



CANNOCK CHASE DISTRICT COUNCIL

HACKNEY CARRIAGE & PRIVATE HIRE LIAISON GROUP

Minutes of Meeting held at 11.00 pm on Wednesday 6 August 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 6 May 2015 were agreed.

Matters arising

Mr Simonczyk mentioned the issue of the 1st Aid Kit which was taken off the agenda at the last meeting. Discussion took place and Mr Simonczyk's concerns were recognised but it was agreed that the condition to have a 1st Aid Kit and a Fire Extinguisher in a licensed vehicle was reasonably necessary.

Terms of Reference (Terms of Reference)

Cllr Bennett advised of the need to revisit the Terms of Reference but confirmed that the HCPHLG could not interfere with the work of the Licensing & Public Protection Committee which is the council's regulatory committee.

Mr Toy said he would like historical matters to be brought up as errors have been made and these need to be discussed. Mr Shilvock explained that the Council already had a well-established complaints procedure if complaints need to be made.

Mr Hammond said that he wanted to discuss matters as they relate to the Terms of Reference and not argue about historical matters. This was agreed.

Cllr Bennett said that the Terms of Reference had been useful in so far as they had allowed Omar Ali to be co-opted on to the group and moved that the Terms of Reference be agreed without change. It was unanimously agreed that the Terms of Reference be re-adopted without amendment.

Taxi policy

Mr Shilvock advised the group that the policy now required amendment and that he had some delegated powers to make minor amendments. He said that the Council were preparing a list of proposed amendments and once he had looked at them he would make a decision whether those matters would be dealt with under delegated authority or by referral to the Full Council.

He said he was aware that there a number of small changes which might add up and therefore a 4 to 6 week short period of consultation may be appropriate. Following that, any October 2015 changes in legislation following the implementation of the Deregulation Act would be made and policy amended. It would then be referred to Full Council for approval and re-issue, probably very early in the new year.

Vehicle accessibility

Mr O'Meara said that he was preparing a draft accessibility policy which would be built into the existing taxi policy once complete. It was hoped that the draft might be ready for the next HCPH LG meeting in November 2015.

Deregulation Act

Cllr Bennett commented that this matter had been dealt with earlier in the meeting and need no more discussion. Mr Toy said that although several matters will become law in October, he has some concerns about the public safety implication of some of them.

HC/PH driver training

Mr O'Meara said that the BTEC course is currently to be offered free of charge to all new drivers and is now underway. He said that he was aware of some concerns regarding the course and that Mr Hammond had spoken to him recently about the matter.

Mr Hammond said that he was unhappy with the way that the course had been organised so quickly as it had left him in some difficulty over the August holiday period. This had left him no flexibility and he might prefer to fund the course himself at his own convenience.

Mr O'Meara responded by saying that although the Council had been speaking to the College since March 2015 the course was actually arranged by the College in Mid-July and started at the end of July. It was unfortunate the drivers received short notice of the start of the course but this was beyond the council's control.

He confirmed that the Council was doing all it can and the course was being delivered free of charge and at the Civic Centre. He also said that there were 22 drivers who had enrolled in May 2015 and 17 had turned up for the first day of the course. This was encouraging.

Although passing the Btec is a requirement of policy, the Council will afford some flexibility for drivers who have difficulties in undertaking the course and this will include personal or academic problems.

Mr O'Meara also said that the mid/long term aim was to train drivers prior to them being licensed rather than after. Drivers who are not yet licensed had been invited onto the current course but the take up could have been better. As time wears on there will be more drivers that need training but more time to do it in.

A question was raised as to the usefulness of the course but it was agreed by the majority that the course was useful to the trade the council and the public. Mr Toy said that anything which raises public confidence in the trade is of benefit to all.

DVSA and other driving assessments

Mr O'Meara advised the group that there was now another option when it comes to undertaking a driving test prior to being licensed. The Council had secured an agreement with Staffordshire County Council who arrange driving tests with their Road Safety Unit. This agreement is in its early stages but now permits greater flexibility into the driving test system.

Future discussions with the Trade on a more equal footing

Cllr Bennett said that the trade had asked this item to be put on the agenda and asked Mr Toy to elaborate. Mr Toy said he was concerned that the Council seemed to hold the upper hand in these meetings and during discussions with another member of the group who had recently resigned, it seemed that there was a lack of flexibility on the part of the Council.

Mr Toy said the Council seemed to be acting in an inflammatory manner towards the Trade and then withdrawing the controversial items when challenged so as to look more accommodating. He thought this was an old political trick. By way of example he said that the 2012 consultation paper on the taxi trade seemed to be a series of score settling matters and we were still living with that legacy.

Cllr Bennett reiterated that these meetings were held on an equal footing and hoped that this was clear for all to see. He also made it clear that the role of everybody was to listen and understand and then achieve solutions to any problems which might arise.

Cross border hiring

It was agreed that as Sam Payne was not at the meeting, this item should be deferred until the next meeting

New applicants- perceived barriers to entering the trade

It was agreed that as Sam Payne was not at the meeting, this item should be deferred until the next meeting

Date of next meeting Wednesday 11 November 2015 at 11.15 am.