

TAXI FORUM
Notes of Meeting held on 22nd February 2017

Present: Julie Wallace, Hannah Wallace, Emma Brigham, David Allen, Sgt. Darren Burney, Dave Williams, Michael Skellern, Fred Dunne, Colin Jones, Dave Kaminski, Guy Herbert, Pete Stock, John Watt, Makhmood Hussain, Ahrsham Ditta, Tony Davies, Owen Hughes, Colin Hanton, Harry Jones, Richard Phillips, Ithsham Pevrez, Ben Sackey, Paresh Thaker, Aydin Arif.

		ACTION
	<p>Notes taken at the Meeting</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Julie Wallace introduced the Licensing Team and gave an overview of their individual roles.</p> <p>Working Group Update</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Following the last meeting of the taxi forum a working group of 12 was set up to discuss the review of the current vehicle, driver and operator conditions, - The first meeting noted the siting of taxi ranks, licensing conditions updates, signage for both Private Hire and Hackney vehicles, educating customers regarding localism, meters and fees, - A cap on Hackney Carriage numbers was discussed but will not be introduced as it cannot be justified however upon review of the licensing conditions, applications and conditions to become a driver will become more stringent to make it harder to get through the process and to ensure a higher quality in drivers, - Discussion of training being required surrounding Child Sexual Exploitation and wheelchair access in vehicles - Badges and placement was also discussed as well as a driving test being implemented for new drivers - The second meeting was last month (January) and discussed signage on hackney vehicles – suggested signage adopted by driver based on personal choice of either putting their own details on or having no signage at all. - <i>Vote put forward to group and asked consensus about signage, mixed opinions. Some stated they had already had signage and would be unhappy to pay for alterations, if the measurements changed, unless there was some reimbursement from the Council.</i> - JW stated one idea was for a Stafford Borough Council logo to be placed on vehicles to identify them as local taxis. 	

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Group also stated that majority would want the choice to have signage as it is positive for their businesses with the number on the side of the vehicle</i> - <i>Question as to whether Council would pay towards new signage</i> - JW taking into consideration. There will be a minimum and maximum size for signage – being discussed in licensing conditions - Working group also discussed differentiation between Private Hire and Hackneys especially regarding prices and charging. Stated Hackneys <u>cannot</u> charge more than metered fare - <i>Drivers have noticed overcharging in the borough.</i> - JW to investigate – stated have to start meter when passenger enters the vehicle. Issues surrounding airport fares will be discussed at later working group <p>Guest Speaker</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Guest speaker Sgt. Darren Burney – Introduced himself and background. Local Stafford Sergeant discussing driving standards and topics including CCTV, complaints and signage. - Stated many do not drive to requirements of law. - Suggested to always wear a seatbelt regardless of any exemptions – will be more prosecutions - Mobile phones – drivers have been seen on phones with passengers in. Can receive <u>6 points</u> on licence and <u>£200</u> fine for being on phone - Questions regarding Bluetooth headsets. DB advised these are fine, mobile phones are significant in Road Traffic Collisions and driving related deaths - Issue with dropping off on zigzags - Drivers state ‘passengers ask for it’ DB states can earn <u>3 points</u> and <u>£100</u> fine – do not stop on them for any reason - Issue with leaving fog lights on – should not be on unless necessary - <i>Driver agreement that some use fog lights when shouldn’t</i> - Discussion surrounding running red lights. 3 prosecutions currently. Amber means stop, drivers should not be at a speed where they cannot stop at amber light. <u>Do not amber gamble</u> 	<p>JW</p> <p>JW</p> <p>JW/DB</p>

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Query from CJ regarding timing of lights by the Grapes. Discussed with county by drivers and have stated cannot be changed but there is not enough time to get through the lights so cannot get off the taxi rank quickly due to queues of traffic. Blocking off from 12.00 by Tavern pub being taken into consideration.</i> - DB raises concerns about driving through the town centre. Alternative needs to be considered. No exemptions apart from carrying disabled passengers. Vehicles also recommended to travel at 10mph - <i>CJ asked if there could be any flexibility for taxi drivers in the town, especially if passengers cannot walk.</i> - DB advised that drivers have to abide by laws and cannot drive in pedestrianised areas, highlighted to keep drivers and pedestrians safe and keep drivers out of court - Bollards to be discussed. - <i>Issues raised surrounding general cars using route between Royal Bank Scotland and Nationwide when states buses and taxis only.</i> - DB discussing new signage needed for one way. All signs being taken up with the County Council. - <i>Confusion surrounding bus lanes regarding Hackney exemption Stated there is exemptions in Stoke.</i> - JW stated Stafford does not often have bus lanes and to follow signage. DB states signage can be unclear and so causes disputes that will be cleared up when signage reviewed with the County Council. - <i>Group raised concerns about yellow boxes. Needs more policing as people are blocking roundabouts and other areas so more traffic is created and cannot get to destinations</i> - DB – Unfortunately need permission to use cameras on yellow boxes, only applicable in London at the moment. Frustration is shared regarding highways so will be discussed/looked at on DBs meeting with highways - <i>Issue with not being able to differentiate between Stafford taxis and taxis from outside the Borough, cannot identify rogue drivers as all vehicles are white</i> - Suggestion of having ‘Hackney Carriage Stafford’ on sides of vehicles to differentiate, to be discussed further. 	<p>DB</p> <p>DB</p>

		ACTION
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Several issues surrounding out of Borough taxis namely Lucky 7 being on ranks in Stone. Both Private Hire and Hackneys have trouble getting into the area and onto the rank and out of Borough taxis are overcharging passengers. Business is being taken from local taxis.</i> - JW and DB state as a Borough we cannot enforce it as they are Stoke taxis however are working with Stoke currently. Discussed pending prosecution against Lucky 7. - <i>GH advised Stoke plying for hire is illegal and where are the police regarding this issue</i> - <i>DK stated do not even send Kaminski taxis up to Granvilles area due to illegal taxis</i> - DB – Police will look at moving taxis on. - <i>Stafford have taxi marshals that monitor and regulate people getting into taxis.</i> - Stated cost of marshals in Stone may be an issue. Julie and Darren to meet and discuss issues for Darren to discuss with police and team. - <i>Discussion around ACE taxis still advertising. JW investigating. Are legally allowed a Stafford number even if diverts to Stoke.</i> - <i>Issue also raised by DW with Stafford Hackney being registered as Private Hire in Stoke as Lucky 7.</i> - JW will investigate, asked for details to be emailed over. More undercover operations for council staff to be discussed and undertaken. - <i>Suspension is not stopping drivers as DK advised once appeals are made driver can continue until appeal has been heard so is not stopping drivers.</i> - Stated difficult to change the law for enforcement Highlighted issues - Outline given of time Julie has been here, 8 months. - Priority of reviewing the licensing conditions however want to highlight regular issues and complaints being received Overcharging - JW states needs to be addressed particularly in relation to Hackneys. A lot of drivers have agreed fares and quote amounts that are too high and JW is working with customers and encouraging them to make statements. - Affects our reputation as a Borough - Highlights issue regarding complaint of man who gets off train and into taxi at 10/5 to midnight and is charged at past midnight rates 	<p>DB</p> <p>JW/DB</p> <p>JW</p>

		ACTION
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Drivers stated clocks could be wrong in vehicles and so meter switches over to post midnight fare price automatically but earlier than should be. Suggestion of clocks being checked when vehicles are inspected.</i> - <i>Drivers also state that council used to check metres but this is not done any more to ensure drivers are charging correct prices. Suggestion that this should be checked yearly.</i> - JW and DA state this will be looked at and done in the future. <p>Availability of wheelchair access vehicles</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - New legislation coming in surrounding equality and disability access in vehicles - <i>Drivers have noticed that some hackneys are saying they have room but do not have ramps or making other excuses not to take wheelchair users in taxis.</i> - JW states this needs to be reported to her if this is being done and some are also charging more for wheelchair users which needs to be stopped. Training will be provided on wheelchair access as it can be a specialist technique so all drivers with wheelchair access vehicles can take disabled passengers. - JW – advisable for private hire operators to have wheelchair access vehicles too as there is a new focus on equality <p>Standard of driving</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Complaints surrounding speeding, tailgating, overtaking when shouldn't, running red lights and speeding through the town. JW states needs to stop, need to ensure good quality driving and standards. <p>Accidents and Incidents</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Not being reported by drivers or operators. Calls should come to us, in licensing conditions states need to report any damage/accidents should be reported to us within 7 days. - <i>Drivers asked about how bad damage has to be before reported to licensing.</i> - EB states any sort of damage needs to be reported, even minor paintwork scratches etc. Will be assessed by inspection and it will either be deemed as fine to drive if not significant or will be sent for MOT 	JW/DA

		ACTION
	<p>Notification of change of address</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Have 7 days to notify the council of change of address, as it is not being done. Need to be informed as part of conditions. <p>All observations by Julie over the last 8 months will all go into conditions to tighten things up.</p> <p>MOT providers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Drivers unhappy as only have County Fleet for MOT and are not flexible enough for drivers as they are restricted on time slots.</i> - JW has checked with legal in council and stated that there needs to be fair and open competition for other MOT providers to be contacted/used by drivers. An MOT is a legal requirement but they are not all the same. - <i>Suggestions for MOT providers: Sovereign, FMS, main dealerships e.g. Bristol Street Ford etc.</i> - <i>CJ stated issues with MOT as they take plates off for simple things that they can change e.g. new bulb in indicators or changing of wiper blade but take plates off and send drivers elsewhere before coming back after completed. RP stated that County Fleet should always be used for re-testing as they are neutral with no financial gain.</i> - JW to look into regarding possible new MOT providers <p>Questionnaires handed out to drivers and asked for honest opinions to make forums better for themselves</p> <p>Any other issues</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Number of passengers that are specified on plate need to be taken. Drivers are picking and choosing fares and passing people back to other drivers</i> - <i>Jobs are being refused due to not enough room for both passengers and luggage or just choosing not to take them. It was suggested that people are buying cars that are too small and they should realize if the boot is too small to take luggage.</i> - <i>CJ states used to be a condition regarding size of vehicles and boots for passengers and luggage.</i> - JW states in relation to the conditions surrounding passengers and luggage and room in vehicles, will be discussed and considered. 	<p>JW</p> <p>JW</p>

		ACTION
	<p>Next working group</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - JW – will be discussing drivers having a dress code and an executive plate scheme - <i>CH asked what executive plates are. JW explains they are more corporate jobs in bigger cars, almost like being chauffer driven. Discussion surrounding having to be a Private Hire driver to be able to do this and cars having to be any other colour other than white. Still being discussed with legal</i> - <u>Both open for discussion working group 1st March 2017 12.00pm</u> <p>Next meeting on 28 June 2017 @12:00 in the Craddock room (1st floor)</p>	