

**NOTES OF TAXI TRADE LIAISON MEETING
WYRE FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL OFFICES
LOOM ROOM, DUKE HOUSE, KIDDERMINSTER**

2:00pm Tuesday 1st May 2007

ATTENDANCE:	Wyre Forest DC: Leader Cllr Stephen Clee (Chair) (SC) Cllr Anne Hingley (AH) Cllr Fran Oborski (FO) Mark Kay – Environmental Health & Licensing Manager (MK) Brian Kent – Principal Licensing Officer (BK)	Taxi Trade: Austin Caulfield (AC) Trevor Owen (TO) Bob South (BS) Pepe Bianco (PB) David Watkins (DW) Harold Dalloway (for Roy Powell who will no longer be attending)
	Police: PC Andy Hill (prior to main agenda)	
APOLOGIES:	Cllr Jeff Baker Cllr Graham Ballinger	

NO.	ITEM	NOTE	ACTION
		<p>Prior to the start of the meeting the chair introduced PC Andy Hill who had been asked to give advice, at short notice, on the distribution of an election circular being distributed, apparently on behalf of the taxi trade, canvassing votes for Cllrs said to support the trade. This was known to have been distributed recently in the Spennells and Sutton Park areas.</p> <p>Copies of the document were circulated to attendees, none of whom who had seen it previously, and PC Hill advised that he had consulted the West Mercia Police who were unable to offer advice until after the elections had taken place, so he had taken advice from Alison Chapel (AC) at the Electoral Commission Midlands office who had concluded that the letter represented third party campaigning, not for a specific party as a number of parties were listed. In AC's opinion this was not an offence, however, the fact that no printer/promoter shown on the letter was, but this could be overcome if the letters were withdrawn and this information provided in the form of a sticker.</p> <p>This matter had been brought to the attention of the Council's Head of Legal and Democratic Services, who considered that this letter could potentially amount to two breaches of legislation, the Representation of the People Act and the Electoral Legislation Act, which could result in a £5,000 penalty and a criminal record.</p> <p>The producers/distributors of these letters are unknown.</p> <p>PC Hill left the meeting which then commenced as follows.</p>	
		Cllr Stephen Clee took the chair in the absence of the Chairman of the Licensing and Environmental Committee, who was unable to attend and welcomed everyone to the meeting	
1.	Notes of previous meeting 11 th Dec 06	Agreed.	
2.	Matters arising	Newsletters are being sent out regularly to inform the trade on matters such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Taxi Marshalls (newsletter of 21/12/06 – 	

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		<p>Enforcement Officer met with companies to evaluate success of the scheme)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ inspections ▪ training ▪ it was agreed that the trade could also include items they wished to raise. <p>FO raised the issue, on safety grounds, of the first registration of used, imported stretch limos and it was confirmed that this is 2 years from the date of manufacture.</p>	
3.	Best Practice Guidance	<p>It was confirmed that the summary, at Appendix 1 in the information tabled, referred only to those elements of the Best Practice Guidance which were not currently complied with and on which the views of the trade, either on a corporate or individual basis, were sought to be reported to the Licensing and Environmental Committee after the deadline for responses of 15th June 2007. To date, just one response, from the Community Safety Partnership, has been received.</p>	
4.	Driver Training	<p>Regular local weekly training sessions have commenced but the take up of the drivers is very low, with only half of the expected number (15 out of a possible 30) drivers having already undertaken the course. The trade were asked to remind drivers that it is a requirement of their licence to undertake training and, if they do not take up this option, they will incur extra costs in paying for and travelling further afield for training in order to comply with any future enforcement after the scheduled 24 weekly sessions have finished.</p> <p>The Council advised that drivers are given 6 weeks' written notice of attendance and the trade confirmed that the course had their full support. In future, copies of the drivers' letters will be forwarded to the Companies they work for to lessen the possibility of letters being lost in the post and the trade will ensure that drivers are aware that training is taking place and of its importance.</p> <p>Future arrangements for new licence holders will be undertaken on a reciprocal basis with neighbouring Worcestershire authorities and an interim period will be agreed between taking up a new licence and undertaking training.</p> <p>It was noted that the training video used makes reference to a mixed fleet of vehicles as it is designed for a wider audience of various local authorities with differing policies.</p>	
5.	Deregulation Plan	<p>The trade felt that the Plan diminished the fleet, however, the Disability Discrimination Act requires that everyone has the right to hail or to pick up from the rank</p>	

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		<p>an accessible vehicle. The meeting discussed how taxi users in other towns/cities were catered for in this respect and the possibility that people requiring a saloon vehicle had no choice but to call a private hire vehicle rather than hail a Hackney Carriage.</p> <p>The statistics on wheelchair accessible vehicles achieved to date were confirmed as being approximately 25%, i.e. out of a fleet of 98, 24 are currently wheelchair accessible vehicles, with 5 new licences (of which to date only 2 are paid for) allocated at the last Licensing Committee meeting. The figure is targeted to be 100% by 2013.</p> <p>Central Taxis advised that the records they are now keeping show that approximately 1,000 passengers per month request saloon cars, whilst approximately 140 per month request wheelchair accessible vehicles, figures which, in the past, were not apparent because most Hackney carriages were saloon vehicles.</p> <p>Whilst some groups representing disabled/older people, e.g. Help the Aged, Disability Action Wyre Forest and Age Concern have expressed some concerns about this, this is nevertheless as agreed in Best Practice Guidance.</p> <p>Following comments from MK that the trade's wishes were unclear and the Council had received no firm comments or plans on the issues raised, the trade agreed to provide a written reply (including evidence) detailing any changes they proposed such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ their preferred alternative to red (or alternative method(s) of identification) for the private hire fleet. ▪ provision of a mixed fleet and compliance with national guidance and accessibility for disabled people ▪ possibility of making operators/driving licences co-terminus. <p>Local/National Disabled Groups, plus others, would then be consulted on any proposals before any recommendations are made to this group to put before members.</p>	
6	Increased Taxi Rank space	<p>With the increased number/size of vehicles, the trade are seeking more ranks in Kidderminster. In the case of privately owned property, such as Weavers' Wharf, and supermarket sites, the permission of the owners will have to be obtained in the first instance.</p> <p>The trade agreed to provide WFDC with details of their proposed locations and their agreement that the ranks will be used at which time WFDC will commence</p>	

AGENDA ITEM NO. 8

NO.	ITEM	NOTE	ACTION
		<p>negotiations with the landowners on behalf of the trade.</p> <p>It was noted that the ranks in Bewdley (which was recently rendered unusable by a skip) and Stourport are not serviced due to lack of demand</p>	
7.	Hackney Carriage Licensing Conditions – (colour)	Wyre Forest District Council confirmed that they are flexible as to the exact shade of silver which will be acceptable for new vehicles as this is dependent on vehicle manufacturers' future trends.	
8.	Health & Safety ref wheelchair accessible vehicles	<p>It was confirmed that this is a matter of a driver's public liability and not a Licensing matter and, under the Health & Safety at Work Act, it is the responsibility of the operator/driver future to first undertake a risk assessment. Training, which includes customer care, will help to address any problems that may arise for drivers. It was further confirmed that a driver's liability to a passenger ends at the point at which they are dropped off. Whilst accidents may potentially be investigated by the HSE, given that they do not always attend accidents involving a fatality, this is seen as very unlikely in the event of minor accidents.</p> <p>Big companies already keep a record of accidents and the possibility of a simple form showing date/time/name/what happened and where, to be signed by both driver and passenger being developed for use by all drivers was discussed. Accident records would be copied to WFDC and included as a regular agenda item on Licensing and Environmental Committee agendas</p>	
9.	Taxi Trade Consultation/ Public – wheelchair accessible vehicles	It was agreed that, in order to reduce confusion, a leaflet could be jointly produced with Disability Action Wyre Forest to explain the Council's Deregulation Plan.	
10.	Any Other Business	<p>FO advised that taxis were being illegally parked on grass verges, particularly on Comberton Estate, causing damage to the grass and resulting in complaints from residents. The trade were asked to remind drivers of their responsibility for the appropriate parking of their vehicles when these are not in use.</p> <p>The trade requested that drivers were alerted via the next newsletter of reported incidents in Sheffield where drivers are being robbed by thieves posing as Police.</p>	
Date of next meeting to be agreed			