

MINUTES of a meeting of the HACKNEY CARRIAGE AND PRIVATE HIRE GROUP held in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, Coalville on MONDAY, 22 SEPTEMBER 2003.

Present:

Councillors J G Coxon, R A Evans and D Howe.

Officers: Messrs R Eaton and J E Peters and Mrs C E Walters.

Hackney carriage and private hire drivers:

Messrs W Bott, R Ketcher, G J Marshall, G M Marshall, Miss G Marshall, Messrs D Morris, T Mullahy, S Sear, S Smith and B J Talbot

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor P A Hyde, Mr D Underwood and Mr D Wyllie.

There were no declarations of interest.

290. ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN

RESOLVED:

That Councillor R A Evans be elected chairman of the Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Group for the municipal year.

291. APPOINTMENT OF DEPUTY CHAIRMAN

RESOLVED:

That Councillor D Howe be appointed Deputy Chairman of the Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Group for the municipal year.

292. MINUTES

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Group held on 18 March 2003 be approved as a correct record.

293. ASHBY DE LA ZOUCH PROPOSED ENHANCEMENT SCHEME

Mr Eaton gave a verbal update on the proposed enhancement scheme for Ashby de la Zouch town centre. He stated that a representative from the County Council had informed him that a second round of public consultation would take place during November 2003 which would give detailed proposals of the extended one way system as well as an alternative scheme that has minimum impact on traffic flow. All key stakeholders including local taxi firms would be consulted on the proposals.

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In answer to a question whether there had been any feedback from members of the trade regarding the proposals, Mr Eaton stated that the earlier consultation had showed no provision for taxi ranking and following enquiries of officers at the County Council it had been confirmed that there would be ranking provision to the same number of spaces as at present. It had been decided during previous meetings of this group that the Council would make a formal request for additional ranking spaces and this had been done although no response to that request had been received. It was felt to be a matter of waiting for details of the proposals through the consultation exercise.

294. THE STOCKYARD AND JIMMY DEANS

Mr Eaton introduced Mr Vince Summer, the Head of Security at the Stockyard and Jimmy Deans, who had attended the meeting to discuss the car parking arrangements for licensed vehicles at the club and to discuss any concerns of the taxi and private hire trade.

Mr Summer stated that problems had been encountered at closing time of the premises when there were not enough vehicles present to take away customers. The club had now gone some way to alleviating those problems and had employed a local taxi firm to transport customers to and from the premises.

There had been a few problems with customers threatening taxi drivers. Mr Summer gave details of an incident which had occurred a few weeks previously when a customer had kicked a taxi and the security staff had intervened and called for police assistance. The customer had been found guilty of a breach of the peace and fined £400. With regard to intervening in violent incidents the door staff were restricted since their jurisdiction ended at the entrance to the premises. Any incident in the car park was classed as a civil matter and the security staff had no jurisdiction over those incidents. Mr Summer stated that his staff had been instructed to be very careful when dealing with such matters and adopted a softly softly approach to diffuse the situation.

A member asked whether there were still problems with taxis stopping to pick up customers on the road bend outside the club. Mr Summer confirmed that this was still happening as customers tended to walk out of the car park and wait for taxis on the roadside. In turn, taxis were then stopping on the bend to pick these customers up.

For information, Mr Summer stated that the previous manager, Mr Lea had now left the premises and contact should now be made through the deputy manager, Charlotte Stevens, and the area manager.

Members and officers thanked Mr Summer for attending the meeting.

RESOLVED:

That officers contact the transport department at Leicestershire County Council to enquire whether a road traffic order could be imposed along the road outside the Stockyard and Jimmy Deans to prevent vehicles from stopping along that road.

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295. EXTRA CHARGE IN HACKNEY CARRIAGE FARE TABLE FOR AN ESTATE CAR

This item was considered following a request made at the previous meeting, (minute no 646 refers). Officers had made enquiries of all other licensing authorities in the County and had found that no authority's fare table included an extra charge for the provision of an estate car. Officers felt that setting such a charge would be establishing a precedent and they recommended that the request be refused.

From his experience, a driver stated that in Leicester City private hire drivers tended to charge an additional £3.00 on a fare when a request was made for an estate vehicle, particularly where the journey involved loading and unloading the vehicle. He also stated that vehicles with meters could charge from the time of arrival at the pick up to leaving the drop off point. However it was acknowledged that meters were optional in North West Leicestershire.

Licensees were reminded that the local authority had no power to prescribe fares for private hire vehicles and this allowed for negotiation of the fare between the driver and the customer. Officers also stated that it was arguable that a reasonable waiting charge could be justified when additional time was required for loading and unloading a hackney carriage vehicle.

RESOLVED:

That the request for an additional charge for the provision of an estate car be refused.

296. SOILING CHARGE

Mr Eaton stated that at the previous meeting, (minute no 646) officers had been requested to make investigations into whether the District Council could pursue the soiling charge from the customer on behalf of a driver. The Council's solicitor had advised that there was no contractual connection between the District Council and a passenger. The contract was between the driver/operator and the soiling party and therefore the Council would have no legal basis for making a claim for money on behalf of a driver. If the passenger had still not paid the soiling charge after written requests by the driver/operator it would then be open to pursue the claim through the small claims court which was designed to recover debts of up to £500.

297. TAXI STAND IN MARKET STREET, ASHBY DE LA ZOUCH

Mr Eaton stated that this item had been placed on the agenda following concerns from drivers in Ashby de la Zouch that the rank was being used by some drivers outside of its operational times. Several drivers were tending to use the taxi rank earlier than 9.00pm. It was therefore suggested that the operating times of the rank should be reviewed.

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It was confirmed that the operating time of 9.00pm had been selected in conjunction with the transport department at the County Council. The space of the rank was dual use in conjunction with a bus stop. It was thought that the last bus used the stop at 8.00pm and therefore the time of 9.00pm for a start of the taxi rank had been selected, bearing in mind that most of the trade for taxis in Ashby de la Zouch took place from the pubs and clubs in the town centre during late evening.

A member pointed out that there was therefore a distinct lack of public transport between the time of 8.00pm to 9.00pm within the town centre.

RESOLVED:

That officers be requested to contact the transport department at Leicestershire County Council with a view to amending the start time of the taxi stand at Market Street, Ashby de la Zouch to 8.30pm or earlier if possible.

298. TAXI STAND IN MARLBOROUGH SQUARE, COALVILLE

A driver requested that this item be considered as he felt that use of the taxi rank by private vehicles in Marlborough Square, Coalville had substantially increased. This was as a result of the opening of the Litten Tree and Dominoes Pizzas in conjunction with the video shop and convenience store already in existence in the vicinity. The rank was marked with road markings and two distinct signs but this did not seem to deter people from parking on the taxi rank. The bottom part of the rank only came into existence after 7.00pm when it ceased to be used as a bus stop. However it had been noted that buses were also parked on the bottom part of the rank as late as 11.00pm some evenings.

Even though this matter had been discussed at previous meetings and officers had contacted Coalville Police it was felt that although action was probably taken for a short period of time this soon petered out and no police action was then taken to enforce the use of the taxi rank. It was confirmed that from time to time the Council did carry out its own enforcement exercises on the rank and had issued tickets.

It was stated that previously the taxi rank and bus stop did also have the provision of double yellow lines along its length and since the new road markings this had been removed. It was suggested that the use of double yellow lines should be reconsidered to deter people from parking.

Members enquired of members of the trade whether late night opening would cause them any problems, for example acts of violence etc. The trade stated that there were incidents in the vicinity of Marlborough Square from 11.00pm onwards and some stated that they had ceased to work in that vicinity due to problems being encountered. A later opening hour would not necessarily have an impact on the trade.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That officers be requested to enquire of Leicestershire County Council transport department whether double yellow lines could be provided along the length of the taxi rank at Marlborough Square, Coalville.

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- (b) Officers arrange a meeting with Inspector Lee of Coalville Police Station, the Chairman and Deputy Chairman of this Group, a representative from Arriva buses and Mr B Talbot and Mr D Morris of the trade.

The meeting terminated at 7.15pm.

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