

Brighton and Hove Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Consultation Forum

Meeting in Committee Room 1, Hove Town Hall, Thursday 16th May 2013

Meeting Commence at 14.30

Attendees:

- Wendy Ellis-Martin (BHCC – H2S)
- Cllr Dee Simson (BHCC)
- Mark Durell (B&H PHA)
- Jeff Defalco (B&H PHA)
- Ishan George (Cab Express)
- Hany Abadeer (BSTF)
- Jon Smith (GMB)
- Richard Dawson (GMB)
- Andrew Cheesman (City Cabs)
- Jeff Elliot (BHCC)
- Shah Mahmoud (ATF)
- Emma Sheridan (BHCC)
- Ibrahim Saidaroos (ITD)
- Jim Verguson (NPTTU)
- John Streeter (Streamline)
- Jeff Howell (Streamline)
- Les Paine (Unite)
- John Oram (Unite)
- Albay Youk (ATA)
- M Monir Miah (UTDA)
- M Alim (UTDA)
- Shamoun Ghattas (Cab Express)
- Geraldine Des Moullins (FED)
- Becca McMenamin (BHCC)
- Louise Anderson (BHCC)
- Jean Cranford (BHCC)
- Martin Seymour (BHCC)

Item 1: Apologies

- Tim Nichols (BHCC)
- Roy Apps (Sussex Police)
- Mick Hildreth (GMB)
- Tony Fish and Chris Nutley (Radio Cabs)

Item 2: Minutes of Previous Meeting

To be minuted that Hany Abadeer sent his apologies, he did not attend. Some confusion as to whether Les Paine and Jeff Howell did or did not attend. John Oram did attend.

Geraldine des Moullins requested that the minutes be amended to reflect that it is **not** acceptable for drivers to idle on disabled bays, even though they would move when asked. GD stated that it was unacceptable as disabled people may not want to confront a driver, or may not be physically able to ask a driver to move. Disabled bays are for disabled people.

Item 3: ACT (Active Communities Against Trafficking)

To be deferred to next meeting.

Item 4: Better Bus Areas

Emma Sherridan, Transport Planner, BHCC, attended the meeting to present the Council's proposals for Edward Street under the Better Bus Areas programme. A plan of the proposals was circulated to attendees.

BHCC and Brighton & Hove Bus Company bid for a grant for better bus priority and additional bus services. First phase of the proposals is for infrastructure works on Edward Street. Consultation is now live and on the Council's website, and will close on 25th June. Results of the consultation will go to the July Environment and Transport Committee. Emma undertook to forward a link to the consultation portal to members of the Forum.

Action: ES

There are no plans for a bus lane for the first stretch from Pavilion Gardens to Upper Rock Gardens, but there will be an on carriageway cycle lane. Improvements to pedestrian crossings along the road, and improvements to junctions are proposed. From Upper Rock Gardens to Freshfield Road, there will be a shared bus, cycle and taxi lane.

Travelling west towards the City, a shared bus, taxi and cycle lane is proposed down to Pavilion Gardens. Greenery will be introduced to improve appearance.

It is anticipated that these proposals will cut down on delays for buses coming into the City; will future proof buses along that road to cope with increased demand; it will improve the environment for pedestrians and cyclists. The current road width is much greater than the need for the traffic flow, so there is capacity for this.

Lengthy discussion followed; the main points raised being –

- There is no problem at present with traffic in that area;
- There is no requirement for a bus lane;
- Concerns that the problems in Lewes Road, caused by the introduction of the bus lane, will be replicated here;
- Concerns that ordinary traffic will re-route into other streets because of the bus lane and cause massive problems there;
- Concerns that ordinary car users had not been considered;
- Concern that only 1% or 2% of people respond to the consultation, but it would be imposed on the remaining 98%.
- Concerns over possible bottlenecks forming where the road narrows to a single carriageway at the top of Freshfield Road.
- Concerns that ambulances will be held up as they won't be able to pass buses;

- Bus stop outside Leach Court will be actually in the bus lane, so will not improve movement of buses, taxis or cyclists;
- Concerns that this scheme will be brought in without considering the knock-on effects to other traffic;
- Concerns about effect on disabled people who have their own cars;
- Concerns about cars turning right down towards the seafront causing bottlenecks;

GM queried what provision had been made for disabled pedestrians. ES stated that there would be improvements in crossings and junctions and that disabled pedestrians had been considered when drawing up the proposals.

ES stated that a grant of £5 million had been received from the Department of Transport, of which £400,000 was being spent on the Edward Street proposals. A significant amount of the £5 million had been spent on new buses and additional bus services. Full details of the funding are available on the Council's website, as follows <http://consult.brighton-hove.gov.uk/portal>

In response to questions regarding how the plans had been devised, and who would benefit, ES stated that extensive modelling had been carried out. Eastern Road had also been looked at in detail but do not have the money to carry out works at present. Modelling has been carried out.

Jeff Elliot commented that the transport strategy for the Council is about aiding pedestrians and not encouraging motorists into the City.

A number of consultation meetings have been arranged, as follows –

- 22nd May at 19.30 – Cllr Ian Davey will be answering questions on the proposals at the Southover Pub, 58 Southover Street, Brighton.
- 25th May – 14.00 - 20.00 Public exhibition at Brighton Youth Centre, 64 Edward Street, Brighton.

Emma emphasised that this is not a final scheme; it is a proposal for consultation. She urged everyone to comment on the consultation.

Links to the consultation document and consultation portal herewith –

<http://bit.ly/16aLE5u> - Consultation Portal

www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/betterbusareas - Better Bus Area web page

PDF questionnaire appended to these minutes.

Agenda Item 5: Traffic Management

Taxi drivers were concerned over the moving of the Brighton Station taxi rank for the night of the Brighton v Crystal Palace match on 13th May. The temporary rank was not sufficiently signposted. Jeff Elliot stated that Highways team were not informed of the decision to move the rank; it was instigated by Sussex Police. Jeff will look into this.

With regard to long term plans for the forecourt rank at Brighton Station, Jeff stated that these were outside of his control.

Monir Miah raised his concerns about the number of potholes. JE stated that inspections were regularly carried out, but the problems can be reported to the Council on 292929. Surrey Street is particularly bad, looks like work on this will start soon. JE stated that budgetary cuts had impacted on road repair and maintenance. Damage to cars caused by potholes can be claimed on insurance via the council.

At the previous meeting, Tim Nichols had asked for suggestions for sites for taxi ranks in the city centre. The Council are trying to increase the amount of rank space, but this will have to go to public consultation.

Problems with the rank at Paston Place continue. Sussex Police have been in discussion with Streamline. Complainant has been photographing and intimidating drivers. Everyone knows that there should not be over-ranking, however, rank space throughout the city is insufficient. This issue needs to be addressed now.

The Montpelier rank has been disbanded, removing six spaces, with no nearby temporary rank.

Concern continues that there is no rank at the Amex Stadium for Brighton taxis. The Lewes Road rank has been removed, being substituted by a two car rank in Coombe Terrace, the next closest rank is Barcombe Road. It is pointless to continually issue licences without new ranks being installed. East Street is a nightmare. Taxi drivers would like a meeting to discuss all these rank problems with Licensing and Transport, and requested that Jean Cranford arrange such a meeting.

Action: JC

Councillor Powell has emailed Tim Nichols with comments on the issues at Paston Place which she requests is shared with Forum members -

Whilst she appreciate this is not her ward, she live very nearby, and has been in contact with ward councillors over a couple of issues relating to taxis in this area:

- i) pollution from stationary taxis (yet with their engines still on), and*
- ii) stationery taxis waiting on 'disabled bays' to pick-up passengers.*

She is informed that two of the disabled bays at Paston Place are, it seems, constantly blocked by taxis through over-ranking in Paston Place. She has also been informed that two of the disabled spaces are immediately outside flats with disabled residents, one of whom fought for years to have and keep this bay outside their property. This resident now has trouble parking nearby to the property. Another disabled person in the same street, cannot be collected or dropped off with shopping at the kerb but only in the middle of the street because of taxis blocking everywhere.

Understandably she asks "Surely this isn't right?! Disabled bays are there for a reason after all!"

She continues:

Pollution is another issue entirely, though of course it is a health risk, and environmentally damaging. With the focus at this meeting being on disability access, she shall shelve the pollution debate for time being.

Andy Cheesman stated that the problem across the City was that too many vehicles had been licensed by the Council and there was insufficient rank space. Even if 50 two-car ranks were established, that would not be enough.

John Oram had emailed Robin Reed (BHCC Principal Transport Officer) to state that most of the time taxi drivers can't get on to the Gaiety Rank because of cars parked there. Enforcement officers are never around to help cab drivers.

Andy Cheesman raised the subject of the Law Commission's views that the licensing authority should no longer have the power to restrict taxi numbers. This would again affect the number of taxis and put further pressure on ranks.

Geraldine M stated that there may be an opportunity for a further rank at the hospital development. She suggested that Forum members open talks with the hospital. Jean Cranford stated that council officers had spoken to the hospital and that there was no intention to put any extra spaces for taxis on the site. As far as the hospital is concerned, Paston Place is the rank for the hospital.

Item 6 – Sussex Police

Following injury to member of public in Edward Street, Inspector Apps had been very helpful. The driver was badly shaken, but is now back at work and the injured person has made a full recovery. There will be no prosecution, CCTV showed that she walked out into the road.

Richard Dawson stated that Police need to be informed that Bilking is a theft matter.

CCTV has recently helped the Police in respect of the arrest of an armed robber who had used taxis en route to the scene of his crimes. HC & PH drivers would appreciate reciprocal help from Sussex Police.

Item 7: 20 MPH

Query raised as to when consultation would begin on phase 2 and 3 but Emma had left the meeting.

Item 8: Accessibility Policy Review

Martin Seymour reported that consultation on this has now closed, he is compiling a report to go to Committee on 27th June. He has asked for figures about wheelchair users requesting saloons, rear-loaders and side-loaders.

John Oram stated that the online consultation document was quite complex; there was not sufficient capacity to respond fully. He has therefore drafted a letter setting out the various points. This should be with Martin by Monday 20th May at the latest.

Item 9: WAV Training Module

Tim was going to arrange for a 10 minute demonstration of this to go to Committee on 27th June.

Item 10: CCTV

Martin Seymour stated that following a meeting of a sub-group set up to discuss CCTV, a draft set of conditions was agreed.

AC stated that these conditions were not agreed, it was a consultation. The sub-group had met purely because the Council's solicitors had been unable to successfully pursue a case. Not everyone was asked to attend the meeting and nothing was formally agreed. Hany had put his name forward to attend, but was not informed of when the meeting was to be held. Others had also not been informed of the date of the meeting.

There was concern that Cygnus and Cab Care had been represented at the meeting, as there may have been a conflict of interest. However, others in attendance may also have had a vested interest in what was agreed. Jeff Defalco stated that he had asked Brian Potts to attend as he is an expert in fitting CCTV.

Les Paine stated that Streamline do supply systems on a not for profit basis. He referred back to the notes of the meeting – in the second paragraph it stated that all agreed that something was needed, Les said that this should read "most".

A lengthy discussion then followed on the merits of the various systems available, and the length of time for which CCTV records should be retained.

Hany stated that if the system helps the Police, why does it need to be changed. The system currently in use complies with the original specification. He queried whether the Police have requested that the systems be changed.

Andy Cheesman stated that there had recently been three armed robberies in Brighton, CCTV images captured by taxis had helped with the arrest.

Ishan George stated that CCTV in taxis is there primarily to help the drivers and customers, however, any by-product, such as helping the Police is a good thing.

Concern was raised that drivers would have to replace their existing systems, even though they were working well.

Jon Smith stated that the spec that the Council is currently using is the one used by London cabs. He stated that five people cannot dictate to the whole of the taxi trade. Situation needs to be monitored for 12 months.

Discussion followed on the merits of an ignition based system; concerns were raised that this would have implications when taxis were used for private purposes. It was noted that the system could be switched off.

It was proposed that another workshop be set up, this time with drivers' groups involved.

Martin stated that the main difference with the new proposals is the increased retention time from 14 days to 28 days, with effect from July 2015.

Jeff Defalco stated that it is possible to have a system which records for more than 31 days.

Jeff Defalco stated that the largest underwriter in taxi insurance has agreed that if a system that meets their requirements is installed, eg Radio Relay, there will be a 10% discount on

insurance costs. This should help deflect the main argument against installing CCTV, namely cost.

Jon Smith stated that CCTV had been forced on the trade. Now need to find a way of getting cheaper systems to work. Systems that Andy C can supply cost £288, not £700, and can be paid for in 10 monthly instalments if necessary.

Richard Dawson stated that taxi drivers are sick and tired of this issue. They are being asked to change their systems within six weeks of installing them.

Andy Cheesman stated that City Cabs and Streamline both only supply systems, they do not make any profit and have no vested interest on either side. Drivers can go anywhere they like to buy systems. Their system retails at £288, Brian Potts' at £700.

Hany queried how many investigations there had been last year involving use of CCTV. Martin stated that in most cases CCTV would be looked at. However there were no figures available to state in how many cases the CCTV footage was unusable. Becca McMenamin will bring the figures to the next meeting. **Action BM**

Mark Durell stated that a 28 day retention period was used by the alcohol licensed trade, and it seemed sensible to adopt this.

Andy Cheesman queried whether the CCTV report was going to be presented to Committee in June. Martin stated that it was.

John Oram stated that there had been a show of hands at the Trade meeting prior to the Forum, the vast majority of those present were totally against the new proposals. Need to consider carefully whether things need to change, need to monitor current situation and then agree the required spec, retention period. Some cameras do not even comply with the current spec, and these should not have been licensed.

Becca McMenamin stated that there were a number of drivers who were turned away because they did not have the correct spec.

Hany stated that this report should not go to Committee until there is agreement from all involved.

Martin stated that Tim Nichols would be informed of the debate and feelings amongst taxi drivers and a decision would be made as to whether the recommendations would be presented to Committee on 27th June.

Item 11: Fares

The proposed tariff card is appended to these minutes.

There was a discussion on ways to display various fares, in particular when there would be additional charges if there are more than 5 people in a taxi. Customers currently found this confusing. A large number of customers also thought it was more expensive to take a multi-seater taxi, this is not the case.

Monir queried whether it would be possible to have a sticker on the meter displaying the additional fares applicable. Alternatively, a system of numbers and letters could be adopted.

It was agreed that there are too many fares, and the system is complicated. There are also problems with people abusing the meter + ½ fare. One option would be to do away with the meter + ½ fare and have a number tariff and then have a sign saying more than 5 people will be and additional 50% of the price showing.

It was agreed that the proposed fare increase would go to Committee on 27th June.

Item 12: Enforcement

For year 2012/13

3069 applications received with 2932 granted

488 Service requests received compared to 317 previous year

(29 Disability Related)

617 Enforcement / Inspection actions.

315 HCDL

33 PHDL

202 HCVL

53 PHVL

7 PHOP

Knowledge Tests for year 2012/13

Btn 61% Pass rate

Hove 85% Pass rate

Route Test 75% Pass Rate = 40 drivers that Passed

Since March 2013

7 drivers received a written warning

Suspended 1 Driver

Revoked 1 Driver Licence (No valid DVLA Licence)

Refused 1 Driver Application – (Indecent Assault on a Female)

Item 13: Items for Next Meeting

Nothing raised.

Item 14: Date of next meeting

4th July – 1.30 – 4.30, Committee Room 1

TBC 5th September 1.30 – 4.30, Committee Room 1

Those present thanked Cllr Simson for her attendance.