



Minutes of the meeting of the PRIVATE HIRE VEHICLE CONSULTATIVE PANEL held on MONDAY 12 FEBRUARY 2007 at 2.30 PM

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

**Officers:** R Comitti (Commercial Manager), T Shulver (Senior Enforcement Officer), D Mullins (Enforcement Officer), R Carleton (Taxi Licensing Clerk) and P Taylor (Committee Manager)

**Apology** Councillor Box

**Number of Public Present:** 11

## **10.0 MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING**

RESOLVED -

That the Minutes of the meeting of the Private Hire Vehicle Consultative Panel held on 27 November 2006 be approved as a correct record.

## **11.0 UPDATE ON SAFETY ASSESSMENTS OF LOCAL TAXI VEHICLES**

The Panel received an oral update on safety assessments of local taxi vehicles. Members commented that the number of vehicles failing the safety assessments remained high.

The Commercial Manager informed the Panel that a report on how other local authorities carried out safety assessments on taxi vehicles was being prepared for consideration by the Regulatory Committee.

Members requested that at future meetings of the Panel, the update on safety assessments of local taxi vehicles be received in written form and include a statistical breakdown of the pass/failure rates for vehicles taking the safety assessments. Members of the Panel suggested that a similar statistical breakdown for vehicles that passed/failed safety assessment spot checks would also be useful.

Representatives of the trade suggested that the safety assessment statistics received by the Panel should include categories of failures,

as drivers felt this information would give a more accurate picture of the overall safety of local taxi vehicles.

RESOLVED –

That the standing item, update on safety assessments of local taxi vehicles, be received by the Panel as a written report.

## **12.0 UPDATE ON PARKING AT CENTRAL MILTON KEYNES TRAIN STATION**

The Panel was informed that the Council was currently in the process of drafting proposals for possible amendment schemes to parking in central Milton Keynes. As part of the review, consideration was being given to the request for additional picking up and dropping off facilities for private hire vehicles at Central Milton Keynes train station which included a proposal for the replacement of 4 disabled bays with picking up and dropping off facilities for private hire vehicles.

Members of the Panel suggested that such a proposal was likely to be opposed by disabled groups but that additional picking up and dropping off facilities for private hire vehicles would alleviate some of the problems at the train station.

## **13.0 PARKING AT THE HOCKEY STADIUM**

Representatives of the trade requested that consideration be given to allowing private hire vehicles to use the hockey stadium car park whilst waiting for customers arriving at the train station. The Panel was informed that a large number of hires came from people arriving at the train station and that it made sense for drivers to wait near by the station in spaces that were not being used. The environmental benefits of allowing private hire vehicles to wait near by a popular pick up point were also noted by the Panel.

Members of the Panel suggested that the issue be raised at meetings of the Parking Group and Transport Strategy Group.

## **14.0 UPDATE ON ISSUING OF MOT CERTIFICATES**

The Panel was informed that, at the driver's request, it was possible for the Council to award an MOT certificate at the same time as the compliance and garage test certificate.

## **15.0 UPDATE ON HOURS OF OPERATION OF THE BUS LANE ON THE H6, GRAFTON STREET**

The Commercial Manager informed the Panel that the Traffic & Transport section was in the process of undertaking a study with a view to the possible revision of bus lanes in Milton Keynes. The

study would take into consideration the request from the private hire trade regarding the H6.

Representatives of the trade informed the Panel that other local authorities allowed private hire vehicles to use bus lanes and requested that the Council investigate the possibility of introducing a similar measure in Milton Keynes.

Members of the Panel asked officers to establish the legal position regarding possible changes to the designated use of bus lanes.

RESOLVED –

That a report be presented at the next meeting of the Private Hire Vehicle Consultative Panel explaining the Council's legal position regarding possible changes to the designated use of bus lanes.

## 16.0

### **PASSENGER INFORMATION DOOR SIGNS FOR PRIVATE HIRE VEHICLES**

The Senior Enforcement Officer informed the Panel that at its meeting on 21 June 2006, the Regulatory Committee had resolved that it be made compulsory for all private hire vehicles to display passenger information door signs whilst the vehicles were being used in connection with private hire business. The door signs were intended to identify facts i.e. 'Private Hire Vehicle' and the legend – 'This vehicle must be prebooked via an Operator' and include wording identifying it to be a Milton Keynes licensed vehicle containing the Council logo.

The Panel noted that the Council had supplied a sticker type door sign free of charge and a magnetic door sign at cost price (plus administration charges). Owners/drivers/operators were also offered the option of integrating a sign approved by the Council within company advertisement stickers.

Representatives of the trade informed the Panel that a number of magnetic door signs had been stolen and that the sticker sign caused damage to their vehicles. The Panel noted that private hire drivers were advised by the Police to remove any signage identifying their car as a private hire vehicle when the car was not in use as such. The permanent stickers provided by the Council prevented drivers from adhering to Police advice.

Representatives of the trade suggested that the information contained within the door sign could be displayed on a roof sign which would be removable and less easy to steal. The Taxi Licensing Clerk informed the Panel that a survey carried out 18 months ago concerning the possibility of roof signs for private hire vehicles had received little response from the trade. The Senior

Enforcement Officer informed the Panel that roof signs were used to allow the public to distinguish between hackney carriages and private hire vehicles.

## 17.0

### TEST OF KNOWLEDGE OF LOCAL AREA

The Commercial Manager informed the Panel that the number of new hackney carriage / private hire drivers in Milton Keynes was currently lower than had been expected. Representatives of the trade suggested that there was a strong perception that there had been an increase in the number of private hire vehicles licensed by South Northamptonshire Council operating in Milton Keynes.

The Commercial Manager informed the Panel that since the Regulatory Committee had restricted the eligibility for re-examination of drivers on induction courses (Minute LR15 refers, 30 June 2004) the number of people re-taking the knowledge test had fallen. Members were advised to consider requesting the Regulatory Committee to reconsider the period for which re-examination was prohibited.

Representatives of the trade suggested that drivers who did not pass the Milton Keynes local knowledge test were registering as taxi drivers with South Northamptonshire Council instead of re-taking the test.

Members of the Panel suggested that, given the fall in the number of drivers re-taking the knowledge test and the increase in the number of drivers using satellite navigation, the Regulatory Committee should be requested to consider abolishing the knowledge test.

Representatives of the trade suggested that the introduction of a formal English test for drivers should also be considered. Officers informed the Panel that drivers were required to demonstrate a good understanding of English in order to obtain their licence.

#### RESOLVED –

That the Regulatory Committee be requested to reconsider its policy regarding the knowledge test element of the induction course for hackney carriage / private hire vehicles.

**18.0**

**DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

RESOLVED –

That the Private Hire Vehicle Consultative Panel be held on the following dates:

Monday 25 June 2007

Monday 3 September 2007

Monday 3 December 2007

All meetings to take place at 13:30 PM in the Council chamber.

THE CHAIR CLOSED THE MEETING AT 3.34 PM