



Minutes of the meeting of the PRIVATE HIRE VEHICLE CONSULTATIVE PANEL held on MONDAY 27 NOVEMBER 2006 at 1.30 PM

Present: Councillor Miles (Chair)
Councillors Carruthers and Dransfield (substitute for Councillor Box)

Officers: R Comitti (Commercial Manager), T Shulver (Senior Enforcement Officer), C Henderson (Enforcement Officer), M Bandali (Passenger Transport Section) and P Taylor (Committee Manager)

Apology Councillor Box

**Number of
Public Present:** 7

1.0 APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR

RESOLVED

That Councillor Miles be elected Chair of the Private Hire Vehicle Consultative Panel for the Council Year 2006/07.

2.0 MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING

In response to a request for an update on Item 6.0 (13 March 2006), the Commercial Manager informed the Panel that there had been a marginal improvement in the percentage of local taxi vehicles passing the random vehicle tests.

Councillor Dransfield expressed concern that the failure rate remained high and suggested that the safety assessment of local taxi vehicles should be a standing item on the agenda for the Panel until the failure rates had been reduced to an acceptable level.

Representatives of the trade expressed concern that private hire vehicles from other authorities - especially from South Northamptonshire - would not be subject to safety assessments but would still be able to operate within Milton Keynes.

The Panel was advised that as long as the booking for a private hire vehicle was made in the region in which the vehicle was registered, it did not matter where the journey commenced or finished. The Panel was also advised, however, that it was the duty of Milton Keynes Council to ensure the safety of members of the public by

carrying out safety assessments on taxi vehicles for which it has responsibility as the licensing authority.

In response to a request for an update on Item 7.0 (13 March 2006), the Commercial Manager informed the Panel that there remained limited space for private hire vehicles to pick up and set down passengers at the train station. The Panel noted that the Traffic and Transport Manager was currently investigating the issue and the Chair suggested that he be invited to the next meeting to provide an update on the issue.

Representatives of the trade emphasised that the current parking arrangements at the train station presented a danger to the public because there was no designated drop-off point for private hire vehicles. It was suggested that the provision of at least 2 bays for private hire vehicles would make the area safer.

RESOLVED -

1. That the Minutes of the meeting of the Private Hire Vehicle Consultative Panel held on 13 March 2006 be approved as a correct record.
2. That an update on safety assessments of local taxi vehicles be received as a standing item at the Private Hire Vehicle Consultative Panel, until such time as the Panel considered the failure rates had been reduced to an acceptable level.
3. That the Traffic and Transport Manager provide an update on parking at central Milton Keynes train station at the next meeting of the Private Hire Vehicle Consultative Panel.

3.0 PARKING AT XSCAPE

Representatives of the trade expressed concern with the pick up arrangements at the Xscape building, as it was difficult for private hire vehicles to collect their customers when the area was busy due to the large numbers of vehicles using the car park and the amount of people walking to and from the building.

The Senior Enforcement Officer informed the Panel that the Taxi Marshalls scheme in place at the Xscape building was intended both to inform and educate the public about the safest way to wait for a private hire vehicle or a hackney carriage, and also to report suspected illegal hiring to the Licensing Team.

Councillor Dransfield suggested that there should be a drop-off point for private hire vehicles but that there was a safety concern due to the large numbers of people moving around the area.

4.0 COMPLIANCE AND GARAGE TESTS AND MOT CERTIFICATES

Representatives of the trade asked the Panel why it was necessary for private hire vehicles to pass a compliance and garage test and

also to undertake a MOT test. It was noted that other local authorities awarded the MOT certificate at the same time as the compliance and garage certificate because the test encompassed all the components that were included in a MOT test. Private hire vehicle operators felt that they had incurred an extra cost because the Council required that both tests be passed separately.

The Senior Enforcement Officer informed the Panel that the testing measures in place were designed to ensure that all the hackney carriages and private hire vehicles were safe for the public to use and that due to the long distances covered by these vehicles, it was necessary for them to be subject to regular testing.

Councillor Dransfield suggested that it was important that hackney carriages and private hire vehicles were tested regularly to ensure the safety of the public. He also suggested that, if it was possible for the MOT to be carried out at the same time as the compliance and garage tests then this was an option that should be investigated.

The Commercial Manager agreed that a report would be prepared for the next meeting of the Panel investigating the viability of an MOT certificate being issued as part of the compliance and garage test certificate.

RESOLVED –

That a report be presented at the next meeting of the Private Hire Vehicle Consultative Panel reviewing the feasibility of an MOT certificate being issued as part of the compliance and garage test certificate.

PARKING AT THE HOCKEY STADIUM

Representatives of the trade requested that traffic wardens give consideration to private hire vehicles waiting in the hockey stadium car park to collect customers from the train station. Drivers suggested that as they were trying to help alleviate the traffic problems at the station itself, they should be permitted to wait in their cars at the hockey stadium car park.

Councillor Dransfield suggested that this matter be considered at the next meeting of the Milton Keynes Parking Sub Group.

5.0 BUS LANE ON THE H6, GRAFTON STREET

Representatives of the trade asked that the Panel consider a proposal to change the designated times during which the bus lane on the H6, Grafton Street, was in operation. At present the bus lane operated between the hours of 7am and 10pm. It was suggested

that the times of operation be changed to 7am-10am and 4pm-7pm, to reflect the times that the bus lane was actually being used.

The Commercial Manager agreed to consider this issue and to report back at the next meeting.

RESOLVED –

That a report be presented at the next meeting of the Private Hire Vehicle Consultative Panel reviewing the hours of operation of the bus lane on the H6, Grafton Street.

6.0 MILTON KEYNES COUNCIL LOGO

Representatives of the trade asked why private hire vehicle drivers did not receive payment for having the logo of the Council on their vehicles as they felt that it was a form of advertising.

The Commercial Manager informed the Panel that the Council logo had to be displayed because it was the licensing authority. The signage displaying the logo of the Council provided confirmation to members of the public that the hackney carriage or private hire vehicle was a licensed taxi vehicle from a company registered in Milton Keynes.

7.0 DRIVING TESTS FOR COUNCIL EMPLOYEES

Representatives of the trade asked if all drivers who were employed by the Council were required to have regular driving tests, or if this was only a requirement for drivers of hackney carriage and private hire vehicles.

The Commercial Manager informed the Panel that tests were carried out regularly on all employees of the Council who drove vehicles that provided a service to members of the public.

8.0 TAXI CARD SCHEME

The Panel received a report on the Taxi Card Scheme that was being piloted in Milton Keynes. The scheme would provide subsidised taxi rides to disabled people and older people who had difficulty using the bus and who did not have access to a car. Taxi drivers who wanted to join the scheme would receive training on disability awareness before they were accredited.

The Panel noted that the initial pilot would be evaluated by the Centre for Integrated Living and, if found to be successful, it would be implemented with a proper full scheme from April 2007.

It was also noted that drivers would receive redeemable tokens in denominations of £1 and 50 pence from members of the scheme

using their taxi vehicles. The first £3 of a journey would be paid by the user; the next £5 would be paid by the Council, and the rest by the user.

Representatives of the trade were invited to approach the Officer from the Passenger Transport Section after the meeting if they had any questions concerning the scheme.

9.0 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

RESOLVED –

That the Private Hire Vehicle Consultative Panel be held every 3 months, with the next meeting taking place in February 2007.

THE CHAIR CLOSED THE MEETING AT 2.50 PM