

Minutes



Taxi Association Liaison Panel

22nd January 2007

Present:

Councillors	Present	Members of Taxi Association	Present
M J Banthorpe	Yes	Barrie Jenkins	Apologies
K E Bigden	Yes	Sue Jenkins	Yes
A F Millam	Apologies	Alan Smith	Yes
Mrs J A Pell	Apologies	Glen Stephens	Yes
Mrs K E Tearle	Yes		

Action by

22 **APPOINTMENT OF CHAIRMAN**

DECISION: That Councillor Mrs K E Tearle be appointed Chairman for the meeting.

23 **MINUTES**

DECISION: That the minutes of the meeting of the Taxi Association Liaison Panel held on 9th November 2006 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

24 **MATTERS ARISING**

INFORMATION: There were no issues to discuss.

25 **ISSUES FROM THE BRAINTREE DISTRICT TAXI ASSOCIATION**

(a) **CHANGE OF SIGNS/LIVERY ON THE VEHICLES**

INFORMATION: The Panel was advised that the new BDC Licence sign was available and samples of the final design were circulated for discussion. The sign with yellow was for the rear plate of Private Hire vehicles, and the sign with white was for the rear plate of Hackney Carriage vehicles. Photographs were circulated to display the positioning of the signs on the vehicles – on the grill at the front, the same position on the rear as the existing arrangement, and on the rear back door on the side of the vehicle. Officers were requested to provide actual samples for a meeting of the Taxi Association on 30th January 2007.

Rachel Smith

The Panel requested that samples should also be available to view at Council offices at Causeway House, Halstead and Witham. Notices advising of the new signs (including dimensions) and inviting comments from drivers were also requested for the Town Hall Centre, local Council offices and, perhaps, on the Council's page in the local press. Association Members advised that drivers should be allowed adequate time to comment on the new signs, and it should be clarified

- What the proposals are
- When they will be introduced, and
- The deadline date for comments (preferably end of March).

Rachel Smith

The issue of livery over two side doors of the vehicle was discussed, and a possibility of siting the sign over the rear wheel arch, if necessary. The numbering of vehicles was also highlighted, and whether a universal database could be held between neighbouring authorities to identify vehicles registered in a specific licensing area. The Panel was advised that there was no national database, and that in Braintree District Nos.1-84 refer to Hackney Carriages, with numbering of Private Hire vehicles following on. It was considered that the Council logo and name would be sufficient to identify the licensing area the vehicle was registered with.

Members noted that it was intended that the new signage be implemented from March 2007, although this could change.

The aim will be to introduce the signs at the time of each licence renewal.

DECISION: That drivers receive letters on the proposals and consultation be undertaken.

(b) **SIZE OF WHEELCHAIRS**

INFORMATION: Association Members advised that wheelchairs come in various styles, sizes and weights, and raised concerns on compliance with the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) for wheelchair accessibility by 2010/2012. It was recommended that contact with other agencies should be sought, and that guidance to the legislation be explored.

The Panel was informed that electric wheelchairs are excessively heavy and wide, and are best suited to rear access tailored vehicles. Side entrance vehicles are not always suitable for wheelchair use and all vehicles would suffer, over time, from the weight of wheelchair use. The issue of motorised scooters was also raised. Taxi drivers had to safely carry their passengers and if styles of wheelchairs become larger and heavier, or if taxi companies arrive for a pick-up at an address and find they cannot accommodate the wheelchair, would the company be discriminating?

Therefore, concerns were raised on

- what taxi companies will be able to do, including the types of vehicles required to take wheelchairs, sizes of different ramps
- how will they comply with all the requirements of the law
- Health & Safety issues, including the taxi driver not being capable to load a person in a wheelchair.

The Licensing Enforcement Officer advised that guidance would be available from government, on Hackney Carriages being accessible by 2010. The wheelchair manufacturer would provide guidance on the capabilities of vehicles to take their wheelchairs, the clamp points required to transport the wheelchair, and for compliance on insurance issues.

A Panel Member stated that he had seen a video advising there were 800 different types of wheelchair – although some were for home-use only. It was also queried if the licence plate on existing vehicles was transferred from an old vehicle to a new vehicle, would the licence plate still be valid ?

The Panel considered that advice should be sought on the legislation and Officers visit suppliers of wheelchairs to the public, i.e. Ashdowns in Braintree, to seek further information and their duty of care.

DECISION:

(1) That guidance on compliance to the new legislation be sought on accessibility of taxis by wheelchairs. **Licensing Officers**

(2) That this topic be a standard agenda item. **Democratic Services**

26 **ISSUES FROM THE COUNCIL'S LICENSING TEAM**

INFORMATION: The Panel was advised that the DVD on new guidance on wheelchair driving training (Minute 16a last meeting refers) had been ordered. The DVD is approximately 10-15 minutes duration, and would be viewed by drivers whilst paperwork was being processed when applying for a new licence. The DVD is to be viewed by the Panel at their next meeting. **Next meeting**

27 **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

INFORMATION: The following issues were raised

Licence Plate on other vehicles. Livery exists on Hackney Carriages and Private Hire vehicles and it was queried what will happen with unmarked cars, i.e. limousines, chauffeur driven. The Panel was advised that implementation of the new plates should be undertaken before considering this issue.

Taxis using bus stops. This was considered a problem in Witham and the Panel was advised that this is an issue for the Highways Authority to produce correct signage, and for Parking Enforcement to deal with parking infringements.

ECC Highways / Parking Enforcement

28 **DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING**

DECISION: That the next meeting of the Panel be held at 10.00am in Committee Room 2 on Monday 19th March 2007.

The meeting commenced at 10.00am and closed at 11.15am.

MRS K E TEARLE
CHAIRMAN