

Brighton and Hove Hackney Carriage and Private Hire

Forum Minutes

Committee Room, Brighton Town Hall, Tuesday 17th March 2015

Meeting Commenced 1300

Attendees:

(JC) Jean Cranford	(BHCC - Chair)
(MS) Martin Seymour	(BHCC)
(SC) Simon Court	(BHCC Legal)
(RF) Ross Findlay	(BHCC – Minutes)
(BM) Becca McMenamin	(BHCC)
(MD) Mark Durrell	(B&H PHA)
(AC) Andrew Cheesman	(City Cabs)
(JE) Jeff Elliott	(BHCC)
(MB) Mark Bowen	(Brighton & Hove Buses)
(PN) Paul Nichols	(BHCC)
(JV) Jim Verguson	(NPTTU)
(JH) Jeff Howell	(Streamline Taxis)
(JS) John Streeter	(Streamline Taxis)
(CN) Chris Nutley	(B & H Radio Cabs)
(TT) Tony Turner	(B & H Radio Cabs)
(BH) Ben Heath	(Sussex Police)
(AP) Andrew Peters	(GMB)
(MS) M.A.H Salim	(UTDA)
(MA) M.S Ahmed	(UTDA)
(IS) I.Saidaroos	(ITD)
(KA) Khalid Alsaadi	(Arab Taxi Association)
(GH) George Hakim	(Sudanese Taxi Forum)

Item	Minute
1.	Apologies: Tim Nichols, J Oram,
2.	<p>Minutes from last meeting</p> <p>Item 8 2nd paragraph should read: JS mentioned that the 3 taxi trade representatives came up with a collaborative.....</p> <p>Item 8 final paragraph should read... but they were against the Valley Gardens scheme as citizens.</p> <p>Agreed</p>

3.

Safeguarding – Rotherham Report, - Simon Court (SC)

Simon Court (SC) attended the forum to highlight the issues that have been raised following the Rotherham report, concerning the child sexual exploitation of vulnerable children under 18. SC continued to explain that at least 1400 incidences were raised in this report, and similar situations have been raised in Rochdale and Oxfordshire. The Authorities have been told they have failed, there is no evidence that Brighton & Hove has, but we do know there are children in this City being exploited.

SC advised the forum that we need to review all elements coming out of these reports, one of the elements is the relationship between the authority and the trade. SC and the taxi office have had a look through and as part of the protective measure hopes to engage with the trade. SC highlighted that the trade is the eyes and the ears on the street and any intelligence the trade can provide helps to build a picture.

The authority needs to look at the blue book guidance again, not because there are problems with drivers but because times have changed. The emphases will be placed on child protection and this will begin from the first page. SC explained that this is new to the Taxi Office and legal so would really appreciate trade to be part of the process. If anyone thinks there could be any problems with this please speak with Legal, Sussex Police or the Taxi Licensing Office. SC then asked for any questions.

AC raised some points, firstly that in the past he has raised concerns with the council and nothing was done, secondly that the procurement team use vehicles without CCTV. JC explained that joint working between council teams is one of the things we will be working on.

AC then questioned why SIA door staff have to have 5 year history but taxi driver check only cover people that have been in the country, also suggested occasions in the past where reports haven't been followed up by social work team.

SC recognised driver history is something we will be looking at but there are equalities issues to consider. SC explained that there is a difference between negligence and sexual exploitation, although both are damaging sexual exploitation is very different. There is a huge problem the Local Authority faces, the courts suggest to keep children with families but also to protect them. In addition resources are limited and there have been problems in retaining social workers. Child protection is a very difficult area to work in and mistakes do happen, SC agreed to pass the comments on, but stated we need to draw a line under the past since Rotherham and move forward.

JS wanted to support the concerns regarding drivers not being checked pre their UK history. He explained that there is a new rule at Streamline that requires all new drivers to have had a UK driving licence for 5 years. JS also wanted to make clear there will be 100% support for anything to do

with protecting children from abuse. SC clarified that EU rules need to be followed.

CN concurs but raised concerns that sometimes school services are issued to the cheapest which can be 50 miles down the road and not necessarily have the same checks or CCTV. SC will take these concerns of price over safety away with him and investigate with procurement.

MD explained that he believes the Council has been undermined for too long, which appears similar to Rotherham situation. The council is left worrying whether the court case will win, MD was also concerned that the police do not supply information to the Taxi Licensing Office, and that undue pressures are applied by Councillors. He believes that once policy is put in place licensing should not be pressured.

SC recognised that this may have been the case in the past but will now be less concerned with costs of cases when we are considering child protection. Also agrees that there are a number of cases of poor communication but not just with the police. SC explained that technically the accused remain innocent until proven guilty which affects information being passed on. In the councils defence we are not like Rotherham as we have tried. SC explained that there are upcoming elections and Cllrs have asked for training in child protection issues, we will expect a reluctance of Cllrs to want to put pressure on ongoing investigations once they have a better understanding of the significance and priority that must take place for child protection.

SC highlighted that the licensing team has legal/trade to contend with when making decisions, there may be some conflicting opinions during the upcoming changes but we expect an amicable relationship. The Blue book was never designed for current knowledge of child exploitation, it may take months to get this all sorted but we need to ensure we help the majority that are honest and stop those that are not. SC will provide his contact details to the trade and will look into some of the issues raised in the hope of providing some informal guidance whilst the changes continue to take place. (simon.court@brighton-hove.gov.uk)

The trade then discussed CCTV and situations where footage it hasn't been able to be obtained, an example was given where a driver was recently attacked. MS clarified that it is difficult for the Taxi office to check it is working which is why the inspection is based on checking it is fitted. Some members of the trade thought that the screens would help and AC advised these can be fitted for £35. Many of the trade agreed that despite initial reservations regarding CCTV they now appreciate its value and would like to see it fitted and working effectively.

4.	<p>Revocations and Suspensions (Streamline)</p> <p>JS explained that all trade want is consistency in revocation/suspension and they don't feel they have had that. JS continued that the trade needs to know what procedures are in place and thinks the blue book updates could also include this to clarify and make actions more consistent.</p> <p>SC explained that the Cardiff V Sing case puts the authority in a difficult position. The authority would like to suspend but cant due to this case. This results in legal advice being to revoke if it's a serious matter, Natasha has written to the home office regarding this inability to suspend but we are currently restrained. JC clarified that we also follow our work instructions and base every situation on its own merit.</p>
5.	<p>Traffic Management, Ranks, Brighton Station, Amex Parking - Paul Nichols (PN)</p> <p>PN clarified the new rules are that drivers will be given 10 minute parking grace period. CCTV only enforces bus lanes, bus stops and not loading or parking.</p> <p>Yellow Lines</p> <p>Can appeal if collecting somebody, for example on a third floor flat assisting an elderly lady. PN doesn't think many tickets have been issued to drivers but please appeal if necessary. Explained that parking officers attend if they are called. PN clarified that this grace period is not just a parking space, it is for drivers while they are working such as helping with shopping. PN will look at how this affects drivers and provide clear guidance.</p> <p>There were some concerns raised about Brighton station and it was questioned if bus drivers were aware taxis can stop at bus stops. MB explained that most do but there are some new drivers. PN explained that a new civil enforcement officer will attend station 7 days a week.</p> <p>JE has put in considerations with Council, and is currently looking at plans for where dropping off/picking up would be better. AC suggested Terminus Road seems to work well but the council has previously said no to this.</p> <p>Blue Badges</p> <p>PN advised that he put in for funds for a blue badge misuse officer, this was granted and the officer started in November. This is ongoing and so far 60 badges have been seized.</p> <p>MD queried who is permitted to use bus lanes, as has noticed hospital transport using them. PN explained that it seems to be pretty good compliance. MD will ask for clarification by email.</p>

	<p>Traffic Management</p> <p>JE Explained there are many issues with works going on at the same time due to successful funding bids, and confirmed that;</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. He has been stating at all meetings that this much in one go shouldn't happen again and projects should be joined up 2. On the 30th March the new permit scheme starts, there will be fines for any works that don't comply. 3. The new scheme will stop so many projects going on in one go if there are valid operational reasons. <p>Ranks</p> <p>JE agreed that he will look at rank space at ashtown, it was suggested some of the loading bays could be switched with rank space. TT has brought this up at the transport forum. JE will also be inputting into KEEP regarding Valley Gardens.</p>
7.	<p>Sussex Police (BH) Ben Heath</p> <p>GH Asked about marshalls on West Street, AC confirmed that there is no money unless drivers want to chip in. BH confirmed that Sussex Police Officers are present on West Street but officers have a lot to deal with. BH explained that Sussex Police have taken 2 actions since last forum. The first is that they have spoken with the local policing team, however they are currently restructuring so this may not be noticed. Secondly officers have been reminded to read signs at Castle Square.</p> <p>MS confirmed that in car signs relating to crime are still being designed .</p> <p>BH raised the old issue regarding the overranking that is still taking place near Old Ship hotel and Buddies. This seems to start from 2am, and from the police point of view taxis taking up 2 lanes an accident is extremely likely, if this was the case any vehicles parked here would be asked some serious questions if it was deemed they contributed to an accident. BH reminded that it was previously mentioned about using Brighton Centre, MS will ask Charles Field again.</p> <p>BH also sits on Safe Space steering group and needs to highlight an issue with the trade. This was that mobile phones are being taken as payment, though this is a civil matter in some cases it is leaving vulnerable people turning up at safe space with no means to contact anyone. Please can the trade bear in mind that they may be making people more vulnerable by taking their phones instead of payment.</p> <p>BH clarified that is a criminal matter if someone gets in car without means to pay but if property is taken then it is a civil matter so it is difficult and cases need to be looked at on an individual basis. MD asked for communication between police and licensing can be improved, BH will speak with Jean Irving.</p>

8.	<p>Enforcement (Martin Seymour)</p> <p>1 Driver had their licence revoked following a conviction for drink driving 1 Driver had their application to renew refused on medical grounds 1 Driver had their licence suspended on medical grounds 1 Driver had their licence suspended pending the outcome of court proceedings. 1 Driver had their licence suspended pending the outcome of a prosecution for motoring offences 5 Drivers have received formal warnings</p> <p>40% HCWavs up from 37% last year 12% PHWavs</p> <p>29 Service requests compared to 15 Last year (Feb 2015) 25 Knowledge tests compared to 14 last year (Feb 2015) 2 out of 4 passed routes test</p>
9.	<p>Committee Report - Fare Changes</p> <p>Committee agreed proposal – to be advertised for Easter Sunday</p>
10.	<p>Clean Vehicle Technology</p> <p>Deferred</p>
11.	<p>Deregulation Bill</p> <p>JS advised forum that he is aware the wording has been agreed by house of commons but has not yet received royal assent which may be in April or October.</p>
12.	<p>Items for next Meeting –</p> <p>1. Health Incentives for Taxi drivers (Gym memberships etc)</p>
13.	<p>DATE OF NEXT MEETING – TBC</p> <p>14 May 2015 1.30pm</p>