

## **Minutes of Public Taxi Meeting**

28<sup>th</sup> November 2023 at 6.30pm

Present Councillor Ian Brown (Chair)

### **Councillors:**

Simon O'Rourke, Donna O'Rourke, Robin Walsh, Stella Brunskill, Derek Brocklehurst,

**In attendance:** Head of Legal and Democratic Services, Solicitor, Taxi Enforcement Officer, Taxi Licensing officer, Taxi Admin Assistant, LCC Compliance Manager, LCC Compliance and Training Officer and Sergeant Hall from Lancashire Constabulary.

**Also Present :** L Ali, I Shah, S Mehmood, M Kamran, J Iqbal, J Iqbal, N Khan, N Zaman, S Yasin, S Hussain, I Hussain, M Amin, A Shaukat, Z Ali, W Akhtar, Z Abbas, A Hargreaves, A Mayer, A Bolton, A Patel, M U Farooq, M Choudry, Hassan Mahmood, W Akbar, M Usman, H Sheriff, Q Khan, R Hussain, Tanveer Khan, R Khan, and M Iftikhar.

### **WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION FROM CLLR IAN BROWN AND SOLICITOR.**

#### **POLICE REPRESENTATION**

Sergeant Hall from Lancashire Constabulary introduced himself and asked for questions.

Mr T Khan (Hackney Trade representative) raised the following point-

Night-time economy is difficult in Whalley because the lack of ranks, the number of out of borough taxis and cross bordering. The Hackney Trade would welcome more police at the weekend to monitor the situation and to administer stop checks. This was also in the context of parking tickets recently issued to drivers by the police in Whalley.

Sgt Hall acknowledged the issues of the night-time economy in Whalley. At present the police numbers were stretched thin, but he was mindful and would keep raising the issue. He was happy to work with the trade and the council to try to alleviate some of the problems and would help to support a new rank.

A request was made by the trade for more help for the taxi enforcement officer in Whalley, and for police officers to be present earlier in the evening "to set the tone".

The Taxi Enforcement Officer repeated his request for the trade to report issues to him with photos and videos and he would investigate.

#### **AGENDA ITEM 1**

##### **TAXI RANKS**

The Solicitor presented the item by acknowledging that the signage on the Council ranks at the Platform gallery, near Booths and King Lane needed reviewing and possibly updating. He stated that the council could work with Lancashire County Council and the trade to try to

provide more ranks. He also asked for ideas as to where ranks were needed in Clitheroe, Whalley and Longridge.

#### Response to the question.

##### Clitheroe

1. Mr T Khan – On Wellgate, near Solos (Social Club) -in loading bay. Weekend/evening hours for 2 or 3 vehicles. Maybe Temporary at the weekend after 8pm till a time to be determined. To be used in a similar fashion to the Bus stops/loading bay on Market Place, Clitheroe out of hours and at the weekend. The one-way system would funnel the vehicles.
2. Cllr D O'Rourke – Rank down near the vehicle entrance to Bowland Beer Hall, as this area had become busier. It was mentioned that this was very near a booking office so that might be the reason it had not been considered before.
3. An Operator from the floor suggested Greenacre Street as this would remove the vehicles from the main road.
4. It was also reported that there were issues with private vehicles being parked in the bays at Booths and outside the White Lion.

##### Whalley

1. Whalley Bus Station -numerous people suggested it.
2. Loading bay near Alta (Rios)
3. Parking spot outside Forum
4. It was also reported that Hackney Carriages were loitering close to Romeros, blocking vehicles, and picking up their pre-booked customers.

##### Longridge

1. Car park near Co-op.

Cllr Brocklehurst suggested the Council contact Longridge Town Council for input.

## **AGENDA ITEM 2**

### **REVIEW OF FARES**

Hackney Reps Mr T Khan and Mr M Iftikhar stated that Tariff 1 was fine. They thought that Tariff 2 needed reviewing because late night totals were high, and customers had questioned the price.

### **AGENDA ITEM 3**

#### **OLDER VEHICLES**

Several drivers had asked for this item to be included in the agenda. They believed the Council should stop the 4 months vehicle plate, and increase it to 6 months, as there was a belief that RVBC were one of the few councils still issuing 4 months plates.

Before the meeting the taxi team had reviewed the policy of all the councils within Lancashire to determine if this was indeed the case. It had been established that several councils still issued 4 months plates. In the councils where 4 months plates had been discontinued, they had included other conditions. For example, limited maximum age of vehicles, monitoring of emissions or higher maintenance of vehicles.

Several drivers argued that the Council should not remove the 4 months plate as it meant that vehicles were being regularly checked and this was a good thing as it showed the vehicles was road worthy. This could be tied in with more frequent spot checks.

### **AGENDA ITEM 4**

#### **ELAP SEATS**

The Solicitor introduced the item by stating that the Council licences 8 ELAP Hackneys and 4 wheelchair accessible Hackneys. These licences were issued on condition that the vehicles remained as such.

Some owners had asked for the ELAPS to be discontinued.

The Council's position was that, if an owner wished to remove the ELAP, they could ONLY do so by becoming fully wheelchair accessible.

Concern was expressed that ELAP seats were incompatible with airbags. Although it was mentioned that some authorities had withdrawn their requirement for ELAP seats, it was also noted that, for example, Blackburn with Darwen had a policy requirement for Hackney Carriages to be wheelchair accessible.

Cllr S O'Rourke spoke on behalf of disability awareness, stating that common complaints about taxis were:-

Difficulty in getting a wheelchair assessable taxi,

Overcharging,

Refusing to lift wheelchair in and refusing guide dogs.

He stated that back loading vehicles are not reasonable, and he would like all wheelchair accessible vehicles to be side opening vehicles.

## **AGENDA ITEM 5**

### **HACKNEY CARRIAGE NUMBERS.**

The Head of Legal and Democratic Services introduced this item, stating that Hackney Carriage numbers had been limited thus far. Twelve extra Hackneys had been added in recent years, with disabled access as a condition.

The reasons for considering increasing numbers or removing the limit altogether included:-

1. Many of the wheelchair accessible vehicles already licensed were also used for school contracts therefore were not available during the day in the local areas.
2. Government had updated Best Practice guidelines, and this had to be taken into consideration. This includes an equality duty, not just public safety.
3. Was there an adequate number of Hackney Carriages to meet demand?
4. A survey might need to be carried out of service users and others. This would identify if there was evidence of significant unmet demand, or if there was an adequate supply with the current numbers. Further information on this item would be brought to Licensing Committee.

### **OTHER ITEMS.**

1. An operator asked to speak from the floor. He requested six monthly meetings rather than once a year, and access to minutes. He also would like the council to look at operators' fees, as he felt they were high for what he considered to be the operator's role as that of a booking agent.
2. An operator speaking from the floor suggested that an incentive should be given to owners who were willing to buy a brand new fully wheelchair accessible vehicle to be used as a taxi. This incentive could be a free plate to be returned when no longer needed.
3. An operator from the floor wished to bring an item to the attention of the council. He stated that Hackney Carriage vehicles were loitering outside Romero's in Whalley, blocking the entrance at the side, and taking pre booked fares and overcharging.
4. The Taxi Enforcement Officer and Cllr Ian Brown both asked for him to contact the Council with evidence so RVBC could investigate the matter.

The Chair thanked all present for their attendance and informed the meeting that the matters raised would be considered in due course.

The meeting closed at 8pm.

