

EAST DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL

Report of a Meeting between Members, Taxi Proprietors and Officers held at Knowle, Sidmouth on Wednesday 26 October 2011

Present:

Councillors:

Steve Hall (Chairman)
Jim Knight (Vice Chairman)

Taxi Proprietors:

Alan J Hill - AJ Taxis
Brian Bailey - AJ Taxis
Nina Peters – Sid Valley Cars
Dave Lean (Viking Cars, Exmouth) Chairman, Exmouth Taxi Association
Rupert Crofts (Ocean Cars, Exmouth)
George Shorters (AJs Taxis, Exmouth)
Caroline Payne (Paynes Premier Travel)
Charlie Stone
Robert Fowler (AA Taxis)
Steve Dean 9Deans Taxis)

EDDC Officers:

John Tiffin – Licensing Manager
Douglas Jackson – Licensing Officer

The meeting started at 1405 and ended at 1550

1 Apologies

Apologies were received from John Huffer, (East Devon Taxi Association) and John Tucker (Sid Valley Cars) and John Loveridge (Licensing Officer)

2 Report of last meeting

The report of the meeting held on 2 June 2011 was received as signed as a true record.

3 Matters Arising

There were no matters arising from the previous meeting.

4 **Exmouth and Honiton Taxi Ranks**

Exmouth Ranks

The meeting started with a debate in relation to the Exmouth ranks, and in particular the ranks in the Strand and Victoria Road. A section of the taxi trade in Exmouth had reported that there were problems with the ranks and at the last meeting the trade was asked to come up with some proposals on how the ranks could be improved. This could then be taken as a starting point to see if Devon County Council could be persuaded to make changes to the Exmouth ranks. The operators, drivers and Taxi Association were asked if they had prepared one but due to sickness in the taxi association none had been prepared. There were various observations about how the rank had reduced income and Mr Lean asked if DCC would be prepared to move the rank. It was agreed that the Exmouth taxi trade including the association would get together and formulate their concerns over the ranks, and give them to the EDDC Licensing Office. Councillor Knight suggested that it may be worth having a site meeting and to get Councillor S Hughes involved as the DCC Highways Portfolio Holder.

There was also an issue with licensed vehicles not moving up the rank at this location, and the Licensing Officer, Mr Jackson, suggested that it may be best dealt with at the time by the drivers, which may resolve the issue. It was requested that a letter be sent from the Licensing Office to remind drivers of this issue.

Honiton Ranks

Douglas Jackson informed the meeting that the new ranks in Honiton were working well.

Beer Rank

There was an issue with the rank in Beer with a request from the Town Council that it be removed. Mr Jackson pointed out that the message is clear to use the ranks or lose them. Beer Town Council had been advised that the District Council had a duty to provide ranks and therefore the rank would need to be retained. A rank is expensive and time consuming to create and it would be detrimental to East Devon taxi users if any ranks were lost.

Sidmouth Ranks

There was a report that some of the taxi rank road markings in Sidmouth had faded badly.

Action

Douglas Jackson will await a response from the Exmouth taxi trade in relation to their concerns about the Exmouth ranks and how they think the ranks can be improved. He will then liaise with DCC and Councillor Hughes with a view to setting up a site meeting with the County Council and other interested parties. Mr Jackson will also attempt to address the issue of moving up the ranks in the Strand and Victoria Road and will contact DCC regarding the rank markings in Sidmouth.

5. **Hackney carriage and Private Hire Joint Licences**

There was a request from Caroline Payne (Paynes Premier Travel,) asking why EDDC didn't issue joint licences as some neighbouring authorities do. It was

thought this could reduce costs for the trade. Mr Tippin, Licensing Manager, suggested that the joint licence had never been properly tested in the Courts and therefore there was some doubt as to its lawfulness. The law prohibited conditions being attached to hackney carriage driver's licence but conditions could be put on a private hire driver's licence. Some Council's had seen a dual licence as a back door method of putting conditions on a hackney driver's licence. There is concern that this might not be legal and currently the Council was satisfied it was acting correctly.

Action

Mr Tippin will investigate and report back to the next meeting.

6. **Fares and Fees**

Mr Huffer Horseshoe Taxis (not present) had asked Mr Jackson to suggest that a fare increase of 8% be recommended for this year. Following a discussion on the subject all those in the trade present at the meeting agreed that due to the current economic climate that there should be no increase this year. Mr Tippin explained that as the Council had only recently started setting its budget for the year 2012/2013 it was too early to know whether there would be any fee increases. Mr Shorters asked that if a press release could be done for the trade to advertise that there would not be any fare rises in the near future.

Action

Mr Jackson will liaise with the press officer to gain positive press coverage if possible.

7. **Recent Legislation**

Mr Tippin informed the meeting that the Law Commission was looking at taxi legislation with a view to reform and update where necessary. They were looking at it as a project. It was at its pre consultation stage where the Law Commission was finding out how it all works and is planning to publish a pre consultation paper in 2012 and a draft Bill by November 2013.

8 **Wheelchair Accessible Vehicle**

Mr Jackson pointed out there was a shortage of licensed WAVs in the EDDC area and encouraged proprietors to consider purchasing that type of vehicle. It was pointed out that older vehicles could, under certain circumstances, be approved for licensing by the Committee and every encouragement would be given to that type of application but the vehicle would have to be in good condition for its age.

9. **Video Surveillance in Licensed Vehicles and Safety in General**

Mr Jackson asked the meeting if there was a need for CCTV cameras in taxis and private hire vehicles, as they acted as a great deterrent to combating assaults allegations against the driver etc. He had noted that there were some drivers that had their own type of monitoring in their vehicles, and wanted to point out that there were legalities to comply with and if it was thought necessary then work could be

initiated to getting a minimum standard and conditions in relation to the installation of a system of surveillance for the trade. It was thought by the meeting that there was no need for CCTV monitoring in licensed vehicles.

10. **Training at Exeter College**

Mr Jackson informed the meeting that there were free places at Exeter College for the NVQ Level 2 award, and he had leaflets available for anyone interested to take and contact the provider direct.

11. **Any Other Business**

Robert Fowler (AA Taxis) asked if there was a list available of licensed vehicles so that the trade had access to who was licensed and who wasn't, and could report incidents of misuse. Mr Tippin pointed out there was a list of licensed vehicles/drivers on the web.

Action

Mr Tippin to look into the matter as there may be an issue with the Data Protection Act and the information requested.

12 **Next meeting**

The Date of the next meeting would be Wednesday 15 February 2012 commencing at 2.00 pm in the Council Chamber, Knowle, Sidmouth.