

Taxi and Private Hire Trade Forum

Trade Consultation with Southampton City

Council Licensing

10am to 1145 Wednesday 22nd February 2023
Conference Room 3, Civic Centre

Cllr Bunday has also invited the following people to attend:

Ian Lyons - Spectrum Southampton

AGENDA

1. Introductions/Apologies Chair
2. Minutes from Previous Meeting Chair
3. Taxi camera, how we can use it to help driver complaints. SR
 - **Advised that SCC is data controller. SCC can only access if in line with download policy.**
 - **Driver can use the subject access request though if there are other people present in the vehicle, it may require their consent.**
4. Driver complaint procedures SR
 - **This item was linked to the item above, in that drivers are concerned that unfounded allegations are being made against them to Licensing and operators. Drivers want better access to camera footage in such instances. Licensing officers advised that we are aware of many such allegations, and we tend to not investigate them as it is a waste of resource. It takes over an hour of an enforcement officers time to complete a download of a system. We must be mindful to use this time wisely.**
5. Itchen toll Bridge, what is happening regarding concessions for drivers that live outside Southampton but have a Southampton badge SR
 - **Taxi trade do not fit within the legal definition of the Bill for concession for small businesses.**
6. Taxi camera fitters availability AS/SR

- **A procurement was being carried out at that time. This is concluded but sadly only gained one new system, 4Eyez. It is I believe cheaper than the current systems. Available via Radio Taxis.**
7. Lack of electric charging points, what steps taken by licensing and wider green council departments to ensure enough charging points is available to drivers? AH
- **Clean air team are looking at this. There is no budget for this area but with partnership from the private sector, more areas for chargers are being looked at. These will not be dedicated taxi chargers like the two in place at bitterne and the station however as these were directly funded by DEFRA as mitigation for a clean air zone.**
8. One badge for those entitled to hold "Hackney & PH Drivers licence" at one set fee. AS/AH
- **Licensing looked into this. We agreed that there was scope to implement a second badge fee reduction and have implemented it with the online form. It is conditional on the renewal dates lining up. Implemented when we put driver renewals/applications online. Additional licence fee is £100.**
9. Pro-rata on operator and driver badge fees is most probably illegal, since we are paying for a licence that we are not actually receiving. SHPHA
- **No it is not. The legislation specifically states we can licence up to 5 years for operators, up to 3 years for drivers and up to 1 year for vehicles.**
10. Compulsory card machines to be in all licensed vehicles. SHPHA
- **ABP have implemented this as a condition in the docks permit agreement for 2023. SCC will see how this progresses but do agree and aspire to have this condition for hackney carriages at some point in the future.**
11. Annual review of fare increase. AS/SHPHA
- **Yes, we await a fare structure from the trade.**
12. We would like to request that an Overview and Scrutiny panel to look at the way licensing spend licence fee money from the five taxi budgets. SHPHA
- **That is not the role of this panel, and we cannot request this. We do get audited by internal audit. They subcontract it out to another authority so the check is independent.**
13. We would like delegated powers removed from officers and decisions returned to councillors which used to happen and was a far fairer system. SHPHA

- **With over 120 suspensions, revocations and refusals in 2022, this would be unviable and not cost effective. We have no examples of unfair decisions being made by officers under delegated powers.**
 - **Licensing Councillors were in agreement with this and were very satisfied of the current decision making regime.**
14. Crew Bus conversions, why do we have to have an IVA (Individual Vehicle Approval) undertaken but Eastleigh which your department licenses allow them not to have one? SHPHA
- **An operator in Eastleigh has the appropriate certificates to demonstrate the conversions they carry out meet the DVSA requirements, they have been provided with an exemption, otherwise the process is the same at both authorities.**
15. Implement a policy on operator licences to stop them unlawfully suspending drivers from their platforms. JC
- **This is not a licensing matter. It is not in an operators interest to suspend a driver without reason as a driver earns an operator money. Licensing to assist with communications in some instances when they can.**
16. CCTV Monitoring of Taxi Ranks AS
- **The legislation does not allow for taxi rank (and bus stop) enforcement by camera.**
17. Bus Lane signage AS
- **Not a Licensing matter. Maybe one for highways?**

The following items will be answered by a written response after the meeting:

18. We need a new Southampton Transport Act to include electric/Hybrid cars, plus diesel, extended age of vehicle and to do away with the corporate colour of white for hackney carriages. It is unfair business practice when so many cars from neighbouring areas have now copied our colour of white. SHPHA

The relevant Cabinet lead and Chair of the Licensing committee have considered the request to change the colour of Southampton's Hackney Cars. We have been minded by public safety, which suggests that clearly identifiable taxis are good for public safety as they are clearly identifiable and a natural refuge point for if needed. We are also minded that other local authorities use specific colours, and we have not seen consistent evidence that clearly suggests that the costs for another colour of taxi would be cheaper, with officers reporting arguments for and against. There would also need to be a lengthy and considered

design process to decide any new colour so that it slotted in appropriate with our wider corporate colours and business policies.

With all this in mind, we do not anticipate changing the colour at present. We appreciate that other authorities may have a similar colour, but we feel that this is just the luck of the draw and that there would be nothing to stop them also changing their colours in the future.

We can also assure the trade that we are very aware of the national and local targets that exist to phase out combustion vehicles in the UK over the next few years and we have our own proactive targets to reduce air pollution within Southampton. We are actively looking into the electric infrastructure needed to support this, guided by national government legislation and guidance, and within this we will continue to consider the needs of the trade.

19. Council needs to contribute towards the cost of CCTV in our licenced vehicles. AH

Southampton City Council, like most other local authorities, are facing very tough financial challenges at present and all costings must be managed closely. We also need to be wary of the fairness of any spend that we commit to. To spend money subsidising the trade in this way would seem unfair and disproportionate to other businesses and industries within the City, who might legitimately ask why we were not contributing towards their key costs in similar ways. We are also confident in the procurement processes that officers undertake with suppliers to keep costs as fair for the trade as possible, and this process is scrutinised as well through our own governance.

Extend the life of vehicle age. AS/AH/JC

Council will always put passenger safety first when making our taxi and licensing policies. We will use data and evidence to support these decisions and will also be guided by national transport policy. Although we will never set timelines for the maximum age of vehicles arbitrarily, the evidence and guidance does not support the extending of the age limit to vehicles at present. A recent spot-check of the condition of vehicles was further evidence when a large proportion of the vehicles inspected failed the spot check.

We have looked at this in detail, as was promised at the recent taxi forum meeting. We understand that taxi drivers face a very tough economic time at present and will always consider ways to make things slightly easier for them, but we must always prioritise passenger safety, which does not support an increase in the age.

Trade Invitees

AH – Ali HAYDOR - GMB Union Rep
PM – Perry MCMILLAN - UNITE union Rep

AS – Ajmal SUDAN	-	SHO
IH – Ian HALL	-	SHPHA
AS – Anwar SUMRA	-	Elected Hackney Rep
GP – Gino PICCANINO	-	Elected Hackney Rep
JR - Jamilur RAHMAN	-	Elected Private Hire Trade Rep
SR – Syed RAHMAN	-	Elected Private Hire Trade Rep

SHO	–	Southampton Hackney Organisation
SHPHA	–	Southampton Hackney and Private Hire Association