

PUBLIC STATEMENT FROM MR CHRIS CULLETON, DIRECTOR UNITED TAXIS

I have 3 items I wish to bring up on Feb 4th's meeting:

1- I would urge the Licencing Committee to re think their stance on dash Cams. These cameras go a long way to safe guard not only the welfare of the driver but also members of the public. Dash Cams in the past have managed to protect drivers from theft and physical violence (which they endure regularly) and have also helped to protect passengers also. It helps with any subsequent police involvement as well. Dash Cams are relatively inexpensive and a lot more affordable than the CCTV that the council recommends as no one will take this type of CCTV on due to the huge cost incurred, especially after a year with no income. If it's data protection you are concerned about then bring in some rules on dash cam footage but please do not just dismiss their use.

2- De regulation? Surely if you have two boroughs regulated and one de regulated it makes sense to regulate all three? Especially after looking at the results of the un met demand survey.

3- There must be provision for MOT testing centres in all 3 boroughs to have just one in Bournemouth will make it so much harder to book a time slot for MOT's surely it again makes sense to have an MOT centre or centres in each borough.

Many thanks
Chris Culleton
Director United Taxi's

PUBLIC STATEMENT FROM MR KEVIN DIFFEY, CHAIRMAN OF PRC STREAMLINE TAXIS

Chair, councillors, ladies, and gentlemen.

Thank you for this opportunity to talk to you today, I hope that you have all read my letter, I was disappointed not to receive any responses to my questions, however I have always prided myself that I have sought pragmatic solutions to situations and helped the licensing authority to implement changes in a way that were acceptable to both the council and the taxi trade. We assume that the committee is trying to improve our service but has not made clear how this will be achieved by the proposed changes.

At the meeting when deregulation was suggested along with issuing 15 extra w/h vehicle licences in Poole and Bournemouth. The only issues raised were firstly one lady having a problem ordering a wheelchair vehicle, and secondly profiteering from trading in licences. At no point in this meeting were we able to respond to these comments and explain those situations. Both proposals were accepted with little discussion and this was all done in under 3 minutes.

With regard to booking wheelchair taxis the time of day is crucial - Taxi companies are very busy at school travelling time and almost all of the W/C cars have contracts. Creating more W/C taxis who sit on the rank will not solve this problem because they are mostly independent and don't take bookings. The vast majority of W/C journeys are done by private hire vehicles not taxis.

The idea that fortunes are made dealing in taxi licences is a mistake, the huge figures mentioned normally included the actual vehicle as well, and membership of the taxi company. Last week on the radio we heard a woman celebrating having won £21,000 you can imagine the emotions of the 200 or so taxi drivers who will lose a similar amount because of a council decision. Purchasing a licence is normal and, although like share prices rise and fall the licence value normally forms a part of the driver's pension arrangements.

When I bought my Taxi licence, I was surprised when the licensing officer shook my hand and welcomed me as a taxi driver as I had been a private hire driver for two years. He explained that having made a financial commitment to the taxi trade I was more likely to provide a better service to my customers.

Why do we have regulation? The answer is to control the number of vehicles that can use the taxi ranks to reduce congestion and emissions and maintain standards. The BCP area is the 6th most congested town in the country this proposal could make the situation worse by increasing the number of vehicles on the roads.

The results of deregulation can be seen in Christchurch. This zone has far too many taxis for its needs and most of them work as private hire vehicles in Bournemouth and Poole.

Taxis are able to work from ranks. If more cars are taxis, the result would lead to much poorer service levels outside of the town centres honeypots, leaving passengers in suburbs to wait longer, for pickups, **and** massive congestion on the ranks in towns.

The Taxis are expected to drive to another rank if one is full but with the number of rank spaces we have lost and the extra cars with licences they will be forced to drive around causing even more air pollution.

The 15 extra W/C plates, if taken up, will be done so by existing PH driver who will probably leave the company they work with because they cannot afford to buy a w/c car and pay the company subscription, which covers the cost of the telephone operators, booking system etc. They will find it extremely hard without the facility to take bookings. They will operate wholly off of the ranks where very few w/c journeys originate. Many passengers will often choose to get in a saloon car behind them on the rank rather than a large van type vehicle. This could lead to a reduction of these cars.

We all recognise that improvements have to be made, the current guidance on best practice, which was originally written when Tony Blair was Prime minister is outdated. Deregulation has been tried in a number of Councils such as Guildford, and Milton Keynes of which, these two have now reverted to regulation because of the disruption it caused with too many cars in the city and town centres.

This decision will impact on the travelling public and on the livelihoods of the many taxi drivers and private hire companies in the BCP area.

We are horrified at the proposals and frankly scared at the effect that it will have on our taxi service in the BCP region. The only opportunity we have had to discuss a solution was to take part in the consultation. This has unfortunately been curtailed due to the Covid situation and there has not been an opportunity for the taxi trade to discuss the issues and proposals in detail with the licencing committee as we would normally do. We need to be able to respond to and ask questions of each other in order to avoid potential problems from this proposal as it stands.

In this exceedingly difficult time, with the taxi trade on its knees due to the reduction in travel, we need to take the time to properly discuss and plan the way forward together. We have been successfully running taxi services in Bournemouth and Poole and have had praise for the excellent service we provide. We share your aims of further improvement, but the situation caused by this Covid crisis has not allowed the normal across the table discussions and has led to an unhealthy adversarial situation. It does not need to be like that.

Taxis will be needed when things get back to normal and we need nurturing not penalising. In other councils' taxi companies have been given grants or free relicensing for their taxis drivers to ensure that they can weather the crisis, BCP has reduced the amount they are paying taxis on unused school contracts to 50% This apparently is not happening in other council areas, including Dorset.

The taxi trade would like to suggest that the policy being discussed is passed with a delay on section 16 allowing vital in-depth evidence-based discussions on this section between all parties.

If you have any questions or comments I would be happy to respond through the chat box during this meeting or by email or phone afterwards.

PUBLIC STATEMENT FROM MR DAVID LANE, POOLE TAXI ASSOCIATION

Madam Chair and Councillors,

Thank you for this opportunity to make representation to you concerning the proposed new policies for the regulation of our trade.

I would like to comment on two areas, namely the unmet needs survey / de-regulation and the age of vehicles.

Firstly, the results of the unmet needs survey, conducted on behalf of BCP Council by LVSA during February last year, concluded that there was no evidence of any unmet demand and recommended 'that there is no need to increase the number of Hackney Carriages at the present time to meet the needs of the general public'. It went on to state that 'If a limit to the number of Hackney Carriages in Christchurch were to be considered, such a limit could be justified on the basis of no significant unmet demand in Christchurch'. This report has not been discussed with representatives of our trade but the options available to the committee were included in the proposed Vehicle Policy at para 16 without any recommendation. In view of this you agreed, at your last meeting, to ignore the report's recommendations and introduce radical changes to the make-up of the Hackney Carriage fleets in Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole.

In our view this decision, made without the benefit of any consultation, will have many unintended consequences for most users and providers of taxi services throughout the BCP area. In view of this we request you to reconsider the decision you made at your last meeting and remove the paragraph from the policy and replace it with a commitment to enter meaningful, and preferably face to face, consultation with all interested parties. It is also fair to say that such a decision would enable the consultation to take place when the effects of the pandemic on the fleet are clear.`

We notice that the working party met on 14 January to consider the replies to the consultation and are disappointed to see that the move to a Hackney Carriage fleet of unlimited size and eventually comprising only Wheelchair Accessible Vehicles is still included in the vehicle policy. We are still hopeful that you will today agree to our request to remove this from the policy and discuss it separately.

Nonetheless we would like to point out that should you agree to adopt it as currently proposed that customers would eventually be forced to travel in a WAV whenever they wish to use a taxi. Many individuals find it difficult to do so due to the height of the vehicle and many others for differing reasons do not wish to travel in 'van type vehicles'. A fleet of mixed vehicle types enables the differing demands of individual customers to be met. . It is also clear that the vast majority of requests for WAVs are made in advance and fulfilled by PHV Operators so there is need for a total WAV taxi fleet.

We do not believe there is any evidence to support the proposed issue of 15 new vehicle licences in both Bournemouth and Poole for each of the next 5 years and are of the view that the only result would simply be over provision.

The deregulation of taxi numbers also causes problems with over demand for rank spaces, resulting in the drivers seeking work as PHVs away from their Zone. Such behaviour has resulted in many authorities re regulating their fleet.

Although we would obviously prefer the status quo to be maintained we believe that there are ways that could be explored and incorporated within the change, should you decide to continue with deregulation, to avoid introducing these difficulties. It is to enable these to be pursued that we again suggest the removal of this paragraph from the policy documents and replace it with a commitment to enter into consultation once the situation allows. In any event we would implore you to, in the absence of any other support given to our trade by BCP Council (unlike many other authorities as publicised in PHTM) to at least postpone the release of any additional vehicle licences for a minimum of 12 months.

To sum up it is our view that the best way to ensure that the needs of customers are met is to have a fleet regulated in terms of size and mix as this is the best way to ensure the viability of each vehicle. Any increase in vehicle numbers dilutes the profits available to each owner, and subsequently a reduction of standards, which is surely what we all wish to avoid.

With regard to the age of licensed vehicles I must say that there are a number of contradictory statements throughout the vehicle policy. This seems to be due 1) to an attempt to be fair to the industry, over the introduction of a new livery for Hackney Carriages, (no need to conform until vehicle changed BUT required by 31/12/2024) and 2) to requiring all vehicles to conform to Euro 6 standards by 31/12/2023 even though this is less than 10 years since this standard became compulsory in September 2015. A date of 31/8/2025 for all vehicles to be Euro 6 compliant would seem to be equitable.

In view of these inconsistencies, and the recent government announcement concerning diesel and petrol vehicles post 2030, we would suggest combining an absolute age of 15 years from the date of first registration with a clear requirement for all vehicles to conform with latest emission standards (Euro6, Hybrid or full EV etc.) within 10 years of them being required by law.

Such a clear policy would enable all vehicle owners to make informed decisions, now and for years into the future, concerning the replacement of their vehicles. It would also mean that the Council would be one of the first to establish such a green policy for its licenced vehicle fleet.

Thank you once again for receiving this address.

PUBLIC STATEMENT FROM MR PAUL SONDEIM, TREASURER BOURNEMOUTH STATION TAXI ASSOCIATION (BSTA)

Good Afternoon,

my name is Paul Sondheim, and I thank you for letting me speak to you on behalf of the Bournemouth Hackney trade which counts to date 249 Hackney cabs.

It has come to my knowledge that a taxi workshop meeting that was held on the 14th January 2021, where five Licensing Councillors (including the Chairman, Nananka Randle and legal officer Linda Cole both attended).

I noticed from the minutes of this meeting that something had been added by Licensing to the original proposals (page 12 /no17 Hackney Carriage Livery). Namely, that vehicle door insignias will clearly state the zone of each vehicle and MORE IMPORTANTLY can be easily be replaced when zones are removed at the next review of this policy in 2025. This statement regarding the removal of zones in 2025 is not in the original proposals. To me it sounds like you've already made up your minds to go ahead and ignore the consequences to the Hackney driver, their businesses which the HMRC class as a business like any other, and most importantly to provide for their families and dependents.

On page 3 of this policy under the heading Introduction as stated :- The Licensing Committee and officers are committed to ensuring the highest standards in order to protect the Public safety when administrating this policy.

With reference to the administration of this policy to protect the public safety, we have stated in our petition (which you should have all seen) with facts why this is not the case with all 3 boroughs being the same colour of white especially with information from recognised motoring organisations and insurance companies that white and silver are the worst visual colours for safety.

Page 4 of the Policy 6.2 (1st line) any significant amendment is one that:

Is likely to have a financial affect on every single License Holder. This means to the trade that they will not be able to manage the upkeep of their vehicles to the correct standard and causing financial hardship generally.

I understand that the formation of a new Council is not an everyday occurrence and wanting to put a new identity on the new Boroughs is at the forefront of the Council's mind. But these proposals have not been thought through and without care to the Taxi trade almost verging on showboating so people can have their names placed in gold letters on a board saying this is what we did for BCP.

15 wheelchair accessible licensed vehicles (WAV) issued per year in Bournemouth and Poole with no restrictions in Christchurch. So that means anyone can buy a vehicle that have met the BCP requirements and start work or create no work through the same amount of public using even more cabs. Recently it has been stated that Bournemouth is the 6th worst in the whole country for congestion and in the South is only second to Brighton. This proposal can only make the situation worse for Bournemouth town.

So why waste £24.000 on a survey in January 2020, that said that there was no unmet demand across the 3 boroughs. Ignore the £24,000 survey and then no.26, chapter 16:- Advice from Council – that a Council can remove limits previously imposed at any time and no evidence is

needed of unmet demand. And the statement of the Council I quote:- this will give applicants of BCP licenses a level playing field. PLEASE TELL ME HOW ?????

We have all invested time, money and some of us have gone that extra mile to try and safeguard our trade and to give the public the greatest of services.

To finalise I would like to know why Bournemouth Licensing are going ahead with these policies when the Country is heading into the worst financial recession since World War 2. That is after the Government have got the Covid 19 virus under control. Don't you think these policies are insensitive in normal times, let alone with what the nation is going through and heading towards.