

NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL
Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Consultative Forum

Minutes of meeting held on Wednesday 10th May 2017 at 10.00 am,
Brotherhood Hall, Gernon Road, Letchworth

Present:

Mr S Cobb (SC)	Licensing Manager NHDC (Chair)
Cllr B Lovewell	Executive Member for Housing & Environmental Health
Mr A Godman	Head of Housing & Public Protection
Mr C Broadhurst (CB)	Licensing Officer NHDC
Miss H Sweetman	Licensing Officer NHDC
Mr M Day (MD)	Tiny's Taxis
Mr R Lafferty (RL)	Castle Taxis
Ms E Page	Independent
Mrs C Grant	Butlers and Meltax
Ms J Andrews	Butlers and Meltax
Mr S Singh	Independent
Mr M Thind (MT)	Boxalls Taxis
Mr A Mander	Mander's Taxis
Ms C Speck	MSU (Minute taker)

Apologies:

Mrs H Hill	Castle Taxis
Mr D Khela	B&D
Mr Saleem	Owner/Driver
Mr D Sandhu	Eurocabs and Cabstar
Mr Bill Stewart	Butlers and Meltax

1. Introduction, Housekeeping and Apologies

SC opened the meeting with housekeeping, introductions and thanks to all attendees. Apologises are listed above.

2. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

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

3. Matters Arising

There was only one action from the previous meeting SC went through the action as below.

- I. CB has contacts at South Cambs Council, and so will look into how they manage their compliance testing – this is to assist SC in writing the policy. CB worked on this and it is now completed.

4. Enforcement update

CB said that there is only one ongoing enquiry and nothing else to report over the last three months.

5. Fees 2017/18

SC confirmed that a proposed increase of 3.2% has been advertised in the Comet and Royston Crow. One representation is to be considered by AG and Cllr Lovewell who will make a final, subject to any Member call-in. It will be a few weeks before a final decision is made however SC was hopeful that the fees will take effect from the 1st June. Any applications received at the moment can be paid at the existing rate.

6. Fares 2017/18

The annual review is normally implemented in November however SC received a request from Castles for an interim increase of 2%. RL explained the issues he is experiencing. SC tried to put this in to context – this will put North Herts 68th out of 266 Councils. The interim review would have to go through the normal consultation process. SC said we can look at it now but is it worth it for two months? SC felt it may be appropriate to bring the annual review forward.

SC asked all for their views on bringing the review forward by two months – most were happy with this suggestion.

EP asked if the time scale would be the same next year or would it be 14 months? AG & Cllr Lovewell will consider the proposal on whether it should be a 12 or 14 month period. SC will write to the Forum and give them the decision before it goes out for consultation.

7. PHV Top Signs

Castles have requested the ability for PHVs to display top signs to help identify them to customers. Views from all were given – most felt that technology allowed them to text or ring the customer and did not feel top signs were necessary.

SC was concerned for drivers' safety if approached late at night by the public who mistakenly thought they were available for immediate hire as a HCV and felt that top boxes must have the private hire number and vehicle registration on them. This would need to go out for consultation as part of the current policy reviewbefore being implemented.

AG suggested that RL may benefit from seeing how the new automated technology works. However both MD & RL said they could not afford the outlay for new technology.

Cllr Lovewell sees no problems with the suggestion going out to consultation.

8a. Hackney Carriages – all WAV fleet (TX style)

Mr D Sandhu from Cabstar suggested that all cabs should have disability access. Mixed views from all in regard to this proposal were expressed. SC emphasised that if you drive a wheelchair accessible vehicle, it will be unlawful for you to refuse to take a passenger in a wheelchair. Drivers unable to provide assistance for medical reasons will be able to apply for an exemption certificate.

Suggestions in regard to how to address this issue in future were to make it compulsory that any new vehicles should be made wheelchair accessible. Any existing vehicles will remain as they are.

Cllr Lovewell understands everyone's differing views and issues and it's a question of reaching the right balance. This topic will be addressed in the policy review.

8b. Diesel query

AM asked about the long term licensing of diesel vehicles as he is considering changing his current HCV. AG said he had no formal view but he discussed the government air quality strategy and air quality standards. AG thinks diesel and petrol will be superseded in the future with alternative methods. EP said she could not see anything in the current policy which includes electric vehicles. SC explained that the existing policy just says what cars we won't take. SC said it would be unlikely that we would ever say a vehicle would need to be changed half way through a licence should we decide to move towards more efficient vehicles.

AM also expressed concern about Sunday time and a half fares as Letchworth are inconsistent in regard to charging for time and a half. SC said the tariff is set for North Herts at a maximum tariff and every area is different in how they apply these rates. AG said we should be mindful to consider a streamlined tariff in future. Suggestions were put forward that we scrap the Sunday and Bank holiday time and a half fare. Future fare reviews may consider the historic conventions of time and a half for public holidays and Sundays.

9. Any other business

MD asked why we are re-issuing Hackney Carriage numbers and why are reminders being sent by post?

SC explained that due to new software we are currently sending reminders through the post but will email them once the new system is configured.

RL asked if he could have an update on the man with the stolen receipts card. SC said RL can discuss this with HS after the meeting.

CG said that the problems with the new software system resulted in one of her new drivers having to wait 3 weeks for his badge. SC apologised for the delay and explained that the new driver applied when we were in the transitional period however future applications can be processed more efficiently.

MD asked if we could make the taxi knowledge test easier and cheaper to encourage more new drivers to apply as there is a shortage. SC said that we have a duty to ensure the safety of the public and not many drivers fail the knowledge test. SC is conscious of the cost and reminded the Forum that the DVSA driving assessment was recently removed as a requirement to assist recruitment.

Timescales for the policy consultation are as follows:

June	Consultation
October	Licensing Committee
November	Cabinet

The next forum will be arranged to occur in August and all will be notified when the date is set.

The meeting closed at 12 noon.