

**Minutes of Taxi Trade Forum**

**Meeting date** Tuesday, 26 October 2021

**Members present:** Councillors James Flannery (Chair), Jane Bell, Peter Mullineaux and Alan Ogilvie

**Officers:** Chris Ward (Interim Licensing Team Leader), Stephanie Newby (Licensing Officer), Justin Abbotts (Licensing Officer) and Coral Astbury (Democratic and Member Services Officer)

**Other members:**

**Public:** 0

**1 Welcome**

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

**2 Note of the Last Forum**

The note of the last forum was circulated for information.

**3 Policy Updates**

The council's Licensing Officer advised that there had been quite a few changes to policy over the last twelve months:

- Private Hire (PVH) Signage had been changed as the previous signage was too small and it made distinguishing PVH vehicles from Hackney Carriages difficult for the public. Visits would be undertaken to identify vehicles that do not have the updated signage.
- The NAFN revocations and refusals register had now been implemented. This is a national database which would allow the authority to see if an applicant had been previously refused by another authority.
- The Tinted Windows policy had now been implemented and allows for a minimum of 50% light transparency.
- Officers are working on the twelve-month plates policy, which would allow drivers to apply for their plates every twelve months as opposed to six. The vehicle will still be required to undertake a six-monthly roadworthiness check. Officers would contact drivers once this policy has been implemented.

**4 Restricted Private Hire Licences**

Requests had been received by a number of operators for the possibility to remove certain aspects of the application process, this would be for drivers that

predominantly perform work outside of the Borough or doesn't need to have local knowledge of the area.

The restricted badge would only be aimed at drivers who would work for an operator who operates work that require no local knowledge. For example:

- School contract work (primarily outside of the borough)
- Private contract work (primarily outside of the borough)
- Airport work where Drivers are collecting customers from inside South Ribble and driving to various airports outside of the borough

The Interim Licensing Team Leader advised that a report on restricted badges would be going before the Licensing and Public Safety Committee in December.

## **5 Vehicle Age Policy Proposals**

The Interim Licensing Team Leader explained that currently Wheelchair Accessible Vehicles (WAV) could join the fleet at up to six years of age and stay licenced until 12 years of age and all other vehicles could join the fleet at up to four years of age and stay licenced until eight years.

A number of proposals were currently being considered:

- Keep the policy as it is.
- Reduce all vehicles to the same age of four when joining and staying on the fleet up until the age of eight.
- Have a blanket policy for all vehicles, with a vehicle being first licenced at up to five years of age and remaining on the fleet up until ten years.
- Reduce all vehicles to four and eight years, with the option of an extension for non-polluting vehicles that conform to a certain euro rating.

The trade raised concern that the age for wheelchair vehicles could be lowered and advised that WAV's are expensive to buy, in particularly for school contracts. These types of vehicles only do around 6,000-8,000 miles a year. They asked if older vehicles could be permitted for School Contract work to allow the number of vehicles needed to be viable.

Another member of the trade commented that the age policy should be the same for all drivers, regardless of what type of work they undertook.

## **6 Licensing and Public Safety Committee - Tuesday 7 December**

The Interim Licensing Team Leader advised that due to work undertaken by the Licensing function the number of changes required to strengthen taxi licensing policy is quite low. However, the committee would be asked in December to approve the DFT Statutory Standards Consultation to the Taxi Licensing Policy. As part of this,

the whistleblowing policy would be formalised, and DBS Checks would change from every twelve month to every six months.

A member of the trade asked if CCTV would be included in the Taxi Licensing Policy. In response, it was explained that the CCTV policy had been reviewed two years ago and was not currently mandatory in the authority.

## **7 Current Application Process**

The Trade were advised of changes to the way in which applications are processed by the Council.

Applicants would now need to apply online for their licences as opposed to coming into the Civic Centre. However, public access computers are available at the Civic Centre and a member of the Gateway team would be able to talk drivers through the process.

When collecting plates, drivers would now need to wait for one of the Licensing Team to contact and advise that the plate is ready. Drivers will be given an allocated time slot to collect with the plate left in a basket at reception.

Appointments for DBS Checks or the CSE/Knowledge Test would still need to be done through gateway.

The Licensing Officer confirmed that all operators had been notified of the changes and this information should have been provided to drivers. The changes to the process would also have no direct impact on the turnaround times for plates and badges, these would still be done within four working days.

## **8 Remembrance Sunday Road Closure**

The trade were given notice of the planned road closures for Remembrance Sunday.

A further document detailing road closures will be circulated to Operators and Drivers.

## **9 Topics submitted by the Trade**

One topic had been submitted by the trade in advance of the forum:

- Officers would investigate tariff increases, considering factors which could affect the increase. Such as cost of living, cost of fuel, COVID impact and the increase on minimum wage.
- Research had been undertaken and within the North West, South Ribble as a Local Authority had the (joint) fourth highest fare at £5.80.

## **10 Any other business**

There was no other business.

Chair

Date