

13 March 2024

## Taxi Liaison Group

[www.southglos.gov.uk](http://www.southglos.gov.uk)

**Location:** Dings Crusaders Rugby Football Club, Shaftesbury Park, Frenchay, Bristol, South Gloucestershire, BS16 1LG

**Chair:** Councillor Sean Rhodes (SR)

**Attendees:** Councillor Keith Cranney (KC), Kevin Barley (KB), Kayleigh Morris (KM), PC Patrick Quinton (PQ), Andrew Birch (AB), Darren Keeler (DK), Lily Brine (LB), Tony Lidbury (TL), Mike Worley (MW), Sharon Shaw (SS), Will Theobald (WT), Babs Redman (BR), Paul Mathews (PM), Neil Merrick (NM), Gelu Ene (GE), Daniel Pop (DP), C Bisog (CB), Gabriel Puia (GP), Adrian S (AS), Zoe Williams (ZW) (notetaker)

**Apologies:** Paula Gillett (PG), Juan Sanzo (JS), Sashi Bhurton (SB), Matthew Freckelton (MF)

Item	Description	Action
1	Welcome and Apologies	SR welcomed everyone to the meeting and introduced Councillors and SGC staff.
2	Previous minutes, matters arising	<p><i>Minute taker</i></p> <p>The minutes of the last meeting were accepted as an accurate recording.</p> <p>The Action Log was welcomed.</p> <p><b>Matters arising</b></p> <p><i>Vehicle fitness tests - respect/consistency/communication</i></p> <p>KB reported that since the previous meeting working practices at the garage have been checked with the garage staff. For consistency the garage management team have stated they are all MOT testers (although they don't have to be) and they are working from the same checklist that is published on the website, To assist all vehicle licence holders and drivers.</p> <p>Any queries or complaints need to be raised through the new Broad Lane garage manager Paul Tudor (PT).</p>

*Broad Lane Garage – access to toilet, and disabled toilet*

AB explained that there is now a temporary toilet on site, in the car aprk outside the licensing offices, for use of people with appointments. This is a temporary measure until a more permanent solution can be found.

SR noted that this issue is being looked at seriously.

Q - Why has the toilet has been out of order for 14 months?

Q – Is there a legal requirement to provide one?

A - It is not a legal requirement but that this is not a position everyone wants to be in either. Other options are being looked at, and the need for one has been recognised.

*Additional garage/s to conduct tests, is it legal?*

KB confirmed that it is legal to only have one garage.

Q – It is being a monopoly or making profit which are not legal and those are the concerns?

A - AB explained that there is a policy review starting to look at this (the policy is reviewed every 3 years), and one part of that is provision of garages. South Gloucestershire Council (SGC) will consult and hopes to have the new policy in place by end of this calendar year.

SR clarified that just because it is legal, Members may choose to take it forward and will be looking at it very closely.

*Appealing failed tests – process*

KB explained that any concerns need to be raised with PT (garage manager) and the garage management team. They will look at the test and review the vehicle. There is no further appeal, and if you want to make a complaint, you will need to go through the council complaints process.

*Taxi Stand, B4059, Yate (outside bus station)*

PQ had brought TROs and drawings to the meeting to try and find a resolution to this.

He does not believe that voluntary buses and private hire vehicles are allowed to park on the taxi rank.

		<p><b>PQ to share TRO drawings with SS. If it is correct that West Link is not allowed to park there he will contact them about that.</b></p> <p><i>Home to School contracts</i> The Licensing team has no remit for this, but to liaise with the Client Transport team to ensure that everything is properly licensed when undertaking contract work.</p> <p>KB had raised this with Paul Kelly (PK) and will ask him to feed back to the next meeting.</p> <p>Q – Mileage above meter rate is being charged? A - This is not Licensing enforcement remit</p> <p><b>KB to seek clarification from the legal department in relation to home to school contracts.</b></p> <p><i>Plate fitting – warm airtight environment and 5 days a week service</i> <i>WAVs – exemptions for drivers</i> These are covered later on in the agenda</p>	<p>(1)</p> <p>(2)</p>
3	<p>Hackney Carriage and Private Hire licensing enforcement update – surgeries and compliance checks update from PC Patrick Quinton and Licensing enforcement team</p>	<p><b>PQ update</b></p> <p>PQ reported that he had been working on a project since last year, and this meeting is the first to hear his report:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Every month he has checked all crimes involving taxis and hire vehicles</li> <li>• Some of the figures may not be as they first appear, due to false allegations etc</li> <li>• There has been an average of 59 crimes per month in Avon and Somerset</li> <li>• Since July, 116 reports have involved violence or ASB towards drivers</li> <li>• But drivers are 3 times more likely to be the victim than the perpetrator</li> <li>• Criminal damage; there have been 43 reports against drivers, and 13 by drivers</li> <li>• 260 crimes occurred in Bristol, more than all the other areas put together, so is the focus of his work.</li> <li>• A lot of reports refer to theft, but this is not usually the case, especially with private hire. Ensuring lost property is dealt with in the right way might help.</li> </ul>	

	<p><b>PQ to update drivers to make sure lost property is handled in the right way</b></p> <p>PQ is trying to identify things that slip through the system, and also finding occasions where drivers have done a particularly good job and he can write to them and say well done. He hopes to add this to drivers' records as well.</p> <p>He asked drivers to look at how many incidents are related to hate crime. If these are recorded and show up in the statistics, he has ammunition to go back and put forward proposals for more resources, dash cams etc.</p> <p>Please do report it, we may be limited in what we can do, but we need the information.</p> <p>SR added that SGC having this data is crucial for them to be able to do anything about it too.</p> <p>Q - Problems with a Bristol company and drivers being threatened, but SGC wouldn't get involved, and they had to go to Bristol instead, although the police had been responsive? A - PQ noted that the one thing that had changed is his role being introduced working across all the councils. A new act had come into force last year which will support this, but it is still early days.</p> <p><i>Plates</i> PQ continues to keep stopping licensed vehicles with no plates.</p> <p>KB explained the current situation that plates have to be fitted in the dry, and at Broad Lane in order to maintain consistency. If there is dry weather fittings have been carried out by the Licensing team on Wednesdays and Fridays.</p> <p>Q - Why not 5 days a week? A - The service demand is currently at its highest point. Last week 93 jobs, public safety matters, came in the first 4 days, with one officer on sick leave and some on annual leave.</p> <p>KB explained that there is now no enforcement staff resource to fit plates to vehicles, so licence holders will need to fit their own, as was suggested at the previous TLG meeting. There is</p>	<p><b>(3)</b></p>
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	<p>guidance on how they must be fitted and displayed and a video on YouTube to assist.</p> <p>This week is a transition week, they will work with drivers and vehicle owners and have the handyvan staff on hand to advise and guide where needed. Enforcement and public safety are the priorities for the Licensing team.</p> <p>If SGC's circumstances change they will review.</p> <p>SGC will need to look at resourcing levels, and will continue to work with PQ to ensure no unlicensed vehicles or drivers are on the streets.</p> <p>PQ supported the new method of fixing brackets which has been brilliant and helped his workload.</p> <p>KB explained that the policy is not as helpful as it could be, but does send a clear message to drivers as to whether something is mandatory, or if other methods are acceptable, the Licensing team has worked with and supported vehicle licence holders to ensure consistency, and requests that all vehicle licence holders continue with this consistency in displaying plates.</p> <p>The policy reflects the old style vehicle plates, the new plate licence does not reflect this, there is nothing to enforce, but they are trying to ensure consistency by having all brackets and plates in the same place so that they can be viewed easily.</p> <p>Q - Why has this changed now the weather is drying up and we have been asking since day one?</p> <p>A - The problems weren't foreseen and we have tried to make it better for drivers, we are listening and trying to make reasonable adjustments.</p> <p>Points made:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• We would rather been consulted before it was implemented, and that you would have listened</li><li>• We have valuable information, and it would benefit KB's team, there is a lot of trade specific input that might help</li><li>• The bracket system doesn't work, it hits the bumper, also covering the parking sensor. We have to use car washes and the brackets specifically say you can't</li></ul>	
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4	Home to school transport update (Client Transport team)	<p><b>See above in item 2</b></p> <p>KB confirmed that Paul Kelly did not provide him anything to raise at this meeting.</p> <p><b>KB will be reviewing any intelligence gathered and report back.</b></p>	
5	Licensing Office - current service demand, and over-the-counter service updates	<p>KM reported that office appointments are up to date, the earliest is next week.</p> <p>The garage's earliest appointment is 21 April, they need at least 6 week's notice so please make contact as soon as you get the reminder.</p> <p>Q - Why is there no communication between the workshop and the main portacabin? Had an unpleasant email from the portacabin?  A - Anything like this must be addressed. Please raise it as an issue and make a complaint so it can be investigated. If any driver receives any communication from a member of staff they consider to be offensive, please follow the complaints procedure. If no one reports the problem, it can't be dealt with.</p>	

		<p>Q - The item on suicide in the Newsletter, who put it together?  A – We don't know, but would value any pointers or suggestions. The newsletter is to try and raise awareness, anything we can do to make it better we would value.</p> <p>KC spoke supporting the complaints procedure and added that we put out various information to anyone in public transport. It's about raising awareness and enabling people to help if wanted.</p> <p>Q - There is a sign in the office about poor attitudes to staff not being tolerated, but this needs to work both ways, we deserve this too?  Q - When paying for licences, you take our payment card from us and send us out to the car.  A - KM has been asking IT about this for a long time, some staff now take payment over the phone. The office is too small so we ask the driver to wait in the car.</p> <p><b>KM to email SB so they can both look at this and investigate</b></p> <p><b>SB to put on next agenda</b></p>	(5)
6	Vehicle fitness tests (Broad Lane Garage)	<p>KB reported that the current waiting time is 4 weeks, the garage management team aim for 2 weeks, but there has been a high volume of vehicles. The garage has 2 lanes and 28 or 32 appointments a day, and is covered in the policy review.</p> <p>Current issues such as added tint to windows or cracked windscreens have been highlighted with PT the garage manager, these are not permitted under the policy.</p> <p>Q - 3 vehicles needed to be plated and the garage took them in at 07:30 and did them before the working day, very pleased?  A - This will all be taken into account when looking at the policy.</p>	
7	Revisiting historical items	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>WAVs policy – report on progress</i></li> <li>• <i>WECA – taxi and private hire remit</i></li> </ul> <p>SR noted no progress to report but has now secured a meeting with Dan Norris, WECA Mayor, to look at seeing these as an area wide issue,</p>	

	<p>wanting to check if the current policy is working and what WECA is planning, so if we decide something it won't be overruled nearer the time. We can't change history, but are trying to go forward.</p> <p>Q - Hackney drivers are asking when, before the October deadline, a decision will be made on WAVs; a month before is unreasonable.</p> <p>Q - They would surely need to refund and make an exception if drivers are out of pocket because of short deadline?</p> <p>A - AB explained that this is very high on the agenda, they are actively looking at it and aim to be well in advance of the deadline.</p> <p>Q - What is the time frame?</p> <p>A - Work on the policy review has already started. Realises this is urgent.</p> <p>Q - Drivers lose money. It should be based on supply and demand. With the WECA policy being under one umbrella, they need to bring it in line; we don't have the same volume of work or need.</p> <p>A - This is coming from the DfT, not WECA, and only being floated at the moment, but we are trying to get ahead of it and specifically address issues raised.</p> <p>Q – Understand no details yet, but if we come under the same banner, will all four authorities have the same benefits? We suggested any operators with more vehicles could offer to have a percentage as WAVs?</p> <p>Q - When the policy was put on hold last year why weren't the drivers who had already changed to PH hire informed? We were told by officers that was because we were not a hackney carriage?</p> <p>Q – We have taken legal advice and been told that we are being bullied by SGC. Cllr Willmore who is supporting us and looking into compensation. She had tried to phone KB who was out of office, and the phone in the licensing office was not answered.</p> <p><b>SR asked that Cllr Willmore speaks to him to coordinate investigating this.</b></p> <p><i>Six monthly vehicle test – unnecessary fee Broad Lane Garage – missed appointment fee</i></p>	<p>(6)</p>
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8	Any other business	<p><i>Payment amount for licence and plates not available.</i></p> <p>Q - Could not find this information on the web site? A – It is on the web site, but may be harder to find. If you google South Glos licensing fees it should come up. The information is also on emails sent out. It is about to be reviewed for 2024/25. The next newsletter should have all fees for the next 12 months.</p> <p>Q – A duplicate plate was issued again. How can this happen? A – The numbers come from a spreadsheet, and if two people are using it at the same time human error can duplicate them.</p> <p><b>KM to look into this.</b></p> <p>Q – Would like an FOI on ringfenced money, to know how much there is and what is being done with it. We may be able to employ more people? Multiple visits should be charged an additional fee so as not to drain the fund. A – An FOI request can be submitted.</p> <p>Q – Was there any representation from the trade when the fees and fares were reviewed this time? A - Yes there was and there will be a meeting in March to consider and confirm fees and charges.</p> <p><i>The taxi plug-in grant has been extended until April 2025:</i> <a href="https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-to-help-more-black-cab-drivers-go-green-with-further-funding-support">https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-to-help-more-black-cab-drivers-go-green-with-further-funding-support</a></p> <p>This has been clarified by the DfT, and only applies to two type of hackney (taxi) vehicles that currently operate in London. There is nothing specific for private hire vehicles.</p> <p><b>KB will send a link and put it in the newsletter.</b></p>	(8)
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		<p>Q - Can the council limit the amount of new driver applications in the current climate?  A – The only limits in law are for hackney vehicles, there are no legal mechanisms to limit PH driver applications. We have to accept and process each application on its own merit.</p> <p>There is new best practice guidance from DfT and service staff are working to the statutory standards, as will all other licensing authorities.</p> <p>Q - If someone applies in South Gloucestershire and gets turned down, and goes to another area, could they then work in this area?  A - Each authority is expected to check, there is a national NR3 register, but nothing you can do if one authority refuses an application but then another authority grants an application for the same person. These are the challenges that the authorities face.</p> <p>Q – Can safeguarding training for drivers be renewed/refreshed?  A - We have a duty of care to all drivers so they know what is expected.</p> <p><b>KB will look into this.</b></p> <p>Q - How often does the newsletter go out?  A – It depends on what is going on that needs to be passed on.</p> <p>Q - Can we have an update of staff please?</p> <p><b>KB will discuss with PG AB and KM</b></p>	<p><b>(10)</b></p> <p><b>(11)</b></p>
9	Next meeting	<p><b>Wednesday 10<sup>th</sup> July 2024 at 10:00am</b></p> <p><b>Dings Crusaders Rugby Football Club,  Shaftesbury Park, Frenchay, Bristol, South Gloucestershire, BS16 1LG</b></p> <p><b>KB to request tables as part of the set up.</b></p>	<p><b>(12)</b></p>