



## Taxi Trade Meeting

The next meeting for the Trade with Officers of the Council will be 12.30pm – 1.30pm, on Thursday 28<sup>th</sup> May 2009, at Stockton Central Library Lecture Hall, Church Road, Stockton on Tees.

If you have any items you wish to place on the Agenda please notify us in writing by Friday 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2009.

## Notes From Last Meeting

At the Taxi Trade Meeting held on Tuesday 10<sup>th</sup> March 2009 the following items were discussed:

### 1. Notes of Last Meeting – Agreed

#### 2. Matters Arising

A member of the Association has attended the Officer Traffic Group – discussions taking place regarding the potential usage of Bishopton Lane, South End of High Street and operation of Taxi Rank.

A study is being carried out and information to be provided at a future meeting when available.

Concerns regarding the changing of the High Street Rank to go to a future meeting of the Officer Traffic Group. Site visit to be arranged and CCTV to be maintained.

### 3. Scrutiny Review

Update given, time table has slipped by a couple of months. The Trade will be consulted and asked for their views.

Items for Terms of Reference to be forwarded to Dave Kitching, who will pass them onto the Scrutiny Officer.

### 4. Other Issues

Craig Barnes gave brief update on taxis operating outside of the area and cross border hiring.

Trade made comment that the process for driver badges is too long and that is why drivers are going to other authorities. Discussion took place – main problem is not the process but the quality of the drivers themselves.

DSA tests discussed, trade stated there is a seven week waiting time. The failure rate for DSA is more than 50%, if drivers could pass initially then the waiting time may go down.

Trade asked why everybody has not done the DSA test, and appear to be saying it should be repeated.

DSA considered good practice and the Committee decided not to be retrospective for existing drivers.

### 5. Private Hire/Hackney Carriage Policy

Brief update given on new policy and dates of implementation. Trade made comment that although the start was quite “bumpy” it has ended satisfactory.

Drugs Testing – further consultation to be carried out.

The new policy is now in place and is available from the website. Officers to look at making copies available to all trade members in the future.

It was confirmed that neighbouring authorities (Tees Valley) are looking at revising their policy and are using Stockton’s as a model.

### 6. Any Other Business

Department of Transport consultation taking place, the Trade need to make their own comments. Closing date for consultation is 24<sup>th</sup> April 2009.

## Town Centre Developments

Stockton Council's Regeneration Department has recently commissioned consultants, Nathaniel Lichfield & Partners, to examine how best to improve the town centre's offer and attractiveness to retail operators, shoppers and visitors alike.

Their recommendations include potential changes to the layout of the High Street and taxi rank provision, and the Council would like to hear your views on them at the next Hackney Carriage Association meeting on 28<sup>th</sup> May.

### Private Hire and Hackney Carriage Licensing Policy

As you are probably now aware the policy was agreed and implemented with effect from 6<sup>th</sup> March 2009.

We will be arranging for copies to be available for all members of the trade shortly.

Within the policy there are a number of implementation dates which effect currently licensed vehicles and drivers.

The important dates for you to note are:

- (a) The new meter provision to apply to existing vehicles from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2012;
- (b) Euro II emission standard to apply at next licence renewal i.e. Sept/Oct 2009;
- (c) Standards for tinted windows to apply at next licence renewal i.e. Sept/Oct 2009; Please contact Officers for further information if you are in doubt regarding your vehicle windows, as a simple test can be arranged free of charge.
- (d) Training requirements for drivers/private hire operators (PHO) re NVQ and BTEC qualifications to be obtained within 12 months from next licence renewal (PHO licences will be renewed in Nov 2009; driver renewals are dealt with each month as they are granted for 12 months from the date of issue);
- (e) Existing vehicles that have previously been categorised as 'accident damaged' on their V5 document should not have their licence renewed at the Sept/Oct 2010 renewals; and

- (f) Cabinet agreed a revised specification for wheelchair accessible vehicles (WAVs) which is set out at Appendix A in the policy and determines that all **new** applications for hackney carriage vehicle licences shall be required to comply with this specification, until the total number of WAVs licensed reaches 25% of the total hackney carriage fleet, which equates to 70 vehicles, when the policy will then be reviewed. Existing licensed saloon hackney carriages can be replaced by another saloon vehicle until this policy is next reviewed (i.e. in three years time or when the total numbers of WAVs reach 70, whichever is the earlier).

Cabinet also approved the requirements for random drug testing of drivers to be included in the Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing Policy with effect from 1<sup>st</sup> July 2009 following consultation with the trade about the manner of testing to be undertaken.

### Thefts From Vehicles

There has been an increasing number of thefts from Private Hire and Hackney Carriage vehicles.

It is important when leaving your vehicles, even for a short time that you take all valuables with you. Items which are being taken are portable satellite navigation systems, PDA units, cash bags and mobile phones.

If you are a victim of a theft from your vehicle you are advised not to touch anything and call the Police to report the theft. Explain to the Officer who takes the call, that it a working vehicle and you need to be seen as soon as possible.

If you need any Crime Prevention advice please contact Eddie Lincoln (Crime Prevention Officer) at Stockton Police Station. (Tel: 01642 302311)