

HACKNEY CARRIAGE AND PRIVATE HIRE FORUM MEETING

Venue: Virtual via Zoom

Agenda: 10 December 2021

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

Steve Pick (**SP**) representing Bristol City Council, Public Transport

Patrick Quinton (**PQ**) representing Police, Taxi Compliance Officer

Steve Lohia (**SL**) representing B Driven Bristol

Desmond Broster (**DB**) representing V Cars and Veezu

Shaban Ali (**SA**) representing Private Hire Drivers Bristol

Saif Hussain (**SH**) representing BBLTA, Chair

Shammi Raichura (**SR**) representing Uber

Nasir Aden (**ND**) representing Bristol Private Hire Drivers, Chair

1. Welcome, Introductions, Apologies

- Apologies
 - None

2. Agree minutes from last meeting

Minutes from 28-09-21

Actions:

- All items resolved, with the exception of the fine information from **CB**

3. Licensing Team update (JM)

JM updated the forum on a number of points:

- Given the rise in fuel prices is a tariff review something that the Hackney trade would like to be revisited?

SH I've spoken to drivers regarding this, and some want a substantial hike in the tariff, others don't want such a substantial hike, or no hike at all as they are worried about losing customers.

- We spoke at length about cancellations in the last meeting. Hopefully everyone saw the update sent out in last week's bulletin. I have been speaking to a number of people about this, mainly from the Private Hire Trade, although it also affects Hackney's who work for Private Hire Operators. As I stated in the last meeting this is unacceptable, and it seems to mainly happen when people want a more lucrative fair. At every cancellation there is a customer at the side of the street waiting. Ultimately this is not helping the trade – please do all you can with your drivers to try and stop your cancellations. I have seen some horrendous figures from operators. If we see this happening, we will take action. Any questions?

DB Is there a threshold that you would like to know the frequency of this happening with drivers?

JM This is happening at such a high volume it would overwhelm the Neighbourhood Enforcement Team. If you have drivers who are persistently doing this, or drivers who are doing it significantly more than others then we would like to be notified, it goes to the heart of being fit and proper. They are here to provide a service which they are failing to do.

DB Even Uber are affected by this.

JM I think all operators are affected by this, drivers are taking the best fare regardless of the operator.

SR We have made a few changes to tackle this, if they have high cancellation rates we send them messages in the app to warn them of this. I will check what our policy is and send it across to you Jon. There have been some changes to the app, and we are acting on this. Our main concern is leaving passengers in a vulnerable position, being left on the side of the road late at night.

NA I think that we need to work with South Gloucester on this, there are a large amount of drivers operating in Bristol who are licensed by them who are also responsible for this issue.

DB I met with South Gloucester last week and told them my concerns, they are also very concerned, I spoke to them and said their

responsibility doesn't just exist within the boundaries of their authority but wherever drivers they have licensed are operating.

JM I've also met with South Gloucester, they have drafted their own communication to go out to the trade. It doesn't matter where the drivers are licensed, they cannot do this.

- Mandatory training -We have the final draft of training, the 10th and 28th February will be dates where we will do a final test on this training. There is a whole range of training covered, and it's been challenging condensing it to a one-day training course. We are looking for some volunteers from the trade. (**SL, DB, SH, SR, and NA** volunteered)
- Application Backlogs – We are in a difficult place and have some backlogs as you are all aware. We're working to clear these where we can. There are a whole range of reasons for this - Covid, implementing national standards, mandatory training, moving all drivers to the DBS Update Service – 30% of all drivers are now on the US – hoping everyone will be on by April.

There has been a lot of short-term pain, and these changes have taken up a lot of resource, but it will have a significant impact on public safety. There are a lot of issues with names completed incorrectly, incorrect addresses. Once all drivers are on the Update Service these issues shouldn't be happening.

Our income is a lot smaller than it was before the pandemic, and we had to let go of staff last year. We are currently recruiting another Licensing Officer, and officers have been working overtime for the last three weeks. We are getting on top of it, but it's going to take a while. We're in a cycle of drivers chasing applications which creates more emails.

SH People are waiting over a month, I know of drivers waiting over five weeks for their plates and badges to be issued. I have 20 to 30 off the road at the moment.

JM This is news to me, please send me the list of drivers who are waiting, and I can look into it for you

SH How long shall I wait to chase an application?

JM It's to do with the expiry date of the licence, rather than when it was submitted. If you contact us within four days of the expiry, we will look into it.

SL When all of this is over what are the chances of everything going back to normal. There are Licensing Officers who are not sure which documents can be accepted for DBS checks

JM The guidance on which documents can be accepted has recently changed

NA There is no representation for Private Hire drivers, we have at least four drivers waiting for their plates. When they call up to chase the people, they speak to don't help

JM If you're starting a Private Hire Driver representation group then I think that's really positive and I'm happy to work with you to ensure drivers know the group exists.

- Taxi operations – Over the next few weekends there will be taxi operations taking place – to ensure members of the public have got vehicles booked, are wearing face masks etc. Parking services will be working with us to ensure PH are not on ranks or bus stops

SH The issue with stopping on bus stops is down to PH, Hackneys only stop on one bus stop, you won't see us on any others. The point of contention is the Hippodrome rank, we feel that it's unfair because the PNC issued 400 fines to taxis. No one told us watch out you're going to get fined. Since 10th September no PH has received a fine. I have around 500 photos of PH parked there. It's not fair that they're not getting tickets.

JM Hackney's and PHV's are not supposed to park there. We've been discussing it for years, and you've had every opportunity to not park there. This was to help the trade, there is information sign posting the rank. Parking enforcement is done by cameras and is indiscriminate, if there are PHV on the rank, then they will get ticketed

SH In the last 2.5 months the hackney's have fully complied. We have done what you've asked, but there are still 2000 PH per week picking up from there and they have had 0 fines. Why have they not, but hackneys have? It's unfair, we feel discriminated against. I can show you the photos of the PH vehicles parked on the rank - I have 500 photos and that's only a small percentage.

JM I thought that this would be a good thing for Hackney's, I recognise that there needs to be a change in behaviour from HC moving away from that rank. This operation is to move those customers to show them where the rank is. We have a lot of officers out tonight; this is along Baldwin Street and Park Street. We will see how tonight's operation goes, and if it improves great, if not we will be reviewing to see what will work best going forward.

SR We have changed where drivers can pick up, If this is not working please let me know and we can look at reviewing the set up.

PQ I'm a bit confused, because uber drivers cannot pick up from outside the hippodrome

NA There are hundreds of uber drivers every weekend waiting on that rank to pick up

PQ As **SR** has said, the app doesn't allow them to pick up from there

SR The app tells passengers they cannot be picked up from there, but it seems that they are not moving to the correct location and drivers feel compelled to pick them up from where they are. We can review the communication, and what else we can do with the app

- **JM** Clean Air Zone – Announcements will be made over the coming weeks. There will be grants for non-compliant Euro 5 Diesel vehicles. For Hackney Carriages there will be £4000, and for Private Hire £1500. We will be pulling together a comprehensive guide of all of the grants available for both PH and HC. For HC the total value of all the grants is £15,000 this includes free licences and Temple Meads permits. There will also be grants for £1000 per year for five years for electric charging. I hope that's approaching the tipping point for where

electric vehicles are worthwhile purchasing. All CAZ grants are only for Bristol Licensing Vehicles.

The council will also be purchasing a couple of LEVC vehicles, which we will be looking at leasing to the trade.

The grant of £1500/£4000 is for any non-compliant licensed vehicle. All other grants are for vehicles being replaced with an electric vehicle – these vehicles will also be eligible for home charging subsidies which will be coming soon.

We're currently in an awkward period with vehicles are expiring now before the grants have gone live, there are 29 vehicles which this affects. We've written them and they will be able to retrospectively claim – I will clarify the dates of this.

4. City Transport Update

- **SP** I work for city transport, and I am managing the A37/A4018 project. I won't have time today to go through the proposals fully, but wanted to use this as an opportunity to ensure you're all aware of them, we can set up a separate meeting in a few weeks to go through fully if this is something you would be interested in. The consultation started last week and runs until 28/1/21

SP runs through a PowerPoint detailing the proposals – key elements are;

- Increase in bus lanes throughout the city
- Removal of some roads within the city
- New rank on Triangle South, and a new promenade along by bus stop

JM Do the bus lanes on park street allow PH access, and can you set up a meeting with the taxi reps?

SP Private Hire Vehicles will be able to use the bus lanes, and I will set up a meeting with the reps.

5. TaxiCop Update

PQ Most of you are on WhatsApp and are aware of what I've been up to recently.

There have been a lot of issues with Apple Pay, with passengers leaving before payment has gone through. I would like some feedback from **SH** and PHV drivers to see if they're having any issues

SH I had heard of a few issues, if we're concerned we would take payment before the journey starts.

NA With Uber, Ola etc we don't deal with any payment, so we haven't had any issues, however, I know that V cars have had problems. The driver should tell passengers to wait until payment has gone through. It's not a big problem a few isolated occasions.

- There was an incident a few weeks ago where a member of public claimed that a licensed driver didn't stop after accident, however, we later found this to be untrue. We have interviewed the person who made allegation regarding this for making a false allegation and perverting course of justice. She has no criminal record and has been very remorseful. We are looking at dealing with it by conditional caution, we obviously take this very seriously.

- New mobile phone laws will be coming in next year, for those of you who use phones in cradles it shouldn't impact you. Once legislation is published, I will update you on how it will affect you

- Cancellations -Is anyone aware of an increase of double bookers, in line with the increase of cancellations?

DB There have been some issues with passengers cancelling at the last minute. It's not a big issue, but the public are becoming more aware of the ongoing issues. I also think that sometimes it's convenient for customers to say that it is a no show

- **PQ** I finished last week with 26 active investigations, I have managed to get this down to 15. I apologise, as this may delay me replying to messages or issues. I continue to work hard for all of you.

6. Issues from BBLTA and issues from PH

- **SH** The light outside of the taxi rank outside of Boots doesn't work, please can this be looked at.

Bowling street was supposed to have a rank outside the Gelato shop; however we haven't seen that this has been put in.

JM – I have been chasing the illumination of the rank outside boots. I've got an email update so let me check and I can give you an update on it.

SH Going back to the electric vehicle, if you get that how long are the licence fees covered for?

JM I think it's five years. I'd also like to remind you that under our policy an Electric vehicle can be licensed for 15 years instead of 12. They're also a 6-seater rather than five.

7. AOB

DB In regard to the DBS policy, is there any way we can help with the service? Could we potentially help with the ID checking of our drivers?

JM this is not something I have considered but we could look at whether this would be an option.

DB We've completed around 500 ID checks, and some of our staff have gotten really good at it.

8. Actions for next meeting:

Action Point	Matters arising	By Whom	Completed?
1	Send across info about fines to JM and GP	CB	
2	Send Uber policy on cancellations to JM	SR	
3	Send across list of outstanding plates/badges to JM	SH	
4	Clarify the CAZ grant dates	JM	
5	Arrange to go through consultation with taxi reps	SP	
6	Check whether ID checks need to be completed by BCC	JM	

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Next meeting: 24th February 2022