonably practicable. Cllr BH asked how it is known if people are competent when they complete the course. RH confirmed that there is a short assessment in place. Cllr BH agrees that classroom face-to-face delivery is much better way of delivering such courses.

6. CAZ Change of Conditions – EURO 6 Diesel

RH highlighted changes of conditions for EURO 6 diesel vehicles. RH explained that at the committee meeting on 24th July vehicle conditions were altered that meant that you cannot put a euro 5 diesel on as a change of vehicle or a new licence from January 2020 and any proprietor with a euro 5 diesel will have to change their vehicle at renewal in 2022. There have been issues around identifying if vehicles are EURO 6 cars or not. There will be a database live from DEFRA in December 2019 which will identify the emission classification by inputting the number plate. We appreciate that TFL have a system but this is not reliable as it only works out if a vehicle was registered after 1st September 2015. This does not mean that a vehicle is a euro 6 as it was still legal to sell a new euro 5 car up until 1st September 2016.. The DEFRA database will be something that will be relied on. AH explained that EURO 6 diesel issue was thrashed out in the committee meeting in July 2019. RH is aware of this but believes that the message needs to be continuous and clear. PB is happy to clarify to discuss where people stand if they are unsure about what cars to buy etc. Cllr McE thinks it would be useful to advise trade of links to the DEFRA website. PB stated that as much notice as possible is being provided. There is cost to the change of conditions, the clean air scheme comes with grant money and there are two separate schemes now. SS feels that different websites will give different results. RH assured that every proprietor that has a vehicle that may be a euro 5 diesel has been written to and informed of a method to find out their emission standard but it is very long winded. PB agrees to put out a notice on the noticeboard to inform of other useful sites for information. Cllr GG warned that making people aware that there is more than one site will not mean they will agree with each other. RH agrees to put something on the noticeboard when the DEFRA checking site is live. McE, all trade should provide Licensing with an up to date email address

7. Private Hire Driver Bespoke Knowledge Test

RH stated that back in 2018, SCC altered the test for hire drivers which has had the desired effect in locally licensing vehicles but has flagged up issues. SCC want to address these issues. Instead of bringing back the old test, SCC Licensing want to develop a completely new one. Some questions will remain but new questions will be developed . PB would like input from the trade as to what questions can be put into the new test. AH feels that SCC should never have stopped the test for private hire. AH feels this was wrong and most out of town workers will now work for UBER instead of Radio Taxis or West Quay taxis. AH would like the test brought back immediately. RH understands AH point. reforming the test would be more beneficial for Southampton. PR feels that the standard of workers coming through is pretty appalling. There are more who fail the operators test than pass with the new test. PR feels that a verbal test approach is needed and is happy to discuss this further with RH and PB. SM can understand why the test was changed but would like the old version reinstated. There were elements to the previous assessment such as basic knowledge which was good, but knowing exact road names for the new assessment would be difficult. SS suggested bringing back old days of the

private apprenticeship. For Southampton, it should be compulsory that they have a proper knowledge test and are given a booklet on what to do. Cllr BH stated that if a licensing vehicle is given a licensing plate, the driver should have to do a test with it. PB clarified that the test is not for plates, but for the drivers. PB feels that SCC are trying to re-dress the test by removing the knowledge areas which will have other implications. There have been other issues identified, the trade would like to re-introduce a test but not just for private hire. RH stated that if SCC went back to 2018 and stood still, then Southampton tradewould have been flooded by out of town private hires. The Local Authority do not want a draconian test such as in 2015 which was convoluted and an obvious barrier into the trade.

8. Medical Checks

PR paid £160 for his medical, and others in his organisation paid other rates. Eastleigh had a system where everyone went to same doctor which SCC should consider as well as looking at the bus drivers system. However, the price must be same for everyone. PB explained that SCC cannot control what doctors will charge. AH feels that it is a question of who the best person to do the medical. AH would only see his own GP but would support in-house as long as the options go to your own GP stands. SM added that at times it is difficult to get an appointment with your own GP, therefore it may be worth approving a few practices for choice. SS stated that his GP would be the best option and agrees with AH. Cllr GG suggested that BUPA have a system for medicals which are in region of £50 to £60. PB explained that SCC require a medical similar to the bus and lorry drivers which are known as Group 2 and overseen by the DVLA. The General Medical Council is fighting back about doctors completing these. The guidelines will range from £50 to £180. RH is slightly concerned about some of this but clarified that Eastleigh Council have a system where they can go to their own GP with a screening form. RH is unsure of costs around screening form.

ACTION - This item to come as an item for January meeting

9. DBS Update Service – must be compulsory

DBS update – AH encouraged drivers to go on the update service. When it comes to renewing their licence, they still have to wait 8 to 12 weeks for their DBS. They could be losing 9 to 10 weeks of work. RH agreed with everything said on the subject of DBS. Recently, they are sending forms out earlier than usual as DBS have explained it is taking longer, it is very clear that it takes 6 to 8 weeks to return DBS. If a license is going to expire end of this year, renewal forms come out this month. SCC are conscious of this problem with the update service and will try to give drivers a form explaining how to get onto the update service. Looking forwards, there are some choices of whether to continue to do DBS in house like currently or use an outside company such as Personnel Checks where the documents are checked in places like post office before DBS is sent off and then come to SCC to renew but this will cost more. SCC are investigating a new company to create an update service DBS

check and would carry out DBS check with them before going onto the update service. The additional checks do not cost any money and continually checks in the background if anything comes up. From a safeguarding point of view, it is great but someone will have to pay, as long as drivers pay their update. SM agreed that it should be compulsory but outsourcing is a bad move because of the personal information shared. RH stated that there is a secure check in place, Personnel checks are already involved and should not come back at all. RH also pointed out it is not possible to apply conditions to hackney carriage drivers requiring them to sign up to the update service.

10. Dock Permits

SS suggested hackney carriages in the docks need credit card facilities.. PB clarified that credit cards are fine, but some debit cards will have restrictions and cannot be overdrawn. However, some will have to go to a cashpoint instead in order to increase overall business. RH explained that people run their own business and it is up to the driver if they want to operate by card or not. LS stated that Hackney drivers are their own business and should run it how they want. PB stated that the actual issue is some drivers will chose to use credit cards or not depending on where their trip goes. This is an issue trade want to address. There is some merit/suggestion as to how much of an impact this would have on the docks. Cllr S referred to some trade having small card machine devices which were really helpful. SM explained that the card fees have completely changed.. EH referred to the need to be mindful of the law when taking payments through an app using a mobile phone. The engine must not be running and to consider safe places to take card payments. RH asked the trade if they wanted licensing to approach British Ports to raise this issue. Agreed by all. They may use this as opportunity to update their rules.

11. Taxi Ranks – Boat show

The Southampton Boat show is the biggest in Europe at moment and there needs to be further detail about how taxis can access this. There have been accidents due to lack of parking, for example, one accident caused £1500 damage. SCC and The Boat Show organisers at an event meeting agreed that the rank in Herbert Walker Avenue was not used and of little value. The organisers cannot find a suitable safe location for an alternative. It was reported that security guards were taking money to allow some drivers to pick up around the boat show. PB informed that the boat show has changed its footprint which has changed for ranking issues and it is unfair to say that licensing agreed with this. There should be a taxi rank but it is trying to find an appropriate place for it. SCC Licensing are very concerned by security guards making local agreements and taking money. Options have been explored. The boat show and buildings around it have changed over past 5 years. The boat show organisers said they were going to put up notices but failed to do this. Licensing staff did put notices up pointing the public towards the nearest ranks. PB confirmed that they were fighting the trades' corner.

**12. Submit Online Application option for Drivers Badge, New or renew.
Reduce paper and cost.**

AH stated that nowadays licenses and passports can be paid for online and there should be a place where trade can renew vehicle plates and more online. AH feels that SCC Licensing should be relishing the opportunity that they can do this. RH feels that it can be done as other Local Authority's do this and would like to be more automated and online. However, SCC has a system that generates license ISP's as part of an intergrated system that serves many other sectors. There is a gradual system change over a few years, for example MOT's have already changed so we check online. If you are coming into produce documents, it might be checked at post office instead but for now, SCC are governed by a system. If there was a new system it would come at a significant cost. It will eventually change but not at the pace any of us would like. RH agrees with AH. AH recognises that it will take time, there are people that use both online and paper. The trade feel that RH needs to appreciate that there could be a number of people that send in documents via email and they then work it from their end.

13. Camera and Meter

Some companies do not use meters but use an app as a meter. A lot of the trade feel that the cost of camera installation is too high. Some trade members feel that other camera operators can fit cameras for less. Prices really vary as some are charged £80 for a camera fitting and some charge £70. They feel that there are places out there cheaper than SCC.

PB regarding meters, it is quite easy and will be happy to approve more fitters. Cameras are slightly different, with different processes to downloading data, due to data encryption and sensitive data, fitters need to be approved by the company providing them and SCC. Each system has its own process for downloading so SCC will restrict approved devices to 5 so staff retain the knowledge to effectively manage the download requests. LS asked if both a camera fitter and meter fitter had been authorised by manufacturers to buy their equipment to do the job, no set prices, no bartering. LS is/was an agent for two manufacturers of cameras, one closed down a few years ago. LS has spent 9 months getting another system up together. The prices have been reduced and the current rate is £575 to fit cameras. LS stated that AH has got to look at what investment is needed for the job up front but fitted. LS is happy to discuss more outside.

14. Subsidised Cost - Contribution for replacing old cars or buying brand new

SS stated that some cars keep coming to him because they do not know where to claim the money from. RH explained that this is SCC clean air scheme and it will be placed on the noticeboard.

15. Itchen Bridge card and charges

SS feels that it is about time that the Itchen Bridge stopped charging the trade in order to encourage the public to use taxis. Buses are used instead of taxi services. Cllr McE stated that charges from last year were made clear, there is an option to use SMART cards and a charge associated with that. PB stated that drivers are currently charged at a business rate, if you are licensed by SCC. AH did not agree that it should be free and there had been discussions about using bus lane at peak times but it was considered unsafe for pedestrians. Cllr McE feels that it would be unfair to bring Cllr Vaughan into anything as she does not have required knowledge or experience. The issue is about how much a driver can charge for crossing the Itchen Bridge. PB feels this is not accurate at all. The Fare Chart allows you to recover charge for going across. AH stated there have been cases where drivers that use SMART card and were charged 70p but charge the customer £1.20p or more. AH added that as a driver, he should not be charging passengers for this as he would be profiting. There was discussion on charging a flat rate for all licensed vehicles. This would have to go through the process of fare reviews overall. PB stated that the difficulty is the technology is not there to recognise licensed vehicles. SS stated that for years it has been customers pay one way and drivers pay the other. SS thinks if there is a taxi sign on the vehicle they should be able to use the bus lane. Cllr McE stated that each authority has their own way dealing with bus lanes, it would fall foul if there were taxis allowed into bus lanes in built up areas like the bridge. AH said that it is a safety issue but nobody should be profiting. PB will arrange test purchasing across the bridge to ensure compliance with fares.

16. Remove Sandals from dress code

AH stated that as sandals are in the dress code for private hire. The law says it is not illegal but RAC and more have noted it as dangerous especially if sandals can come off. There are drivers that tend to wear sandals and SCC Licensing would like sandals not to be allowed to be worn at all when driving. PB has not seen the reports mentioned but is prepared to support the proposal as it does increase the risk when driving. SM agreed. SS explained that he encourages his drivers to dress smartly where possible. In London, they sometimes wear hardly anything. SM agreed due to health and safety. AH has raised the use of walking sandals. RH this can only be conditioned to private hire drivers but it can be added to the dock conditions.

17. **Btech**
18. **Compliance Test**
19. **One cost for both badge**
20. **Options to have sticker or magnetic signs**

The above items will be written statements.

AOB

Cllr S asked if UBER drivers have licensing, RH agreed to show Cllr S the processes and explain how they are the same as private hire drivers..

Date of next meeting: 21.01.20