



CANNOCK CHASE DISTRICT COUNCIL

HACKNEY CARRIAGE & PRIVATE HIRE LIAISON GROUP

Minutes of Meeting held at 11.15am on Wednesday 11 November 2015
Civic Centre, Beecroft Road, Cannock, Staffs. WS11 1BG

Members of the Liaison Group (Councillors)

Cllr Carl Bennett, Portfolio Leader for the Environment (Group Chair)*
Cllr Maureen Freeman, Vice Chair of Cannock Chase Council (Group Vice Chair)**

Members of the Liaison Group (Officers)

Steve Shilvock - CCDC**
David Prosser-Davies - CCDC*
Sean O'Meara - CCDC*
Jason Salter - CCDC*

Elected representative of the Hackney Carriage/Private Hire Trade

Terrance Hurley*
Steven Toy*
Kendal Tranter***
Martin Hammond*
Steven Holroyd*
Omar Ali (Observer)*
Samantha Payne***
Victor Simonczyk**
Patricia Taylor*

(* Present (** Apology (***) Not present no apology)

Minutes of the last meeting

Minutes of previous meeting on Wednesday 5 May 2015 had previously been circulated. Mr Toy informed the meeting that although he agreed that Cllr Bennett's comments during discussion on "Future discussions with the Trade on a more equal footing" were correct, they did not accurately reflect the conciliatory tone in which they were made.

Matters arising

There were no matters arising.

Mr Hurley asked why the matter he had asked to be put on the agenda had not been put on. Cllr Bennett confirmed that the HCPH LG was not the forum to bring individual complaints. He said that there is a formal process for complaints against officers which are dealt with according to council policy. Mr Toy confirmed he had used this procedure and it worked.

Revised taxi policy

Mr Prosser-Davies took the group through some of the proposed amendments to the current Hackney Carriage/Private Hire Driver, Vehicles and Operators Licensing Policy. He made the group aware of proposed changes in respect of:

- Safeguarding children by requiring drivers to notify the Council if they are questioned or arrested etc. in connection with any safeguarding investigation.
- The current requirement to take seats out of licensed vehicles.
- PH operators employing suitable people to work for them.
- Changes to the current Dress Code.
- Changes to the Penalty Matrix.

There was general discussion around all of the above matters.

Mr Hammond expressed concern that the removal of the seat condition was to be deleted as its introduction in 2014 had caused him some problems.

Mr Toy asked that a general personal hygiene condition be added to the Dress Code and that the Code itself should be based around common decency.

Cllr Bennett raised the issue of how the group make the rest of the trade aware of the work they are doing and changes to policy and legislation etc.

Mr Toy said that he has set up a new Facebook page called *Cannock chase district taxi association and friends*. He said he is using this page to help ensure that the trade are aware of the changes to the legislation and taxi policy. It was accepted however, that the trade reps do not speak to each other as a group outside the meeting itself.

Cllr Bennett offered to provide a room for the members of the trade to meet half an hour before the formal HCPHMG meeting takes place. This will enable them to go through the agenda and be prepared. The group welcomed the offer.

Mr Toy raised concern about the current policy on vehicle standards and raised concern about vehicles failing the taxi test because of minor cosmetic damage. Mr Prosser-Davies said that enquiries had been made at the Depot about this matter and that since the new policy was introduced in 2014, around 300 vehicle tests have been carried out and only around 5% have failed because of damage alone. He said that this was not therefore considered to be a significant problem.

Mr Holroyd said that vehicles were more likely to fail the older they get. Mr O'Meara said that following the removal of the 6 year age limit policy on vehicles, proprietors were now being encouraged to ensure that older vehicles were being kept in good condition so that high standards are maintained.

Vehicle accessibility

Mr O'Meara tabled a document which outlined the work of the WAV Task & finish Group earlier this year. He said that the group's findings have now been considered by officers and the conclusion reached is that the Council do not need to act further in order to influence the number of WAV's currently licensed. There has been an increase from 10% to 14% following changes made to the taxi licensing policy in 2014. The group endorsed the council's conclusion.

Deregulation Act

Mr Prosser-Davies said that the new Act had intended to ensure that all councils were now offering a 3 year licence and that this would benefit both drivers and the Council.

He confirmed that the default position of the Council was now for a 3 year licence but if drivers wanted a 1 year licence they were still available upon request. This would be made clear on the application forms.

Action DPD- sent weblink for Government Guidance to Mr Toy

Taxis plying for hire in disabled parking bays.

Mrs Taylor advised the group that she was now getting more and more concerned about drivers plying for hire in the early hours of the morning in the disabled bays outside Bar Sport in Cannock. She said this was a clear safety issue as she had seen an ambulance having to park in the middle of the road. This had no choice but to hold up all of the traffic for 15 minutes whilst taxis were parked in the disabled bays waiting for a fare. The ambulance could have parked in the bays if they had been empty.

She also said that the drivers who wait on the ranks for the next fare are getting frustrated with the matter and things are now getting heated.

Mr O'Meara advised the group that the Licensing Unit had received several complaints of a similar nature and the information provided also seemed to suggest that the matter could escalate if it were not dealt with. He confirmed that it was an offence to park within a disabled bay without appropriate authority to do so and that the disabled bays were deemed to be so all day, every day. They did not stop being a disabled bay in the early hours of the morning.

He said that officers do attend the area in the early hours of the morning and they deal with the matter when found. He acknowledged that although he is aware of the obvious problem he confirmed that it is not a frequently found problem. Mr O'Meara agreed to speak to Bar Sport about the matter to see what they and their SIA door supervisors could do.

Cllr Bennett said that although he recognised this was a licensing issue in the first instance, he hoped that the message would get out from the trade itself that this was an undesirable practice. If the problem persists then the matter would also need to be referred to the police, the civil enforcement parking officers and ask CCTV to monitor the situation.

The group generally felt that it more appropriate to pick up and drop off passengers in Manor Avenue by the Library rather than right outside the front doors of Bar Sport.

HC/PH driver training

Mr O'Meara said that the BTEC course is nearly complete and another course is being discussed.

He also said that the Council now has 3 providers who are willing to provide a refresher course for all of those who undertook the Btec or similar training some years ago.

Mr Ali explained to the group what the refresher courses would entail and this included a module on:

- Disability awareness including a practicable session on wheelchairs.
- Health & safety
- Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)
- “Prevent” counter terrorism training
- Public Services

At this point Mr Ali was asked to leave the room and Mr O’Meara explained that the Council had received 3 expressions of interest to provide the refresher training. He said that two of the providers were very similar in their proposal. The third was more expensive.

The group unanimously agreed that the more expensive provider would not be appropriate for them. Mr O’Meara agreed to make more enquires with the other two in order to ensure the best possible provision for the cheapest cost.

He also said that the Council were currently looking into ways by which the course could be funded. No free funding is currently available and therefore it would seem that the best way to fund would be for drivers themselves to pay for the course upfront.

Mr Ali returned to the meeting.

Cross border hiring

This item was deferred from the last meeting as Ms Payne was not in attendance. It was agreed that Mr O’Meara contact Sam Payne and advise her that if she did not attend the next meeting then the item would be removed.

Mr Toy said that he may wish to discuss this at the next meeting even if Ms Payne was not there.

New applicants- perceived barriers to entering the trade

This item was also deferred from the last meeting as Ms Payne was not in attendance. It was agreed that Mr O’Meara contact Sam Payne and advise her that if she did not attend the next meeting then the item would be removed.

Date of next meeting Wednesday 3 February 2016 at 11.00 am.