

## Operator Meeting 10:30hrs 11th May 2016

### Summary of meeting

#### 1. Introductions

Cllr Slater opened up by welcoming everyone. She apologised for a clash of meeting time with the remembrance service for the Valley Parade Fire. She gave the audience a choice of postponing the meeting for a short time around 11am or for officers to continue the meeting in her absence. No one in the audience wished to postpone and therefore Cllr Slater left around 11.00am and returned around 11.45am.

#### 2. Previous minutes

There was a polite reminder for all parties to respect each other and not shout out when others speak. Also, people speaking should identify who they are and where they are from, this helps with the recording of information.

Officers then continued the meeting by reviewing the actions from the January meeting:

A question had been asked about people who received CSE warnings incorrectly. Officers explained that people who had wrongly been given a warning letter regarding CSE attendance in October 2015 had been spoken to and warnings removed where appropriate.

A question had been asked about why tests fees were so high and what had happened to the free MOT. Officers explained that fees had been reduced twice and there had never been a fee for the MOT.

Operators had asked for the Council to restrict where drivers work. Officers explained that the Council can't legally do that. They explained that to assist Operators the service now requires an email or letter from the Operator (i.e. the employer) to ensure a driver's badge accurately reflects the Operator who the driver works for and it is then up to the Operator if they wish to allow their driver to work for more than one company.

Eldwick, Bingley, Harden and DCH asked about vehicle signage and whether they could have use magnetic signage. Officers explained that an email had been issued to all Operators explaining signage conditions and a copy of that email will be re-sent with the minutes of this meeting.

***Action: Officers to re-send email to operators re vehicle signage***

Operators asked for a statement of accounts. These will be circulated for the last completed year 2014 / 2015 with the minutes of the meeting.

### ***Action: Officers to send statement of accounts***

Some Operators believed that Sheffield Council were controlling PH fares and as such asked Bradford to do the same. Officers had explained that this was not legal but they contacted Sheffield Council and Sheffield confirmed they are not setting fares and reiterated that settings fares would be illegal. Note: In Sheffield one owner owns 75% of the PH industry which may make it appear as if fares are being set when in fact they are not.

A discussion then took place and an Operator asked whether the trade can function and make money from £1 a mile. There was a widespread recognition that a business could not operate and make money on such low fares. Officers explained that a mature, professional attitude is needed to set prices at appropriate levels to run an efficient, professional business and make money.

There was an action to send proposed condition changes out with minutes. Officers explained that it had taken too long to issue the minutes of the January meeting due to teething problems with the production of minutes between the Service and colleagues in committee secretariat. These have now been resolved and the Service will issue the minutes in future.

Also, as an after note to the last meeting, it was agreed that Operators who have under 5 vehicles only need to attend one of the four business meetings per year.

### **Agenda Items for today's meeting**

#### **3. CCTV Update**

Officers updated on the CCTV project which had been discussed in January's meeting. A document has been drafted which list requirements that must be met before CCTV can be authorised for use in a vehicle. The draft document will be circulated with the notes of the meeting for Operator comments.

***Action: Officers to circulate draft CCTV document with the meeting notes and Operators to comment NLT 3<sup>rd</sup> June 2016 to [taxi.testing@bradford.gov.uk](mailto:taxi.testing@bradford.gov.uk)***

Once comments have been received a finished the document will be taken to committee.

As there were circa 30 Operators present photocopies of the document were provided.

DCH asked if it's the same for dash-cams or different and if it will be compulsory. Officers explained that the draft document does not cover dash-cams which face out of the vehicle and do not record internally. The project for CCTV is for inward facing equipment. It is not compulsory but pressure may grow from parties in the wake of the Rotherham issues.

#### **4. Licensing Update**

Officers thanked Operators for sending in emails / letters in a timely manner regarding their drivers who work for more than one Operator company.

Officers thanked Operators for passing on to their driver's the importance of using the pre booked appointment slots for visits to counters at HCPH service. They asked that Operators continue to promote these appointments as this saves queues and helps get drivers back on the road more speedily.

An Operator asked for clarification on lateness for appointments. Officers explained that it is unreasonable for someone to arrive late with no prior contact. If someone is a couple of minutes late and there is no knock-on effect to other customers who have pre booked appointments officers will still agree, where possible, to carry out the pre booked appointment. Where a customer is more than 5 minutes late it is unlikely that they can be seen in their pre booked slot as the officer will not have time to conduct the appointment without later appointments being affected.

#### 5. RAG (Red, Amber, Green) Rating

At the January meeting there was positive feedback on ideas to use for RAG rating and as such Officers invited further feedback from Operators. An Operator commented that they want to see clean, tidy bases and staff presentable to customers. Officers mentioned that these form part of the Base checks which Officers conduct. An Operator gave an example of how they hold in-house training with their drivers in small groups to improve communication and knowledge. Officers commented they were aware of other such examples of great practice, including Operators who take photocopies of driver training certificates (as evidence).

***Action: Officers will draft a RAG rating guide by the next Operator meeting***

An Operator asked about CSE stickers and whether they should be external facing. Officers answered by saying that customers would not pay attention to exterior facing information and that when they are in the vehicle they see more. If stickers are damaged or stolen from vehicle then the Service will issue free replacements.

#### 6. West Yorkshire Combined Authority

Leaders want a combined authority with combined policies. A person has been set on to carry out a 3 month investigation to explore the viability of this idea. An Operator asked if that means anyone can work anywhere in the region and if costs would be the same. Officers explained that in theory that would be the case but that it can't be confirmed at this point. An Operator raised concern in respect of vehicle specifications being different in each Authority so how could an agreement be reached. Officers explained that changes, if authorised, may take a number of years to fully implement.

An Operator asked for clarification on window tints. Officers reiterated that the requirements are clearly set out in the vehicle specification and that everyone should check this and seek clarification if necessary before purchasing a vehicle.

#### 7. Ultra Low Emissions Vehicle (ULEV)

Officers explained that the move towards ULEV vehicles is growing quickly and they anticipate this continuing. Many organisations are now engaging with Councils to

improve the take-up of electric vehicles and charging points. Whilst such vehicles are currently expensive, take between one and six hours to charge and have a restricted mileage between charges this is changing quickly. Officers recommend that Operators give serious consideration to the use of ULEV and low emission vehicles and point out that grants are being offered for people wishing to purchase such vehicles, e.g. up to 75% for HC vehicles. Officers suggested that Operators may wish to consider how these vehicles could work for them to look at hybrid options as a medium term option. Officers said that there would likely be a change in vehicle emission requirements for new vehicles.

***Action: Any Operator interested in ULEV please email [taxi.testing@bradford.gov.uk](mailto:taxi.testing@bradford.gov.uk) before 3<sup>rd</sup> June 2016***

#### 8. IT Update

Officers apologised for the lack of IT progress over the past 12 months. They explained that they believed a move to a corporate system would assist the Service but this has not worked and work is now underway towards a bespoke licensing software system. They explained that the Council has set rules to follow in procuring a new system therefore it may take approximately 9 months to source and implement a new system. Officers assured Operators that this was a high priority for them.

#### 9. Vehicle tests Update on April's Figures

In April there were 257 tests and a first time pass rate of only 63%. The problem of vehicle failures has been long standing despite an educational and training approach. The service is now addressing vehicle failures direct with drivers / proprietors / operators (as appropriate) by way of official warning letters.

An Operator said that drivers were self-employed and therefore Operators should not be dealt with. Officers clarified that operators take bookings and allocate drivers therefore they are responsible for the driver, vehicle and journey provided. It is the Operators responsibility to ensure the service they provide is safe and they must be able to demonstrate that they have done everything reasonable to ensure drivers have their vehicles inspected, serviced and maintained by a reputable garage. The issuing of warning letters will help to tackle the issues surrounding vehicle safety. Officers point out that if the Operators use reputable garages for vehicle inspection, maintenance and repairs then their service will be safe and their vehicle safety inspection results will not be at a 40% fail.

An Operator said that he trusts his drivers and therefore they should pay for their errors / untruths. Officers explained that basic daily driver checks are not the issue; the issue is mechanical faults which drivers would/may not be able to identify. A responsible operator would have policies in place to ensure that drivers are required to use reputable garages for vehicle safety inspections and maintenance etc.

An Operator said how they know if drivers are passing or failing and how many retests they have taken at Shearbridge. Officers explained that they should have effective

communication channels in place at their base. An Operator said they ask their drivers for the result of their tests and do not put them back available for work until they have them. Officers agreed that this was good practice. Cllr Slater added that the public must be safe.

#### 10. Enforcement Update

Officers updated on driver training. All drivers must be trained before 31<sup>st</sup> August 2016 or risk suspension after that date. Operators have been communicated with multiple times on the matter, most recently in April and May by email. An Operator asked if additional training can be put on as his drivers are being booked in for July. Officers explained that there are two large training events in June. Operators need to contact the training team to book their drivers on at the earliest possible opportunity. An Operator said some drivers refused to be trained. Another said that some drivers have done PATs courses in the past and that courses are similar from time to time. Officers pointed out that courses do not change significantly on the 3 year cycle. Officers explained that Operators should explain to drivers that they will not be able to work as no one will be able to employ/use an untrained driver come 1<sup>st</sup> September unless they have attended training.

CSE stickers – 50% of Operators were very positive and complied with a request to collect and display CSE stickers in vehicles. Officers thought that responsible operators would be supportive with the requirement and willing to liaise effectively with them to collect and display the stickers. As CSE is a high profile issue Operator support would help lead to public confidence in the service they were providing. As 50% of Operators didn't respond Officers will now have to reconsider what needs to be done.

#### 11. Communications update

Apologies were given about the unavailability of the Council website (outside of Service control). The site was meant to change as part of a corporate change in February. There was a corporate delay and sites only changed a couple of weeks ago. During the change some links to documents were lost and this is in the process of being resolved by IT services. We hope to resume full functioning of the website by end of May. In the meantime forms can be issued via emails.

6 Key emails have been sent out in the past couple of months. 2 needed replying too, one received a 10% reply rate, the other a 50% reply rate. The requirement was for a 100% reply rate. Please consider this in order to avoid enforcement action for non compliance.

Officers asked Operators to consider whether they want emails or attachments on their notice boards for their drivers to read. Officers will email this question to Operators for feedback / consideration on some future correspondence. Several Operators have said they find it awkward receiving attachments as they do not open properly from hand held devices.

***Action: Officers to email trade regarding cascaded information – to see what helps Operators***

12. Agenda Point Submissions

There were no agenda points raised by Operators prior to the meeting. The service would encourage Operators to provide agenda points in order for their points to be raised. The next Operator meeting is July 29<sup>th</sup>.

13. Date of next meeting

The next meeting will be held on 29<sup>th</sup> July, City Hall, Council Chambers

The meeting was then officially closed at 12.10pm and thanks were expressed by officers to all who attended.

Note: An Operator who attended towards the end of the meeting raised several issues, including: out of town vehicles working in Bradford; the training of their drivers; Uber drivers working everywhere and in his time as a representative said drivers should go to nominated garages to get their vehicles tested.

Officers explained that it was clear he had not been to trade/Operator meetings recently. They refreshed his knowledge in that: Uber have the right to work anywhere if they have a Bradford base, licence and are awarded jobs through the app system. Out of area vehicles are here because Operators employ them. Bradford Council can't instruct licensed drivers by another authority to do Bradford training. Garages can't be nominated by the Council; it is down to the Operator/driver to decide on reputable dealers.