MINUTES OF THE TAXI LIAISON GROUP
Wednesday 5th August 2015 at 10.00am
Council Chamber, Crescent Gardens

Attendance
Cllr John Ennis Chair of Licensing Committee
Gareth Bentley Food, Licensing and Occupational Safety Manager
John Higgins Spa and Westminster Insurance
Chris Doyle Taxi Licensing Enforcement Officer
Kevin O’Boyle Central Taxis
Dave Travis Compliance Technical Officer, NYCC
Garry Sadler-Simpson Mainline
Belinda Pittam Assistant Taxi Licensing Officer
Steve Rogers Enforcement Manager

1 INTRODUCTIONS
Each attendee introduced themselves.

2 APOLOGIES
Paul Rushton, Neil Smith

3 MINUTES OF LAST MEETING 17 June 2015)

5. Parliament Street Rank. It was felt that there was a discussion at the meeting that HBC approved the rank contrary to the views of the TLG. KOB added that no risk assessment had been carried out by HBC/NYCC. GSS stated that there was nowhere for PHV to collect. CD advised that there are yellow lines outside Jamie Olivers Restaurant adding that there were a taxi rank not there members of the public would be parked so there would be no difference for pick-ups.

SR advised that he envisaged taxis would park in parking bays up the hill and on yellow lines adding that parking do not operate during the early hours. GB advised that the rank would be reviewed after one year by NYCC.

7. Post-election political arrangements HBC. JE advised that he is in fact Chair of the Licensing Committee and that Cllr Mike Chambers is Cabinet Member for Housing and Safer Communities

The notes were then recorded as an accurate record.

MATTERS ARISING

JE stated that Neil Smith had driven him into Harrogate early on a Sunday morning to see the issues that exist. He could now see the issues as raised by the group, especially in the Bambinos area. He also noted the positive impact that the Night
Marshals have when on the scene. It was discussed how CCTV could help in sorting the issues but that DPA restrictions prevent this happening in practice. KOB stated the frustration that the trade has as this has been happening for over 12 years and there are certain prolific offenders. CD advised that 3 drivers had been spoken with or written to and that one driver had been interviewed under caution.

Test purchasing was discussed and CD advised that this was being looked at and had some action planned.

SR raised the matter of drivers parking on the double yellow lines at the lower end of Kings Road at rush hour times and asked that the group ask drivers to refrain from doing this.

JH advised that he had received no contact from Jackie Snape regarding WAV bookings. GSS advised that he was getting some work from this Care Home.

CD stated that he had once again tried to get independent HC drivers to attend the TLG meeting without success.

CD advised that 2 further Safeguarding Children training sessions had been arranged during the school holidays in August.

4 TRAINING FOR HACKNEY CARRIAGE OFFICE AND DRIVERS

KOB advised that in his opinion training given to licensed drivers was far behind that of other authorities. He quoted an example of an incident in Birmingham where a coroner had blamed a LA for inadequate training. He feels the Council should take some responsibility particularly with regards the loading of wheelchairs.

GB stated that we could look into some general disability training adding that no training is ever given in other areas of licensing. DT would provide the contact details of a NYCC trainer as this could be useful.

GSS stated that it is better to be proactive rather than reactive.

5 UBER

CD advised that Uber are still pressing to meet but as yet no meeting has been arranged. He has been following up leads to see how they are performing elsewhere. He confirmed that other Authorities have their concerns with Uber’s practices and legal advice will therefore be taken before any decisions are made.

GSS considers Uber’s practices rather underhand and advised that the Taxi Trade in Harrogate have their concerns due to the controversy surrounding the company. Uber know Councils are strapped for cash and will therefore take liberties.

KOB Does not think Uber will work in Harrogate as it is quite unique in the way it works.
6 RECORDING OF DISCUSSIONS AT MEETINGS

GSS wondered if there was a better and more accurate way of recording notes from the TLG meetings. He feels the notes do not always meet requirements and some opinions are overlooked.

It was debated about using verbatim recordings but this was not considered appropriate. GB stated that anyone could see these notes if a Freedom of Information request was made.

The notes are approved before release so additions or amendments can be made prior to this if any of the group chooses to do so.

GB did not think taking full detailed minutes a good idea as this stifles conversation and the group generally agreed.

7 TRADE INPUT IN THE DECISION MAKING PROCESS

GSS stated that he did not feel that the views of the TLG are always taken into account by the Council; he made reference to the rank on Parliament Street adding that the rank was requested by the independent hackney trade, who never attend meetings anyway, This Rank was opposed by some members of the TLG group for good reason yet it was still approved. He advised that members of the trade rely heavily on the offices to earn a living (Mainline around 100 drivers) hence why they represent them at the meetings. Their time is given freely for this so their views are therefore important. He said that Private Hire vehicles outweigh Taxi’s and there needs to be provision made for this.

JE advised that the Council does listen to the TLG views; however the views of everyone must be taken into account. Decisions are made taking all the views and comments into consideration.

8 MODERNISATION OF THE LOCAL TAXI TRADE AND COUNCIL PROCESSES

GSS raised this issue however some points relating to this topic had already been discussed. He wanted to know if the Council could speed up their decision making process as it is currently very slow. He stated that it is common knowledge that there are not enough WAV’s in the area yet the trade have to wait until the next unmet demand survey before any action may be taken to remedy this.

GB stated that any decisions regarding a Policy are always a slow process as a Policy cannot be easily changed. The only way to make a decision contrary to policy is to hold a Taxi Licensing Hearing. Policies cannot otherwise be flexible as they would then be open to abuse.

A brief discussion was held as to the location of the taxi office when the new offices are built. JE asked if this could be discussed at a later meeting after everyone has given their views on the matter.

There was some debate about the proposed new Council Offices. JE said he did not think it was within the TLG’s terms of reference to discuss this matter.
9 UPDATE ON THE DEREGULATION BILL

CD outlined the changes following the Deregulation Bill. He advised that 3 parts of the Deregulation Bill had now been enacted. These were:

- Driver licences should be for a period of 3 years
- Operator licences should be for a period of 5 years
- Operators can start cross border hiring.

GB advised that HBC is now working on ways in which to adopt the above changes. As a first step he would make a presentation to Licensing Committee in September. The way in which HBC currently issue an Operator Licence would need to be revamped and it was noted that this could result in the taxi account receiving less income.

JH wants to know who is going to enforce what following the changes? JE says it will need looking at fully.

10 ENFORCEMENT MATTERS

CD advised that he has spoken and written to drivers regarding parking in the Bambinos area of town adding that a further driver had been interviewed under caution for plying for hire.

A driver had been prosecuted for refusing to take an assistance dog.

An operator had been reported for not using all restraints fitted to vehicles when carrying wheelchairs. Correct loading procedures and details of wheelchair loading training had been provided to the operator for the vehicles in question.

GB thinks the night Marshalls have upped their game and this will hopefully help resolve some of the enforcement issues.

OTHER ITEMS

JH mentioned that the papers stated that the public toilets in Harrogate were closing down?

JE noted that toilet provision was currently being reviewed. He asked how important the toilets on Tower Street and Devonshire Place were and it was agreed they were very useful. SR said there were concerns that if no toilets are available where are people going to go? Matter to be reviewed.

JH referred to difficulties collecting a disabled passenger from Beulah Street and if any leniency could be shown by the traffic wardens whilst this collection took place? SR said he would look into this but that it was difficult making exceptions.

11 NEXT MEETING

Wednesday 7th October 2015 – 10 am Crescent Gardens, Council Chamber.