

Minutes of the Private Hire and Taxi Forum
Held on the 9th May 2012 at the Town Hall

Present

Kareen Plympton (KP) Licensing Manager EBC – Chair
Sue Oliver (SO) Environmental Health and Amenities Manager
Jay Virgo (JV) Licensing Officer EBC
Danielle Bryant (DB) Licensing Officer EBC
Geoff Johnson (GJ) EBC Lawyer
Mandy Cracknell (MC) NSL
Martin Reeves (MR) Independent
John Hake (JH) Devonshire
Alex Gilmour (AG) Eastbourne & Country
Barry Cole (BC) Independent
Levi Santos (LS) Independent
Alan Barnett (AB) Independent
Chris Islip (CI) Sussex Cars
Dean Islip (DI) Sussex Cars
Ben Fowler (BF) Sussex cars
Nick Galligan (NG) Independent
Peter Smith (PC) Independent
Dave Hopkins (DH) Eastbourne & Country
Kenny Kemp (KK) Eastbourne & County
Clive Connell (CC) Eastbourne & Country
Sadek Abdullah (SA) Independent
Gentain Tafa (GT) Independent
Emin Ozcan (EO) Independent
Paul Prior (PP) Independent
Kevin Jeffries (KJ) Eastbourne & Country
Ian Staines (IS) Eastbourne & Country
Neil Cartwright (NC) Independent
Ray Matthews (RM) Independent
Nigel Carter (NC) Independent
Nez Neziraj (NN) Independent
Lee Gatton (LG) Eastbourne & Country
Mohammed Ismail (MIS) Independent
Mohammed Illami (MIL) Independent
Martin Silk (MS) Slik protection
David Ratuszny (DR) Independent
Andzej Volusko (AV) Independent
Pitor Srodek (PSr) Independent
Councillor Heaps (Cllr. H)
Councillor Ungar (Cllr U)
Councillor West (Cllr.W)
Councillor Shuttleworth (Cllr.S)
Councillor Thompson (Cllr.T)
PS Stella Wells (SW) Sussex Police -

Jamie Sykes (JS) Sussex Police

NB Some individuals attended after the commencement of the meeting and did not sign in.

1.0 Welcome & Introductions

1.0 Chair welcomed all attendees and stated that she was delighted with the level of attendance. Everyone introduced themselves, The Chair reminded attendees that the meeting was a discussion Forum not a decision making body. The Chair made reference to the Forum Constitution regarding the conduct of the meeting, and asked for a positive meeting.

2.0 Apologies for Absence

2.1 Meteor and Victoria Mackrell East Sussex County Council (ESCC)

3.0 Minutes of Last Meeting & Actions

- Action Point 6.1 done
- Action Point 7.1 Sussex Police and Ward Councillors in attendance.
- Action Point 8.1 & 8.5 done
- Action point 9.1 ESCC have said no to the use of the Bus lane, but KP will continue to lobby them on behalf of the Trade.
- Action point 12.1 KP has had no response.

3.1 Discussion on the reasons behind the price rise of the Meteor station permits. The number of permits issued by Meteor has been increased but this is not something that Eastbourne Borough Council (EBC) has any power over. KP is aware however that the cost of the railway station permit in Eastbourne is the cheapest in Sussex.

Action: KP to ask Meteor how many permits they have issued and the reasons behind the price increase for a station permit.

3.2 The frequency of the Forum was raised as it has been 9 months since the last one. It had previously been decided that one would take place every 4 months. KP reminded the Trade that they can request an interim Forum if they feel this is necessary, and the Licensing Team will facilitate this.

4.0 Tinted windows

- 4.1 PS raised the strength/depth of tinting windows in licensed vehicles. He expressed concern for the public and driver safety.
- 4.2 JV provided the Forum with an overview of MOT compliance and advised that the front windscreen and the driver windows should only have a tinting of 70%. Many manufacturers use this upper specification limit and provide 100% tinting in the rear as an option.
- 4.3 JS and SW of Sussex Police also offered their views on the matter. KP asked for a show of hands regarding the issue, with approximately 16 in favour of a limit on the tint of windows, 6 people declined to vote, and the remainder were against a limit.

Action: KP to ascertain strength of feeling from the Trade concerning this issue. The Trade will be consulted more widely as to their views on this.

5.0 Taxi meters – A thank you

- 5.1 KP thanked the Hackney trade for turning up to the meter testing days. A reminder to the drivers who have not yet had their meters tested will be issued. Meters need to be correctly calibrated by the 28th May or they will be issued with a stop notice.

6.0 Vehicle livery update

- 6.1 The decision to have permanent livery was made by the Full General Licensing Committee on the 16th January 2012 following a consultation with all vehicle proprietors, and other partners to include Sussex Police, the Disability Involvement Forum and Nightwatch.
- 6.2 DH felt that Operators should have been able to represent all of the drivers on their circuit. This comment was backed by CI. KP reminded the Operators that members of the Licensing Team had advised them directly that they would need to get the written consent of proprietors/drivers to represent their views, as these can vary, and this had been identified at the time of the original consultation. Operators had not done this.

- 6.3 DH handed a petition to the Chair with 90+ signatures against permanent livery and a second internal plate in the rear of the vehicle.
- 6.4 There was wide feeling amongst the Trade that the decision brought by the General Licensing Committee regarding permanent livery was the wrong decision. GJ informed the Forum that the procedure had been followed correctly. All relevant parties had been properly consulted and the next step would be to lodge an appeal to the Magistrates Court.
- 6.5 The Chair and GJ informed the Forum that as a petition had been served on the Council, they would need to seek further legal advice. Members of the trade are requesting that the matter be referred back to the Licensing Committee for re-consideration.
- 6.6 GJ stated that to reconsider such a recent decision made by committee would be unusual as the matter had been properly consulted upon, debated and democratically decided. Even where consultation had taken place such as this, the Members of the Committee decided in favour of permanent livery in the interests of public safety, having fully heard and considered the views of the Trade, Sussex Police and other Groups. A consultation exercise does not bind Members to the results of this, and the Forum was reminded that the main purpose of the Licensing regime is public safety not for the benefit of the drivers, although their views are key. The Forum was reminded that a licensed vehicle is always a licensed vehicle.
- 6.7 The Chair and GJ advised would require direction from the Head of Democratic Services on re-visiting the matter.
- 6.8 Cllr U, Cllr S, Cllr T all aired their views on the matter. Cllr H stated that a proper democratic process had been followed, with only a small proportion of the Trade responding to the consultation. All parties had the chance to air their views and Members voted having heard this. MR also spoke, saying that the Trade had been properly consulted, but a significant proportion had chosen not to respond and the decision was made to instate permanent livery. The final decision had been taken by Members.
- 6.9 The Forum agreed that the correct process in relation to consultation had been followed, and it was disappointing that only a small proportion of the Trade had responded. The Chair welcomed the re-establishment of the Hackney Carriage

Association as a mechanism for the hackney trade to air views, and reminded attendees that the Authority is keen to work in partnership with the licensed trade.

Action: KP to liaise with Democratic Services to ascertain whether the recent decision made by Committee, and ratified by Council can be re-visited.

7.0 Ranks – Old Orchard Road/Railway Station- Ideas and opportunities

- 7.1 KP gave an overview of the issues in this area. It had been raised as an urgent item of business by Cllr Thompson, Licensing Chair at the General Licensing Committee. This had arisen as a result of; noise nuisance, poor driving and waiting practices by the hackney carriage trade which negatively impacted upon residences and businesses in the locality.
- 7.2 Cllr H, W, Jenkins and Liddiard had previously contacted the Chair about these issues. Stephen Lloyd MP was also seeking a resolution. The Trade had been written to twice about this, but there had been little/no improvement. The area had also been monitored by the Councils Call Out Service, Sussex Police and partners from NSL. The matter was discussed, and ideas regarding the reduction in size of the Old Orchard feeder rank and the use of the under cover area adjacent to the station were discussed as potential solutions, but nothing has been decided upon on. The Trade will be consulted before anything happens.
- 7.3 PS speaking on behalf of the Hackney Carriage Association said that the Trade feel that decisions are made behind closed doors and the views of the Trade are not taken into account. The Chair and Members strongly refuted this, and asked for ideas on how to manage the situation as something urgent needs to be done. Letters and enforcement action were having limited impact. RM blamed the Council for permitting residences and driveways in the area.
- 7.4 There was a further discussion regarding rank space. East Sussex County Council (ESCC) advise that they will not be providing anymore rank spaces at this time.

Action: KP to find out the number and location of all rank spaces. It is believed that there are 42, plus an additional 3 spaces on the railway station forecourt.

8.0 Taxi Hail points

- 8.1 KP gave an idea of what this entailed and asked for the views of the Forum. The Trade thought it was a good idea but the travelling public will require educating on being able to hail a hackney carriage vehicle in Eastbourne.

Action: KP to pursue options in relation to this with ESCC/Planning and other partners. A media campaign to promote the hailing of taxis, and to advertise the new vehicle livery would also be developed.

9.0 Any other business

- 9.1 AB informed the forum that the Hackney Carriage Association are producing a code of conduct.
- 9.2 DH thanked the council for allowing the trade to air their views and concerns and thanked the Chair for doing a good job.
- 9.3 KP thanked everyone for coming and keeping the meeting positive.

10.0 Time and date of next meeting

To be arranged