

## TAXI LICENSING

### MINUTES OF A TAXI FORUM MEETING

HELD ON FRIDAY, 28 MAY 2010

Venue: Committee Room, Municipal Buildings, Boston

<b>Present:</b>	Councillor Brenda Owen	Chairman of Regulatory & Appeals Committee
	Councillor Gerry Clare	Portfolio Holder for Licensing
	Fiona White	Boston Borough Council
	Mr Ray Smedley	Boston Hackney Carriage Association
	Mr Steve Potts	Boston Hackney Carriage Association
	Mr Gary Chamberlain	Boston Hackney Carriage Association
	PC Andy Heath	Lincolnshire Police (Licensing Officer)
	Traffic Warden representative	Lincolnshire Police

Note taker – Shaun Sharp

#### 1. APOLOGIES & INTRODUCTIONS

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Helen Staples.

Introductions were made around the table.

#### 2/3. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING AND MATTERS ARISING

The minutes of the last meeting were agreed to be a true record of events.

##### Matters Arising

3. Update on Market Place Scheme  
Fiona asked if this item could be added to the end of the Agenda as it was hoped that Ian Martin (currently attending another meeting) could attend to give an update on the latest position. This was agreed by the Chairman.
4. Taxi Testing Facilities  
At the last meeting it was agreed that Fiona/Taxi Licensing would collate/monitor booking issues relating to Fen Road garage for a year – with three months gone there had been no reports received.
6. The parking of non-taxis on the Market Place taxi rank  
Fiona asked if this item could be discussed within agenda item 5 – Bylaw infringements. This was agreed by the Chairman.

7. Wide Bargate Taxi Rank

Following the last meeting, Fiona asked the CCTV Control Room to monitor usage of the current Wide Bargate taxi rank both during the day and at night-times. She read out the results that the Control Room had produced but indicated that to get a better picture she wanted to carry on the monitoring for another month.

Her reason for this is although there is room for probably 7 spaces, she did not want these spaces to be created but only 2 or 3 being actually used. It may be prudent for only 5 spaces to be created.

Stephen Potts indicated that there are certain times during the day that there are no taxis on the rank – ie school times.

AGREED – Fiona to contact LCC Highways with regard to the viability of relocating the rank and also to ask CCTV to continue to monitor the area for a further month. Once all information had been collated then a decision would be made as to how many rank spaces, if any, are to be created and the timescale for getting this done.

Fiona indicated that once the minutes have been approved by the Forum she would like them to be placed on the taxi website for everyone to have access to. This was agreed.

**[Fiona/Shاون to Action]**

**4. SIGNS AND MARKINGS ON THE TAXI RANKS**

Ray Smedley reported that the taxi rank sign in the Market Place has been removed. This was as a result of vandalism one Saturday night when the pole and sign was uprooted causing this to become dangerous – the Council had subsequently removed the pole/sign but nothing has yet been done to replace it.

Fiona explained she was not aware of this but would make enquiries as to where the sign was and would ask for this to be reinstated.

**[Fiona to Action]**

Ray asked if the road markings for the taxi rank in the Market Place could be re-done, Fiona explained that road marking is the responsibility of LCC Highways and read out an extract of a letter she had received from Highways dated 22 May 2009 with regard to road markings:-

“.....currently underway is the Civilian Parking Enforcement Orders review. All parking, loading and taxi rank orders etc are being confirmed and checked. This will result in the refreshing of appropriate road markings and signs as required, commencing later this financial year...”

She confirmed that she had heard nothing since but would contact Highways for the latest position and would also enquire about the missing sign at Bond Street.

**[Fiona to Action]**

## 5. BYLAW INFRINGEMENTS

There was an issue with the fact that often the public don't always go to the number one taxi on the rank – as is the policy. They often approach a taxi that is waiting on the rank, the driver then asks them to go over and wait at Boots, the taxi moves away from the rank and picks up the customer from the other side of the road. This is occurring more and more often. Could something be done about this.

Fiona asked the BHCA to write to her indicating which individual / company is doing this so it can be investigated separately from the Forum. This was agreed.

**[BHCA to Action]**

Fiona also suggested that perhaps vehicle renewal letters could include a sentence with regard to the Bylaws and copies of these can be provided on request by taxi licensing. Alternatively, the Bylaws are accessible via the taxi website. She indicated that the website contains a copy of the Bylaws along with a lot of other useful information for both drivers and proprietors.

Ray asked if the website address could also be included within the renewal letters. Fiona agreed.

**[Fiona/Taxi Licensing to Action]**

The Traffic Warden indicated that she had been made aware that BHCA had expressed concerns about the public parking on the taxi rank (mainly Market Place). She confirmed that both the traffic wardens and the police can ticket non-taxi vehicles that park on the rank.

She also mentioned that on occasions she and her colleagues had cause to ask taxi drivers to move off the outskirts of the rank as they were blocking the road.

Stephen explained that often drivers don't move along the ranks quickly enough. They get out of their vehicles for a smoke and don't move their cars until they had finished their cigarettes thus stopping the rest of the rank from moving forward.

The Traffic Warden indicated that there are also several areas in the town where taxi drivers drop off their customers and wait – one is the loading bay outside Marks & Spencer – she reiterated that this is not a dropping off point and if she sees taxi drivers use this or any other areas that have double yellow lines she will ticket them.

Andy Heath indicated that if a customer has a disabled badge with them (and they allow it) there is nothing to stop the taxi driver using this badge, but they must only park where it is allowed.

## 6. RE-REGULATING TAXI NUMBERS

Ray indicated that it was getting to the point that there are now too many taxis in Boston and asked if the Council could look into re-regulating numbers.

Fiona explained that years ago there was a cap on vehicle numbers but following a request it was de-regulated. If this was to happen then a survey would first have to be done to establish any unmet demands. This survey will not be cheap and unfortunately the only way to pay for this would be to increase fees as there was no council budget to cover this.

The BHCA have noticed that some of the larger taxi firms are now working off the rank, whereas a few years ago they relied on telephone work, now they can't.

Gary Chamberlain indicated that it isn't the current drivers that are a worry, it is if a new company is set up in town.

## 7. FLAGS ON TAXIS

Fiona talked about the flying of flags on taxis and indicated that although the Council did not want to be unpatriotic the safety of both the driver and passenger is paramount. The flags that are fastened to the back window can be easily torn off and used as a weapon and she asked if the BHCA could advise its members not to place the window flags in their vehicles.

There was also the fact that not everyone was football minded and taxi drivers may lose a fare because the customer may not want to get into a vehicle flying an England flag. She also referred BHCA to the taxi guidance notes with regard to advertisements.

Fiona confirmed that there will not be any publicity about what taxis can and cannot put in their vehicles during the World Cup but if we get enquiries then we will answer these individually. With regard to stickers (as mentioned by BHCA), as long as they do not impair the sight of the driver and they are not too big then licensing would not be taking any action on this. She confirmed if licensing sees any flags or receive reports / complaints of flags etc on taxi vehicles then that driver will be asked to take them off. BHCA agreed to circulate this information to its members.

**[BHCA to Action]**

With regard to the World Cup, Andy Heath referred to the article on the front page of the Boston Target and confirmed that the Police have not banned the wearing of football shirts etc – this is something that has been done to try to inflame tempers. He indicated that intelligence was being gathered as the Police did not want a repeat of the riots a few years ago and he asked if taxi drivers do hear of anything (no matter how small) if they could contact the information team on telephone 0300 111 0300 or 999 if an incident is currently happening.

## **8. MARKET PLACE ENHANCEMENT SCHEME**

Ian Martin attended for this item and circulated a draft plan of what the LCC design team had produced.

At the last Forum he reiterated that the moving of the taxi rank had been discussed. He had taken on board their comments and the best place for the new rank would be to the other side of the road outside Boots. This would entail two rows being created and it would then be up to the taxi drivers to police the way fares are taken. There would be 13 possible spaces but if these are full then he suggested that taxis could park outside the Assembly Rooms then move across when there is room. They would then join the shortest queue.

Fiona indicated that we were trying to provide the best option for drivers. Although space for 13 vehicles had been calculated, it may be that if vehicles parked closer together more than 13 could get onto the rank as it will only be the first vehicle that would need room for loading luggage etc. The only concern in having the two rows is how the drivers would work it - there may be the odd occasion when things wouldn't go right and someone would in effect 'jump the queue'.

The current rank would then be given over for disabled parking spaces.

Work is due to start in January/February 2011 and will take approximately 4-5 months.

He reiterated that the plan was by no means the final one and it would be going out for further consultation shortly.

With regard to the closure of Bank Street, he confirmed that this was not part of the Scheme but he was aware that LCC wanted to look at this, but nothing would be done until after the scheme had been completed.

Ray enquired about what was happening to the May Fair. Ian confirmed that next year it would be impossible for the May Fair to be in the Market Place due to the works, but discussions are taking place with the Showmen about this.

Ian asked if the BHCA could speak to its members, show them the plan and then let him have any comments within the next 4-5 weeks.

**[BHCA to Action]**

## **8. DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING**

10am -10 December 2010  
Venue: Committee Room