

Operator Business Meeting Summary

Wednesday 14th February 2018 – 10.30am

1. Introductions/Welcome

Cllr Ferriby opened the meeting and thanked the Operators for attending. She handed over to Officers to then begin the follow up actions from the last meeting.

2. Outstanding Actions

There were a number of outstanding actions, 7 in total from the November meeting. Officers updated as below:

- Health and Well Being Session to arrange – Completed. This item is on the agenda
- Officers to consider the merits of standardised window visors.

This was considered but is not seen as beneficial to the public. Standardising visors mean that vehicles are harder to identify quickly and easily.

- Officers to supply the breakdown of vehicle failures – Completed. This item is on the agenda.
- Officers to begin the process of sending Operator renewal reminder emails – Update to give. This item is on the agenda.
- Officers to look into concerns around service opening times
- Officers to look into allegations of poor service / attitude of frontline staff

Officers explained that these two action points had been discussed internally and investigated and specific complaints had been feedback to the complainants.

- Peer review Session to arrange – Completed. This item is on the agenda

3. Police Update

There was a brief update on offences and the figures were encouraging in that stoning / offences had decreased from November 2016 to November 2017. These offences are not just aimed at the taxi and Private Hire trade but at other vehicles, such as ambulances, the fire brigade, etc. 9 People have been arrested in the past 12 months. The areas of offence have also altered slightly, away from the previous areas of Dudley Hill and towards Wakefield Road, Holmewood and Tong Street.

An update was then provided in regards to CSE (Child Sexual Exploitation). There was a plea to get effective support to the CSE investigation team. Sometimes the CSE team ask for members of the HCPH service to accompany them to bases and it is often when this happens that they finally get the information they need.

Officers asked Operators to ensure that their base staff / phone operators are aware of the CSE processes and the importance of supplying information when requested and in a timely manner. Work on this matter is important and many partners work together to achieve positive results.

Key things for bases / operators / drivers to think about are:

- Who is being picked up?
- What time of night is it?
- Are they going to a location that seems inappropriate?
- Who is the person with?
- What age is the individual?
- Is this a regular journey?

Any concerns should be reported. Some leaflets were brought to the meeting for Operator to take away and Operators were reminded of the Police contact numbers of 101 and 999.

If anyone has intelligence for Andrew Simpson or the team regarding CSE please ring 101 and then key in the number 20143 which is Andrew's direct line. Messages can be left.

4. Health and Well Being Event

This event was held as a result of the peer review recommendations. As the job of a licensed driver is a sedentary role the Local Authority has looked to promote better health and well-being for the trade. The event was not organised by the HCPH Service but the service was asked to pass on information to the trade. The event was attended by 2 members of the trade, 1 attendee found it useful, the other less useful.

A further event is being arranged by the organisers for March and the service will pass information on as soon as it is received from the organisers.

Action: Officers to circulate March date to trade once known

5. Key Operator Responsibilities / Liabilities

An Enforcement Officer spoke about a real life case that has happened. The case involved an Operator that had lost their licence and one of their drivers who was imprisoned for causing death by dangerous driving. The case highlighted the significant importance of having a thorough, robust complaints process in place. The case also highlighted again the fact that Operators are responsible for the following key areas of work:

- Vehicle safety
- Driver performance
- Office Staff Performance

- Compliance on all related matters
- Promoting the reporting avenues and signs of CSE (Child Sexual Exploitation)

Details of the Court case are also on the web and can be found at the following link:

<https://www.chad.co.uk/news/council-revokes-mansfield-taxi-firm-licence-after-unlawful-killing-verdict-1-8293878>

As the link may be discontinued in the future from the website a separate document will be added to the Website in coming days.

Action: Officers to add a separate updated document reflecting the court case and add it to the website.

6. Agenda Points Raised

No Agenda Points were received from the trade. An Operator asked if future agenda points could be sent on email rather than using the agenda point form. Officers agreed subject to the email content including the same information as required by the agenda point form.

7. Vehicle Safety Inspections / Air Quality / Emissions / Idling / Illegal Parking

A summary of PH Vehicle results was provided. In the past 3 months (November 2017 – January 2018) over 900 PH vehicles were presented for annual inspection. The percentage first time pass rate of those vehicles equated to 71%. In addition to this, over 100 PH Vehicles were presented for Random Vehicle Inspection. The first time pass rate equated to 64%.

If an operator wants specific feedback on their companies' performance then the service will contact Operators on an individual basis to provide further data around this area of work / performance.

The Principal Officer then gave an update on the Council's Progress regarding air quality in Bradford. This was a 'head's up' only at this point and covered the need for air pollution to be decreased through not allowing vehicle engines to idle, especially on ranks, or outside schools. There is also a requirement for Operators to consider the use of greener vehicles in the future. Much of the work in this area is being shared between the West Yorkshire Local Authorities and therefore lots more information will become available on these matters in the near future. Please click on the below link which takes you directly to a webpage on the service website where we cover 'Air Quality and Emissions' in further detail.

<https://www.bradford.gov.uk/transport-and-travel/hackney-carriages-and-private-hire/air-quality-and-emissions/>

8. Peer Review Summary

A peer review was requested by elected members following concerns raised some members of the trades. The review was on the November 2017 meeting agenda but Operators present requested a separate feedback session. The session was later arranged for 13 February 2018.

Over 4500 licensed members were written to in January 2018 inviting them to attend a 'drop in session' if they had any questions regarding the peer review. Over 100 people attended of which 98 booked in and 70 had a one-to-one meeting with an officer. The session was disrupted by a small number of the trade who were attempting to influence drivers to not book in or take part and this accounts for both those who did not book in and the difference between the 98 who booked in and the 70 who were seen by officers. This was inappropriate behaviour by a small number of people and is being addressed.

It became evident that less than half the people who engaged with officers had read or understood what the peer review was. Many did not know why they had chosen to attend the 'drop in' session and others tried to use the opportunity to ask questions about other topics, such as fees, parking, and old historic conditions but as these questions did not relate to the peer review they were not answered.

2 attendees on the day asked about the interviews that were conducted as part of the peer review process. Officers said they would ask for the notes from these.

Over 25% of people that engaged with officers made a point of saying thank you to officers for the big improvements that have already been made in the email system and the pre booking of appointments. Those drivers are delighted that their visits to the depot are reduced and they do not have to wait when they visit to collect their licences.

During the Operator Meeting an Operator also asked about the questions asked by the people who were interviewed during the Peer review. Officers said these will be published with the Operator Meeting minutes and placed on the website.

Please see the following link which takes you to a page marked Bradford Peer Review on the website. When you visit this page you will find a copy of the Peer Review, updates on the 12 recommendations and the service will also be adding a copy of the Notes.

<https://www.bradford.gov.uk/transport-and-travel/hackney-carriages-and-private-hire/bradford-peer-review/>

Action: Officers to circulate the link to the Peer Review Notes

9. Service Review Update

There were several updates to provide and these are as follows:

Operator Refresher Training

Officers have redesigned the Operator Training content to make it more interactive. This will be delivered to small groups over the coming months. Further information will be provided and details of courses and attendance requirements will be formally circulated.

Vehicle Inspections

There were a couple of issues that the service has found regarding too many vehicles being booked into the same time slots at the workshop. The workshop has 2 bays and therefore 2 tests that can be carried out together. Some IT related systems errors have meant that 3 vehicles have been booked in for the 2 time slots. Workshop mechanics have been fabulous in working with the service to make sure the customers can be seen. The service has offered apologies to any customers who have been disrupted by this fault.

Applicant's Communication Difficulties

The service have identified 3 individuals who have progressed through the new application to the point where they are ready for a badge but have subsequently been found to be at a non-suitable standard regarding basic English Skills. This was an error by the Service. Those applicants have been to prove competency before they proceed with their applications.

Online Renewals

Progress has been good since the last Operator meeting. Officers are meeting with IT services on Monday 19th February and are hopeful of having an online renewal form and payment process, for driver renewals initially, in the next couple of weeks. If successful, online Vehicle and Operator renewals will follow. Again, significantly reducing the numbers of visits to Shearbridge and allow a smoother transaction for the trade. Within this process there will also be an option for a customer to book their own appointment to attend to complete the renewal process and collect their badge / licence.

Some Operators had concerns that vehicle plates had to be collected several days after the test. Officers explained that is in part due to the failure rate but that the process is also being reviewed with a view to plate collection taking place at the workshop directly after the vehicle test providing the vehicle passes. There was no date for this to commence at this time.

10. Queue Management Information

December 2017 / January 2018 figures were explained. There were over 3000 visits to the counters at Shearbridge. The great news is that over 2000 were pre booked visits which means those visitors had no waiting time. Around 1000 visitors turned up with no appointment (Note: these customers were choosing to not use the new procedures and instead were choosing to wait) and in some cases had lengthy waits before an appointment was booked for them to return at another time.

Operators were concerned about 2 key areas.

- 1) Not all drivers have emails or a capability to register and use emails effectively
- 2) There is an issue at the second stage of the process whereby officers attempt to call / contact the trade following an initial email. A numbers of drivers who miss calls have a long winded process to get an appointment and this delays them in their bid to renew.

Officers explained the following points to answer the concerns:

- 1) Officers have previously posted online, and circulated back in 2016, helpful guides to set up email accounts. The trade were asked to contact Shearbridge at the time if they wanted assistance. Officers received no contact on this matter. Officers are still willing to visit bases to work with trade to promote this and provide an initial assistance and guidance in this area.
- 2) Officers try on multiple occasions to contact an individual and leave clear instructions on either email or voicemail to the trade members they have failed to contact. It has to be a joint Operator / driver responsibility to allow some effective time to a trade member who needs contact back from the service. Short term loss is longer term gain for all parties.

Note: the above led to an open debate in which a range of perceptions were put forward to officers, including, "It was a much better service in the past" and "there were too many changes taking place nowadays". However, the reality was that historically there were only two customer service windows which required the use of protective glass between customers and officers due to daily "frustrations", many about waiting times. Nowadays there are five or six customer service windows with no protection glass and a much more positive customer/officer experience. The changes which are taking place nowadays, and there are many, are as a result of such things as the additional checks required for the right to work, DBS and CSE etc. as well as normal progress and the evolution of the service to keep pace with the business environment and technology.

Actions for officers: Enforcement Officers to include email guidance and checking on their future Base Checks.

11. Date of Next Meeting

The next Operator Business meeting will be held on Wednesday 16th May 2018. Registration will be at 10 am and the meeting will start at 10.30 am.

The meeting was closed at around 11.40am. Cllr Ferriby re-iterated thanks to the attendees.