

HACKNEY CARRIAGE AND PRIVATE HIRE FORUM Meeting

Venue: Virtual via SKYPE

Agenda: 5th May 2020

Attendees and who they represent:

Cllr Ruth Pickersgill (RP) representing Bristol City Council

Jonathan Martin (JM) representing Bristol City Council

Sarah Flower (SF) representing Bristol City Council

Mayor Marvin Rees (MR) representing Mayor of Bristol City Council

Saif Hussain (SH) representing BBTLA, Chair

Steve Lohia (SL) representing Prestige Cars

Jonathan Downing (JD) representing Bristol City Council

Des Broster (DB) representing Vcars

Mahad Jama (MJ) representing Magans Taxis

Alex Doel (AD) representing Uber

Nick Carter (NC) representing Bristol City Council

Kieron Harte (KH) representing Uber

Desmond Broster (DB) representing Veezu

Olly Alcock (OA) representing Bristol Welfare Rights & Money Advice Service

Alex Raikes (AR) representing SARI

1. Welcome, Introductions, Apologies

- Apologies – none

2. Mayor Address

- Aware of how brutal it is out there at the moment and trying to support the trade not just now but after as well.
- Concerns were raised that when the lockdown finishes what else the Council could do to help, as only approximately 5% drivers were currently working. There have been long running issues that sit in the background that we have been trying to address with the trade, and we have been raising issues with out of town drivers with core cities. Government backing is needed to deal with this to protect the local trade. We have faced challenges with COVID and the free 6 month plate extension has helped to ease one of these challenges. MJ wanted to convey his thanks to the Licensing Team for their help in issuing 6 month vehicle licence which has been very helpful to the trade
- There was a discussion around screen partitions and it was felt that this would help the drivers during the pandemic. There have been debates about this nationally and there was no guidance on safety on screens, not just for drivers but from consumer point of view. Internal use of the vehicle may have use on airbags etc, waiting to see if DFT have any comments to make. Cleaning regime will need to be implemented as a screen can keep the virus stagnant for longer.
- The discussion then turned to PPE and it was raised if facemasks were supplied to drivers and passengers would this assist the drivers and it was felt that this would give the passengers a sense of security regarding droplets in the air. Some Operators deal with the NHS and no concerns were raised by them regarding making face masks a mandatory requirement.
- It was raised that as a Council if we could promote taxis as a safe use of travel we could possibly do this as a back to work plan. We have to be confident that all safety is in place as well as washing and hygiene. We should factor this in as part of the economic recovery plan.
- Enforcement work was being undertaken in respect of drivers not having cleaning equipment in their vehicle and 6 vehicle licences had been suspended for not having cleaning available. Industry representatives have been getting the message out regarding cleaning regime on vehicles. It was felt that further clarity was needed on PPE for drivers and on the use of screens.
- Clear messaging has been sent out via emails and website updates as to what is required in regards to cleaning vehicles.
- The trade wanted it noted that they were grateful for being able to help regarding school contracts and were helping delivering food and medical supplies during the pandemic.

- There would be a revision regarding a package of measures with DEFRA worth around £5/6K in respect of fuel cards for vehicles, for the first few years of the licence being granted. Free charging points dedicated for the taxi trade would be available, near Temple Street and Fleet Services controlled by ANPR. There was a new LEVC vehicle which has a 1.5 petrol generator that doesn't use diesel at all. It was hoped that these would be available in Bristol so they could be tested by drivers.

3. Bristol Welfare Rights & Money Advice Service

- There is some good guidance available for the self employed. Benefits are available, ie council tax and universal credit. Bristol Advice line is also available. This information would be communicated by way of PC Quintons Whatsapp Group, email and the taxi newsletter.
- It was noted that there was very little work and money coming in to the trade due to COVID-19 and concerns were raised on the timescales regarding funding. Applications were being looked at in May and HMRC were advising customers not to contact them but they would contact them in the first instance.
- There is a Taxi driver benevolent fund which costs drivers £1 a week worth sending this information out for when drivers cannot work. The DWP sometimes refuse claims, you can call Bristol Advice line 0117 5321888.

4. Changes in Licensing Services

- The Citizen Service Point at 100 Temple Street was now closed and the Government gave update regarding DBS applications which means that applications can now be submitted via the post and ID documentation does not need to be checked face to face. Licensing staff are working from home, and for the time being Licensing officers would now be answering the main licensing phones rather than the calls being directed through the Citizen Service Centre.
- Medicals were proving difficult to complete at the moment, any new applicants we cannot determine their application. Providing there is no change to existing medical condition we need a signed medical declaration signed and will issue a licence for 6 months, this is a case by case basis and each application is on its own merits.
- Cllr Pickersgill wanted to convey her thanks to the Licensing Team for the way they had been dealing with these changes.

5. Policy Updates

- Work is still being undertaken regarding the surveys once this has been resolved we are looking to go live, however, there is no firm time frame at the moment. The consultation would run for approximately 6-8 weeks.

6. Taxi Cop Update

- It is estimated that 80% of drivers are off the road due to COVID-19 with some working for Deliveroo or UBER Eats. A lot of hire cars have been returned to their Companies and as a result these companies have lowered their rates.
- The Whatsapp group would be used try to send out as much information as possible.
- In respect of cleaning regimes it was PC Quinton's view that if a driver cannot sanitise their vehicle between each journey then he felt that the vehicle was not fit for use. A lot of drivers were very good at doing this, sadly this isn't everybody.
- Part of PC Quinton's role was to support drivers and he would be putting them in touch with volunteering agencies.
- There is less patrolling at the moment and there would more ANPR targeting this has resulted in the backlog of his work reducing. Some recent reports that he has been dealing with were a driver reported living in vehicle, a driver masturbating outside of the vehicle, no plates on a vehicle, no insurance. Because of delays in the Court system it could take a while to get cases heard.
- Given the 6 month licence and MOT extension there would be an increase in vehicle checks to ensure they are kept in safe condition.

7. HC Fare Review

- The forum were waiting for information from BBTLA and SH should liaise with JM regarding this **Action A**

8. SARI

- SARI would welcome more involvement at Transport meetings from taxi drivers, as they are trying to sort out hate crime and wider equalities issues, taxi stands.
- They jointly co-ordinate the taxi conference held each year and the taxi cop role came about because of the conference as funding was made available.
- SARI are here to assist anyone who suffers from any hate crime, discrimination, work alongside Allen Hoole who deal with licensing issues.
- The dates for these meetings have been set for the rest of the year.

AOB

- Passengers have been known to run off without paying for their fare, these are reported to the Police, SARI do have information that can be sent out regarding this.
- There have been some changes in the Police force and the way they deal with matters concerning this and questions have been raised if it is proportionate to be dealt with. If it is a low value issue it may not be considered, however, it should be recorded as a crime, so trends are available.
- It was felt it could be worth Operator's doing a press release to say what could happen if you do make off without payment.

9. Actions for next meeting:

Action Point	Matters arising	By Whom	Completed?
A	Taxi fare increase to be discussed with JM	SH	

Next meeting: 30th July 2020