

# Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing Forum

**Tuesday 15th November 2011**

**Present:**

Jim Watson, Sue Whybrow, Mark Oxley, K Hogben, Adrian Joy, Darren Bentley, Lloyd Santer, M Bates, Tracey Ruck, Steve Faldon Alison Faldon, Lindsay Groves, Pam Ninham

Councillor Goddard	Chair of Licensing and Health and Safety Committee	(CG)
Sheila Davison	Environmental Health Manager	(SD)
Jack Godley	Licensing Officer	(JG)
Tammy Brooks	(Minute taker)	

**Apologies:** James Hann

**1. Minutes and Actions from the Previous Meeting**

Grants for DSA Tests and mystery shopping ideas: Items still being reviewed. Additional information on exemptions issued.

**2. Recent Thefts**

JG advised that a series of thefts had been reported. He confirmed that DC Tom Wilson was dealing with the case and that a suspect had been arrested. JG urged drivers to be vigilant and report any matters as soon as they were able. In response to a query about how drivers were kept informed, JG advised that he hoped that when representatives were appointed, they would be able to quickly disseminate this type of information to other taxi drivers.

TR suggested that a facebook page be set up accessible only to taxi drivers in order that incidents like thefts etc could be reported. JG advised that any such media forum would need to be maintained by the taxi drivers themselves.

TR further suggested that a notice board be put up at the station displaying taxi information useful to both drivers and the public.

JG advised that he was not looking into making CCTV in hire vehicles mandatory. JG to investigate the cost of installing CCTV and the funding opportunities available. He would then come back to the forum for further discussion. SW to forward Gravesham contact details to JG.

SD suggested that representatives might wish to set up their own notification cascade system.

**Action:** JG to look into notice board at the station.  
JG to explore grant opportunities for installation of CCTV in vehicles.

### **3. Results of Fare Consultation**

Cllr Goddard advised that they had only received an 18% response rate to the consultation on fares. He advised that the low response made it difficult to report to the Licensing Committee on the views of the trade. He urged representatives to put forward the views of the trade and explained how the views influence the decisions made by the Committee. There was some discussion around increasing maximum fares further than suggested. For example it was suggested that the drop rate could be raised much higher in order to make short journeys more profitable. SD advised that there was a need to balance requests against what was reasonable for the public. SD to insert a paragraph in the report to the Licensing Committee explaining the variation of charges and the fact that charges lower than the tariff set are frequently charged. Cllr Goddard felt it would be useful for representatives to explain about drop rates at the meeting of the Committee.

### **4. DSA Tester Experiences**

It was confirmed that only 1 out of the 3 volunteers passed the tester experience. Lindsay Groves gave his feedback on the tests. He confirmed that he had found the experience useful. There was a lengthy discussion around the need for the tests, its effectiveness and expense. It was suggested that the item be deferred until such time that Paul and James could report back on their experiences. The advantages and disadvantages could then be reviewed. SD confirmed that this issue was in the policy review and would form part of the consultation.

### **5. Policy Review**

JG advised that the draft policy was complete. James Hann has met with representatives and has produced an information sheet on the key policy changes. This will be circulated to representatives to pass round. There was discussion about the dress code with some forum members expressing their unhappiness about it. JG asked forum members to read the document and pass their comments onto the representatives. SD confirmed that the draft policy would be submitted to Council in December and then be put out for consultation until the end of February. It would then come back into the committee cycle and become effective from 1<sup>st</sup> May 2012.

### **6. Gateway Plus**

JG had received complaints regarding the waiting times. He advised that the Gateway had been receiving higher visitor rates than expected. However wait times were being investigated in the mean time he was looking into whether some forms could be completed online. There also seems to be some confusion as to when it is necessary for drivers to come into the Gateway or Civic Centre.

TK suggested that a tick box be added to the application asking applicants whether they wished to have their licence posted or collected.

**Action:** JG to add extra notes on the website regarding paperwork and where it should be sent.  
JG to add tick box option to application form.

JG to review website and provide more guidance on when it is and is not necessary to come into the Gateway Plus or Civic Centre

## **7. Election of Representatives**

The 5 nominated representatives were:

Executive	-	Darren Bentley
Companies	-	Adrian Joy
Independent	-	Sue Whybrow
Private Hire	-	Steve Faldon
Hackney Carriage	-	Tracey Ruck
Main point of contact	-	Tracey Ruck

## **8. Any Other Business**

No other matters arising.

## **9. Date of the next meeting:**

It was suggested that a meeting be held towards the end of February to discuss the draft policy document.