

## **Preston Hackney Carriage Trade Liaison Meeting**

**10<sup>th</sup> May 2023**

### **Attendance:**

Michelle Reynolds (chair) – Licensing Manager, Preston City Council (PCC)

Julia Littlechild – Senior Licensing Technician (PCC)

Elizabeth Wallace-Mills – Senior Licensing Technician (PCC)

Steven Morris – Licensing Enforcement Officer (PCC)

Sodack Ally – Preston Branch Secretary (RMT)

Daren Ireland – Regional Organiser (RMT)

### **1. Introduction of attendees**

All above attendees introduced themselves and briefly outlined their role.

### **2. Minutes from previous meeting**

Minutes from the previous meeting held on 8<sup>th</sup> March 2023 were agreed. These meeting notes are available to view on the Preston City Council website.

MR advised that she had received a response from LCC regarding the layout and signage of the Church Street hackney carriage rank and the Garstang Road/Broughton roundabout. LCC have advised that they had made site visits to the locations and considered the current provision was adequate therefore there would be no changes. LCC also advised that they had looked into the request for taxis to be allowed to use the bus lanes on Fishergate Hill & the Garstang Rd/Broughton roundabout but as there are adequate alternative routes there would be no changes made.

DI – Advised the majority of Authorities permit the shared use of bus lanes by taxis and noted that as the trade plays a vital role for the disabled community the fact that LCC are refusing this request is forcing fares up for this group of service users as taxis are forced to take longer routes around the city. He advised that he would write to the CEO of LCC regarding this matter again.

DI – Raised the issue of private vehicles parking on hackney carriage ranks as discussed in the previous meeting. He considers that LCC should not have total control over parking and the role should be delegated back to the local council, i.e. Preston City Council. He would like to pursue this option and requested that PCC Licensing join him in writing to LCC requesting this.

MR – Agreed this would be a good course of action and will put a letter/email together however feels that it may be difficult to persuade LCC to relinquish these powers as they are the primary parking enforcement agency.

### **3. Ranks**

MR – Advised that since the previous meeting the hackney carriage stand situated on the north-east side of Friargate facing Ring Way had been revoked further to the formal request received from LCC's highways department. This was required due to the re-layout and part pedestrianisation of Friargate. In lieu of this an additional new stand for 2 spaces had been formally created on Heatley Street and a further 4 additional rank spaces created over the brow on Friargate to extend the existing rank.

SA – Advised that the Heatley Street rank is not really adequate as a rank and may not work well due to the narrowness of the street together with the addition of private vehicles that would park up.

MR – Advised that these amendments had already been subject to public consultation and subsequently approved by LCC and advised that should the rank prove to be impractical or

insufficient once operating as a rank that this should be monitored and future discussions could then be arranged with the Highways Authority and Licensing regarding additional rank provision.

DI – Requested if the trade could be consulted on future rank changes/issues.

MR – Confirmed that this would be usual practice.

#### **4.Tariff Increase**

MR – As discussed at the previous meeting no supporting evidence for the proposed tariff increase had been received by the trade.

DI – Advised that although there had been a recent tariff increase (implemented August 2022), in the last 9 years the trade had only had 2 increases and the pressures of the cost of living is what has forced them to request a further one, he would forward supporting evidence to MR.

MR – Requested figures of how many drivers in Preston the RMT represents as she has received some feedback from some drivers that they are not in support of the proposed increase. DI to forward details of how many members they represent.

DI – Advised that it was mainly those drivers that work on the Railway rank that had requested the increase.

MR- Requested DI to get back to her with some figures so the process can progress.

#### **5.Enforcement**

SM – Provided a summary of the multi-agency vehicle inspection operation that was undertaken on 21.04.23 with officers from DVSA and Taxi Licensing in attendance. On the day of the inspections there were very few Hackneys available, however of the 22 vehicles inspected (4 hackneys) 3 passed inspection and 1 was issued a suspension notice which was later lifted. SM advised that moving forward there would be further similar operations arranged.

SA – Requested that these operations be organised Monday to Thursday so that if a suspension notice was issued the driver would be able to get the vehicle repaired and suspension lifted before the busy period over the weekend.

MR – Advised that this request would be taken into consideration but could not be guaranteed as enforcement is a 24/7 job and pointed out that all licensed vehicles should be roadworthy at all times and that drivers should ensure they carry out regular vehicle maintenance checks which should reduce the likelihood of vehicles being taken off the road.

SM – Advised that a lot of drivers are not completing their green vehicle maintenance books, these should be completed following routine weekly vehicle checks and kept in the licensed vehicle for inspection by Licensing officers.

#### **6.Admin/Policy/Procedures**

MR – Advised that PCC were experiencing an issue with the online payment system with some drivers being unable to pay for some application types (driver badge and operator licence applications) and that this had been reported to the relevant team to investigate/resolve.

MR- Advised that there had been a recent email sent to all operators/proprietors from the Licensing team regarding the introduction of legislation, 'Taxi and Private Hire Vehicles (Disabled Persons) Act 2022' which affects the trade.

EWM – Briefly explained the implication to the trade of the new laws and advised that the PCC website was up to date with all the key information that the trade should familiarise themselves with.

SA – Asked if it was OK for drivers to refuse to carry the larger sized motorised wheelchairs.

DI – Added that there could be damage caused to the under carriage of some of the wheelchairs

from the taxis ramp and requested if it would be possible to have guidance on which vehicles could take which wheelchairs.

MR – Advised that if complaints were received from passengers they would be dealt with on a case by case basis and the likelihood of complaints can be minimised through effective communication between driver/customer. As a driver cannot legally refuse to take a wheelchair then there should be communication between the driver and the customer to advise on entry and exit of the vehicle may possibly cause damage to their wheelchair and that way they leave the decision up to the customer if they want to proceed with the journey. MR advised that this could be discussed at a later date once they had familiarised themselves with the new legislation changes. We may also be able to obtain advice from the Council's disability and equality officer in relation to this topic.

#### **7.Any other business**

DI – Raised the issue of Wolverhampton licensed drivers working in Preston.

MR – Advised that this was discussed at the previous meeting and confirmed that that there was nothing that could be done about the situation until and unless there is a change in the taxi licensing legislation.

#### **8.Date of next meeting**

Town Hall

11<sup>th</sup> July 2023 meeting room to be confirmed