Eastbourne Taxi & Private Hire Forum

Minutes of Meeting Held on 23rd June 2006

Chair - Kareen Plympton, Licensing Manager, EBC. Present:

Jay Virgo, EBC, Claire Groves, EBC, Chris Islip, Sussex Cars, Keith Brunt, Sussex Cars, Cllr David Stevens, EBC, John Hake, Devonshire Cars, Mike Grasinger, E&C, Peter Goad, Radio Cars, Mike Chant, Radio Cars, Cllr C Sims, EBC, Martin Reeves, EHCA, Peter Smith, EHCA, Cllr H Pooley, EBC, Cllr P J Bowker, EBC, Cllr Ann Murray, EBC, Clir Barbara Woodall, EBC, Roger Hyde, EBC -

Highways, Barry Morris, E&C, Cllr N J Marsh, EBC

Apologies:None

KP: Welcomed people to meeting and introductions made.

Action

- KP: Previous minutes and actions discussed. No further update on MPV's. Greater enforcement with regard to illegal plying for hire has been implemented, letter drafted by members and trade and passed to Highways regarding Terminus Road. CRB checks and policy now implemented.
- KP: Introduced agenda item re use of bus lanes on Terminus Road and issue of Taxis and PH vehicles not being allowed to utilise the bus lanes.
- **RH:** Stated that due to the number of accidents in the area the road is to be used specifically as a bus lane and for permit holders only. Clarified that permits are issued only to shops which have no rear access to enable delivery on Terminus Road. No intention at the present moment to allow any further vehicular access through the bus lane.
- **NM:** Raised issue regarding access for elderly persons and those with a disability to services on Terminus Road. How are these persons expected to access the area?
- **RH:** Arndale Centre has car park and lifts.
- **BM:** Stated he has correspondence from Highways stating that once traffic calming measures had been implemented, taxis and private hire vehicles could use the bus lane. Five years later no action has been taken. Also what about Southern side of Terminus Road that is away from the Arndale Centre?
- **RH:** Reiterated point that Terminus Road is for buses due to number of accidents.

BM: Accidents occur just outside bus lane as well.

RH: Highways department want to reduce accidents, if bus lane opened up to further vehicle, it is likely that traffic accidents would increase.

BM: Greater policing and traffic calming measures would reduce accidents and allow access for taxis and private hire vehicles.

RH: Lack of enforcement by the police is an issue. If policed correctly accident record could well be reduced.

KP: Police have taken some action and ticketed people. Also, EBCs Community Enforcement Officers and Licensing Officers have been involved in taking action.

PS: Standard letter received from Highways regarding issue including accident record. Licensed drivers are professionals and accordingly spend a great deal longer driving, are more experienced and therefore safer. Why can't taxis have access in one direction West to East?

Lengthy discussions ensued regarding the use of bus lanes, overall service to the towns residents and visitors. Discussions regarding the part use of lanes by taxis and private hires.

KP: Acknowledges that there are re-occurring themes and that this agenda item is likely to remain a topic of discussion.

The following expressed similar concerns: MR, MC, JV, BM, CI, BG

RH: Highways Department have a management agreement with County Council and therefore are delegated decision making body that controls authority for vehicular access in Eastbourne. Accident audit ensures that at present, under the existing conditions on Terminus Road, there is no possibility for increased vehicular access, including taxis and private hire. To change the system would require a traffic management scheme that at present, taking into account the regeneration scheme, is not a viable option due to costs.

MP: If pressure needs to be applied it needs to be applied to County level.

JH: 1999 Urban Transport plan clearly stated that bus lane should allow access to taxis and private hire vehicles.

RH: Reiterated his earlier point.

KP: Why not set up a system which would permit taxis and PH to make use of the bus lanes on a trial basis, taking into account all factors including growth of the economy and the option of providing a better service?

RH: Accident control is the priority. The Traffic order would need to be changed and due to the available data, this is not going to happen.

PS: If buses were involved in more accidents, would they be limited to utilising this area?

RH: If significant, it could be reviewed.

PB: Any movement on this issue would necessitate dialogue with County and possibly Councillor Elkin.

KP: Joint letter from EBC and trade could be sent to County providing an overview of concerns. Thanked RH for attending.

KP/ Trade

KP: Introduced next agenda item - livery consultation.

JV: Results as follows:

Total letters sent 427

Responses 132 (31% turnout)

Against permanent door livery 100% For more robust rear ID plates 3% Against more robust rear ID plates 2% No comments with regard to rear ID plates 95%

KP: Introduced fares consultation.

JV: Results as follows:

Total letters sent 84

Responses 11 (13% turnout)

For a change to existing tariff 82% Against a change to existing tariff 18%

MC: Trade in favour of more robust ID plates.

KP: Agreement in principal that more robust rear ID plates will be moved forward to be agreed by Committee.

BM: Rear ID plates should be kept simple for ease of identification - plate number most important.

JH: Registration of vehicle should also be on rear ID plate to make it easier to recognise if unlawfully transferred to another vehicle.

KP: Agreed that the feedback offered by the Forum would be incorporated into the subsequent Committee Report and presented accordingly for a decision.

KP: Raised issue of decriminalisation of parking and associated parking issues in the town. Unfortunately no Police present at the meeting.

BM: People parking on ranks at Safeway, Bolton Road and Susans Road.

KP: Request trade identify hot spots so that the police can be informed.

KP: Introduced issue regarding VSTs. Item raised by BM.

BM: VST copies should be sent directly from the garage to the licensing team so that onus taken off drivers.

CG: System has been in place for seven years and did not appear to cause other drivers/operatives difficulty.

KP: Without any major problems being raised, save for E & C, the onus should remain on driver to provide information as it is their responsibility to ensure all documentation is in place prior to the issue of a licence. The current procedure will not alter.

JV: If driver gets MOT and VST done early problems do not occur. Only an issue if driver leaves the VST to the last minute. In extenuating circumstances Licensing Team can contact garage to ensure VST passed. If tight deadline driver could ask garage to fax a copy.

KP: Agreed that the Licensing Team would try and facilitate matters as above, but only in exceptional circumstances where challenges have arisen. KP will direct in such instances. KP reminded Forum that such challenges only arose where drivers left things to the last minute. Recommended that drivers provide the relevant documentation in good time of any deadline.

KP: Introduced CRB check policy. Please arrange to bring in documents in good time. Reminder letters are being sent out at least 8 weeks in advance by the Licensing Team. Incomplete applications for licence renewals will not be accepted. All documents must be in place before licence issued.

Any other business

KP: Introduced concept of draft constitution which would be presented at the next Forum for consideration and whether frequency and conduct of meetings is agreeable to attendees.

All: Agreed frequency and conduct of meetings is good.

KP: Introduced new website as a good source of information. Details

contained within the information pack. Discussions surrounding the information card "Take a taxi you can trust." Press release

regarding this and the Nightwatch banning system discussed. Cards distributed amongst the Forum and Licensed premises to educate patrons.

CI: When is the unmet demand survey taking place?

KP: In 2006. Regard will be given to issues of seasonality, key weekends and the like.

KP: Drew close to meeting and thanked everyone for their attendance. Next meeting 10.00 am on 12th September 2006.

Jv/minutes/Taxi Forum – June 2006