

Minutes of	Taxi Trade Forum
Meeting date	Tuesday, 13 December 2022
Committee Members present:	Councillors Derek Forrest and Jacqui Mort
Officers:	Chris Ward (Licensing Manager), Justin Abbotts (Licensing Officer) and Clare Gornall (Democratic and Member Services Officer)

Representatives from the Taxi Trade 3

8 Welcome

Christopher Ward, Licensing Manager welcomed everyone to the meeting.

9 Note of the Last Forum

The notes of the last meeting of the Forum held on 28 June 2022 were circulated for information.

10 Update on CCTV

The Licensing Manager gave an update as to the CCTV policy. He explained that the consultation with the trade had just closed at the end of November, however he stressed that **responses were still being accepted.**

He also mentioned that a four week public consultation was still ongoing.

He indicated that the consultation responses from the taxi trade and the public would then be collated and the evidence presented to the Committee on 16 January 2023.

One comment made by a representative of the trade was that the Council should amend its policy on tinted glass in windows to allow for an appropriate level of tint.

11 Could the council bring in a yearly review of fares for Hackneys

The Licensing Manager explained that in his view it is up to the Hackney Carriage trade to raise the matter / make requests for an increase in fares as and when they feel appropriate. He said that such requests were not currently being made to the licensing team however if they were officers would look at it and present to the Committee to consider.

One of the representatives of the trade argued that some of the drivers he had spoken to had raised the issue and that by having an annual review, it provided the

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 Gateway officer, who is skilled in licensing applications. 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 Manger explained that currently our in house version of the course, requires for a minimum of 10 students booked on the course to make it viable for the tutor we use through Blackpool College. He was therefore looking at an alternative in house course, other authorities such as Hyndburn Council and Rossendale Council are providing this for new drivers, and contact will be made with them to look into details of their course.

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). This a would need to be put to the Committee.

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