

TAXI AND PRIVATE HIRE FORUM

Thursday 29th July 2021

Minutes

Steve Cobb [SC]	Licensing Manager	NHDC
Jeanette Thompson [JT]	Legal & Community Service Director	NHDC
Melanie Gillespie [MG]	Licensing Officer	NHDC
Charlie Skeels [CS]	Assistant Licensing Officer	NHDC
Alice Ashbrook [AA]	Licensing and Community Apprentice	NHDC
Gary Grindal [GG]	Councillor	NHDC

1. Introductions

2. Apologies

Avtar Mander Randhir Singh Backra

- Invited but did not attend

Callum Kitteridge

3. Steve Cobb- Taxi fares

[SC] We should ask drivers what they would like the fares to be from November onwards. **[GG]** Have a look at the national fares and email drivers about the tariff. **[SC]** There are 356 councils that set a tariff and we are joint 59th, so we are no longer near the bottom of the table. **[GG]** The public would not be happy to see the fares going up, so perhaps we can keep them the same for the next year.

[SC] There is only Hertsmere above us in the Hertfordshire authorities, and they tend to set fares close to London taxi fares as they border London. If we do not hear from drivers then the fares will remain the same, but they will have the opportunity to give their input and ideas of rates that they wish to charge.

ACTION: **[MG]** To circulate an email to all drivers asking what they would like the standard tariff charges should be from November. Drivers to be given a time frame in which they can respond.

4. Boxall Taxis- Since the calendar meter changes, unable to discount journeys on Sunday in Letchworth as there is only single time on all office bookings.

[SC] The automated fare on the calendar metre is a maximum charge for drivers. It is possible to charge less than the standard Tariff 2 rate on a Sunday if companies wish, but the calendar metre is automated and unfortunately it cannot be changed by the driver as this is a standard rate. If companies do wish to charge single rates rather than time and a half, they would have to calculate the fare themselves **Companies will need to keep a log to show that they are charging Tariff 1 rates on Sundays if they choose to do so.**

[JT] How does this work when companies complete their accounts? Is this going to affect their income or tax? **[SC]** The company has their own system whereby they calculate the rates and if they keep the log then it will be fine.

[GG] Why do they want to charge single time? **[SC]** They are doing it for commercial reasons because there is a lot of trade out there and the public does not understand why costs of taxis are time and a half on Sundays when buses and other public transport do not use the same system. They want to charge the usual rate, so they get more customers. **[AA]** There is also competition with other companies who currently charge single rate fares.

5. Boxall Taxis- Unable to contact the licensing team. Need to have better communication with the licensing team, email and phone message can lead to very a slow response times.

[SC] The trade used to have direct dial for all licensing officers, but management felt that this was taking up a lot of resources answering questions which can be found within the policy. Thus, licensing fees went up and then customers who did not take up the Officers' time before started to complain but the fees have been dropped. If you have a question, try searching it within the policy or NHDC website. If you cannot find it, send an email into the Licensing inbox (licensing@north-herts.gov.uk) and the relevant Officer will reply to it. Whilst it may take a bit more time for the team to reply than before, the team do respond in a reasonable timeframe. **[AA]** The website is being updated as well to become more user friendly. **[SC]** There will also be some e-forms to help make things run even more smoothly.

6. Boxall Taxis- DVLA are currently experiencing major delays processing new driving license (6-12weeks), The driving license is a major requirement for the NHDC taxi badges renewals & DBS check process.

[SC] Whilst this delay may cause inconveniences, it is advised for taxi drivers to send in renewal applications in good time. If drivers have not received their driver's license back in time for the NHDC renewal date, then as long as they have proof that it has been submitted to the DVLA in good time then they can still renew their licence. They would then need to email a scanned copy to the Licensing inbox once it has come through.

In August, NHDC will start up new driver applications again as drivers will be able to make appointments with CSC. It will be a reduced service, and there will be a booking system whereby drivers will be able to book in the Knowledge Test and Right to Work. Doctors are doing medicals again, so it will be possible from August.

ACTION: [AA] To update the webpage with the information and send email to all drivers once the booking system is in place to let them know that new applications will be starting back up again.

7. Boxall Taxis- No Idling stickers are not fit for purpose as they keep falling off.

[MG] Perhaps this needs to be investigated. The team would appreciate further feedback on how they could be improved.

ACTION: Licensing team to organise trial runs of No Idling stickers on various vehicles to see if they are sustainable. If not, the team will look at procuring some more sustainable stickers.

8. Any Other Business

- **[JT]** Can the taxi licensing update from the government be included in the minutes?
[SC] sent **[AA]** the following information to add:
 - The 'Best practice Guidance' to taxi and PHV licensing for authorities that was published in 2010 is currently being updated to reflect the changes in the sector since then. There will be a Consultation for licensing authorities and other stakeholders to provide their views on the refreshed guidance.
- **[GG]** The Council recognises the difficulties that drivers have faced throughout the pandemic. We are grateful that there has been some support from the government for companies to keep afloat and it is great news to hear that they are starting to return to business as usual now that the government restrictions have eased.
- **[SC]** There will be some positive engagement with taxi drivers at the next CT.

ACTION: [SC] to organise some positive engagement with drivers with the Licensing team and **[GG]**.