

ITEM 13b

TRANSPORT COMMITTEE

20 JUNE 2000

Minutes of the meeting of the HACKNEY CARRIAGE AND PRIVATE HIRE CONSULTATIVE PANEL of the TRANSPORT COMMITTEE held on WEDNESDAY 30 MARCH 2000 at 7.00 pm

Present: Councillors O'Sullivan (in the Chair), Conchie, Day, Mabbutt and Pugh

Officers: R Comitti (Regulatory Support Services Manager), G Uppington (Synergy Transport Manager), T Kirk (Passenger Transport Manager), P Bowen (Traffic Management and Parking Engineer) R Brill (Licensing Enforcement Officer), L Hurrell (Licensing Officer) and T Mabbott (Committee Manager)

Trade

Representatives: Derek Newland - Transport and General Workers Union
Peter Kirkham - Milton Keynes Hackney Carriage Association
Keith Weldon - Milton Keynes Hackney Carriage Association
Mark Steers - Milton Keynes Hackney Carriage Association
Mike Kushner - Private Hire Operators Association

HC8/00 MINUTES

The Panel received the Minutes of the meeting of the Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Consultative Board held on 12 January 2000.

The Panel noted that, at Minute HC6/00, the Drivers' representatives had requested a record of what had already been done in relation to new developments, and that the Minute did not accurately reflect this.

The Milton Keynes Hackney Carriage Association had also requested updates on the following items:

- (a) The Midsummer Boulevard Rank - Taxi Signs, Rank Marking, Centre Leylandii; Shelter taxi markings, Lower 9th Street taxi sign and Lower 10th street markings

The Transport Manager reported that lines had now been put down for Rank marking in Central Milton Keynes. Concern was expressed that these were not in line with DETR guidance and

would therefore be unenforceable. It was agreed that this should be clarified. It was also noted that a budget was currently being identified for additional taxi markings, and that this would be updated at a future meeting.

It was further reported that the issue of Leylandii had been raised with English Partnerships, who were investigating planting a lower-lying shrub, which would be acceptable to drivers, but which also addressed health and safety considerations.

Officers were asked to clarify the legal status of the line markings in Central Milton Keynes.

(b) Unused Taxi Ranks

It was reported that the de-regulation of unused taxi ranks was currently underway and that the process would take a number of months, as it required the implementation of certain legal procedures.

It was noted that the de-regulation of the unused taxi rank by the Food Hall in Central Milton Keynes be addressed as soon as possible.

(c) Milton Keynes Theatre Rank

It was reported that the issue of the siting of a new taxi rank in the Theatre District had not yet been addressed. It could be dealt with using the Experimental Traffic Regulation Order for Station Square, later in the year. It was agreed that the issue of providing facilities for taxis should be brought to the attention of English Partnerships.

(d) Enforcement

It was reported that the cost of employing a night-time enforcement officer had been investigated, and was likely to be in the region of £15,00 - £18,000. It was noted that this would need to be paid for out of increased license charges, and that one option to minimise costs would be to work closely with a partner organisation such as Thames Valley Police. It was also reported that such an officer would have limited powers to deal with those drivers licensed outside the area.

Representatives of the trade expressed the view that this approach would be undesirable because of potential conflicts of interest with the Police. It was also stressed that, by effectively enforcing the regulations, Milton Keynes Council stood to gain revenue from drivers requiring licenses.

RECOMMENDED -

That the Thames Valley Police and neighbouring local authorities be contacted to produce a joint strategy for the enforcement of licensing regulations.

(e) Tariff Review

Representatives of the Milton Keynes Hackney Carriage Association presented its proposals for an increase in charges to the public. It was noted that these had been produced after a review of the taxi trade in Milton Keynes and in response to increased licensing, insurance, fuel and council tax costs.

The Panel felt that the proposed increases in charges were reasonable, although it was noted that any operator taking telephone bookings would need a separate operators license and that this section of the proposal be removed. It was also agreed that it would be desirable to review such charges on an annual basis.

RECOMMENDED -

That the proposed charges (attached as an **Annex** to the Minutes) be approved, and that these be reviewed on an annual basis each April.

(f) Large Rank Signs

It was reported that the large rank signs at Station Square had been removed pending the enforcement of an Experimental Traffic order. Once this had been enforced, signs would be re-installed.

At the request of representatives of the trade, it was agreed that signs should be put up in Queensway, Bletchley.

(g) Vehicle Tidiness/Livery

It was reported that the guidelines on vehicle tidiness and livery needed to be formalised in line with arrangements for the inspection of vehicles. It was agreed that any comments on the draft proposals should be submitted to officers, and approved subject to any major objections being received.

HC9/00

DANGEROUS OCCURRENCE LOG BOOKS

The Panel noted that, from 1 April 2000, all enforcement matters would be dealt with by Synergy, and that this was part of an attempt to create a 'one stop shop'.

The Panel noted that drivers had expressed growing concern at the level of attacks upon them, and the approach set out in the report was welcomed as an attempt to address this. It was reported that the

system had been produced in response to the lack of voluntary proposals from the trade, and Operators would be obliged to keep a record of the level of the problem.

The introduction of the amendment of terms and conditions to include the compulsory maintenance of a Dangerous Incident log book by Operators with a requirement that all records were sent to Licensing Team on a regular basis, was noted.

HC10/00 CONDITION OF VEHICLE STANDARDS

The Panel considered proposals to clarify Section 11 of the Vehicle Inspection Report, in order to clarify inspection procedures.

RECOMMENDED -

That the proposals for guidelines for vehicle testing be approved.

HC11/00 MATTERS RAISED BY REPRESENTATIVES OF THE TRADE – HACKNEY CARRIAGE ASSOCIATION

The Panel considered the following issues raised by the Hackney Carriage Association:

(a) Breakdown of Council Fees

The Panel noted that representatives of the trade had requested a detailed breakdown of the Council's fees and costs, as a result of concerns that the Council should not make a profit from licensing. These had still not been made available, despite repeated requests.

(b) Queensway

Trade representatives expressed dissatisfaction at the effect of the relocation of Bletchley Market upon the taxi rank in Queensway. It was noted that the size of the rank had been effectively halved and that private parking in rank spaces was inadequately policed.

Officers gave an undertaking that this was being addressed.

(c) Licensed vehicles from out of the area using Central Station

Representatives of the trade expressed continued concern that large numbers of unlicensed vehicles were picking up passengers from the Station and the Theatre. It was agreed that Officers would write to the management of the Theatre, expressing concern at this.

(d) The use of drivers seat belts in Hackney Carriages

Representatives of the trade expressed concern that Police in some areas were harassing Hackney Carriage drivers

regarding the wearing of seat belts, even though this was not a requirement. It was asked that officers would investigate this.

(e) Hackney Carriages picking up illegally

Trade representatives reported that, in some areas, instances had been reported of Police preventing licensed Hackney Carriage drivers from picking up passengers in the street. It was asked that this would be addressed with Thames Valley Police and that further training days be held in conjunction with Thames Valley Police.

(f) Vehicle Testing

Representatives of the Trade expressed concern that drivers were being expected to help out with vehicle tests, and that some were unhappy to have to do so. It was pointed out that, although drivers were under no obligation to help with testing, doing so helped to keep costs down, and that these would have to be passed on in increased charges.

It was suggested that a sign be prominently displayed at the test centre waiting room, which clearly sets out the legal position for drivers taking part in tests.

(g) Medical Examination

Trade representatives expressed concern that drivers' medical examinations were not entirely consistent. It was pointed out that drivers were required to self-certify whether they were fit to drive.

(h) The Knowledge/the English Language

It was reported that concerns had been expressed about the requirements for those employed as escorts for schoolchildren. It was reported that these were enforced as part of a Home-School contract by Milton Keynes Council, and that any concerns should be reported and would be investigated thoroughly.

HC12/00 THE FUTURE OF THE TAXI SERVICE IN MILTON KEYNES

The Panel considered a paper from the Chair on the future of the Taxi Service in Milton Keynes. The paper was welcomed, although the view was expressed that it should have been circulated in advance. It was agreed that comments would be welcomed on the paper and that a fuller discussion could be had on the subject at a future meeting.

THE CHAIR CLOSED THE MEETING AT 9:32 PM