

HACKNEY CARRIAGE/PRIVATE HIRE JOINT WORKING GROUP
MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT THE BOOTLE TOWN HALL
ON TUESDAY 2ND JUNE, 2015

PRESENT:

Member/Association:

South Sefton Hackney Carriage Drivers Association

Richard Jarman
Ian Stanton

Delta

Paul McLaughlin

Sefton Private Hire Fleet Operators Association

Mark Sanders

Berry St Garage

Joe Johnson

Officers

Mark Toohey (Chair), Principal Trading Standards Officer
Mike Foulkes, Senior Taxi Licensing Officer

MEETING OFFICER: Colin Auty
Email: colin.auty@sefton.gov.uk

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

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Mike Denning – Brookfield Garage
Adrian Hughes – All Whites

MINUTES

Minutes from meeting of 3rd March 2015 accepted as a true record.

MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

MT – There are no current cross border enforcement exercises with Liverpool at the moment.

RJ – Raised the issue of Uber using GPS meters and the TFL case. Liverpool City Council have stated that certain GPS devices are not Taxi Meters.

MT – stated that GPS devices in Uber vehicles record distance/time and then connect to a remote server (or 'cloud') to calculate the price and does not therefore consider them as meters. This is an identical view to the TFL stance.

PM – Said that the Alpha stated their vehicles are using meters.

MT – Stated that as far as he was aware, the Alpha devices need to connect to a database and consequently may not be meters.

RJ – Enquired as to where this issue could be escalated and why all licensed vehicles are not using these devices.

PM – On the issue of joint/cross border enforcement, PM stated that he wanted the Sefton Chief Exec to be aware of the trade's request for better engagement across all neighbouring Merseyside authorities.

MT – There has been work on cross border enforcement and a draft policy has been started but not finalised.

ANNUAL STATISTICS

PM – Would like a breakdown of new applications, renewals and lapses in a 12 month period, as well as the total number of licence holders during each month of the year. The total number of licence holders at the end of the year should also be reported. In relation to point 2.3 in the upcoming L & R Report, PM states that low unemployment is causing a decrease in drivers working in the trade.

PM & JJ – Were both critical of the report to go to L & R. The report was not consulted with trade reps who can provide more relevant information. Both parties believe the information is not relevant.

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MT – Explained that the report was for L & R and the format was what they requested. Statistics more suited to the trade can also be done if that what this group requests. The L & R report was included for information only and was not intended to be changed in any way at this meeting.

PM – People keep badges for Sefton licensed vehicles for years as a safety net even though they do not drive so thinks some figures may be misleading.

RJ – This is a standard annual report, I believe Pauls concern is more due to the proposed amendments to the knowledge test.

PM – The current changes to the trade make the layout of this report obsolete. Could officers consult with the trade to provide better information to councillors? Can a steering group be set up to influence the content of this report? I would like to see the format of this report changed and be presented comparatively on an annual basis.

MT – Once again explained that the format of the report was for the benefit of the Councillors but always happy to discuss improvements and he would pass on the comments to the section manager.

JJ – In relation to section 4 he would like to know what vehicle inspection numbers have been during the last financial year compared to the previous year as staffing levels have been reduced? This report does not provide L & R with relevant information regarding the impact of staff cuts in inspection figures and results. Could we also have a breakdown of the number of licences issued each year compared to the previous year? I would also like to enquire as to whether or not the taxi licensing department has enough staff?

MT – If there is a request for inspection stats year on year then this can be provided. The council adopted an inspection programme that prioritised the vehicles seen so the number of inspections carried out dropped as we are no longer inspecting all brand new vehicles. There has also been a loss of dedicated Police support so inspections of moving vehicles is not possible.

MF – Explained current recruitment procedures in Sefton and a brief discussion all round on the redeployment procedure which led to Carl being in his current post. MF also explained that we will soon be back to 5 full time staff when Liz returns.

JJ – Can we pay for more enforcement staff out of the ring fenced budget? JJ would like to see more inspections all round being carried out.

PM – I am going to write to Margaret Carney about this as the trade feel there should be more enforcement staff. JJ agreed with PM that he would like to put his name to this letter as well.

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RJ – If there are persons in the council who can do the job and will be available, can they be recruited as per the redeployment process?

MT – Explained if a vacancy becomes available and a decision is made to fill it then standard procedure will be to look internally first with those on redeployment.

JJ – Recruitment for taxi licensing is self-funding and should be treated separately to other council staff.

MT – Explained although the funding for the TLU staff may be taken from licensing fees but standard Council procedures apply to everyone regardless of how the service is paid for.

MF was questioned by members about the levels of enforcement at the Aintree meeting in response to the query about staffing levels. MF advised that four investigations had been commenced following on from the last Aintree enforcement activity which is likely to lead to 4 prosecutions.

PM – It is equally important to note how many drivers refused an illegal pick up. These figures have not been reported here?

MT – Apologised for not producing the number of refusals for this meeting as this has previously been requested. This will be included next time. Also explained that we will only normally use sefton enforcement staff for the test purchasing excercises.

RJ – Regarding the review of the knowledge test, when is this review due to take place, and what is the plan for it?

MT – This is being commenced imminently – our first meeting will be next week.

PM – I am happy to be on the steering group, but I would like Gareth Taylor of Delta to attend. Agreed by all.

JJ – Is this annual report still going to L & R?

MT – Yes.

JJ – Councillors need to made aware of the comments made at this meeting.

PM – Echoed this stating that he wished for concerns to be reported directly.

MT – Stated he would pass comments on but please feel free to contact section manager directly if they wanted to.

VRQ

MT reported that the OSS reported that around 350 drivers still need to obtain the VRQ.

NEW HANDBOOK

Discussion about how version 3 will be distributed.

MT said happy to consider giving a printed copy out to all drivers this time.

Handbook Version 3 can currently be found at www.sefton.gov.uk/taxi

TAXIMETERS

MT stated a report on taximeters/gps devices is due to go to L & R so the council can consider the issues surrounding what is or isn't a taximeter.

IS asked if Uber would get a licence?

MT replied that if they met all the conditions then, like every other operator, they would be granted a licence.

PM said that Uber's system measures distance via GPS/time then a server calculates the price.

JJ suggested that we wait for the outcome of the High Court case.

MF reminded everyone that despite the system used all private hire vehicles must still carry a fare card.

ULTRA LOW EMISSION VEHICLES

MT said a Merseytravel consultation has been sent out but no responses have been received from anyone in Sefton as yet.

PM suggested that drivers have not engaged as the market is not ready.

RJ discussed whether Hybrid technologies will work or not.

MT stated that ULEV is on the agenda as it is part of ongoing work with Merseytravel whilst consideration is given to a bid for funding to support electric vehicles.

DBS CHECKS

RJ asked if an explanation of the DBS checks be placed in the handbook? If a disclosure applicant joins the DBS scheme a live DBS check can be

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provided to prospective employers. The fee is £13 per year for 3 years after each 3 year certificate is issued (the update service).

MF said issues are being found where DBS registered drivers are not contacting Taxi Licensing after the department has been notified of new information that is reported.

MT stated that licences will be affected if a driver does not come forward to declare what the new conviction is.

LOCAL TRANSPORT PLAN

RJ asked if SMBC be made aware of the impact of the bus bill that was proposed at the queens speech.

No further comment from the rest of the group.

MT said that the LTP is in its early days of being revitalised and there are likely to be further meetings with Merseytravel in the coming months.

DATA PROTECTION

RJ asked if drivers can be reminded of the data protection issues relating to publishing CCTV in car data. Drivers should also be reminded that it is the owner of the vehicle that is responsible for the data and not the driver.

LEGAL EXPENSE SCHEMES

No further discussion on this point.

SIGNS IN VEHICLES

RJ requested that new vehicle signs be produced but in smaller higher visibility formats.

DUAL PLATED VEHICLES

MT said they have found examples of Sefton plated vehicles that are being driven by Liverpool badged drivers. This may not be compliant with legal requirements as could be viewed as unlicensed driver of a Sefton vehicle.

PM asked if this is really a public interest issue?

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MT confirmed to be fully compliant, vehicles should be plated by one council. Dual plated vehicles may cause issues – drivers only licensed in Sefton but driving a Liverpool plated vehicle need to be aware.

PM asked if it is legal to leave two plates on the vehicle at the same time? He has seen vehicles with multiple plates on elsewhere.

IS asked if a driver can have both a hackney and a private hire badge?

MT said he did not see any issues with having 2 types of driver licences.

JJ again asked if a driver wished to hold both badges then this can be permitted.

MT confirmed we will report back at the next meeting.

JJ asked if guidance be issued to fleet owners regarding dual plating.

FRAUD ON PRIVATE HIRE ACCOUNTS

RJ stated he will be raising an issue if Uber apply for a licence – are they fit and proper?

DATE OF NEXT MEETING *

1st September at Southport Town Hall.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

None.