

# **HACKNEY CARRIAGE AND PRIVATE HIRE FORUM Meeting**

**Venue: Virtual via Zoom**

**Agenda: 28 September 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  
Adam Crowther (AC) representing Bristol City Council, City Transport  
Helen Wigginton (HW) representing Bristol City Council, City Transport  
Karen Daniel (KD) representing Bristol City Council, City Transport  
Kirsty representing V Cars  
Patrick Quinton (PQ) representing Police, Taxi Compliance Officer  
Steve Lohia (SL) representing B Driven Bristol  
Clive Burdett (CB) representing Unite  
Desmond Broster (DB) representing V Cars and Veezu  
Shaban Ali (SA) representing Private Hire Drivers Bristol  
Saif Hussain (SH) representing BBLTA, Chair

## **1. Welcome, Introductions, Apologies**

- Apologies -
  - Shammi Raichura - Uber
  - Steve Pick –Bristol City Council Public Transport Team

## **2. Agree minutes from last meeting**

Minutes from 25-03-21

Actions:

- All items resolved.

## **3. Licensing Team update (JM)**

JM updated the forum on a number of points:

- The licensing service is funded through licence fees, several temporary members of staff were let go due to funding, however,

the service is back to full numbers of permanent staff. Sarah Flower is still on long term sick.

- Trade numbers are still down compared to pre-covid numbers, particularly in regard to PHV drivers, there are currently 1650.
- Prior to the pandemic there was a full time Licensing Officer in CSP, for the foreseeable we will be home working with no plans to return to CSP.
- There is still an officer in Temple Street but this is not for public interaction. They are there for plate production etc. There is a second officer Tuesday to Thursdays to complete face to face ID checks, this is by appointment only.
- In line with the rest of the council we are not returning to Temple Street on a full-time basis.
- JM confirmed that having one licensing officer in Temple Street should not delay licences going out, and that the length from application to grant is usually around 10 days.

#### **4. Clean Air Zone Update**

HW shows attendees a presentation on CAZ

- The government have set legal limits on levels of CO2 and pollution within cities which is caused by vehicles needs to be reduced by 2023. For Bristol to comply with these limits a Clean Air Zone will be introduced in Summer 2022. The Clean Air Zone will cover a specific area of the city to restrict exposure to Nitrous Oxide.
- No vehicles are banned from travelling within the Clean Air Zone, however older and more polluting vehicles will need to pay a fee, the charges are applicable 24/7 365 days of the year. The fee paid is applicable for a 24 hour period. Currently 71% vehicles are clean enough to travel through the Clean Air Zone without paying a fee.
- There will be more information on what support is available once the full business case comes back, which should be about April 2022. There will be loans and grants, as well as improvements to the flow of traffic around the city, such as the implementation of additional bus lanes. We have proposed a dedicated grant for Taxis and Private Hire Vehicles. This has not been approved yet, but if

approved the grants would be £1500 for Private Hire Vehicles and £4000 for Hackney Carriages. Only vehicles licensed by BCC would be eligible. Currently 34% of Taxis/PHV are not compliant with the CAZ

## **5. Taxicop update (PQ)**

- There has recently been a significant increase in illegal plying for hire, which had taken up a significant amount of time, which had resulted in some delays in responding to queries from the trade. PQ is still out patrolling, chatting to driver and detecting issues. Although the majority of his work is licensing based, he is still a police officer, and recently he has been dealing with a number of issued with E-scooters.

## **6. Issues from BBLTA and Private Hire**

- DB raised that since Supreme Court decision on Uber, drivers are “multi-apping” more. Taking signs off vehicles and creating a number of dangers. One of the conditions on licence is we have to provide a prompt service. Drivers are picking up bookings but not turning up to get the passenger because they have taken another booking. It undermines Miscellaneous Provisions Act, and there are instances where drivers are on their way to a booking but cancel last minute to take a better booking with another app. There’s a need for a bigger discussion between licensing and the operators. PQ advised that this is also due to the decrease in PHV drivers, and that there is a smaller pool of drivers. There is no reason why drivers can’t work for multiple operators and there’s no requirement from BCC to have door stickers. It is down to the driver to ensure they are not double booking.

JM responded in agreement that that this is a serious problem, but that the legal constraints BCC are operating under does not allow BCC to stop this. It is not acceptable that these cancellations are happening to the customer. Whilst drivers should have the ability to move between operators during the working day/night. However, that comes with responsibility, once a booking has been accepted it should not be cancelled without good reason. In that instance the operator/customer should notify BCC and we would look at the case

and consider whether a referral to PSP to look at whether they are fit and proper would be appropriate. It could be a vulnerable person and they should not be left at the side of the road.

- SH raised that Hackney's have no surges and that the fares are set by the council. It was also raised that a larger number of Hackney Drivers were receiving fines outside the Hippodrome than Private Hire Drivers, SH also stated that he had witnessed private hire drivers illegally plying for hire outside the Hippodrome.

CB Outside the Hippodrome there's a bus lane, Hackney's can drop off at a bus lane, however Private Hire's cannot.

JM The mayor has responded to the questions regarding the Hippodrome, it is not a rank, the enforcement is done by cameras which is indiscriminate between PHV and HCV. I will speak to transport and confirm regarding dropping off in bus lanes.

## **7. Policy Update (JM)**

JM updated the forum on the new "Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Policy 2021-2026"

- The new policy was introduced on 27<sup>th</sup> July 2021, a lot of the changes are in line with the national standards implemented by the government.
- There is now a requirement for drivers to complete mandatory safeguarding training. There are currently 1650 licensed drivers, it will be a huge task to put all drivers through the training. The training should be in place in the new year, it's anticipated this will be delivered in groups of 45-50 people. This training is compulsory, it is a one-day training course along with an assessment.

The training will cover human trafficking, enslavement, disability awareness, temporary vulnerability (suicide prevention, late night economy)

We will be looking at some volunteers for pilot training in the new year for feedback on the training.

The training will be delivered over a six-month period in the New Year, drivers will need to pass this to retain their badges.

- In order to cover the cost of this we will need to increase fees in the new year, this will form part of the “fit and proper” test and will need to be repeated every three years.

There have also been changes to the conviction policy, one of the changes is that the policy states, “offences can be committed unintentionally, and a single occurrence of a minor traffic offence would not prohibit the granting of the licence”, this is lifted from the national standards, we are working with the committee with how we will approach this. Ultimately, it’s about context, it is unacceptable to deliberately speed and so is calling it an occupational hazard. However, travelling at 50mph in a 30 zone is different to 33mph in a 30 zone.

- DB queried whether the Gold Standard was still a requirement, JM confirmed that it is. DB then raised the issue that there are drivers in Bristol licensed with South Gloucester who are not required to complete the Gold Standard. JM agreed that it was an issue, but BCC have no control over other authorities licensing regimes, ultimately BCC want their drivers to be of a high standard, and the requirements will not be lowered due to neighbouring authorities not having the same level of requirements.

The knowledge test has been revised and will be rolled out very shortly, the main changes are that the route knowledge will be removed, the questions on landmarks will be simplified, and the mark scheme will be clearer. In conjunction with the police we have introduced a section with questions on safety.

SH raised concerns that the knowledge test had been dumbed down.

JM clarified that the route knowledge was always the area vulnerable for change, it hasn’t been dumbed down, it’s 2021, and we need to move with the technology. We are delivering a compromise to allow for high standards, whilst recognising new technology.

## 8. AOB

- JM Last week we revoked a licence for a driver failing to carry a guide dog in an acceptable manner. We have been talking about the importance of this for years, and we expect it to be dealt with in a

correct way. It's not just about being fit and proper, it's about doing the right thing.

- GO raised that licences are cheaper in South Gloucester than Bristol, he said there should be an incentive to be licensed by Bristol, such as only Bristol drivers being able to use the bus lanes. JM Confirmed that this was not something that BCC were currently considering.

## 9. Actions for next meeting:

Action Point	Matters arising	By Whom	Completed?
1	Send across info from Wales regarding multi-apping.	DB	Yes
2	Send across information about fines to JM and GP	CB	No
3	Clarification on whether hackneys can drop off at bus lane	JM	Yes
4	Confirmation of what fees would be charged if a non-CAZ compliant vehicle is swapped for compliant CAZ vehicle when/if the grants are available	JM	Yes
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**Next meeting: 10<sup>th</sup> December 2021**