## Minutes of the Private Hire and Taxi Forum Held on the 28<sup>th</sup> July 2011 at the Town Hall

#### **Present**

Kareen Plympton (KP) Licensing Manager EBC - Chair Jay Virgo (JV) Licensing Officer EBC Danielle Bryant (DB) Licensing Officer EBC Jan Standen (JAS) Licensing Administration EBC Mike Chant (MC) Radio Cars John Hake (JH) Devonshire Julian Ledger (JL) Call-a Cab Chris Islip (CI) Sussex Cars Dean Islip (DI) Sussex Cars Nick Galligan (NG) Independent Nick Bodle (NB) Eastbourne & Country Taxis Councillor West (Cllr.W) Councillor Shuttleworth (Cllr.S) Councillor Thompson (Cllr.T) PC Vicky Bishop (VB) Sussex Police -(on behalf of PC Charlie Connaughton) Peter Smith (PC) Independent Barry Morris (BM) Eastbourne & Country Clive Connell (CC) Eastbourne & Country

#### 1. Welcome & Introductions

1.1 KP asked for a moment of remembrance for Roger Dean and Joe Timiraos who sadly passed away recently.

## 2. Apologies for Absence

Victoria Mackrell, East Sussex County Council (ESCC)

## 3. Minutes of Last Meeting & Actions

Action Point 2.3 - Discuss under main agenda.

Action Point 2.5 – KP confirmed that East Sussex County Council have stipulated both door signs must remain in situ on vehicles for school collections.

Action Point 7.1 – JV advised that the Equalities Act has been amended to take account of individuals with differing needs and drivers are not able to charge more for people with specific requirements. All drivers had been written to and advised them of

the requirements. The Disabilities Involvement Group will be key in assisting with any revisions to practice in relation to the Trade and disability awareness.

Action Point 8.4 – KP has been in discussions with East Sussex County Council (ESCC) who are undergoing a restructure. KP is waiting to hear which Officer will be dealing with taxi matters.

- 3.1 PS asked to receive copies of Forum agendas in advance of the meeting. KP advised that these are available online at <a href="https://www.eastbourne.gov.uk/Licencing">www.eastbourne.gov.uk/Licencing</a>.
- 3.2 KP asked if any issues attendees would like to be discussed at future meetings could be advised in advance so that they can be added to the agenda. Hard copies of the agenda are available on request.
- 3.3 Remainder of minutes agreed as a correct record and signed off.

## 4. New Staff in the Licensing Team

4.1 Olivia Stapleford is now on 12 months maternity leave and Danielle Bryant will be taking over as Licensing Officer. Jan Standen will be covering the Taxi Administrator role.

## 5. Driver Standards – Knowledge test & other actions (warnings, cautions & initiatives)

- 5.1 Changes have been made to the Knowledge Test to improve the benchmark standard for drivers. It is now more complex. First test failure rate is currently 50% and drivers are charged for a retest. The test comprises of 3 parts; conditions, places of interest and shortest distance between routes. Flash cards to test recognition of Highway Code and standard road signs/markings will also be introduced in the near future. This will have a compulsory 100% pass requirement to pass the test.
- 5.2 There was concern regarding the number of drivers relying on the use of SatNav systems. KP confirmed that the use of SatNav cannot be prohibited and enforced, however Licensing Officers will be checking drivers who we receive complaints about. The complaints vary from not using the shortest route, over charging or poor driving skills. Action will be taken where appropriate.
- 5.3 English Test KP will be assessing suitable levels of the English & Communication Skills Test to establish best practice for the Town.

All drivers must go through this process to meet equality requirements. Current investigations show wide variations of communication skills in Sussex.

- 5.4 Cllr Ward asked how warnings/cautions are issued. JV informed that PACE interviews are carried out and verbal and written warnings are issued by KP where drivers are not meeting standards set out by the Council. Issues concerning new and existing drivers can be put before the Licensing Sub-Committee. Sanctions vary from a requirement to attend the NVq in transporting passengers to revocation.
- 5.5 KP asked Operators to inform the Licensing team if they have any problems or issues with their drivers so that we can work in partnership and identify problem individuals.
- 5.6 KP confirmed that new applicants for a Hackney Proprietor licence must hold the NVQ BTEC qualification. CC raised the issue of lack of local service providers offering the necessary training and the amount of cost involved. MC advised that QTEC are currently offering free courses. PDM are also another service provider.

## 6. Livery and Advertising Sub-group

6.1 Eastbourne Borough Council (EBC) want to introduce a more corporate standard and consistent form of door signage. It was agreed to form a Livery and Advertising Sub Group, including key service groups, to discuss livery and advertising options. Cllr T agreed to Chair the committee with Cllr S as Co-Chair, and DI, CC, PS, JL, MC and Cllr.W volunteered to attend. However, in the first instance it was agreed that the Trade would meet to discuss and agree the initial key elements.

ACTION - KP to arrange first meeting (Trade based) within the next 2 weeks, with a follow up meeting with Councillors.

### 7. Delimitation Review Group Update

7.1 Since delimitation in April 2009, 10 new hackney carriage proprietor licences have been issued, the most recent in November/December 2010. The Group gave the following updates:

- Quality control policy appears to be working in conjunction with the limit of station permits.
- Police support as many DDA compliant taxis as required to assist with the efficient clearing of late night club goers.
- Next Group meeting will be held next month with economic climate, rank space and rank location up for discussion on the agenda.

ACTION – KP to try and ensure consistency of Group members, as there have been a number of Police representatives and a change in Ward Councillors.

#### 8. Ranks

- 8.1 KP advised that taxi ranks will be under review as part of the Town Centre Area Action Plan (TCAAP).
- 8.2 As ESCC were unable to attend the Forum, KP read out an overview of their responses to the rank issues raised at the previous Forum.

#### ACTION - KP to forward contact names at ESCC to CIIr S

- 8.3 Additional signage directing people to ranks in the town has been provisionally agreed with Planning at a cost of around £95.00 per application and £200 per sign. KP confirmed costs will be met from the Hackney Proprietor budget.
- 8.4 DI reported problems with private vehicles parking in key ranks at night, and PS stated that ranks are not clearly designated as hackney carriage only.
- 8.5 KP suggested introducing Taxi Marshalls could be an option for enforcement, but there would be a cost implication to be considered. There is also a problem with the larger wheelchair accessible vehicles taking up more space within the ranks

ACTION – KP to reinstate the advisory policy for using information cards, and in conjunction with NSL to employ the ticketing frequent offenders who park in ranks. KP will discuss the issue with NSL Parking Partners and raise the issue of rank space for wheelchair accessible vehicles with ESCC.

- 8.5 The Pier KP is discussing parking and positioning issues with ESCC. At this time, the reconfiguration of this rank is not considered an option due to costs and consultation issues.
- 8.6 The Station CI asked whether the covered area at the rear of the station could be used as a rank area. KP said that this has looked at by the Council and ESCC. Discussions are ongoing with Network Rail under the TCAAP. The Trade will also be consulted.

#### 9. Bus Lanes

9.1 It was agreed that the night use of bus lanes was a sound proposal, and KP will continue to lobby ESCC for consideration. Cllr S asked a number of questions regarding this and will pursue this separately.

## **ACTION – KP to continue to lobby ESCC.**

#### 10. Old Orchard Road Rank Issues

10.1 KP has received complaints from local residents and Environmental Health regarding inappropriate behaviour, noise and littering by some drivers waiting in the rank. Cllr W has also been contacted by residents in this regard. A letter has been sent out to all hackney proprietors setting out details of the complaints and KP asked for feedback to enable enforcement to be instigated against problem drivers. Problems with congestion has been raised with NSL and littering issues with the Councils Community Enforcement Team.

## 11. Meteor and Railway Station Permits

- 11.1 Meteor have a 100 permit limit for hackney carriage proprietor vehicles; 97 are currently in use, 3 are on offer. They have agreed that only existing hackney carriage licence holders will be able to get a permit, and that permits are not transferable.
- 11.2 EBC has provided Meteor with a list of hackney carriage proprietor names so that permits can be issued correctly. PS stated that hackney proprietors will be looking to challenge Meteor over not being able to transfer permits as it is affecting business.
- 11.3 KP has already approached Meteor with this issue on behalf of the Trade, and confirmed that legally the matter cannot be pursued by EBC, as this clause was included in the original signed issue agreement and is not a matter the Council has control over. Cllr S has raised the issue at local MP level and will keep under review.

### 12. Any Other Business

12.1 Station Street –JL expressed concern about possible pedestrian and vehicle accidents in this location. JL suggested that to avoid potential accidents road drop off and pick up should be confined to either end of the road. DB acknowledged that there are issues with smokers congregating in this area who have often consumed alcohol and this increases the likelihood of accidents.

# ACTION – KP to raise matter of possible loading only in this area with ESCC during the night time hours

12.2 PS raised the issue of cross-border hiring – The Licensing Team are investigating cases of non-legitimate bookings. JV provided an overview of the law in relation to this.

#### 13. Next Forum & Chair For Discussion

13.1 It was agreed to hold future Forum meetings on a 4 monthly basis, and that KP will sit as Chair.

ACTION – Date for next Forum to be confirmed.