

PRESTON TAXI TRADES LIAISON MEETING 6 March 2019

Present:

Daren Ireland – RMT North West
Riaz Qadeer – RMT Preston Taxi Drivers Branch
Mike Thorpe – Licensing Manager, Preston City Council
David Johnson - Senior Licensing Technician, Preston City Council
Dave Lowe - Senior Licensing Technician, Preston City Council

Minutes from Last Meeting

The minutes from the liaison meeting held on 7 November 2018 were agreed as a correct record.

Taxi Ranks

Those present discussed proposals for new taxi ranks following site visits with highway officers from Lancashire County Council (“LCC”) and Preston City Council on 27 November 2018. MT also reported on comments he had received from the LCC Highways officer since the site visits.

It was agreed not to pursue with the proposal for a new taxi rank in Christian Road because this would be dependent on allowing hackney carriages a right turn from its junction with Fishergate Hill and LCC will not permit this.

It was agreed not to pursue the use of a loading bay adjacent to Bistrot Pierre, Fishergate due to the conflict it would cause to patrons enjoying the external area of the afore mentioned restaurant.

It was agreed to ask the Council’s Taxi and Miscellaneous Committee to resolve to undertake a consultation process for the appointment of new 24 hour taxi ranks at Chapel Street and Theatre Street.

It was agreed to ask the Council’s Taxi and Miscellaneous Committee to resolve to undertake a consultation process to amend the Market Street taxi rank from a day time rank to 24 hours.

Parking Enforcement

DI shared a letter of reply dated 3 January 2019 he had received from the LCC Cabinet member for Highways and Transport at Lancashire County Council regarding the enforcement of parking restrictions at city centre taxi ranks in which a request for a meeting had been declined but information provided on enforcement activity.

MT confirmed that LCC had commenced regular weekend evening parking enforcement within the city centre, including taxi ranks. He also welcomed an invite he had received for this Council’s Senior Licensing Technicians to accompany their parking enforcement officers which had been taken up on a number occasions. He confirmed that between November 2018 and February 2019 a total of 108 penalty charge notices had been issued to owners of vehicles parked on city centre taxi ranks during weekend evenings.

DJ and DL shared their experiences of the parking enforcement operations and reported that a similar number of drivers had received warnings (those sat in or returning to their vehicles).

Access for Wheelchair Users to Taxis and Private Hire Vehicles

MT reported that the Council had not received any objections from the trades to its proposal to publish and maintain a list of licensed hackney carriage and private hire vehicles that are able to take wheelchair passengers. If approved it will mean that licensed drivers of vehicles included on this designated list would commit an offence under the Equalities Act 2010 if they refused to carry wheelchair passengers; did not provide assistance to those passengers; and charged them extra for doing so. He confirmed that once approved he would be writing to all drivers and include details on how to apply for an exemption certificate on medical grounds. He added the Taxi Committee at a meeting held on 9 January 2019 had agreed to recommend that the Cabinet approves the proposal.

(Cabinet met on 6 March 2019 and agreed to approve the proposal to publish and maintain a designated list).

National Register of Taxi Licence Refusals and Revocations

MT reported on another Council proposal to subscribe to a new National Register of Taxi Licence Refusals and Revocations. If approved it would mean that applications for new drivers and renewals will be checked on the register. Also, where an existing licence is revoked or an application refused then details will be recorded on the register. He added the Taxi Committee at a meeting held on 9 January 2019 had agreed to recommend that the Cabinet approves the proposal.

(Cabinet met on 6 March 2019 and agreed subscribe to the National Register).

Preston Taxi Policy – Proposed Amendments

MT reported that he will shortly be consulting with the trade on proposals to replace the current medical assessment form and to require applicants to seek its completion by the medical practice where applicants are registered. RQ commented that applicants currently use different medical practices based on the fee charged. MT responded that applicants may transfer to another medical practice if they wish to but added all representations received will be considered by the Taxi and Miscellaneous Committee at a meeting on 24 April 2019.

MT also reported that he intended to propose another policy amendment in respect of vehicle testing stations. He is considering replacing the current closed list with an open list of approved garages subject to them meeting an approved criteria which is currently being worked on.

Government Response to the Task and Finish Group Recommendations on Taxi and Private Hire Vehicle Licensing

MT referred to the Task and Finish Group on Taxi and Private Hire Vehicle Licensing which was established by the Department of Transport in September 2017. In July 2018 the Group Chairman submitted 34 recommendations for consideration by the Government. In February 2019 the Government published its response which sets out a broad summary of the Government's position and the actions it proposes to take including revised Statutory Guidance for Licensing Authorities. It was agreed to discuss the proposals in more detail at the next meeting.

Enforcement – General

RQ raised concerns about the impact of the highway and development proposals in the vicinity of the "Adelphi junctions" and it was agreed to monitor and lobby when appropriate to do so.

He also raised concerns of out of town hackney carriages acting as private hire vehicles for Preston licensed Operators with their "For Hire" signs illuminated. He agreed to provide vehicle details (and Operator if possible) to the Licensing office.

Enforcement – Vehicle Inspections

DJ reported that between November 2018 and February 2019 the Council inspected:-

- 24 hackney carriages – 11 stop notices and 12 vehicle defect notices.
- 22 private hire vehicles – 4 stop notice and 17 vehicle defect notices.

Enforcement – Penalty Points

DJ reported that between November 2018 and February 2019 a total of 28 penalty point notices were issued in respect of:

- 4 hackney carriage drivers for breach of byelaws
- 3 hackney carriage drivers and 11 private hire drivers for undeclared criminal convictions or motoring offences
- 1 private hire driver for breach of condition
- 3 hackney carriage and 2 private hire vehicle proprietors for breach of vehicle licence conditions
- 4 hackney carriage drivers for breaches of policy

Taxi and Miscellaneous Committee

At its December 2018 meeting the Committee granted an application for a Private Hire Driver Licence for a probationary period of six months. It also agreed to adjourn the review of two Hackney Carriage Drivers Licences until the January 2019 meeting. At this meeting one of the hackney carriage drivers was issued with a written warning. The licence of the other hackney carriage driver had expired since the December meeting so he appeared before the Committee in January asking for the renewal of his Hackney Carriage Driver's Licence which, following consideration, was granted. An application for a Private Hire Driver's Licence was also considered and

granted for a probationary six month period. The Committee also considered a request to adjourn the review of a Hackney Carriage Driver's Licence pending the completion of a police investigation and any subsequent legal proceedings. This was granted subject to the driver handing in his badges in order to prevent him from working as a hackney carriage driver until the until the Committee makes a determination on the review of his Hackney Carriage Driver's Licence.

Date of Next Meeting

Wednesday 24 April 2019 in Room C at the Town Hall commencing at 2pm.