

FALKIRK COUNCIL

Minute of Meeting of the Taxi and Private Hire Car forum held in the Municipal Buildings, Falkirk on Thursday 26 October 2018 at 10 a.m.

Forum Members

Present:

Councillors Robert Bissett and Laura Murtagh, Emma Bruce (Bruce Taxis); Laura Bruce (Bruce Taxis); John Kennedy (Stenhouse Taxis); Jenny McCartney (Falkirk Area Disability Access Panel); Derek Martin, Grange Taxis; Andrew Buchanan, Express Taxis; James Buchanan (Express Taxis) Taxis; Sharon Manson, Falkirk Delivers; PC Trenchard and PC Hutchison, Police Scotland and Jim Kelly (Member of the public)

Convener:

Councillor Laura Murtagh.

Council Officers

Present:

Bryan Douglas (Licensing Co-ordinator); Lindsay Fyfe, Thomas Ross (Licensing Standards Officers)

1. Welcome and introductions

Councillor Murtagh welcomed the Licensing Standards Officers (LSOs) Mr Ross and Mrs Fyfe to the Forum. She explained that they had both recently assumed enforcement duties in respect of taxi matters with Mrs Fyfe being a new appointment.

The LSOs were invited to say a few words in respect of their experiences of taxi enforcement so far which included the following:-

- Joint inspections with traffic police
- Visiting taxi ranks/ engaging with the trade
- Targeting P plates at the testing station at the recent meter recalibration tests
- Investigation of complaints
- Initial light touch approach – looking to be more visible from early next year

Noted.

2. Apologies

Apologies were intimated on behalf of Lennox Ainslie, George McBlain, Fourways Taxis Ltd; Alex Fleming, Falkirk Delivers, Sergeant MacKenzie, Police Scotland, and Gordon Speirs, Fleet Supervisor.

3. Minute

Decision

The minute of the meeting of the Taxi and Private Hire Car Forum held on 28 June 2018 was approved.

4. Matters arising

GPS meters

Bryan Douglas referred to discussion at the last meeting about GPS meters. He advised that Falkirk Council hosted a meeting of Enforcement officers last week and the issue of GPS meters was discussed. Some authorities confirmed that the GPS type meters were present in taxis within their area, however this was in addition to the "usual" taxi meter which would calculate the fare. Bryan confirmed that he had contacted a solicitor at South Ayrshire Council who had raised the issue of GPS systems with other Councils at the SOLAR licensing group and the view held was that the GPS meter was not legally compliant.

James Buchanan said he was aware of a number of local authorities who had authorised the use of GPS meters. He resolved to pass details of these authorities to Bryan Douglas

Noted.

Taxi Tariff

Bryan Douglas confirmed that the new rates were introduced from midnight on 30 September. He said that there had been a four week window for cars with updated meters reflecting the new charges to have their meter tested and re-sealed by the testing station.

Councillor Murtagh made reference to previous discussions regarding the frequency of the tariff review and the potential to review annually.

Following discussion the Forum were in unanimous agreement that the tariff review should take place annually.

Noted.

Falkirk town centre dedicated WAV drop off bay

Bryan Douglas referred to the question posed by Jennie McCartney at the last meeting as to whether a dedicated drop off space for Wheelchair Accessible taxis could be created at Baxter's Wynd. Bryan Douglas said he approached colleagues in the Roads Authority in this regard but was advised there in terms of an enforcement and practical perspective it was not something that could be progressed at this time.

Councillor Murtagh said she would look to revisit this issue.

Noted.

5. Testing Station Update

Bryan Douglas explained that due to staffing issues, Gordon Speirs, fleet supervisor was unable to attend the meeting. He had however provided an update for the Forum.

There is not a lot to report on the test station at the moment
The meter sealing on the whole went well with a minimum of complaints.
The station continues to be busy and we appreciate the trades understanding of this. Where possible the testing station continue to move Council vehicles around to allow taxis the test slots. Gordon has reiterated that the early booking of tests is advised to make this easier for all. Gordon has given an assurance that he will be at the next meeting and should have information about some changes from DVSA to report by then.

Councillor Murtagh reflected on Gordon's absence due to staffing issues and resolved to come up with a technical solution to enable testing station input to be available at meetings.

Noted.

6. Taxi Fraud

PC Trenchard spoke about instances where taxi drivers had been the victim of non-payment of taxi fares as a result of passengers fleeing the car. She asked if any of the trade present were aware of such instances and whether it was prevalent.

There followed a discussion with the trade advising that although it did happen, occurrences were generally rare.

Noted.

7. Policy Development Panel

Bryan Douglas referred to the recently established Policy Development Panel and advised that the Panel which was chaired by Councillor Murtagh were considering the current taxi medical policy.

Councillor Murtagh advised that the Panel were unanimous that the policy position of Group 2 DVLA Medical Standards of fitness being required for taxi and private hire car drivers should remain. She said that the Panel were considering changing the frequency of medicals from the current position of: at application and then 46, 51, 56 and annually after 61 to

–50, 55, 60 and annually after 65. This pretty much mirrors the DVLA Group 2 licence requirement (exception of 45).

Delivery of medical examinations

The PDP is also considering a range of possible options including the applicant's own GP undertaking the medical as in theory they would know the person best in terms of medical history. This could remove possible fraud with applicant dishonestly answering questions as to their health (Glasgow bin lorry).

Councillor Murtagh confirmed that officers would be undertaking a survey with local GP's asking whether or not they would wish to be part of the medical examination process.

In addition officers would be looking to undertake a short benchmarking exercise with independent medical providers as an option to consider as some other local authorities already use established taxi medical practices in Glasgow and Edinburgh.

Councillor Murtagh invited views from the trade.

The trade were in unanimous agreement that the Group 2 Standards should remain and were supportive of the proposed change in medical examination frequency. The trade expressed concern at the possibility of taxi medical examinations being held outwith the local area. The consensus of opinion was for local GPs to undertake the examinations.

Knowledge Test

The Licensing Co-ordinator advised that the Panel had also briefly discussed knowledge test arrangements with the possibility of the test forming part of a per-application process.

Vehicle specification

The Licensing Co-ordinator explained that once the Panel had concluded consideration of the taxi medical process it would then focus on taxi and private hire vehicle specification. This would involve engagement with the Forum.

Noted.

8. Electric Vehicles

The Licensing Co-ordinator explained that he had been approached by the Council's Planning & Economic Development Unit regarding the electric vehicle charging points currently provided at the Falkirk Stadium.

In short, the provision is changing and will become a new Low Carbon Vehicle Hub. The current location is not suitable as the hub would have suffered from the existing match and event day restrictions.

The new and separate location will have a new entrance point off Stadium Drive.

The Hub will consist of a Solar Canopy which will create between a third and a half of the energy required by the electric car chargers. There will be 4 new rapid chargers each with 2 car spaces allocated and 6 fast chargers each with 2 spaces allocated. One of the fast chargers with 2 car spaces will be reserved for blue badge holders and one car space associated with a rapid charger will be reserved for blue badge holders.

It is anticipated that the hub will be operational by summer 2019.

The Licensing Co-ordinator advised that the Council was currently carrying out a survey with users and potential users of electric vehicle charging points. Views were being sought on where chargers should be located in future. He said it would be good for the Council to receive your views. Details of the web link could be provided to anyone if interested:

<https://response.questback.com/isa/qbv.dll/ShowQuest?QuestID=5242963&sid=Pbsm4qwjvD>

The proposal comprises the following elements and is expected to be fully operational sometime in June 2019

9. Any Other Competent Business

1. Disabled passengers/ seat belt requirements

Jennie McCartney asked what the legal position was in relation to taxi passengers who use colostomy bags and whether they were required to use seatbelts.

The Licensing Co-ordinator resolved to return with an answer to the next meeting.

Noted.

2. Taxi Marshall Numbers and festive arrangements

Sharon Manson confirmed that in the 1st quarter of the year the taxi marshals had dealt with 19880 people at the taxi rank. In the 2nd quarter the numbers were 19242. Both quarters were down on last year's numbers with Friday evenings being predominantly quieter.

Sharon provided details of the operating dates for the Safebase scheme over the festive period:-

Safebase - Dates for Festive Period

Saturday 15/12/18

Friday 21/12/18

Saturday 22/12/18

Saturday 29/12/18

Monday 31/12/18

(All normal operating times 10pm – 4am)

Christmas Eve -Monday 24th Dec times tbc

Taxi Marshals - additional provision outwith the normal Friday/ Saturday Service would be as follows:

Christmas Eve -Monday 24th Dec

Boxing Day – Wednesday 26th Dec

Hogmanay – 31ST Dec

Noted.

3. Unlicensed taxis

In response to a question surrounding unlicensed taxis, the Licensing Co-ordinator advised that any information pertaining to potential unlicensed taxi activity was a matter for the Police. He said however that if information was passed to the licensing section then the Licensing Standards Officers would liaise with the Police.

Noted.

4. Parking Enforcement

The Licensing Co-ordinator confirmed that the Council will become responsible for parking enforcement on 19 November 2018

Noted.

10. Date of Next Meeting

Decision

It was agreed that the next meeting of the forum would take place in the New Year with a date and time to be confirmed.