

TAXI CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

Wednesday, 14th January, 2015
at Committee Room 1, Town Hall, Chesterfield

Present:-

Representing Chesterfield Borough Council

Councillor Jean Innes
Councillor Bob Gibson
Grace Dowson – Licensing
Trevor Durham – Licensing
Russell Sinclair – Environmental Health

Representing Derbyshire County Council

Bridget Gould – Traffic and Safety
Simon Tranter – Traffic and Safety

Representing Derbyshire Constabulary

Inspector John Turner

Representing the Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Trade

Stephen Atkin
Mandy Briddon
Jim Brookbank
Chris Brown
Ann Dickens
Victoria Naylor

22 **DECLARATION OF MEMBERS' AND OFFICERS' INTERESTS RELATING TO ITEMS ON THE AGENDA**

No declarations of interest were received.

23 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor David Allen and Stephen Oliver.

24 **MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 8 OCTOBER, 2014**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 8 October, 2014 were agreed as a true record, subject to the following amendment:

Minute No. 19 – "... Mr Tranter reported that the proposed changes in respect of taxi clearways and prohibition of waiting/loading in Chesterfield town centre had been approved by the County Council Cabinet, excluding changes to the taxi rank on Stephenson Place."

25 FEES AND CHARGES - 2015/16

Trevor Durham reported that the Appeals and Regulatory Committee had decided to increase Licence and Registration fees and charges for 2015/16 by 3%. He distributed a copy of the notice of the increase, including the schedule of current and proposed fees and charges, which would be published in the local press, on the Council's website and was available for inspection at the Town Hall. Any written objections to the proposed fees received by 20 February, 2015 would be considered by the Appeals and Regulatory Committee.

Trade representatives expressed concern at the proposed increase, particularly as they were experiencing a reduction in trade.

26 ACTIONS TAKEN BY THE LICENSING TEAM SINCE THE PREVIOUS MEETING

Trevor Durham reported that during the past three months the Licensing Team had revoked the Driver's Licence and the Private Hire Operator's Licence of one driver/operator following conviction for assault.

Licensing Officers were being trained in wheelchair accessibility and trade representatives were asked to remind drivers to bring in evidence of their qualifications in respect of wheelchair accessibility, to enable Licensing Officers to confirm that they would be eligible to drive wheelchair accessible vehicles after 1 April, 2015, as some of the NVQ modules awarded before 2011 were no longer valid. Once drivers had produced satisfactory evidence they would have a wheelchair symbol added to their badge confirming this. Details of the accepted qualifications were available on the Council's website.

There had recently been an increasing number of reports of drivers smoking (including e-cigarettes) in licensed vehicles, and one driver had been prosecuted and convicted with a fine of £150 and costs of £175. Trade representatives were asked to remind drivers of the importance of not smoking in licensed vehicles.

Some trade representatives expressed the view that banning the smoking of e-cigarettes was unfair, although it was explained that the Council had a responsibility to not promote smoking.

Trevor Durham reported that during the previous three months 38 vehicles had failed tests, although these were generally for minor items, and only two cases had necessitated the awarding of penalty points.

27 RENEGOTIATION OF THE TEST STATION CONTRACT

Trevor Durham submitted a report outlining a proposal for the renegotiation of the test station contract for licensed vehicles.

The report outlined some preliminary suggestions for criteria to use in selecting providers, and it was hoped that the plating of vehicles at the test station could be included.

It was suggested that there should be more than one test station, that the specification should include the ability to test large vehicles and that test stations should not also undertake repairs. Further comments from trade representatives would be welcomed.

28 SECURITY AND ENFORCEMENT ISSUES

A suggestion had been received from trade representatives for the driver's identity card displayed in vehicles to be larger and to include the driver's photograph, to make this more prominent and visible to passengers. The Licensing Officers agreed to consider how this could be achieved.

It was confirmed that enforcement staff had been on duty on two nights over the Christmas period in addition to during normal office hours.

29 POLICE ISSUES

Inspector Turner provided crime figures for the period 1 October, 2014 to 31 December 2014 for the Chesterfield and the Bolsover and North East Derbyshire Policing sections, totalling:-

24 occasions where the driver was the victim
 1 occasion where a taxi company was the victim
 3 occasions where a member of the public was the victim
 3 occasions where the driver was an offender

Timing – 20 crimes were between 0000 hours and 0600 hours.

Violence against drivers – 1

Crime breakdown:

13 – making off without payment
 3 – theft
 3 – assault
 1 – fraud
 2 – damage to vehicle
 2 - damage
 2 – sexual assault
 1 - burglary

The figures showed a reduction in the number of reported incidents in Chesterfield compared to the corresponding quarter in previous years, although an increase since the previous quarter. He agreed to include summarised information in respect of the number of convictions in future reports.

Inspector Turner thanked operators and drivers for their positive response to the 'Say Something if You See Something' campaign in respect of the sexual exploitation of young people and the 'Getting You Home Safely' campaign in respect of drink driving over Christmas.

30 DERBYSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL ISSUES

Simon Tranter reported that the changes in respect of taxi clearways and prohibition of waiting/loading in Chesterfield town centre which had been approved by the County Council had been implemented, excepting the work on Stephenson Place, which was awaiting the relocation of a bus stop.

He invited suggestions from trade representatives on where they would like to see direction signs to taxi ranks, and Licensing Officers agreed to investigate the potential for locating these on the town centre fingerposts.

31 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting would be held on Wednesday, 15 April, 2015 at 6.00 pm.