

CITY OF YORK COUNCIL – TAXI LICENSING

MINUTES OF MEETING WITH YORK HACKNEY CARRIAGE & PRIVATE HIRE ASSOCIATIONS

MONDAY – 5 NOVEMBER 2018

Present: Lesley Cooke (Chair) – Licensing Manager CYC (LC)
Matt Boxall - Acting Head of Public Protection CYC (MB)
Angela Ruane – Licensing Officer CYC (AR)
Bryce Andrews – Senior Licensing Assistant CYC (BA)
Billy Iqbal – York Cars Association(BI)
Wendy Loveday – York Private Hire Association (WL)
Steven Nelson – York Private Hire Association (SN)
Michael Palmer – York Private Hire Association (MP)
Michael Albon – York Hackney Carriage Association (MA)
Anthony Green – York Hackney Carriage Association (AG)
Colin Metcalfe – York Hackney Carriage Association (CM)
William Swords – Station Taxis (WS)
Allan Davies – Independent Taxi Association (AD)

Apologies: Jim Kerr – Independent Taxi Association

General Items – both Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Associations Present:

1. Minutes of last meeting

- a) CM raised the issue that out of town private hire vehicles are still picking up customers outside McDonald's on Blake Street and asked if anything had been sent out yet, as discussed in the last meeting.
- b) LC advised that she believes a notice was sent out via email to this effect.
- c) CM explained that these pick ups are still occurring, particularly with out of town vehicles. CM also asked whether there are any plans to close or reduce the working hours of the Queen Street rank.
- d) LC advised that there are no plans to change it at present but this may change when the Queen Street bridge works begin.
- e) MP added on the topic of Queen Street that there could be an issue with exit of 127 residents from new apartments where old Hudson House is. MP asked if there was knowledge of an exit road being put in place.
- f) LC explained that as far as we are aware from looking at the plans there was no exit road being put in place but Highways and Transport should have taken this into consideration when evaluating the plans for the application.

2. Policy Amendments Consultation

- a) LC made attendees aware that CYC are going live with the consultation tomorrow for driver training and driver suitability. CYC are also consulting on some matters relating to vehicle specification to combat a lot of the day to day issues that we face

at the moment. The consultation will be available via the website, paper copies can be sent out on request. The consultation will run until the 18th January 2019. The five West Yorkshire authorities are consulting at the same time and the findings will be collated as a combined authority. CYC will have to take into account York's trade and public opinion alongside the West Yorkshire Combined Authority's.

- b) WL queried why CYC policy was being mentioned in conjunction with West Yorkshire Combined Authority.
- c) LC explained that CYC are in a combined authority agreement with the five West Yorkshire authorities. The Leaders from the six authorities asked Licensing Managers to form a working group to look at aligning licensing policy relating to taxis. The main aim of the combined authority is for the six authorities to align with matters such as highways and transport which assist in getting external funding.

3. Safeguarding Training

- a) LC made attendees aware that extra safeguarding courses are being added for completion before driver licence renewals.
- b) CM queried whether it would be possible for drivers to complete outside courses and for them to be seen as equal to those offered by CYC.
- c) LC said that this is possible. Drivers would have to demonstrate that they have been trained by other means and provide evidence of this, it would then be up to CYC licensing team to evaluate this evidence and decide if it is acceptable.
- d) CM then asked if anyone who had done this had ever been denied.
- e) LC and AR replied that they had not to the best of their knowledge.

4. Enforcement

- a) LC explained that joint enforcement exercises with the Police and DVSA are being held between now and Christmas.
- b) CM raised issue that there are a number of threats and acts of violence taking place at the moment and more enforcement presence is needed to deter this.
- c) MP/WL/AG/CM all agreed that there is escalating tension between drivers and Uber drivers that is causing issues.
- d) MB noted this but said that the best course of action to take would be for any CYC drivers not to get involved in confrontations with out of town drivers, they should report any enforcement issues to officers for them to follow up, in the past officers have acted upon issues reported.
- e) MP asked whether there is anything CYC can do in terms of enforcement that would be more proactive instead of reactive.
- f) MB explained that even when we have had officers on patrol there is often a reliance on them being in the right place at the right time to be able to see something as it

happens and this is rarely the case. The best course of action is to report any enforcement issues to an officer and any threats or acts of violence should be reported to the police as CYC enforcement cannot deal with police matters.

- g) MP raised the issue that every three months Uber send an email out to their drivers in the West Yorkshire area asking if they have tried York for business yet. This results in 100 new drivers turning up in the city which creates issues with finding business and results in the disagreements between drivers.
- h) WL asked if it would be possible for CYC to somehow block Uber drivers from certain areas.
- i) MB explained that this is an argument that needs exploring further but the current position is that the triple licensing law (driver, vehicle and operator all licensed by the same authority) is valid and the drivers do not breach any laws by coming to a different district. Legal advice offered about this at the minute is not clear cut.
- j) CM asked whether it would be possible for drivers to fund their own enforcement officers.
- k) LC advised no, enforcement has to be undertaken by an officer authorised by CYC. LC also explained the legal process of setting licence fees.
- l) CM added that even just having a person (not necessarily an enforcement officer) driving around in a van that says CYC enforcement on it would be some kind of presence that might serve as a deterrent to any acts against drivers.
- m) MP stated that more enforcement is needed and drivers are willing to consider any possible methods of helping this to happen. Drivers would even be happy to take enforcement officers to incidents as they happen if they are asked to.
- n) MB said that it was important to know how willing drivers are to assist in providing more enforcement and their willingness shows how much more enforcement presence is wanted and needed. We should also note that the associations appear to be in agreement that they are willing for licence fees to increase in order to add to enforcement.

5. Bridge Street/Ouse Bridge & Low Ousegate

- a) LC advised attendees that she has attended a meeting with the police and the Transport team to address issues in this area with RTAs. One of the points highlighted at the meeting was the width of the pavement in this area which can cause pedestrians, especially late at night, to walk into the road. LC asked if drivers have experienced any issues in this area.
- b) MP agreed and added that Nessgate corner is dangerous and this is made worse as Tesco trucks park there throughout the day and night. Larger vehicles such as buses also have to swing out around that corner.
- c) WL mentioned that Coppergate is dangerous down by Duttons for Buttons as pedestrians walk out randomly all day.

6. Changes to the Licensing Section

LC made attendees aware that the Licensing Section is now one unified team instead of two. The team has been short staffed and new members are/will be joining the team. Two experienced officers will be leaving by the end of the month. Helen will be seconded from enforcement to Senior Licensing Officer from the beginning of December and Nigel Woodhead will be rejoining as Licensing Enforcement Officer until the end of March 2019. We may be looking to add more enforcement officers to the team. Bryce has also joined the team as a Senior Licensing Assistant. LC then ran through the structure of the team.

7. Rank arrangements on New Year's Eve

- a) LC made attendees aware that she had attended a meeting regarding NYE with the Police to discuss matters around the Minster. The road closure for Duncombe Place will be in place early morning NYE so that certain counter terrorism measures can be put in place. The officer in charge for the evening is Inspector Andy Godfrey – Bronze Commander. The rank will remain open until the Police determine that it needs to be closed, at which point the rank will relocate to Exhibition Square at the bus stops before the Art Gallery and the bus stop will be the start of the rank. The feeder part will be the area outside the Theatre Royal. There will be signs at Duncombe Place to show that it is closed for the evening. Paul Willey (Supervisor of Street Cleansing at CYC) will be putting the signs out. Street Cleaners will also be working to ensure that all broken glass and other waste items are clear from Duncombe Place before reopening. High Petergate area and Blake Street will also be closed. It is important to note that the arrangements for the Duncombe Place rank will only apply for NYE as the buses will stop running at 7:30pm.
- b) MP raised the issue that the rank outside Society bar needs a new sign as it has been removed.
- c) LC advised that this would be rectified. The rank will be moving back to its original location once all of the works are completed. The Associations will be notified when the rank relocates.

Hackney Carriage Associations only:

8. Knowledge Test/English

- a) AG asked what is the current pass rate on the knowledge test.
- b) MB advised that we didn't have the exact figures to hand but the pass rate has climbed slightly but not significantly. We are in the process of revising some questions for the test. These will be kept in virtually the same format as they are currently, i.e. ten route questions, five customer service questions, five safeguarding questions etc. However, we are looking to incorporate more pinpoint location questions such as where is location x, y, z instead of find your way from a to b type questions.

- c) AG asked if there is an English section of the test or an English test that has to be completed as part of an application.
- d) LC explained that we currently do not have an English test, unlike some other authorities. The only thing that does test the English understanding of an applicant is the fact that the test is in English, we talk to the applicants during the application process and they do have to display an understanding of English. We always make sure that we do explain to applicants that they have to be able to communicate in English to be a driver.
- e) AG advised of an issue a customer had brought to his attention regarding another hackney carriage driver who didn't know the route or understand the customer when he tried to give instructions.
- f) MB raised the point that a new feature of the test that may filter out drivers like this from becoming hackney carriage drivers is that in future tests applicants will have to maintain the current 90% pass score but will also have to pass each individual section.
- g) LC then ran through the points in the training test of the draft policy going out for consultation.
- h) MB mentioned that one idea for CYC might be putting on some kind of authorised training school to prepare drivers for the tests. It would be voluntary but the advantage of going through it would be that it would put drivers in a stronger position to pass the tests.
- i) WS agreed that there is a language issue with current drivers but there is not an English section on the test at the moment. There is one in the consultation draft (LC confirmed this) so there is an opportunity for the test to improve from that point of view.

9. Accessibility of wheelchair accessible vehicles

- a) AG raised the issue that wheelchair users' access to vehicles is becoming more of an issue as wheelchair accessible vehicles are available but the customers are not being given the service. There are a lot of instances where customers are being turned away or are being taken to a destination but are then not able to get a taxi home, which could leave them stranded if there is no other WAV available. There was one instance of this where AG went to collect a customer to take them home but did not have a big enough vehicle for the customer's wheelchair. The driver that had done the first journey did not offer to do the return and the customer ended up having to get an ambulance to take them home. AG then asked what CYC can do, mainly about drivers refusing to take wheelchair users if they have the correct vehicle because there are other WAV available but customers don't necessarily know where to look for them.
- b) WS raised the point that some drivers provide sick notes to show that they cannot do any loading or unloading for wheelchair accessible customers.
- c) LC advised that only CYC officers grant exemptions from loading or unloading for wheelchair customers.

- d) AG explained that vehicles on the Station rank that are not part of Station Taxis direct wheelchair users to Station Taxis office to book a vehicle when there is already a high demand for vehicles there. AG then asked if complaining customers could be given the details of York Taxis app as they have a number of wheelchair accessible vehicles.
- e) LC advised that there isn't anything CYC can do in terms of giving out or displaying drivers' contact details but we can put information on our website of where you could find contact information such as apps and which companies have vehicles available. As well as this, all licensed vehicles can be found on the CYC website.

10. Station, Ranks etc (also including consultation on the unmet demand survey)

- a) MA advised attendees that he has tried to come to an agreement with Station Taxis when there is a high demand for vehicles but they have not been able to come to an agreement about this for financial reasons. MA also said it would be a good idea for there to be a rank outside the Station again.
- b) LC advised that the development scheme for Queen Street and the station frontage may address this. We will look at the situation once the works have been completed.
- c) MA pointed out that it doesn't look good when customers cannot always get a taxi from the Station rank.
- d) AG added that one of the main problems with getting customers in and out of this area is the traffic getting out of the station.

11. Deregulation

- a) MA explained that there is a free-for-all at the Toft Green rank at the moment and hackney carriages cannot get on the rank due to all of the private vehicles already parked on there.
- b) LC advised that Helen will patrol that area when she is out on enforcement duty.
- c) AG asked what the timeframe might be on deregulation.
- d) LC & MB explained that the likely timeframe to look at this would Spring/Summer 2019, the trade will be kept informed.
- e) CM asked if deregulation is a possibility at the moment as during his experience as a licensed driver it has always been something that had negative connotations amongst drivers.
- f) MB replied that all options are being considered at the moment.

12. PHTM task force recommendations to cover most points set out by the task force

- a) CM said that the recommendations made are already being acted on by CYC regarding child awareness and disability vehicle accessibility. Happy with current

state of these meetings as well as CYC's contribution to them and would like them to continue in this way. However an enforcement presence is still needed.

- b) AG agreed but mentioned that he would like the Association meetings to be slightly more frequent than they are at the moment.
- c) LC agreed with this and advised that the licensing team have been very busy and that has stopped the meetings from occurring more frequently.
- d) CM wanted to add that child awareness is working well at the moment with communication between drivers and CYC.

13. Enforcement

Covered in number 4.

14. Consultation on unmet demand survey

Covered in number 11.

15. Minutes after the liaison meeting has finished

Attendees acknowledged that this is now up to date on the website.

16. New drivers' lack of knowledge

Covered in number 8.

17. Private Hire Operators using the work 'Taxi'

- a) WS asked if York Cars and other PHO are able to use the word taxis on their signage and on the windows at their premises. The trade understands that it can't be used on their cars but what are the rules regarding use of the word taxi at their premises.
- b) LC explained that they cannot legally use the word 'taxi' on licensed PHV, however there is no legal requirement with regards to signage on PHO offices.

18. AOB

- a) AD asked for it to be noted to acknowledge Bill Brolly's contribution to the association as well as the trade in the 30 years that he contributed to both.
- b) LC, AR and MB did acknowledge Bill's contribution. LC advised that in the last edition of the Taxi Times there was an acknowledgment to both Bill and Keith.

19. Date of next meeting

To be confirmed.