

MINUTES - TAXI PROJECT MEETING

THURSDAY 6 AUGUST 2020 11:30 (Microsoft Teams)

Attended

Cllr Jackie Porter

Cllr Roger Bentote

David Ingram

Carol Stefanczuk

Claire Humphreys

Apologies

Richard Botham

Simon Finch

Nathan Mountney

The amended minutes of the meeting held on 29 May 2020 were approved.

Carol Stefanczuk informed the group that we held a virtual meeting with the Taxi Forum on the 8 July 2020 to discuss the consultation survey results and to inform them of the draft proposals the working party agreed would be putting forward to the Licensing & Regulation committee for consideration on the 15 September 2020, with respect to amending the current Taxi and Private Hire Policy.

Carol Stefanczuk told the group that she and Claire Humphreys had on separate occasions made visits to the taxi ranks to talk with the drivers. Both Carol Stefanczuk and Claire Humphreys reported that there is very little work out there; the drivers are really struggling and concerned about what the future brings for their trade. Carol Stefanczuk said that some drivers have given up taxi driving and are having to sell their vehicles. The market for selling them is not good; it is understood that one driver sold his vehicle for half of the expected value as he was desperate to sell.

Cllr Jackie Porter commented that they are a vital service, but no-body is using them. Carol Stefanczuk said that the students will be coming back to the University soon, which could have an impact on the City. The licensing team (amongst others) are going to be working with the University Student Union to provide guidance to students with regards to Covid-19 and enjoying a 'safe night out' whilst behaving responsibly.

Cllr Jackie Porter asked that if the proposals were adopted, did the Forum think that this would put the drivers out of business. Carol Stefanczuk and Claire Humphreys both commented that the Forum seemed happy in general. Claire Humphreys

explained that the main proposal of concern to the Forum was in relation to the permanent plates and signs on vehicles. Carol Stefanczuk had explained to the Forum that if they had any concerns they could raise them at the Licensing & Regulation meeting on the 15th September 2020.

Cllr Roger Bentote commented on the start of life vehicle age and the end of life vehicle age, and felt we should show more flexibility. Carol Stefanczuk was concerned that this would make it confusing and wanted to ensure consistency. Carol Stefanczuk also commented that the end of life age of the vehicle was key to having a positive effect on air quality and the climate emergency.

David Ingram said that we must primarily take into account public safety, we must have a consistent approach rather than offering them flexibility.

Carol Stefanczuk asked for clarification from the last meeting as to whether it had been decided that we propose 4 or 5 years and under as the start of vehicle life age for both Hackney Carriage and Private Hire. It was confirmed that we would propose 5 years as the start of life age. This would ensure all new vehicles would meet Euro 6 emissions standard. This would enable the Hackney Carriage drivers to purchase a slightly cheaper rear loading WAV vehicle if their current vehicle falls into the category of being registered before 1 September 2015. These vehicles will have to be replaced by 1 January 2023 if the proposals are adopted into policy.

Carol Stefanczuk said that the Forum surprisingly felt we should keep the start of life age of the vehicles as it is 3 years for Hackney Carriages and 5 years for Private Hire. David Ingram replied that this would be a choice based policy. If the Hackney Carriage drivers wished to purchase a 3 year old vehicle, then it would be up to them.

Cllr Jackie Porter asked what happened to the plates if drivers bought a new vehicle. Carol Stefanczuk informed that the plates are returned if the driver surrenders the licence or if the licence is being transferred to a new vehicle, we would issue new plates and the old ones would be returned.

Cllr Jackie Porter was concerned that a vehicle could be sold with the plates. Carol Stefanczuk reassured her that all licence plates have an expiry date on them and they are renewed yearly. David Ingram commented that we have procedures in place to ensure this doesn't happen.

The main points discussed and agreed.

Cllr Jackie Porter went through each proposal to be considered at the Licensing & Regulation Committee Meeting on the 15 September 2020. Each proposal was agreed by Cllr Roger Bentote and the meeting attendees.

1. In order to improve air quality and respond to the Climate Emergency, **all** existing vehicles that have a date of first registration before 1 September 2015 must be replaced by 1 January 2023 – **Agreed**

2. Livery – New Hackney Carriages

- A standard white body colour (all panels) to be proposed for all new Hackney Carriage vehicles. **Agreed**
- All new Hackney Carriages to have the approved Council door sign permanently fixed to both front doors. **Agreed**
- All new hackney Carriages to have a licence plate permanently fixed to the rear of the vehicle to the satisfaction of the Licensing Authority **Agreed**

Current Hackney Carriages

- All current Hackney Carriages to have approved Council door sign permanently fixed to both front doors no later than 30 June 2021. – **Agreed**
- All current Hackney Carriages to have their licence plate permanently fixed to the rear of the vehicle to the satisfaction of the Licensing Authority no later than 30 June 2021. **Agreed**

Private Hire Vehicles

- All new private hire vehicles must be of any other colour except for white. **Agreed**
- All new Private Hire vehicles must have the approved Council door sign permanently fixed to both front doors. **Agreed**
- All new Private Hire vehicles to have their licence plate permanently fixed to the rear of the vehicle to the satisfaction of the Licensing Authority **Agreed**

Current Private Hire vehicles

- All current Private Hire vehicles must have the approved Council door sign permanently fixed to both front doors no later than 30 June 2021. **Agreed**
- All current Private Hire vehicles must have their licence plate permanently fixed to the rear of the vehicle to the satisfaction of the Licensing Authority, no later than 30 June 2021. **Agreed**

Wheelchair Accessible Vehicles (WAV)

- All new Wheelchair Accessible (WAV) vehicles can be either side or rear loading and must be capable of carrying a wheelchair and its passenger plus a minimum of one other passenger. With immediate effect. **Agreed**

Age of Vehicles

- All new Hackney Carriage and Private Hire vehicles, when licensed for the first time, must be less than 5 years old from the date of first registration. **Agreed**
- All licensed vehicles, other than Electric/Hybrid, will have an end of life age of 12 years from the date of first registration. **Agreed**
- All Hackney Carriage/Private Hire Electric/ Hybrid, when licensed for the first time, must be less than 8 years old from the date of first registration. **Agreed**
- All Electric/Hybrid licensed vehicles will have an end of life age of 15 years from the date of first registration. **Agreed**

Contactless Payment Facility

- All new Hackney Carriage and Private Hire vehicles (other than those who carry out contracts only) must carry a contactless payment device to take payment by card in addition to accepting payment in cash. **Agreed**
- All current Hackney Carriage and Private Hire vehicles (other than those who carry out contracts only) must carry a contactless payment device to take payment by card in addition to accepting payment in cash, no later than 30 June 2021. **Agreed**

Driver Training

- All new drivers must complete and pass disability awareness training, with a training provider approved by the Licensing Authority, before a driver's licence is granted by the Council. **Agreed**
- All current licensed drivers must complete and pass disability awareness training with a training provider approved by the Licensing Authority, no later than 31 August 2021. **Agreed**

Claire Humphreys advised the group that a Taxi Forum member had made comments with regards to the incentives to encourage Electric & Hybrid vehicles to our fleet of licensed vehicles, implying that no driver would consider purchasing an Electric vehicle of 8 years old, due to the battery life not lasting much longer than that. David Ingram commented, we have had no evidence presented to support the comment and it is the choice of the driver whether take advantage of this incentive.

Carol Stefanczuk informed the group that the Department for Transport has now released required standards that Licensing Authorities must 'have regard to'. CCTV is one of them. The Council would need to investigate and consider if there is a

justifiable need to require CCTV in vehicles licensed in our district i.e. obtain crime statistics from the Police. The outcome of Southampton and Portsmouth City Council's challenge to the ICO will be an important factor to take into consideration. Drivers would also be required under the DfT standards to have enhanced DBS checks done every 6 months which would require them to register for the DBS update service.

David Ingram said there had been a presentation from Cornerstone Solicitors on this subject and he would email the link to all of the group should they wish to view this.

Carol Stefanczuk advised she will take advice from legal as to whether we should include the recommendations within our paper for the 15th September 2020 or if we should submit a separate paper at the next scheduled Licensing & Regulation committee meeting.

Claire Humphreys advised the working party that the next Taxi & Private Hire Forum meeting will be held on the 1st September 2020. Cllr Jackie Porter asked if she would be able to attend. Claire Humphreys will forward a Zoom invitation.

Cllr Jackie Porter thanked Licensing for enquiring how the Muslim drivers were coping with Covid-19 and praying, due to the closure of the Guildhall. David Ingram advised that this would be discussed at the Chief Officers Group that afternoon (6 August 2020).

Carol Stefanczuk advised the group that due to the Sunday Market being trialled in the Broadway around the end of August 2020, the Broadway Taxi Rank would be pushed back to outside of the Guildhall steps. Extra signage was being requested and the Taxi drivers will be notified.