

**NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL  
Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Consultative Forum**

Minutes of meeting held on Monday 23 September 2019 at 12.00,  
Council Chamber, Council Offices, Gernon Road, Letchworth

**Present:**

Mr. S. Cobb	NHDC Licensing Manager (Chair)
Mrs. M. Shiells	NHDC Licensing Officer
Mr. Charlie Skeels	NHDC Community Safety and Licensing Apprentice
Cllr. Gary Grindal	Executive Member for Housing and Environmental Health
Ms. C. Speck	NHDC MSU (minute taker)

Mr. T. Elnemr	Taxi 4 You
Mrs. R. Elnemr	Taxi 4 You
Mr. H. Alhaydary	Owner/driver
Mr. M. Nasserislam	Owner/driver
Mr. K. Singh	Tiny's Taxis
Mr. A. Mander	Mander's Taxis
Mr. H. Singh	Tiny's Taxis
Mrs. E. Stewart-Page	Owner/driver

**Not present:**

Mr. W. Stewart	Butler Meltax
Mrs. H. Hill	Castle Taxis
Mr. D. Khela	B&D
Mr. D. Sandhu	Eurocabs and Cabstar
Mr. S. Singh	Owner/driver
Mrs. J. Thompson	NHDC Service Director - Legal and Community
Mr. M. Thind	Boxalls Taxis
Mr. S. Gul	Angels Taxi
Mrs. C. Grant	Butler Meltax

**1. Introduction, Housekeeping and Apologies**

SC opened the meeting with housekeeping and thanks to all attendees.  
All introduced themselves.

**2. Apologies for absence**

Apologies for absence received from

:

Mr. W. Stewart	Butler Meltax
Mr. H. Singh	Tiny's Taxis
Mrs. J. Thompson	NHDC Service Director - Legal and Community
Mr. M. Thind	Boxalls Taxis
Mrs. C. Grant	Butler Meltax

**3. Minutes of the Previous Meeting, including updates on actions**

Forum Terms of Reference: these are now on the website.

SC reminded all of the enforcement action that was discussed at the last Forum.

Fees for 2019/20 were advertised in The Comet and The Royston Crow and the consultation period has now closed with no representations having been received. Vehicle plates went down and badges went up. SC reiterated that the council is prohibited in law from making a profit on licence fees. This is the second year running that vehicle plate fees have gone down;

subsidised fees were also introduced for electric and hybrid vehicles.

The Parking Team is looking at taxi rank provision and existing ranks will be remarked. If it is likely that rank locations could change, the trade would be made aware of any consultation.

DBS documents: currently the council has only been able to accept original bank statements but is going to discuss with the DBS about the possibility of accepting electronic bank statements.

It was agreed that the minutes of the previous meeting where a true account.

#### **4. Enforcement update**

MS said we have received 10 complaints – down quite significantly but still too high. As a result 2 driver badges have been revoked. The ‘fit and proper’ person requirement is covered in the safeguarding training; drivers must remain professional at all times. MS recommended that all drivers keep an incident book in the vehicle and make a record of any incident.

Compliance tests: MS advised that she has welcomed additional contact with the trade over the last 3 months during CTs which has led to some investigations. This will be covered off in email bulletins, let licensing know if you see anything at [licensing@north-herts.gov.uk](mailto:licensing@north-herts.gov.uk)

Cllr Grindal said this is an important message to get across to the trade, MS said all drivers should signed up for regular email bulletins that will be starting next month with the assistance of CS.

MS advised that when a badge renewal is required a reminder will go out to the driver to attend the training. The training will be required every renewal as it is constantly changing. Three sessions have taken place so far and we have received good feedback. Details are on the NHDC website.

TE Can the training be done online?

SC No it must be delivered in person so we know the correct person has attended

ES If a driver has just renewed can they still voluntarily do it?

SC Yes

#### **5. Fares 2019/20**

SC said fares are reviewed every year and displayed a PowerPoint presentation summarising the findings of the review.

SC said the council has to balancing act the needs of the trade with the needs of the public. North Hertfordshire has a high percentage of elderly people and people on a low income who may rely on public transport to undertake essential journeys such as shopping, medical appointments and social interactions.

The impact of Brexit would also need to be considered post 31 October 2019.

Review outcome: no change to the hackney carriage tariff at this time.

EP Can we reduce the flag from £3.10 to £3.00?

SC This would be appreciated by those on low income that were reliant on public transport and so could be considered at the next review.

Cllr G Reiterated that there are some there are some big issues in the towns financially

SC Having the meters re-chipped would cost money so would need to be carried out at the same time as a general tariff change.

MN Are the figures being manipulated as NHDC should be looking at what an average taxi driver earns across the country?

SC The figures quoted are facts supplied by the Office for National Statistics. Comparing

average wages would be problematic as the cost of living varies across the country.

- SC Uber is operating lawfully and undercutting NHDC rates therefore picking up many local journeys. Any fare increase now would just make Uber more attractive to customers.
- MS Will be meeting with Uber to discuss the local issues being caused by Uber drivers and to whether NHDC drivers can work off the Uber app.
- TE When is this meeting?
- MS The meeting is imminent – will let all know how it goes.
- Cllr G The council recognises the threat of Uber and will try to assist the trade where possible.
- SC At the Herts & Beds Licensing Group, a Uber rep said they would prefer to work with us rather than against us. If anyone has further comments/ideas please email [licensing@north-herts.gov.uk](mailto:licensing@north-herts.gov.uk) and these will be reviewed at the Uber meeting.

## 6. Vehicle numbers and WAV requirements

SC gave an overview of current licence numbers for drivers, vehicles and operators. Since this time last year there are 37 less drivers but 4 more vehicles. We are receiving a lot of emails asking whether the WAV percentage has been met and whether we are operating a waiting list.

MS explained the process that will be followed when the WAV percentage is met which is detailed on the new Trade Information page: <https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/home/licensing/taxi-licensing/taxi-and-private-hire-forum-information-licensed-drivers>

- EP Why do private hire vehicles not have to meet a percentage of wheelchair accessible vehicles (WAVs) like hackney carriages?
- SC At the last policy consultation a number of options were given to the trade to consider, including a private hire WAV percentage, however no responses were received.
- SC There may be a consultation in the next 6 months; if so it is important that the trade engage and provide consultation responses so the council understands and can consider the trade's opinions.
- AM Asked if a private hire driver can take a booking on his mobile and pass it on to an operator?
- SC No this would be unlawful. Private hire bookings must be made directly with the private hire operator by the customer, for the operator to allocate to a driver.

## 7. Uber

The Courts have decided that the Uber business model is lawful; they can park anywhere a member of the public can lawfully park provided that it was not near to a rank where it would give the impression that it was available for hire.

## 8. New compliance test

MS has developed a new compliance test which will be introduced from 1<sup>st</sup> October 2019. The tests will be booked in 10 minute slots. A more thorough test of vehicles will be carried out and if an issue is identified that is not serious enough to warrant a failure a rectification notice will be issued. The vehicle will need to be returned by the date stated on the notice with the issue resolved otherwise the vehicle will be suspended. This is to ensure that all our vehicles are of a good standard without having to fail a vehicle for minor issues.

- AM Will there be any extra charge?
- MS No.
- EP Will the compliance tests still be undertaken every 6 months for vehicle over 7 years?
- MS Yes.

## 9. Credit card payments for customers

SC asked the Forum if they accept card payments.  
Some companies accept however some have a minimum charge they will accept due to the

credit card company charges.

Cllr G Would it encourage more passengers if they could pay by card?

Forum Internet connection is the biggest problem or lack of 3G in some areas.

SC It is unlawful to charge anything not on the tariff card so the credit card company fee cannot be added to a metered fare. Out of district journeys can agree a price with the passenger before the journey starts so it could be added to those fares.

#### **10. Policy updates**

SC reminded the Forum that they had been given the opportunity to advise of any policy issues that the trade would like us to consider. SC and Cllr G will now study the list and determine which to investigate further. Minor changes would be approved by SC or Cllr G depending on the impact on the licensing objectives. Significant changes would be subject to public consultation and referred to the Licensing Committee.

#### **11. Any other business**

EP Can something be done about the 5 disabled bays by the cinema? EP has seen people struggling with wheelchairs due to the kerb and a ramp is required to assist access to the pavement.

SC Will feed this back to the relevant service team

Minutes and the date of the next meeting will be put on the NHDC website.

The meeting ended at 13.40