



opportunity to ensure that driver fares do not fall behind as they have done in previous years.

The Forum agreed that the taxi trade had changed considerably since the pandemic and there was a shortage of drivers.

The Licensing Manager also made the point that the Council would be in a difficult position if it looked to increase fares without the consent of the trade, and would be unable to justify it to the public, potentially being cause for a judicial review. He reiterated that the Council would respond to requests from the trade.

## **12 Period of time it takes to get a private hire driving licence**

A representative of the taxi trade raised the issue of the length of the process to obtain a licence. In one instance the process had taken 5 months.

The Licensing Manager explained that some aspects of the process e.g. HMRC checks are mandatory, however his team were looking at ways to make other aspects of the process more efficient.

He said that a new Head of Customer Services was now in post, training provided for new staff and improvements were being made to the appointments process. An applicant could turn up in the Civic Centre to book an appointment or have the option to wait for a licensing officer. He also said that any complaints about Gateway staff should refer to the name of the staff member.

The other key issue was the period of time to get booked on the mandatory course to obtain a qualification. Courses kept being cancelled. The Licensing Manager explained that he spoken to the course teacher at Blackburn College and there needed to be a minimum of 10 students on the course to make it viable. He was therefore looking at alternative course providers such as Hyndburn College and Rossendale College.

To assist speeding up the process it was suggested introducing a grace period for passing the course following the grant of a licence (e.g. 3 months).

The Licensing Manager would look at these issues following the CCTV report going to Committee on 16 January 2023.

## **13 The re-introduction of the 12 month licence plate - why is it taking so long and when can we expect it to be back in force**

The Licensing Manager explained that although the matter had been approved at Committee the delay for the reintroduction of the twelve month licence plate was due to waiting for the licensing database software, IDOX, to be set up. The 12 month plate would be coming in as soon as possible.

**14 Any other business**

The Licensing Manager informed the Forum of an email he had just received from Lancashire County Council regarding public vehicle lanes and penalty charge notices. They are now requesting that taxi drivers provide evidence of their licence within 5 working days of receiving a PCN.

Justin Abbotts explained that the licensing team usually send them a list of licensed vehicles. The new procedure seems very inefficient in comparison, so the licensing team have queried this with LCC.

**15 Date of next meeting**

The next meeting will be held on Tuesday, 21 March 2023 at 6.00pm in the Civic Centre, Leyland.

Chair

Date