

City of York Council – Taxi Licensing

Minutes of Meeting with York Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Associations

Wednesday – 27 January 2021

Present: Lesley Cooke – Licensing Manager (LC)
Matthew Boxall – Head of Public Protection (MB)
Tricia Poole – Licensing Assistant
Cllr Ashley Mason – Chair Licensing & Regulatory Committee (AM)
Wendy Loveday – York Private Hire Association (WL)
Saf Din – York Taxi Association Group (SD)
Robin Sargent – York Hackney Carriage Association (RS)
Anthony Green – Independent Taxi Association (AG)
William Swords – Station Taxi's Association (WS)
Mohammed Iqbal – York Cars Private Hire Association (MI)

Apologies: Angela Ruane – Licensing Officer

General Items:

1) Appeals following refusals to renew and revocation of drivers' licences

- a) LC advised there has been 7 appeals – 6 for refusals to renew drivers' licences. The court upheld the Council's decision and dismissed the appeals.
- b) One appeal is still pending.
- c) Two driver licences were revoked in December, neither have appealed the decision.
- d) All licences that were revoked/refused were private hire drivers.
- e) A number of driver licences have been suspended as the drivers have not completed a DBS as they are not driving at this time due to COVID. Once they intend to start driving again they will have to complete their DBS. The suspension will not be held against them on their record.

2) Station Rank and Short Stay Car Park

- a) LC advised that the Council do not have the power to challenge issues such as picking up or dropping off at the Station unless an offence is being committed, such as a private hire vehicle illegally plying hire. It is for the British Transport Police to deal with other issues under the Portico, Tearoom Square and short stay car park.
- b) WS advised that BTP are not interested, they do not like Station Taxis and the drivers. They rarely help out.
- c) LC advised that the Council has had meetings with BTP about this, LNER have never attended.
- d) WS – BTP usually do not engage or attend meetings.

- e) WS – vehicle can only drop off under the Portico and pick up from the short stay car park.

3) Report DfT Statutory Standards – Licensing and Regulatory Committee 22 February 2021

- a) LC – taking a report to Committee on 22 February with regards to the DfT Standards, recommending a formal public consultation takes place with regards to the recommendations that are not already implemented by the Council.
- b) LC – the report recommends that further public consultation takes place on other taxi licensing matters, including matters covered in the report taken to Committee last September.
- c) LC – the report also recommends that private hire operator licences are only issued for one year, instead of 5 years, until the public consultation has taken place due to the recommendations within the Standards. This will enable the Standards to be applied to operator licences as soon as possible. The Standards recommend requirements such as booking/dispatch staff are DBS checked and that operators have a register of such staff.
- d) Can request a copy of the DfT report from LC.

4) Smoke Free Taxi Ranks – Initiative from Public Health – Smoke Free Places

- a) MB advised that Public Health are looking at setting up ‘Smoke Free’ locations across the city. People (including taxi drivers) would not be able to smoke in these locations. Taxi Ranks have been suggested as suitable locations. Seeking views of the Associations on behalf of Public Health. Views as follows:
 - i. Will prove difficult when people are coming out of pubs, clubs etc. They won’t want to stand and wait for a taxi without being able to smoke.
 - ii. Some drivers have parked on the rank and gone to purchase a coffee and ended up getting a parking ticket, similar issues will arise if they can’t smoke while waiting at the rank. It will also impact a drivers place on the rank if they are unable to join the rank due to wanting to smoke.
- b) **MB to feedback** potential for polite sign requesting no smoking. Trade completely against making it a no smoking zone as they feel that customers may stop using ranks.

York Private Hire Association Items:

5) Fleet Services

- a) The trade’s views to new arrangement for Fleet Services and vehicle testing:
 - i. There is no viewing point so cannot see their cars whilst the mechanic work on the cars.
 - ii. Drivers also not happy about the mechanics being in their cars. This is down to COVID.
 - iii. There were only a couple of drivers who moaned about driving their own cars onto the ramps.
 - iv. Want it all changing back and this is agreed by all 5 Reps.

- v. A driver was given a full test appointment on a Friday, when he attended was told they only do re-tests on a Friday. Office staff need to be asking what test the vehicle needs, a full test or a re-test.
 - vi. Drivers have paid for re-tests on minor points fails, re-test only taking a few minutes.
 - vii. Drivers told vehicle had failed for an issue that would pass a MOT.
 - viii. Although the MOT is public, taxis should take priority.
 - ix. Due to dates of their inspections, it could mean that drivers could end up paying for 2 MOT's as testing is no longer in blocks.
 - x. Vehicle tests – can the mechanic have the temporary plates ready to give to the driver.
- b) LC – aware that there would be some teething problems, the new system is being monitored and the trade's feedback will be shared with Fleet Services. She confirmed:
- i. That testing takes place Monday – Thursday, with time set aside each day for re-tests, including Friday morning to prevent a vehicle being off the road all weekend if possible.
 - ii. Will look into refunds for driver who have paid re-test fee for minor fails.
 - iii. Will look into point ix above.
- c) LC asked that the driver whose vehicle failed the test, vi above, contacts the office so that the test paperwork can be checked.

6) Additional Restrictions Grant with thanks:

WL – thanked the Council on behalf of the Trade, for enabling them to apply for the grant in these times. They are very grateful.

7) Licensing Fees

WL asked if the council could continue to reduce licence fees for the next renewal as Covid issues are still impacting the trade. LC advised that the decision on fees are made by Full Council (budget council in February). She asked WL to write to her under the United Trade York banner making the request and she will forward to those concerned. **Actioned by WL, forwarded by LC. Awaiting decision.**

8) Medicals during Covid

- a) WL advised drivers are struggling to get appointments with Doctors as they are not doing medicals due to Covid. LC advised this has and will continue to be taken into consideration. LC also advised that drivers who are suspended due to a medical issue will need to provide a medical to confirm that are fit to Group 2 standards. WL thanked LC.
- b) SD – Safeguarding course still waiting on paperwork. LC advised original date had been rearranged, courses are now going ahead via Zoom. Course dates are in the calendar and if a driver cannot get booked onto a course before their licence expires they must book onto the next available date.

York Hackney Carriage Association Items:

9) Enforcement Officers

RS wanted to raise some concerns regarding the weekend/evening Enforcement Officers. LC advised that she would contact him by phone to discuss.

10) Fare Increase

- a) RS – the trade applied last year for 2.9% increase, they are now asking for 4%, the difference is practically nothing, 5-10p per mile and 20p for the extra mile. He had emailed LC with some figures produced by Steve Eades of Digitax. SD asked for a breakdown.
- b) LC advised that she will have a look at the email, she will request the inflation calculation from her Accountant and share with the trade. They needed a formal request from all of the Hackney Carriage Associations with regards to any increase. Once received she will discuss the proposal with MB and AR.

11) Vehicle test (current system)

- a) RS enquired about the vehicle testing standards. MB advised that he has had a meeting with Ian Hoult, Head of Fleet Services, who has confirmed that they have a check sheet with regards to the standards, this check sheet will be available on the Council's website so the drivers can check before they bring their vehicles in for testing. All test fees go into taxi licensing account. All of the mechanics carrying out the testing are the same as before. Testing is now 4 days a week. Fleet Services staff have all been trained and the Council is providing a 100% better service.
- b) RS mentioned that it seems to be the opinion of the mechanic at the time whether a vehicle passes or fails, when an independent MOT is carried out the car passes when the Council fail it. MB advised all mechanics are MOT qualified. LC advised that this point will be raised with Fleet Services.

York Taxi Association Group items:

12) Taxi ranks / head of rank signs

- a) SD – advised that he raised this point 5 years ago and sad to say all the taxi rank still look the same. All ranks need to be looked at:
 - i. St Saviourgate looks atrocious as if it does not belong in York;
 - ii. there is no Head of Rank sign at St Sampson's;
 - iii. the sign on Rougier Street is inside the bus stop and cannot be seen;
 - iv. visible signage needed.
- b) SD – Highways need to be a part of this and asked could they be invited to the meeting. LC advised that the ranks will be reviewed.
- c) SD asked if the ranks have been put on google maps. **MB to look into this.**

13) Piccadilly taxi rank

- a) SD advised that the rank is for 2 vehicles and the times have changed now:
 - 6.00pm to 6.00am – rank
 - 6am– 11am. Loading bay
 - 11am – 6pm. Blue Badge Parking
- b) SD asked if the rank could be relocated near to Sparks, this is a better placed with the redevelopments taking place, UBER are parking in this area.

14) Taxi grant / tinted windows

SD asked for a review regarding tinted windows to allow factory fitted tints, concerns shared about availability of vehicles and the costs of having to change windows, if

they are able to do so. LC advised that window tints will be covered within the public consultation.

15) Taxi account residual balance

- a) SD asked if £70,000 surplus was still in the taxi licensing account, and if it is, could it be divided between all drivers to help out at this time.
- b) MB advised that taxi licensing account has taken a hit over the last year due to the reduced fees, payment holidays and vehicle licence renewal reductions. The surplus has been greatly reduced.
- c) LC also advised that we are still within the financial year, therefore we will not know the impact on the budget until year end.
- d) MB advised that the Licensing Section has grown over the years and the demands on the Manager are high, therefore it has been determine that Taxi Licensing requires its own Manager. Approval is required with regards to this post, which would be paid for out of the taxi licensing account.
- e) SD asked if taxi licensing would get its own dedicated telephone line? MB advised that the Manager had to be in post first, then we will work out the best way to do things.

LC thanked everyone for attending.