

Meeting to discuss change of policies in Council Chamber

23 June 2015

Present:

Name	Organisation	Initials
Councillor Bob Ayer	Chair EHDC Licensing Committee	BA
Mike Smith	Licensing Team Leader EHDC	MS
Gill Stevens	Licensing Officer EHDC	GS
Hayley Hadaway	Licensing Officer EHDC	HH
Justine Allingham	Licensing Support Officer EHDC	JA
Graeme Fraser	AMK	GF
Peter Blackman	Alton Eights	PB
Kevin New	Wilson's Taxis	KN
Chris Keech	Wheeldrive	CK
Barry Winter	Barry's Taxi	BW

Cllr BA welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked Operators for their time.

MS explained meeting held to discuss the changes in the taxi policy. MS explained the June newsletter outlined the changes and the new draft policies are online to view in detail.

MS highlighted the major changes:

Drivers – application now require knowledge/literacy/numeracy test, one and three year badges. New private hire 'restricted' licence for Local Authority work – different applicant criteria. Updating guidance on convictions. Photograph every six years.

Vehicles - conditions regarding vehicles will not be so prescriptive. We will now allow seats to be tipped or tilted. Now accept space saver and run flat spare tyres.

Operators – option to have a five year licence. Under recent Deregulation Bill operators can now sub-contract work to operators in another council area.

Penalty Points (PP)– currently can be appealed. Will now able to be appealed against when total PP reach 12 points on licence. Appeal to committee.

PB advised that he is very pleased with most of the changes, but stated that it is not fair that each set of PP cannot be appealed against at time of issue. PB felt very strongly that at the time of allocation you must be able to appeal. It could be 3 years before the opportunity to appeal is available and by this time the committee would not necessarily understand an appeal for an issue that was 3 years old. MS advised that the PP system is basically a mechanism of recording conduct. PB said he would not accept them if he didn't have the right of appeal, it was wrong for no right of appeal. KN agreed with PB, he didn't agree with the change in the PP policy. KN felt it wasn't right that the licensing office could revoke the licence. MS advised once 12 points on licence the driver/operator would be taken before the committee and given the opportunity to have their say. MS advised licensing committee could revoke a licence. Cllr BA advised it would be with great reluctance to revoke a licence. MS the PP system is to ensure consistency. PB thought the system as it is now is fair.

CK questioned leaving a vehicle unattended is 6 points. MS advised this is H/C.

CK questioned having more passengers than on the licence plate is 6 points, CK felt this was very serious offence that would warrant more than 6 points. PB added only 6 points for uninsured vehicle; this should also be considered more serious. KN asked if the point's system generally would be reviewed. MS said the policy must be fair and proportionate. KN felt the PP accumulation should be last for 1 year not 3 years for an Operator.

GF welcomed most of the changes especially the new proposals for a 'Restricted' licence. GF asked if the 'Restricted' applicants would be required to have a knowledge test. MS explained driver's would not be required to know each back street of the district, but would need knowledge of the main roads.

CK asked if the all drivers could only be required to complete the MIDAS test and not the Btec. MS explained taxi driving is a professional trade and it requires a professional qualification. The government funding has been reduced (mostly withdrawn) drivers are now required to fund themselves. CK stated that he would like to know that the Btec wasn't going to be stopped in the future if his company was going to pay to put new drivers through the Btec he would like reassurance that the requirement to complete the Btec will stay. MS advised yes. CK stated that the cost to licence a new driver is now about £700. GF said he kept a training budget and would pay for the Btec or MIDAS and wanted confirmation that to change from 'restricted' to an ordinary licence the only requirement would be to obtain the Btec. CK explained that different Local Authorities requirements were confusing. HCC, Surrey and WSCC had varying requirements that drivers had to complete i.e safeguarding, disability awareness, epilepsy. HCC do not accept EHDC obtained DBS Disclosures. MS has written to HCC to advise change of requirement from Adult and Child workforce to 'Other'.

GF asked about new change in requirement for mechanical tests for P/H to have yearly mechanical tests until the 3 year MOT for new P/H vehicles.

PB asked about licencing Vauxhall Zafiras for 6 passengers even though the boot would not carry 6 suitcases. MS advised that the two back seats were not suitable for licencing.

CK queried the condition that 'the vehicle must remain in the form it is submitted for licencing'. CK advised wheelchair accessible vehicles sometimes used for six passengers and one wheelchair, sometimes used as three or four passengers and two wheelchairs, sometimes used for eight seated passengers. GS advised difficult to enforce if vehicle over five years old as this would be a way to get round the under five years old requirement. MS advised happy to remove the condition, but vehicle must be converted with wheelchair tracking to IVA approval. HH and GS to have training regarding wheelchair accessible vehicles and certification at AMK.

CK said there were references to Private Hire vehicles tariff/fees to be displayed. MS agreed to remove this requirement. MS also agreed to remove the requirement for index street maps in each vehicle.

CK asked if PSV drivers need to have driving assessments. PB asked if PSV drivers need medicals. MS advised must treat everybody equally and fairly. It would be still a requirement.

Following the meeting MS explained the new procedure for applying for the DBS disclosure online and then taking to Post Office to get validated.

MS advised that he had received an apology from the police who would have liked to have attended the meeting and talked to the taxi association to build up a good relationship between the police and the trade. MS advised we would arrange another meeting.

MS thanked everybody for their time and for coming to the meeting.