

HACKNEY CARRIAGE AND PRIVATE HIRE FORUM MEETING

Venue: Virtual via Zoom

Agenda: 24 February 2022

Attendees and who they represent:

Guy Poultney (**GP**), Chair, representing Bristol City Council
Jonathan Martin (**JM**) representing Bristol City Council
Dakota Ferrara (**DF**) representing Bristol City Council
Patrick Quinton (**PQ**) representing Police, Taxi Compliance Officer
Karen Daniels (**KD**) representing Bristol City Council, City Transport
Shammi Raichura (**SR**) representing Uber
Clive Burdett (**CB**) representing Unite
Saif Hussain (**SH**) representing BBLTA
Sam Kirby (**SK**) representing Bristol City Council, City Transport
Gary O'Neill (**GO**) Private Hire Driver
Steve Lohia (**SL**) representing BDriven

1. Welcome, Introductions, Apologies

- Apologies
 - None

2. Agree minutes from last meeting

Minutes from 10-12-21

Actions:

- None

3. Licensing Team update (JM)

JM updated the forum on a number of points:

- Application backlogs – there is still a backlog of applications, however this has improved, especially since Christmas. We discussed this in December's Forum, and it's predominately down to all drivers now being required to sign up to the DBS Update Service. Saif and Clive have been emailing me with drivers who are waiting which has been

beneficial, and I think you would both agree that a lot of the time there are issues with the application which is why we haven't issued the licence. Please continue to let me know if any of your drivers are experience delays, myself, Dakota, and the team will be looking at the ones you send through to ensure we issue them where we can

- Mandatory training – we have had one pilot session so far, with another scheduled for Monday. The feedback we have had so far has been positive. We're using these pilot sessions to ensure training is right, and refining the training based on feedback.

The sense we're getting is that Bristol is ahead of the game. It's a comprehensive programme to equip drivers with what they need, to ensure that they're aware of what a key role they play. We're working to ensure courses are available at times suitable for all drivers, especially in school holidays for those in school and passenger transport.

- Tax Conditionality – DF updates the forum on the upcoming tax conditionality checks. From 4 April 2022 Private Hire, and Hackney Driver Licences as well as Private Hire Operators Licence will need to complete a simple tax check, we will not be able to issue these licences until the tax check is provided.
- There has been a spike in applications to North Somerset. This has been predominately made by Uber drivers. I'm aware that there has been some misinformation that Bristol has stopped accepting applications for new drivers which is untrue. We need to dispel this rumour. Please ensure this information isn't being given out. I believe the spike in North Somerset applications has come from South Gloucester amending updating their policies, they are now more in line with ours, and they are more selective on who they license. Drivers are targeting neighbouring authorities with perceived weaker policies, where there there's no requirement for gold standard, or knowledge test.

SR I'll put out some feelers to see if this is a rumour that's going around and if anyone's aware of it

- Software Update - These usually occur over a weekend, however the scale of the upcoming upgrade is huge, so it's going to straddle working days, and we will be unable to access our Licensing database on 4th March until 7th March.

We have contingency plan in place and will be prioritising applications that expire during that weekend. If you, or your drivers are expiring during that time period please ensure you have sent all your documents so we can get these licences issued in advance.

- Appeals - We recently lost two revocation appeals on consecutive days, these revocations were due to incidents which involved vulnerable people, one of whom was visually impaired, and the other was a wheelchair user. We feel that the right decision was made by the Public Safety and Protection Committee in both instances and were planning on appealing both decisions. Unfortunately, the witness who's visually impaired doesn't want to go through the appeal process again, which is understandable, but this means we will be unable to appeal.

The second case was a wheelchair refusal at Bristol Temple Meads. The judge has referenced the wording of our policy. We have taking QC advice and will be appealing the decision to the High Court.

At the time of this incident other drivers were calling out the driver and flagging that he was in the wrong – it shows that the majority of our drivers want to do the right thing. It is unacceptable in 2022, and before that people are being refused. We will not accept this kind of behaviour.

4. Transport Update (SK)

SK updates the forum on the East Bristol Liveable Neighbourhood scheme

- We are seeking views from the neighbourhoods of Barton Hill and parts of Redfield and St George in East Bristol, as part of our first liveable neighbourhood pilot. Liveable neighbourhoods are areas of a city where improvements are designed in partnership with local communities to achieve a better balance between how streets are used for transport and people.
- We want local people to give feedback on what east Bristol is like now, what is good and not so good, and how it could be made better.

- We will be looking at the balance of how streets are used, to ensuring we're getting the right balance.
- This is a pilot area and the funding has been provided by WECA
- We're interested to hear from you, as we're aware you work in the local area. This is a good opportunity to bring funding into a local area, covid brought more people into the local area, we're looking at maintaining that.
- There is a budget of 150k, and the business case will be heard in Summer 2022. If that is approved the trial measures will be in place within 6 months. The consultation period is 31 January to 13 March. There will be surveys, on street events and door knocking. Feedback on what taxi routes are commonly used and issues with these routes would be beneficial.

Trade representatives raised concerns about road closures, and the impact on people with limited mobility. It was advised that this would be looked at during the consultation, it was also advised that access to Lawrence Hill station would fall into the consultation.

5. TaxiCop Update (PQ)

PQ updates the Forum on a number of points

- With the restrictions having been lifted, I'm interested to know if any of you have policies in regard to wearing masks.

SR We are no longer enforcing masks, or the front seat policy. Now that the restrictions aren't mandatory, we're asking passengers to do what feels right.

PQ I still have face covering stickers left, Jon what do you want to do with them?

JM The restrictions are no longer in place, but Covid is still out there, we have the 8th highest rate in the country. It's down to the individual drivers to decide what's best for them, it's about approaching it with common sense.

SH That makes sense, I wear my mask all the time, and I think it will be good to let the drivers decide for themselves.

- Mobile drop ins - These stopped due to Covid and my van being burnt in the riots. They will restart from Tuesday in Avonmeads, every Tuesday 14:00-15:00 I will be at a different location. This is starting as a 5-week trial, and we will see how it goes. Drivers are welcome to

drop by and see me, or video call a Licensing Officer to discuss their issues. There should be a licensing officer from South Gloucester with me each week. I'll have badge holders, stickers, masks etc on me.

- Patrols – As you will be aware because of covid I reduced the amount of patrols I was completing to ensure I didn't inadvertently spread Covid. From March I will be increasing patrols and static road checks.
- Workload – This is still pretty high, Paul Caines, PCSO will be with me for a few more weeks to help stay on top of everything, he's helped with runners, and we have recovered around £200 in lost fares which we're very happy about it.
- East Street, Bedminster – I've had drivers asking about whether this can be used. The traffic order is in place, but Police haven't always enforced it, many members of the public are sending in photos of vehicles driving along East Street during restricted hours. We have been issuing offences for this.

KD –I have taken on board your comments, and have spoken to internal teams around reviewing this, at this point it's for Senior Managers to decide whether we can allow HC and PH vehicles access during restricted hours.

GO Can you confirm whether we can use East Street?

PQ The traffic order is still in place, there is signage which states when it can be used,

KD I will keep pushing it, once a decision has been made this will be fed back to you.

- Posters – these have been really beneficial, does anyone feel like it would be good to put more up?

SH It would be good to have some by Motion, and also to put some up when we have events on such as Toyko World.

PQ That's a great suggestion, the organisers normally ask me about taxi plans, and it makes sense to have these posters at the temporary ranks. It's not a police issue but I can keep running with that
In regard to Tokyo World, the driver who was overcharging was suspended for six months.

JM We're heading into event season, and they're currently going through SAG, I will pick up with organisers to ensure they're working with us. Where events where temporary taxi ranks are implemented,

we will get those posters up, it's key to get the message out about respecting drivers. There have been some changes to events, a couple are moving to Ashton Court which is outside of the Bristol City boundary. Love Saves the Day will be down there, I'm not sure what other events will be moving down there.

- **PQ** – St Augustine's Parade - A lot of drivers are stopping on double yellow lines; this is not enforceable by police unless they are causing an obstruction. If police are asking them to move, they shouldn't be arguing, they should just move on.

SH The council moved us from the rank five months ago, we're now watching Uber and South Gloucester driver's pickup from the old rank. We're annoyed that Uber park there from 11pm all night long. You've moved us but not moved uber, we've behaved. Does this mean we can go there after 11pm?

PQ I've made it clear how I feel about this matter

JM Councillor Poultney and I went out before Christmas. There are PHV parking in those locations. Many have bookings in place and can be there.

SL They cannot park within 30m of a rank. This needs to be enforced.

JM I agree with you, the matter is complicated by South Gloucester drivers parking near the rank. I understand that we need more enforcement. Saif, I thank you for moving your members on and I can understand your frustration.

GO We discussed a few months ago that there would be places for PHV to pick up, but nothing's happened – there's nowhere to stop.

JM no, that's not what was agreed. We discussed the Park Street proposals and feeding back so they could include pick up and drop off points within the area.

PQ I'm working with Uber on introducing further geofencing, to look at drop offs outside the Watershed. However, the area I think would be a good place to use, is often blocked by members of the public

JM I will raise this with Senior Leadership

SR We have the ability to do things within our app, we have already made changes, including mandatory pick up points, along with driver side blocks, which stops them from entering a particular area, If they do enter the area it pushes them off the app. I can make changes to the app based on feedback on what's working what isn't. The most

recent changes were implemented in September. We can review this if there is any non-compliance or breach of conditions. Please reach out we're happy to help

SL Drivers should not be on a rank, if they do they should feel the full force of the council, you see them just parked wherever they want.

SH Parking on the Hippodrome is against the Road Traffic Act, they can't pick up on a bus stop. You said parking services finish at 11pm. Why aren't you using the cameras on them?

JM They shouldn't be picking up there. You know that the cameras are used on them. As I've said I will take away from this that we will put in more enforcement.

SH I'm concerned that if PHD don't move on then HCD will go back to stopping on the bus stop

6. Issues from BBLTA and issues from PH

JM Saif, have you looked at whether the trade are asking for a tariff change?

SH I have been talking to drivers and will get back to you.

GP I was wondering if you'd experienced a decrease in people tipping since the mandatory card machines came in?

SH I haven't had a problem, I have had tips on the card machine, overall we're happy that we've got the card machine, and we're making more money because of it

SR We spoke about events earlier, we're happy to liaise with you around big events to set up pick up points.

KD We look at events as a whole, Patrick, shall we look at this outside of the meeting?

SL There are still issues with Uber cancelling at the last minute with no good reason. My family and other people have said they've ordered a car, and when they're five minutes away it's cancelled. Are there any updates?

JM I'm working with operators and will be convening a meeting with the main app based operators, we've asked for information on worst offenders. The majority of offenders are licensed by South Gloucester, and they are currently investigating a number of drivers. We've been clear with the trade that this is unacceptable and in contravention with their conditions.

SR We have all of the information on cancellations, and we have been providing this to licensing when requested

SL Why do you have the option for cancelling?

SR Sometimes there is a legitimate reason

SL It's not good, I use uber and think it's really bad that they are cancelling

GP This is the first issue Jon raised when I came into post, it is not from lack of will. I have seen the team working with operators to take enforcement - it's a work in progress.

GO What happens if a company gives you a job, you don't know where you're going? You could be finishing your shift in 10 mins and accept a job to Scotland. Also, are companies allowed to send you jobs whilst you're driving within the new highway code changes? I'm sure Patrick would talk to any driver who was on their phone whilst driving.

SR I don't know of an app that doesn't tell you the pickup or drop off points. If they're going to Scotland, they will know where they're going. The root of the issue is from people picking and choosing fares more fruitful fares and cancelling the fare they had previously accepted.

SH Can a vehicle which has been previously written off been licensed?

JM I will take that away as an action and come back to you.

SL When will the Knowledge Test be restarting?

JM We don't have an exact date, we will add it to the agenda for the next meeting.

CB What time does the CAZ period run? Is it valid from 24 hours after you first enter the zone?

JM It runs from midnight to midnight.

CB If I were to buy a licensed vehicle from another driver that meets the CAZ requirements, Would I still be able to get a grant, or do I need to buy a car from a company?

JM We're finalising the terms of the grant and will be in touch when this has been finalised. I can confirm that the grants will only be for vehicles licensed by Bristol Council.

GO North Somerset will licence diesel vehicles that are 8 years old, and can operate in Bristol.

JM You know that I have no control over neighbouring authorities policies.

PQ I'm in conversation with the other councils about these issues, we can't control it at council level but we can feed back and put pressure on.

SL In regards to MPV, do we still have to write to you to get them licensed?

JM Issue is ongoing, there is a lack of availability, only viable option is diesel. I've been making decisions on a case by case basis.

PQ North Somerset are aware they are licensing an increasing amount of people who live in Bristol. One of their Licensing Officers will be coming into Bristol once a month to ensure their vehicles are compliant.

7. Actions for next meeting:

Action Point	Matters arising	By Whom	Completed?
1	Send information around liveable Bristol to DF	SK	
2	Send out information to all drivers regarding liveable Bristol	DF	
3	Raise with senior leadership that we need to increase enforcement in the City Centre to cover the early hours	JM	
5	Provide confirmation on whether previously written off vehicles can be licensed	JM	
6			
7			
8			

Next meeting: 21 April 2022 11:00-13:00