

MINUTES - TAXI PROJECT MEETING

FRIDAY MAY 29 2020 10:30 (Microsoft Teams)

Attended

Cllr Jackie Porter

Cllr Roger Bentote

Simon Finch

David Ingram

Nathan Mountney

Carol Stefanczuk

Claire Humphreys

Apologies

Richard Botham

1) Discuss Hackney Carriage & Private hire Consultation Report

Carol informed the working group that the full report had been received from SMRS at the beginning of the week. Everyone confirmed they had received a copy. She informed the group that a meeting was held late last week to discuss the initial finds with herself, David Ingram and Claire Humphreys being present.

Carol Stefanczuk commented that there had been a good amount of public participation, but it was very disappointing that so few of trade that took part in the consultation, but reassured the group that all drivers and operators were sent several reminders, and there had also been visits to the rank to encourage drivers to take part in the survey and provide their views. Paper versions of the consultation survey were sent out to those drivers with no email and these paper versions were also available from the main City Offices Reception with a freepost addressed envelope.

Claire Humphreys reported that SMSR had invited drivers and operators to attend a focus group. The group was formed with a number of Operators, Private Hire and Hackney Carriage drivers. Questions were directed to the group to engage in discussion regarding the survey. , The responses were quite negative and it seems that the attendees didn't really look at how the proposed changes could affect the whole trade and how some of the proposed changes could have a positive impact.

Carol Stefanczuk pointed out that Covid-19 has changed the dynamics of the project and this will have an affect on the main proposed changes that we were consulted

on. Carol Stefanczuk advised we would need to bear this in mind when discussing how we would like to move forward. As there has been a change in administration, the priorities may have changed, such as the Climate Emergency, but it will still be a positive change and there are many things that will help the trade.

Cllr Jackie Porter confirmed that anything which improves air quality and public safety would be a priority. However, with the current situation as it is with Covid-19, we want to avoid having to introduce changes immediately that could have a significantly detrimental impact on the trade.

Cllr Jackie Porter pointed out that we must look at the cost of the proposed livery, and remember a lot of drivers are going through financial hardship at the moment.

Cllr Roger Bentote said that the age of the vehicle and the livery were important to look at with regards to air quality and public safety.

2) Identify and Discuss Findings

Livery

The survey results to having a standard livery were very close. No real clear winner. Simon Finch asked, with cost in mind, could we not just have permanent door signs rather than a livery?

Carol Stefanczuk advised that in the past when they had looked at licensed vehicles having fixed plates, drivers living in Southampton, had complained that they would be more likely to have their vehicles broken in to and it is likely that proposing a standard livery would result in the same concerns. Carol also asked if the livery would cost too much for them at the moment. It could be looked at in separate parts with phased implementation;

- 1st part – new vehicles must have the decided livery.
- 2nd part - rear access vehicles added to the fleet of licensed vehicles must also have the decided livery. These vehicles are smaller, lower emissions. They would be saving around £2000, therefore, must meet the livery requirements.
- 3rd part - Could introduce a standard base colour for all new licensed vehicles. We could introduce a standard livery at a later date.

David Ingram added that if we introduce an end of life for the vehicle of 12 years (would need to look at current fleet figures), we could introduce a new standard livery after 12 years. We would need to decide, do we want to uniform the fleet?

Claire Humphreys advised the working group that quotes from two companies were sought. The cost of the proposed livery shown in the consultation survey was slightly different between the two companies, Monster Wrap, Southampton and ASAP, Southampton.

Monster Wrap - Southampton

- Option A - Bonnet, boot, mirrors and sign writing £450 plus VAT for small cars/£550 plus VAT for larger vehicles
- Option B – Roof (cut around aerial) door handles, mirrors and sign writing £600 plus VAT for small cars/ £700 plus VAT for larger vehicles.

ASAP - Southampton

- Option A - £585.00 plus VAT
- Option B - £460.00 plus VAT
- No quote as yet for larger vehicles.

Simon Finch felt that with the current situation of Covid-19 that having door signs might be a way forward, rather than a livery, because of cost impacts, but would still identify the vehicle as Winchester.

Cllr Roger Bentote agreed that doors signs with the Council logo would be a great idea. He also thought that 12 years as a maximum age for licensed vehicles was acceptable although he did mention that there are some vehicles over 12 years old that have been looked after and made reliable vehicles.

David Ingram agreed with Cllr Bentote on a maximum age, however, he pointed out that if you don't have an end of life age, some vehicles won't meet the required standards for a licensed vehicle.

Carol Stefanczuk told the group that drivers are allowed to choose the type of vehicles they drive. We don't stipulate as some other local authorities do. She said that with regards to the end of life age of 12 years, if we are presented with a vehicle that is clearly in exceptional condition, we could depart from the policy if there were compelling reasons. However, we must be mindful of setting a precedent. It is essential that with a climate emergency having been declared it is appropriate to take action limiting the age of vehicles in the fleet age.

Cllr Jackie Porter speaking on behalf of the administration, thought that the livery was too expensive and that she believes they would like to see the Council Logo permanently fixed on the doors, including the Council's crest and including the licensed plate number.

Cllr Porter agreed that 12 years as a maximum age at the moment was reasonable.

She suggested perhaps a white base for new Hackney Carriage vehicles would be a good idea as a standard livery, the logo using corporate colours would stand out well. Carol said that Southampton City Council have white Hackney Carriages, but pointed out that Private Hire Vehicles cannot be the same colour.

Carol Stefanczuk also mentioned that the Hackney Carriage taxi roof sign can have the WCC logo and their plate number on it. This could be enforced.

Age

To improve air quality, Cllr Jackie Porter agreed that we need to determine an age limit for licensed vehicles. David Ingram pointed out that if we have only Euro 6 or better by 2023, this would automatically get rid of Euro 4.

Even though less than half of the respondents agreed with the need for an age limit, Cllr Jackie Porter considered that a move towards this is justified. David Ingram agreed saying that as an authority we should stand strong to implement this. There may be some misunderstanding amongst the trade as to what this would mean in practice.

Nearly three quarters of respondents to the survey agree that a vehicle could be 4 years and under for both Hackney Carriage and Private Hire vehicles from the date of first registration and approximately two thirds agreed to an end of life age of 12 years.

Carol Stefanczuk mentioned that even though a new vehicle would not be required to have an MOT until it was 3 years old, the licensed vehicle would still be required to pass a vehicle mechanical inspection at one of our approved garages.

David Ingram thought we should consider a consistent 5 years across the board for the start of life and keep it at 12 for the end of life. This would help the rural companies who just do school runs and can purchase a good quality vehicle less than 5 years of age rather than the 4 suggested in the survey. Cllr Roger Bentote agreed a good quality car could be found less than five years of age.

Simon Finch pointed out if we change this we will have to have good justification for doing this, if we are challenged at the L & R committee meeting.

Incentives for Electric/Hybrid vehicles

Although the survey concluded that the majority of respondents agreed that the Council should introduce incentives to encourage licensing of electric/hybrid vehicles, it was actually surprising that the majority of participants thought the ages of all vehicles at beginning and end of life should be the same. Notwithstanding this the group felt we should still propose this change as having a positive impact on air quality (15 years). Simon Finch suggested we would need to have explanatory notes in support of this with regards to the environment, in case we are questioned on this at the Licensing and Regulations Committee Meeting.

CCTV

Carol Stefanczuk advised the group that she felt CCTV would be of great benefit in terms of security for both the general public and the drivers, however, this cannot be

taken lightly and to give this the amount of work it requires we would need to ensure we have a justification to support this, i.e.; police stats. And that it's legal. She felt that this should be something for the future, when we see what is happening with Southampton and Portsmouth and their challenge to the ICO. Cllr Jackie Porter agreed and said she too felt we need to explore this further and come back with more information. It's a further piece of work on its own. Simon Finch agreed with Carol Stefanczuk to wait and see what happens with Southampton and Portsmouth and then work out a way of achieving this for Winchester.

Contactless Payment Facility

Simon Finch felt this was a must for public safety. The group was all agreed on this and Carol Stefanczuk advised that the drivers would have the option to find the device that they felt would suit them best individually.

Permanent Door Signs

The group agreed as did the respondents to the survey (84%) that all Hackney Carriage and Private Hire vehicles have permanently fixed doors signs in support of public safety. This will make it easily identifiable to the public that a vehicle has been licensed by Winchester City Council. Claire Humphreys also confirmed the licensed plate number will also be on each door. With public safety in mind this will identify the driver of the vehicle should the need arise.

Carol Stefanczuk mentioned that we do have some plate exempt vehicles which won't be required to have door signs. These vehicles have a credit card size plate exemption badge in the vehicles windscreen. These vehicles tend to have corporate contracts.

Wheelchair Accessible Vehicles/Rear Loading

The survey concluded that 83% of participants agreed that wheelchair accessible vehicles should be side or rear loading. Cllr Bentote asked if we have any electric wheelchair accessible in the fleet. Carol Stefanczuk answered that the cost of these vehicles outweighs the earnings of our drivers. London taxi driver's earnings are much higher, therefore can afford these vehicles, in addition to the issue of there not being enough charging points in Winchester available. This could be something that could change in the future.

It was agreed this should be proposed as a change to current policy. The Blue Lamp Trust can be contacted with regards to stats on safety.

Training

Carol Stefanczuk explained that this had been put into the consultation as an addition to gauge the thoughts of drivers and the public for future change, perhaps the government should be recommending a standard qualification for all drivers.

Cllr Jackie Porter suggested this might be something that can be proved online. David Ingram suggested trying to adopt a similar standard throughout Hampshire.

Carol suggested that we work with David Watkins at the Blue Lamp Trust. They are developing new courses all the time. Claire Humphreys and Carol Stefanczuk attended a disability awareness course which was very well presented and informative and delivered in a way the drivers would understand.

Carol Stefanczuk also said the Btec is a good baseline for new drivers coming into the trade and that possibly existing drivers could take a module to update their existing skills.

It was agreed that the following recommended changes to the Council's Taxi Licensing Policy be taken forward to L&R Committee for agreement :

- ***A STANDARD BASE COAT OF WHITE TO BE PROPOSED FOR ALL NEW HACKNEY CARRIAGE VEHICLES BEING LICENSED INCLUDING ANY REAR LOADING WHEELCHAIR ACCESSIBLE VEHICLES BEING LICENSED FOR THE FIRST TIME.***
- ***ALL EXISTING AND NEW HACKNEY CARRIAGE AND PRIVATE HIRE VEHICLES PROPOSED TO HAVE PERMANENTLY FIXED LICENSED PLATES AND DOOR SIGNS WHICH WILL INCLUDE THE COUNCIL'S COAT OF ARMS AND THEIR PLATE NUMBER. [must agree deadline for existing vehicles to meet this]***
- ***ALL NEW LICENSED VEHICLES PROPOSED TO BE 5 YEARS OR UNDER FROM THE DATE OF FIRST REGISTRATION. (Was this 4 years or 5 years from the date of first registration? To be confirmed at next Taxi Project meeting)***
- ***ALL LICENSED VEHICLES PROPOSED TO HAVE A MAXIMUM END OF LIFE AGE OF 12 YEARS FROM THE DATE OF FIRST REGISTRATION.***
- ***ELECTRIC/HYBRID VEHICLES PROPOSED TO BE 8 YEARS OR UNDER FROM THE DATE OF FIRST REGISTRATION***
- ***ELECTRIC VEHICLES PROPOSED TO HAVE A MAXIMUM END OF WORKING LIFE OF 15 YEARS FROM THE DATE OF FIRST REGISTRATION.***

CCTV – PROPOSED TO BE PUT ON HOLD FOR NOW TO ENABLE MORE RESEARCH TO BE UNDERTAKEN TO JUSTIFY INVESTMENT BY THE FLEET AND LEGALITY OF THE MEASURE BECOMING A REQUIREMENT AND ALSO TO AWAIT THE RESULTS FROM SOUTHAMPTON AND

PORTSMOUTH OF THE CHALLENGE TO THE ICO, TO ENSURE THAT ANY REQUIRMENTS ARE LEGAL.

- **CONTACTLESS PAYMENT FACILITIES – IT WILL BE PROPOSED THAT ALL VEHICLES HAVE THIS PAYMENT FACILITY AVAILABLE. [need to agree deadline date for implementation]**

WHEELCHAIR ACCESSIBLE VEHICLES - REARLOADING IS TO BE PROPOSED IN ADDITION TO THE SIDE LOADING VEHICLES WE HAVE AT PRESENT.

- **DRIVER TRAINING – IT IS PROPOSED THAT THIS BE PUT ON HOLD AND WILL BE LOOKED AT IN THE FUTURE AFTER RESEARCH IS UNDERTAKEN TO FIND A LOCAL PROVIDER, POSSILBY THE BLUE LAMP TRUST TO UNDERTAKE ALL TRAINING.**

Any other business

Carol Stefanczuk gave the group an update on Perspex partitions in licensed vehicles in light of Covid-19. Standard requirements have been set with the testing stations for inspecting these partitions. All drivers have been updated that partitions must be inspected by one of our approved testing stations prior to any work being undertaken.

Carol Stefanczuk confirmed that advice has been given to all drivers on the cleaning and sanitizing of their vehicle in line with Government recommendations. She informed the working group that to date we had one vehicle that had a partition installed and had passed the garage inspection.

Cllr Porter said it would a great idea for publicity to push the good stories. Perhaps we could get a photo of this driver. David Ingram suggested contacting the Communications team.