

City of York Council – Taxi Licensing

Minutes of Meeting with York Hackney Carriage & Private Hire Associations

Tuesday – 12 November 2019

Present: Lesley Cooke (Chair) – Licensing Manager CYC (LC)
Matthew Boxall – Acting Head of Public Protection CYC (MB)
Nigel Woodhead – Enforcement Officer CYC (NW)
Angela Ruane – Licensing Officer CYC (AR)
John Armstrong – North Yorkshire Police (JA)
Glenn Jardine – Independent Taxi Association (GJ)
Anthony Green – Independent Taxi Association (AG)
William Swords – Station Taxis Association (WS)
Brendan Trotter – Station Taxis Association (BT)
Robin Sargent – York Hackney Carriage Association (RS)
Ruth Bradley – York Taxi Association Group (RB)
Daniel Smith – York Taxi Association Group (DS)
Mohammed Iqbal – York Cars Private Hire Association (MI)
Bilal Iqbal – York Cars Private Hire Association (BI)
Wendy Loveday – York Private Hire Association (WL)
Neil Rowley – York Private Hire Association (NR)
Andrew Thomson – York Private Hire Association (AT)
Kevin O'Donnell – York Private Hire Association (KO)
Richard Newby – York Private Hire Association (RN)
Rachael Melly – Councillor (RM)

Apologies: Gary Graham – York Hackney Carriage Association

General Items:

1) North Yorkshire Police

(This item also deals with Item 19)

- a) JA advised that the foot street hours have been extended to 8pm for the Christmas Market.
- b) WL asked if traffic offences could be broken down. JA advised that it is down to the Officer taking the details relating to any incident as they only mention taxi and not Uber, York Cars etc. He could go through all offences. WL advised she has information from the trade and could send this to him.
- c) AG mentioned that there was a news article of a serious sexual assault in West Yorkshire. JA not aware. AG said we should be helping the public as this is now a serious issue.
- d) AT asked how much time is spent on out of town vehicles. JA advised he cannot differentiate, although he could go through offences. 17 related to issues with Uber. He could check the Police system and then call their taxi company.

- e) WL advised that she is trying to get a multi discipline team meeting with LNER and taxis. JA advised that he could try to organise a team meeting regarding the car park and Uber vehicles. LC advised that Tea Room Square and the short stay car park are under the station's control. JA the police have a good relation with Catherine Wood and John.
- f) AG asked if we can talk to someone from the Council regarding the traffic backing up on Nunnery Lane. Alan Davies has previously suggested taking out the zebra crossing, this would not be too drastic for the general public. LC advised that she had received an update about the Station frontage and Queen Street by Brendan Murphy – they need to submit another planning application, signage and temporary traffic lights means there would be an awful lot to plan. WS advised this is a red herring. There is no funding and no planning.

2. Trades input on new local knowledge training

- a) MB said he had not received anything as yet, but thought knowledge sharing a good idea. He advised the test has been tweaked to include, for example, what is the shortest routes from A to B, one way streets, learning the conditions of licence and standards of driving. Any thoughts and suggestions that can be put into the training would be appreciated. WL thought this is a good idea. AT said this also goes back to being ambassadors for the city, making for a better experience for the passenger.
- b) AR mentioned that Neil Lee, the trainer, had advised a lot of applicants turn up and do not know anything about the routes in the city or conditions of licence as they have not done any studying or even read the guidance notes.
- c) RS suggested reintroducing the half day course.
- d) LC asked for all suggestions to be sent over by Christmas.

3. Trades input on enforcement – best times to undertake enforcement and why

- a) MB advised that we tend to focus on Friday and Saturday nights between midnight and 4.00am. Daytime is much busier and therefore trickier. He asked the Associations to speak to drivers as they could suggest areas, he would also like some input regarding daytime enforcement.
- b) WL said that having a visible presence would help deter drivers plying for own business. We need full time enforcement officers.
- c) RS asked if we could try a secret shopper test doing flag downs. AG asked if we could do this at the station.
- d) LC advised that we are restricted in what we can do, but all points would be considered.

4. Christmas Events

- a) LC advised that the Christmas Lights switch on will take place on Duncombe Place on 14 December from 6.00pm and there will be a road closure on Duncombe

Place. Make it York will put the official road closure out as late as possible so taxis can still use the taxi rank.

- b) NW advised that the Christmas market starts on Thursday and the pedestrian zone will be extended in line with the market.

5. New Year's Eve

- a) LC advised that counter terrorism measures will be in place this year and barriers in certain parts of the city. There will be a road closure on Duncombe Place and the taxi rank will be located at the bus stop at Exhibition Square, signage will be in place and buses stop running at 7.00pm.
- b) JA asked that if anyone spots anything suspicious, for example, anyone taking photographs of CCTV cameras etc. that they call 999 immediately.

6. Private Hire Renewals

- a) LC thanked all drivers who returned appropriate forms and payments on time without having to be chased. She advised that the renewal period was two months of hell. We were having to chase drivers for safeguarding certificates and Drive Tech forms. Some drivers were rung up numerous times, some up to 15 times, chasing for information to enable us to renew their licence.
- b) WL asked why we do this, she could understand 2 or 3 calls and added that this was a waste of public money. AT said we should make a maximum of 3 telephone calls. If they do not respond then that is their problem. All drivers know when the renewals are due.
- c) LC said we do this as we do not want a driver to lose out by not having their licence renewed on time.
- d) RS asked if we could ring the operators and ask them to advise their drivers.

7. Revocations / refusals to renew

- a) NW advised that a PH driver had been arrested for a sexual assault and subsequently his driver licence has been revoked.
- b) LC advised that she has refused to renew seven private hire driver licences. Six for having 9 penalty points on their driving licence that they had not reported to the council (breach of licence condition), and one on medical grounds, the driver had a serious medical condition which he did not report to the council and continued to drive. The decisions were made after discussions with MB. It is a condition on the PH driver licence that we are notified of any changes within 72 hours. LC said she and NW interviewed all drivers concerned and they can appeal the decision within 21 days. NW commented that some of the drivers have been licensed for over 20 years.
- c) WL said that drivers are getting complacent and asked what would happen if a hackney carriage driver had received any points after their renewal earlier in this

year. She suggested it would be good to use the same date for all as any points received would have been before the new policy.

8. Enforcement update

NW gave an overview of recent events:

- a) We have received 113 complaints regarding Uber including driving standards, illegal pickups, altercations with Kirklees drivers, using mobile phone whilst driving, swearing and smoking in vehicle. Uber complaints now go to Uber's Head Office, all are redacted.
- b) A York HC driver was involved in an accident on Stockton Lane which unfortunately resulted in a fatality. We have not heard if any action is being taken by the police. The driver is now back working after taking some time off.
- c) There have been a couple of disputes regarding Station taxis.
- d) A PH driver was caught smoking drugs in his car by the police. He was six times over the limit for drugs. The driver has now had his PH driver licence revoked.
- e) HC driver aggressive to Uber driver and the police were involved.
- f) NW said there was a multi-agency enforcement check on 18 October during which six York vehicles were checked, four were suspended, four Leeds vehicles were checked, three were suspended. Bradford and Calderdale vehicles were also checked.
- g) Also on 5 November nine vehicles were checked on enforcement. Six York vehicles were inspected and all passed. Three other vehicle were inspected of which two received an immediate suspension and one vehicle's fault was rectified straight away.

United Trade York Items:

9. Three Unanswered Questions

- a) **When recently reporting to the Licensing and Regulatory Councillors on the complaints data collected, what did you use as your start dates and cut off dates for the report entitled Taxi Complaints – 1 January to 31 August 2019?**

LC advised that complaint start dates were from the date the complaint was received. As the office is closed on a weekend, if a complaint comes in late Friday we do not see it until the Monday morning.

- b) **How many or what percentage of complaints against the York trade were reported by Uber drivers?**

MB replied none.

- c) **How many accidents in York were self-reported by Uber to their home authorities?**

MB stated we don't have that information.

10. Bus Lanes

LC advised the Associations to put a proposal together regarding bus lanes and road traffic and these would be forwarded to Highways.

11. Congestion

12. Emissions

LC said that Items 11 and 12 would be brought up next time.

13. Supporting Local Taxis – other councils are supporting their own trade

- a) WL said lots of licensing authorities support their own drivers and asked if we would support advising the public to use local trade. Is it worth a discussion?
- b) WL also advised that her attacker has been arrested and although he was disabled, she was conscious of leaving him in a deserted area so took him to his destination.
- c) LC advised that the council's Workforce Development Unit deliver training in respect of equality and safeguarding, however this does not deal with vulnerable situations. LC said she is very conscious other drivers have been threatened. RB mentioned safety in the workplace, could a course be run for women drivers only. LC advised we cannot discriminate, all are treated equal. WL and RB will discuss with trade to see if they are interested in lone working / personal safety training.

14. Association versus independent business – who are the Associations representing

WL advised that all the Associations meet every month and questioned the validity of some Associations.

15. Wolverhampton drivers in York

- a) WL advised she had received a message from a Wolverhampton driver who has been approached to drive in York. He said he has been advised that should there be any harassment from York drivers, to just ignore it.
- b) DS asked MI if he thought it is undermining their own drivers and taking their earnings. No response was given.

16. Racism versus speaking up against law breakers

This item was not discussed.

17. York Council versus the WYCA – all taxi licensing policies aligned but are being implemented differently

18. Rank Marshals and the spare £75,000

- a) LC stated that rank marshals are already in place, and will also be working New Year's Eve. Duncombe Place rank marshals are subsidised by the local residents and the Hotel in Duncombe Place.
- b) WL said she has asked six times for better signage to make the Rougier Street rank clearer. LC said she has emailed Highways and advised that the signage needs to be road side and easier for the public to see.
- c) LC advised that on the recent consultation document one of the questions asked if we have enough taxi ranks and she was surprised that most responders thought that we already have enough.
- d) DS said no-one can see the St Saviourgate rank as it is not visible from Stonebow.
- e) MB said we should remove street furniture and that should make things better. He is aware that the taxi ranks need some work.

19. LNER, TL, PH and HC – Tearoom Square and under the Portico – meeting request as a fully represented MDTM

This Item was dealt with at Item 1.

20. Is it possible to represent PH, HC, trains and buses in one Association?

- a) LC responded that this would not be possible.
- b) MA stated that Uber are still parking on Rougier Street taxi rank. NW advised that he will liaise with the weekend enforcement team. He will also request that the taxi rank sign is placed roadside of bus shelter and will contact Uber regarding all taxi ranks in York.

21. Are members of Associations aware they are members?

See point 15.

22. Full time taxi enforcement officer (days as well as nights)

See point 3.

York Taxi Association Group Item:

23. Stay Safe campaign – assaults on drivers

The Chair of YTAG was not present at the meeting. The other committee members who were present were not aware of this item.

General Items:

24. Any other business

- a) MB advised that Fleet Services, who undertake our vehicle inspections, are looking at changing the availability of vehicle tests, making them available on all working days. This will have an effect on the dates for block (annual) testing. WS thinks this is a good idea.
- b) NR asked whose idea was it to move the bike racks on to Church Street. LC advised the bike racks have been moved due to the Christmas market and it is only temporary until Christmas.

25. Date of next meeting

Tuesday 25 February 2020 at 1.00pm at Hazel Court.