

TAXI FORUM  
Notes of Meeting held on 28<sup>th</sup> June 2017

**Present: Julie Wallace, Hannah Wallace, Emma Bringham, Katie McKinney, Robert Simpson, Zoe Baker, Billy Plant, David Williams, Paresh Thaker, Paul Bates, Peter Stock, Zulqurnain Bukhari, Makhmood Hussain, Arsham Ditta, Colin Jones, Nurul Rashid, Ithsham Pevrez, Gurpal Kang, Khalid Latif, Shabir Khan, Harry Jones, Michael Skellern, Ghulam Raza, Patricia Thorpe**

		ACTION
	<p><b>Notes taken at meeting</b></p> <p><b>Julie Wallace introduced the Officers and Billy Plant and gave an overview of roles.</b></p> <p><b>Consultation and Process</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>The consultation process was not discussed at the meeting. JW stated as it is a formal consultation any responses needs to be made in writing via email or post</b></li> </ul> <p><b>Billy Plant – Taxi Marshals</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>Outline given of the service; nationwide security service, taxi Marshalls have been around for 5 years and contracted again by Stafford Borough Council last year.</b></li> <li>- <b>Drivers may not see benefits but Marshalls can also complete compliance checks on licences and drivers, ensure Private Hires cars aren't plying for hire and should ensure the efficiency of the taxi service</b></li> <li>- <b>At least one Marshall wears body mounted cameras which provides undisputable evidence for taxi drivers in court should it be needed</b></li> <li>- <b>Work with the council with data sharing to see when busy periods are, which ranks are the busiest and also report on incidents/licensing breaches</b></li> <li>- <i>HJ stated they do not have a proper Marshall Service, think the idea is brilliant but it doesn't happen correctly in Stafford. They control the traffic flow but drivers can manage this themselves but need more of the described activities</i></li> <li>- <i>Open food is an issue for drivers, food should be closed before entering the vehicle at all times and Marshalls should be informing people that they cannot get into taxis with opened food</i></li> <li>- <i>People are also coming in from out of town and stealing fares from Stafford drivers</i></li> <li>- <b>Billy Plant will now look into this and documents about Marshalls' roles will be provided.</b></li> </ul>	

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>CJ stated needed the Council board back by the taxi rank</i></li> <li>- <b>ZB stated board is broken and the Borough are going through a corporate rebranding so will be getting it back after this is done</b></li>   <li>- <i>HJ asked if there is any way of communicating better with the Marshalls group</i></li> <li>- <b>ZB – reviews happen with Billy every month or so</b></li> <li>- <b>JW – Send emails to ehlicensing with concerns/queries and this will be collated into feedback and taken to the review meeting</b></li>   <li>- <i>Drivers asked about training of Marshalls</i></li> <li>- <b>BP stated they have training regarding their roles and responsibilities and how the job works in practice as well as training about compliance checks. They have the necessary qualifications with the SIA and complete scenario training in the interview process. Each site then has its own specific training processes</b></li> </ul> <p><b>Child Sexual Exploitation Training</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>JW – CSE is in the policy. Training is being introduced in <u>September</u> and there will be a letter drop to notify all drivers of this</b></li> <li>- <b>Need to attend one session of approx. 2 hours which will be provided over a range of 6 days over a 2 week period</b></li> <li>- <b>The council will pay for training however taxi drivers will need to pay the £5.00 booking fee.</b></li> <li>- <b>External agency is coming in to provide the training and training will be certificated – only those contracted by the County for school runs do not have to attend this training if they can provide recent certificates.</b></li> <li>- <b>This training will be compulsory every 3 years.</b></li> </ul> <p><b>Safeguarding leaflets</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>JW handed out safeguarding leaflets to keep in taxis with the appropriate numbers for calls in terms of safeguarding.</b></li> <li>- <i>CJ asked about heart attack numbers/procedures</i></li> <li>- <b>JW process is being completed for this and will be supplied with details</b></li> </ul> <p><b>Smoking in vehicles</b></p>	

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- RS there have been reports of drivers smoking in vehicles and there is no exceptions, no smoking in vehicles</li> <li>- Drivers will receive a fixed penalty notice (FPN) of £75.00 if caught, charge is £50.00 if paid early</li> <li>- If cigarette butts are then thrown out of the car onto the floor, will also receive a littering FPN of the same amount</li> <li>- E-cigarettes are not allowed in vehicles but do not come under the FPN regime, if caught with an E-cigarette this will come under the penalty matrix and can lead to suspension or revoking of licence</li> </ul> <p><b>Letter from Staffs Police</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Letter handed out from Sgt Darren Burney from Staffordshire Police</li> <li>- Letter details current traffic regulations regarding wearing a seatbelt for taxi drivers, although Hackney Carriages are exempt, it is encouraged for drivers to wear seatbelts for personal safety and insurance reasons.</li> <li>- When required to wear seatbelts but failing to do so, fixed penalty is £100.00</li> <li>- Drivers are <b><u>NOT</u></b> permitted to drive through the town centre, the only exemption is when dropping off disabled people with blue badges.</li> <li>- Drivers are also <b><u>NOT</u></b> permitted to pick up or drop off on pedestrian crossing zig zag exclusion zones</li> <li>- For both of these offences the fixed penalty fine is £100.00 and 3 points</li> <li>- <i>Complaints regarding this need to be sent to Inspector Mark Joynson</i></li> </ul> <p><b>Inspections of Taxi's</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- If drivers receive a phone call from the Technical Support Team or Julie as the Licensing Officer requesting it in for an inspection this means that the vehicles are brought in almost immediately – no excuses. If drivers do not come in and vehicles are deemed unsafe JW will suspend the car from the road until the vehicle has come in for inspection and will take the route of the penalty matrix</li> <li>- Have a small window of time that driver can come in straight after they have been called. Unless genuine reasons and proof are provided drivers will be facing penalties if do not come in</li> <li>- Will be doing spot inspections as well and enforcement</li> </ul>	

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	<p><b>Wheelchair Passengers</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- There have been reports of excuses and discrimination against wheelchair users as passengers of taxis. It is against the Equality Act 2010 to discriminate in any way including on price.</li> <li>- There are new knowledge tests in place with a section on wheelchair users as passengers and a lot of new drivers are getting this wrong</li> <li>- There is ideas and discussions surrounding potential training to show proof of drivers knowing how to do it</li> <li>- Have dealt with serious discrimination cases, there will be penalties and serious consequences for this including drivers having to pay for training themselves.</li> <li>- Rules of discrimination apply to both Hackneys and Private Hires but JW to deal with specifics of private hire drivers/operators as they are slightly different</li> </ul> <p><b>Taxi Plates</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- JW has taken on board previous comments about flimsiness and longevity of current plates</li> <li>- New plates have been created (sample passed around the group), are rubberised and waterproof and more sturdy overall</li> <li>- Executive hire plates – examples of plates being passed around (gold and black plates)</li> </ul> <p><b>Taxi Rank Provision</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- All want Millbank by the Post House/Coach and Horses as a night time rank but County is currently objecting (highways)</li> <li>- Have to take it higher to the elected members as highways are complaining about a visual obstruction to the junction which is disagreed with by the Borough Council.</li> <li>- Clark Street is going for approval also however has a road traffic order on it for car parking which the Borough Council have asked to be removed as we feel a taxi rank would be more important and beneficial than car parking</li> <li>- There has been agreement between the Borough Council, the Police, Town Centre Partnerships and also Taxi Drivers but highways are objecting so the Borough Council will be taking it higher</li> <li>- Press release occurred yesterday for the area around the railway station – marker has been entered surrounding taxi provision to be planned in from the start.</li> <li>- HS2 phase 2 bill submitted shortly for extension. Works</li> </ul>	

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	<p>will start in 2019 if bill is approved and will be completed by 2026, it has been agreed that along the line there will be 12 trains per hour in each direction and one of these trains per hour will stop at Stafford station</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Because Stafford is one of the few stations that will be stopped at by HS2, developers are now interested in Stafford and are particularly looking at the area around the railway station for things like hotels with conference room spaces and businesses with office space – looking to regenerate the area</li> <li>- Taxis will be an integral part of this so the officers have stressed the importance of taxi provision therefore JW to keep drivers informed of plans/progress</li> </ul> <p><b>North end of town</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- There is a group interested looking to regenerate this area, likely to be autumn that the ex-Morrisons development is going to be used, said to be split into 3 sections and a German supermarket is going to occupy one</li> <li>- <i>Drivers stated investment needs to be made in the town centre</i></li> <li>- The Council are hoping for economic regeneration and then will put on more events in the market square and surrounding town area e.g. looking at introducing a 7 day market</li> <li>- <b>Suitable taxi rank provisions are to be included in plans</b></li> <li>- <i>Drivers have stated there are not enough spaces for taxis and they are being persecuted by the traffic wardens if there are not enough spaces and they are trying to wait to see if the rank becomes free</i></li> <li>- <b>RS need to park where you are allowed to park and is trying to get additional rank spaces provided</b></li> <li>- <i>Discussion amongst drivers and RS regarding a temporary capping of Hackneys as they state other Councils do this but RS advised it is against best practice</i></li> <li>- <b>Council are decreasing numbers as knowledge tests have been made more difficult and we are currently getting a lot of individuals failing so cannot get through to be drivers. Also if the person takes 4 and fails all 4 they have to wait 12 months before they can reapply.</b></li> <li>- <i>Drivers asked about short-term plans</i></li> <li>- <b>RS – the council alone cannot declare a street a taxi rank, it is a long process. Can be blocked by people like highways then plans will fall. RS will be asking what can be put in place as an interim measure</b></li> </ul> <p><b>AOB – None</b>  <b>Date of next forum – 30<sup>th</sup> November 12.00pm Craddock room, 1<sup>st</sup> Floor, Civic Centre, Stafford Borough Council.</b></p>	





# Staffordshire P O L I C E

Sergeant 4427 Darren Burney

Stafford Police Station,

Eastgate Street ,

Stafford

ST162DQ

28 June 2017

Dear Sir or Madam.

I am writing to all local taxi companies.

I attended the last taxi forum, and tried to impress on the attendees, the importance of driving standards, and compliance with road traffic regulations.

Staffordshire Police are committed to road safety and are determined to drive down fatal and serious injury road traffic collisions.

One of the main factors in fatal or serious collisions is failing to wear a seatbelt.

European research suggests that an estimated 50% of all car occupants that die in a fatal accident in the EU could have survived if they had worn their seat belt.

Taxi drivers, particularly hackney, do have various exemptions in law regarding the wearing of seatbelts. These exemptions however are unfortunately abused, with some taxi drivers rarely wearing seatbelts.

Although exemptions in law exist for taxi drivers from wearing a seatbelt, drivers clearly can still suffer catastrophic injuries in the event of an accident

It should also be considered that if a driver was in a collision, even one that is no fault of their own, any claim for compensation could be reduced, or refused if a seatbelt was not being worn.



## Staffordshire P O L I C E

As part of a national campaign to reduce fatal collisions education will now only be given in certain circumstances

Can we please remind you that the fine is a fixed penalty ticket for £100 for not wearing seatbelts when required to do so,

I also discussed at the forum, taxi drivers use of Gaolgate/Greengate Street in Stafford town centre.

This is a pedestrianised area. Access to vehicles is very limited. It is only allowed between certain times. During the authorised times access is only for loading/unloading goods, and for disabled badge holders. Taxis taking disabled people in to the road is permitted.

I stressed at the meeting that there is no exemption for taxis, private hire or hackney. This has gone unheeded with taxis and public alike breaching the restriction.

To ensure this area remains safe for pedestrians, Stafford Police will be starting to enforce the restriction.

This will begin on immediately. Again, any vehicle entering the road, when not permitted, will be issued with a fixed penalty.

Another common offence committed by taxi drivers is picking up and dropping off on pedestrian crossing zig zag exclusion zones. This is never acceptable. Again words of advice have failed to have the desired effect. The penalty for this is £100 and 3 points. Tickets will be issued to anybody seen to be committing this offence.

I would be grateful if you would inform your drivers of these measures. We wish for the above offences not to be committed so enforcement is not required

Yours Faithfully.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Darren Burney', written over the typed name.

Darren Burney

Sergeant 4427