

Cheltenham Borough Council taxi / PH licensing policy working group 2017

Meeting (1), 30<sup>th</sup> March 2017

Licensing of private hire and hackney carriage drivers

Attendees:

Cllr Adam Lillywhite

Cllr Paul McCloskey

Cllr David Willingham

Rob Bates (Starline)

Leon Jackson (Starline)

Stuart Hawthorne (Hackney Carriage Assoc)

Gary Knight (Hackney Carriage Assoc)

John Donoher (independent HC driver & proprietor)

Phil Cooper (CBC Licensing Officer)

Andy Fox (CBC Senior Licensing Officer)

Cllr McCloskey agreed to chair the meeting.

Record of matters discussed.

Local knowledge test

Officers propose to remove the existing knowledge test and replace with:

- (1) A mandatory training course for all new drivers covering law and conditions, safeguarding, accessibility and more;
- (2) A shorter knowledge test concentrating solely on the knowledge of the borough.

There was agreement in principle from the group, with the following comments:

- The new process should result in no additional time to the application process. Officers confirmed that the actual process has yet to be decided but it is likely that the course and short LKT would be held as regularly as the current knowledge test, so there shouldn't be any additional delay for applicants.
- General comments about the local geography test especially if it follows the existing format – some concerns that new drivers are passing the test but don't seem to know their way around. Concern that 'places of interest / name the street' may not be the most robust way of testing knowledge of the borough because it doesn't include residential streets or routes from A to B, which would be more rigorous but potentially more difficult to set / mark such a test.
- If the basic numeracy section is removed from the test it should be incorporated into the training course or tested in some other way. It was felt by the group to be vital that drivers should be able to calculate change correctly.
- The basic English section can be removed because there is now an English proficiency test, which should be included in the policy in the first paragraph of the driver section alongside criminal record check, driver assessment etc.

### Medical assessments

Some members of the group felt that a 3 yearly medical is excessive and costly, pointing out that other professions are not so regularly tested. One member of the group felt that there should be just one medical assessment at the new application stage, after which it should be left to the driver to visit their doctor as required and report medical conditions to the council as they arise. Other members of the group said this could mean a taxi driver not having a medical for decades.

Other members of the group felt that 3 yearly is not excessive and is a safeguard so that drivers who have developed conditions cannot keep them from the licensing authority.

The working group asked officers to check how regularly some other professions are medically tested, the answer to which is as follows: bus drivers and pilots every 5 years until age 65 then every year, although pilots are subject to other more frequent tests on specific issues such as ECG, respiratory function etc.

Officers explained that the 3 yearly medical requirement (up to age 65) is because licences are renewed every 3 years and a new medical is required each time the licence is renewed because the council needs to be satisfied that the person is fit before issuing a licence.

There was no unanimous agreement on this.

Re over 65s requiring annual medicals – this should be accompanied by a statement of due regard to explain why it is not age discrimination.

### NVQ

Officers explained that this was introduced as a mandatory requirement around 7 years ago and since then there have been several changes to our other procedures, including a much more robust knowledge test for new drivers, a more comprehensive driving assessment, an English test and mandatory safeguarding training. In addition to which government funding for the NVQ has now been withdrawn (although some training providers have sourced some funding from the EU) which means it has the potential to be prohibitively expensive for drivers (£hundreds). Consequently officers are recommending removing this requirement. Working group members were in agreement as long as officers ensure / are satisfied that the important parts of the NVQ are being covered elsewhere e.g. through the training course for new drivers and the driver assessment.

### Drivers' badges

Officers are recommending enforcing the requirement that drivers should return their badges on renewal / expiry of their licence, in the same way that we take back expired vehicle plates before issuing new ones (this is already in the policy but is not enforced). There was general agreement although it was pointed out that whilst we give out 2 badges to every driver, most only use 1 and therefore are unlikely to return both. Should we change this so that we only issue 1 driver badge?

### Vaping / e-cigarettes

General agreement in principle on a policy ban on drivers vaping or using cigarette substitutes in vehicles, however it is understood that there would be resource implications in terms of enforcement and also difficult to take action because, unlike smoking, driving a taxi / PHV whilst vaping is not an offence in law.

### Penalty points system

Discussion about potentially introducing a points system for enforcement and disciplinary matters, whereby officers and / or licensing committee would impose points on a driver/proprietor/operator's record in the event of that person breaching a policy requirement or law. Once points accrue to a certain pre-defined level, e.g. 10 points in a 12 month period, their licence would be reviewed by the committee.

Comments:

- System must be clearly defined, i.e. what breaches / offences will incur points and how many? The trade must be made fully aware.
- Must incorporate a clear and fair avenue for appealing or disputing points imposition. Officers explained that in Worcester any such appeals are referred in writing to the licensing manager. Several members of the working group felt that this is unfair as it's still the licensing team deciding. Would prefer appeals / disputes to be considered by an independent arbiter.
- If introduced could it be on a trial basis? It would need to be more than a year to test whether it works, so review the scheme when the policy is next reviewed?

### Code of conduct

Item f, CCTV – could the wording be changed to make it apparent that the council encourages drivers to install CCTV both for crime prevention and to protect themselves against allegations. There followed a brief discussion about making CCTV mandatory but no one felt that is the right way forward.

Item g – some drivers think having a safe in the boot makes them a target for thieves, especially if it became mandatory and people knew about them. Accepted that it's just something drivers should consider – not mandatory.

Item k doesn't define what 'vulnerable' is and why only at night? Also if a driver drops off (for example) a young woman at night and then sits in the car watching her until she's indoors, that in itself looks creepy and could invite complaints about the driver. And what if the person asks to be dropped off in a dangerous place, should the driver refuse to leave her there because they can't ensure she's safe? Suggestion that instead of requiring drivers to do this, there could be a sticker in the car saying "If you would like the driver to wait at your destination until you are safely indoors, please ask."

Item j. Consider amending the wording so that it includes a requirement to work with the taxi marshals and not to unreasonably refuse a request from them. This led to a wider discussion about

the marshals and what they should and shouldn't be doing, including allegations that they cherry-pick certain jobs for the drivers they know.

Medication – add a requirement that drivers who are taking prescription medication must read and adhere to the prescription instructions and must not drive if the prescription instructions say not to.

Discussion about sports clothes – some rugby / football tops are expensive and quite smart and should be allowed. Counter-argument that such items can cause confrontation.

Re “footwear not secured around the heel” (e.g. flip-flops) could this be broadened out to include other sorts of inappropriate shoes, e.g. large heels?

Under responsibility to residents, change “remain in the vehicle” to “remain with the vehicle”.

#### Appendix I, diabetes policy

Agreement from the group to remove this as it seems unnecessary when we don't have separate policies for other medical conditions.

#### Appendix J relevance of convictions

No issues with this but a request to include domestic violence in para 2.6, also modern slavery if it's not already included elsewhere.

#### General

Where there is a specific requirement on a driver, e.g. to pass a knowledge test or report something to the council, the language should be changed from “shall” / “is required to”, to “**must**”. Applicable throughout the policy for consistency.

Wherever the term “his or her” appears, replace with “their”.

The data protection statement that appears on our application forms (“the council will use / share your data for the following reasons”) should also be in the policy.

There's a requirement that drivers must hold “a full UK driving licence (or recognised equivalent)”. Is that still the case or do all resident UK drivers now have to be holders of UK licences? Officers to check.

Under ‘first application procedure’:

(d) explain what DBS stands for

(f) explain that the approved provider's details are on the website, or provide a link

(g) change to reflect the fact that there will be a knowledge test of local geography and a mandatory training course

Add one more: (h) Successfully demonstrate proficiency in English by way of a test or an appropriate qualification.

Under criminal record include a sentence explaining that all convictions, cautions, driving endorsements must be declared **including foreign ones**.

Foreign nationals – where it says they must provide an English translation of certain documents, should we explain that this will be at the applicant’s expense and not the council’s?

Knowledge test – change to reflect new training course etc and also remove the statement that they can pay 48 hours before the test.

Under driver renewal applications (b) , change “DVSA” to DVLA and delete (f) .

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## Cheltenham Borough Council taxi / PH licensing policy working group 2017

### Meeting (2), 6<sup>th</sup> April 2017

#### Licensing of private hire and hackney carriage **vehicles**

Attendees:

Cllr Adam Lillywhite

Cllr Paul McCloskey

Cllr David Willingham

Rob Bates (Starline)

Leon Jackson (Starline)

Muhammad Hasnain (Hackney Carriage Assoc)

Gary Knight (Hackney Carriage Assoc)

John Donoher (independent HC driver & proprietor)

Phil Cooper (CBC Licensing Officer)

Andy Fox (CBC Senior Licensing Officer)

Cllr McCloskey agreed to chair the meeting.

#### Record of matters discussed

Before dealing specifically with policy matters there was a general discussion about out-of-town vehicles, i.e.:

- PHVs that are licensed in another borough and dispatched by an operator in that borough to do a job in Cheltenham
- HCVs that are licensed in another borough doing pre-booked work in Cheltenham (whether through an operator or not)

Some members of the working group felt that this situation, while legitimate in law, lowers standards, creates an unfair playing field, reduces the amount of work available for drivers licensed by CBC and makes enforcement more difficult.

A member of the working group said there is an article in the latest PHTM saying that some insurers are beginning to issue borough-specific insurance, e.g. you’re insured to do PHV work in Tewkesbury but not in Gloucester because the risks there are greater. The member of the group asked what officers can do about this – for example stopping out-of-town vehicles to check their insurance. Officers advised that if an out-of-town vehicle is working in Cheltenham on a legitimate pre-booked

job, even if their insurance is invalid for the reasons described above, CBC wouldn't be able to take any action against them as they're not committing a licensing offence. Driving without insurance is a police matter and CBC officers would have no jurisdiction.

#### Wheelchair accessible vehicles

The current policy requirement is that all new hackney carriages must be:

“... disabled accessible as per London Public Carriage Office Specification, Eurocab M1 Specification or such other nationally accepted specification as is agreed by the Council (see appendix C)”

whilst appendix C says they must be: “designed or adapted to M1 standard.”

Some members of the group felt that the policy requirement should be (and they believe used to be) Eurocab M1 or London Public Carriage Office standard specification only. The result of allowing vehicles that only comply with standard M1 specification – rather than Eurocab specification – is that vehicles such as the Peugeot Partner / Premier are now within the required specification, whilst they are really only domestic vehicles, not public carriage vehicles.

Members of the group stated that the difference between standard M1 spec and Eurocab M1 spec is that vehicles complying with the latter are larger and most importantly safer, because wheelchairs can access/exit the vehicle through 2 doors (rear and side) rather than just the rear door. Some members of the group felt that in the event of a collision involving the rear door on a Peugeot Partner for example, a passenger in a wheelchair could become trapped in the vehicle as there is no other suitable exit.

The suggestion by the group is that the specification should be amended and tightened up to allow only those wheelchair accessible vehicles that have been approved or designed for taxi work, i.e. Eurocab M1 or London-style taxis, and not to allow standard domestic wheelchair accessible vehicles such as the Peugeot Partner.

#### Unmet demand / limiting numbers of hackney carriages

The current policy does not limit the number of hackney carriages, but it does place a requirement on all new hackney carriages to be wheelchair accessible. Some members of the working group felt that the number should be capped as there is no unmet demand in Cheltenham.

Officers explained that the process for introducing a cap would be to get approval from Members to consult with the trade on a proposal to commission an unmet demand survey, which would need to be paid for by the trade, to establish if there is an unmet demand in the borough. In the event of there being no unmet demand, a cap could be introduced but the survey would need to be repeated at intervals, again to be paid for by the trade (in theory it could be met through an increase in hackney carriage vehicle licence fees). Officers further pointed out that current government recommendation is not to impose caps.

All 3 of the hackney carriage trade reps present in the meeting confirmed that they want the council to look into consulting with the trade on carrying out an unmet demand survey to consider a cap on numbers.

### Colour policy

There was a discussion about the requirement, introduced 2 years ago, for all new/replacement hackney carriages to be silver in colour and all new/replacement private hire vehicles to be any colour but silver. At this stage, 2 years down the line, it is not immediately noticeable that the hackney trade is predominantly silver but that will change over time (of all hackneys licensed by CBC the split is currently around 60% silver to 40% not silver).

There was a discussion about the fact that silver is not an unusual colour and hackney carriages licensed elsewhere can be any colour, which muddies the water, as well as unlicensed private vehicles that are silver. There was a discussion about the possibility of introducing a single wrap on the bonnet with a different colour. This would immediately identify that it is a licensed Cheltenham hackney and differentiate it not only from licensed CBC private hires, but also differentiate it from out of town cars and private vehicles. However on discussion, in general the group felt that the top-light displaying the word taxi, the green plate on the back and the fact that all of CBC's taxis will ultimately be silver, is enough to differentiate them from private hire vehicles and there is no need or desire to introduce any changes to this part of the policy at this stage. The silver policy has only been in effect for 2 years so the impact should be more noticeable next time the policy is reviewed in 3 years.

### Age policy

The policy currently states that all vehicles being licensed for the first time (i.e. not renewals) must be under 5 years of age. It was generally felt that this does not need to be changed, although some members of the group felt that if the council's priority is reducing emissions, it could incentivise drivers to buy hybrid cars by relaxing or exempting them from the 5 year age requirement. As hybrid cars are more expensive it is difficult to afford one that is under 5 years. So the requirement would be, for example, "Must be under 5 years of age (or 10 for hybrid vehicles)".

Some members of the group felt that 10 years is too old to license a vehicle for the first time regardless of emissions, especially as emissions are not the only priority when licensing a vehicle (other important factors are the appearance and most importantly the safety of the vehicle, both of which can be compromised by its age), but the requirement could be relaxed to 7 or 8 years for hybrid vehicles if people felt it was appropriate to do so in order to improve emissions.

### Roof sign

The current policy requirement is that HCVs must be fitted with an illuminated sign on the roof, of a design approved by the council. The HCV proprietors/drivers present felt that the design currently approved by CBC is too large and causes drag, which increases emissions and is only guaranteed up to 60mph. General agreement from the group to look into changing the approved roof sign or relaxing this requirement, as long as it remains clearly recognisable that it is a CBC vehicle.

### Testing station arrangements

General approval from the group that the trade is currently restricted by only being able to use 1 approved testing station and that this should be opened up to other garages – but not just any garage. The general agreement was that there should be a set list of approved local garages which

will carry out both the MOT and the fitness test - although some members of the group felt that the fitness test is unnecessary and should be replaced by a visual test by licensing officers, which officers said is not practical with current resources.

The requirement at the moment is that all vehicles must have an MOT and fitness test when first licensed and again annually thereafter on renewal until age 8, after which the MOT and fitness test must be carried out every 6 months. Those present felt that this arrangement is acceptable although some felt that the fitness test is unnecessary and some people felt that 6 month test should apply to all vehicles, not just those over 8 – there was no consensus on this. Some suggested it might be better to test vehicles more frequently based on their mileage rather than their age, but again there was no consensus on this.

### Misc

One member of the group felt that just as it is a requirement for PH vehicles to display their operator's signage on the doors, HC vehicles affiliated with an operator should also display their operator's signage. Officers pointed out however that this requirement is because PH vehicles must be dispatched by an operator whereas HC vehicles don't have to be. Also HC vehicles could be affiliated with multiple operators so it would be impossible to enforce.

Officers mentioned that some authorities have a third colour plate for temporary vehicles, a 'T-plate' (green for example) which immediately indicates that the vehicle is only licensed on a temporary basis. This would only apply to hackneys because we don't issue temp plates for private hire vehicles. There was a general discussion but no decision made on whether or not this is worthwhile.

The requirement to display advance booking stickers should be changed to say the stickers must be clearly visible (a councillor pointed out that a driver who appeared before committee last year admitted that he had the stickers but that they were not clearly visible).

Applicable throughout the policy: Use paragraph numbers rather than bullet points so that specific sections in the policy can be referred to and found more easily. When referring to multiple appendices they should be listed in order, appendix A, B, C etc.

Include the byelaws applicable to hackney carriages as an appendix to the policy.

Under trailers – remove “must comply with Road Vehicles (Construction and Use) Regs” as we shouldn't be duplicating legislation. Or change to advisory.

Under communications devices – update so it gives advice re using mobile phones, also radios are now rarely used but where they are used they have at least 2 frequencies, not 1. Radios must be licensed.

Under CCTV – include a reminder that they must be registered with information commissioner.

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Cheltenham Borough Council taxi / PH licensing policy working group 2017

Meeting (3), 13<sup>th</sup> April 2017

Licensing of private hire and hackney carriage **vehicles**

Attendees:

Cllr Adam Lillywhite

Cllr Paul McCloskey

Cllr David Willingham

Rob Bates (Starline)

Leon Jackson (Starline)

Stuart Hawthorne (Hackney Carriage Assoc)

Gary Knight (Hackney Carriage Assoc)

John Donoher (independent HC driver & proprietor)

Phil Cooper (CBC Licensing Officer)

Andy Fox (CBC Senior Licensing Officer)

Cllr Willingham agreed to chair the meeting.

Record of matters discussed

Continuing the review of the vehicles section of the policy, which we began the previous week.

Type approval

Members of the group mentioned again that the eurocab M1 standard should be the only approved standard for new wheelchair accessible hackney carriages (see notes from meeting 2) and suggested that when consulting on this, disabled groups should be included in the consultation.

Tinted windows

Current policy requirement is that vehicles may only have tinted glass if it is factory fitted, but members of the group feel that factory fitted tints are now darker so this should be changed. In particular the group felt that for public safety reasons there should be no privacy glass permitted.

A suggestion was made that the policy could have a specific maximum % tint, although it was pointed out that this may make it more difficult to buy cars (i.e. they already have to be silver and now we're saying they must also not have a tint of more than x% in the glass). Also who tests the tint %, licensing officers? The approved garage?

Would vehicles that are plate exempt also be exempt from the tint requirement?

The group suggested that officers should take this away and see what other councils do about this.

First aid kit and fire extinguisher

The group felt that this should be either removed completely, or changed to advisory. In particular drivers are not insured or trained to administer first aid or to tackle fires so would be reluctant to use them. Some operators routinely tell their drivers not to use them due to concerns about litigation.

## Advertising

Page 32 – “Advertising, please see policy attached” – change from F to E

The original policy only allowed advertising on purpose-built HCVs, for example London style. However it now appears to allow any HCV to have external 3<sup>rd</sup> party advertising, but not PHVs.

General agreement that the policy should either revert to purpose-built HCVs only, or should be broadened to include PHVs, but if the latter then there should be a caveat that full-body wraps on PHVs should have no silver colouring at all, and adverts on HCVs should be at least 60% silver.

It was generally agreed that while the group doesn't have a problem with 3<sup>rd</sup> party advertising, which is a good way of drivers making some additional income, it does compromise the silver / not silver policy.

## Plate exemption (PHVs only)

General discussion about whether this should apply only to vehicles that are executive or luxury in terms of their make/model, or whether it should be based on the sort of work they do - e.g. GCHQ may not want their vehicle to stand out so may want it to be a standard saloon vehicle, not a luxury vehicle. Whilst there was no general agreement on this it was agreed that drivers applying for plate exemption or renewing their exemption must provide clear evidence of the work they're doing and it must be up-to-date. In particular a vehicle should not be plate exempt simply because it does normal airport runs – in fact for enforcement reasons those vehicles should have a plate as they are monitored by airport security.

## Differentiating between HCVs, PHVs and private vehicles

The issue of a single wrap on HCV bonnets was brought up again (see notes from previous meeting) but the HCV reps present said they had spoken to colleagues in the trade and there is no appetite for introducing this so soon after introducing the silver policy 2 years ago. The group in general agreed to leave this alone until the next policy review, although it led on to a more general discussion about how to educate the public to know the difference between HCV, PHV, out of town vehicles and unlicensed vehicles. For example could the council do more, particularly around race-week, in terms of advertising the differences? “If you get into an unlicensed taxi you're just getting into a stranger's car”.

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Cheltenham Borough Council taxi / PH licensing policy working group 2017

Meeting (4), 20th April 2017

Operators and miscellaneous

Attendees:

Cllr Adam Lillywhite

Cllr David Willingham

Rob Bates (Starline)

Leon Jackson (Starline)

Gary Knight (Hackney Carriage Assoc)

John Donohoe (independent HC driver & proprietor)

Phil Cooper (CBC Licensing Officer)

Andy Fox (CBC Senior Licensing Officer)

Andy Burford (Transport Procurement & Compliance Manager, Gloucestershire County Council)

Cllr Willingham agreed to chair the meeting

### Record of matters discussed

#### DBS checks for operators

The policy currently requires operators to complete a standard DBS check, although in practice most operators already have enhanced DBS checks because they are also licensed drivers. Could this be changed so that all DBS checks for operators are enhanced?

A comment from the working group that whilst the operator must be DBS checked, their staff are not required to be, even though it is normally the staff who take bookings and dispatch the drivers. We can't introduce this as a mandatory requirement as the staff are not individually licensed, but could it be introduced as recommended good practice?

#### Convictions

The policy states that an operator with convictions will be dealt with as per appendix J – however appendix J deals mainly with how drivers with convictions are treated. Should it be rewritten to include a specific section for operators? For example a conviction for a driving related offence should be treated more seriously for drivers than operators because operators don't drive passengers.

#### Voluntary code of conduct for licensed operators

A suggestion from the working group that licensed operators could be asked to agree to a code of conduct, with the following examples as starting points:

- (1) Operators will ensure that each person employed by them who takes bookings will supply to the operator a basic criminal record check (for example a Disclosure Scotland).
- (2) Operators who sub-contract a Cheltenham booking to an out-of-town operator or to an out-of-town hackney carriage, will ensure that a silver vehicle is not used.

#### Planning permission

Operators are advised to get planning consent for their premises but this is not checked and an operator's licence would not currently be refused if they didn't have the appropriate planning permission. Should this be more stringently required? Should licensing have a consultation process

with planning to ensure operators have the appropriate planning permission? This may discourage people setting up as operators from domestic addresses.

#### Duty to keep records

Appendix H requires operators to keep records of drivers, vehicles, desk staff and bookings for two years, however a member of the working group felt that the data protection act limits the amount of time such records can be kept to a maximum of 12 months. Can officers check this?

#### Duty to submit records

The policy requires all operators to submit quarterly records of drivers, vehicles and staff to the licensing team. Whilst this has occasionally been useful when trying to locate a particular driver (e.g. following complaint or if the police are seeking a witness), it is felt that it is overly burdensome on the operators to have to do this 4 times a year and also adds unnecessary admin for the licensing team in terms of sending reminder letters etc. The working group generally feel that operators should be required to keep the information and make it available on request rather than be required to send quarterly returns – although it was mentioned that in the event of an urgent enquiry (e.g. police seeking a witness) officers would be in the position of having to contact every operator as the records would not be on file.

#### Licence duration

Policy states that operators licences will be issued for 1 year. This is now 5 years.

#### Subcontracting

The law allows an operator, upon taking a booking, to subcontract that booking to another operator either inside or outside the borough. The operator isn't required to tell the customer that the booking has been subcontracted, but a law commission report on reforming taxi and private hire law, published in 2014, recommended that *"Any person accepting a booking in respect of a private hire journey will be under a duty to provide information to the hirer about who they passed the booking on to."* Whilst these reforms have not been implemented in law, a member of the working group asked whether a similar requirement could be imposed by our policy. Another member of the working group felt that this is very difficult as the person taking the call (or online booking) doesn't always know at the time of the booking whether or not it will be necessary to subcontract it out.

(see para 3.142 of

[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/314106/9781474104531\\_web.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/314106/9781474104531_web.pdf)) – note: this 2014 report has not been adopted either as law or as formal recommendations to licensing authorities

#### Safeguarding

In Cheltenham all drivers are required to undergo safeguarding training but this does not apply to operators or their staff. That being the case, should the policy contain a section alerting operators and their staff to safeguarding issues and requiring them to have due regard for such matters?

#### Display of operator's licence

Appendix H requires operators to display their operators licence conspicuously on the premises. Can this be changed to “where those premises are open to the public”, otherwise operators dispatching from a domestic address are breaching the policy if they don’t display their licence in their home.

### Signage

Appendix H requires all vehicles dispatched by an operator to display their company logo on the front nearside and offside doors. A member of the working group representing operators felt that this should be changed to “on the side of the vehicle” rather than specifying the doors, as it is becoming more difficult to use magnets on the door panels and it’s easier to adhere them to the rear side panels. The sign would still be visible on the side of the car and some members of the group felt that it makes no difference which panel is used as long as the sign is on the side of the vehicle. Other members of the group felt that for consistency and to assist enforcement the signs should all be in the same place, i.e. on the doors, and if magnets don’t work there are other methods that can be used. There was no agreement on this.

### Misc

That ended the discussion about the operators sections of the policy, but then there was a brief discussion about other aspects of the policy that the group had covered in previous meetings but which Andy B, the County Council representative, had missed.

- Tinted windows: The policy currently allows tints only if they are factory-fitted, however in a previous meeting of this working group it was agreed that this should be looked at because factory-fitted tints are getting darker and it was felt that for security, safety and enforcement reasons it is necessary to be able to see into all licensed vehicles. However, Andy B said that some of their contracts require tinted windows due to specific medical conditions.
- Wheelchair accessible vehicles: GCC have specific requirements for their vehicles which do not necessarily match the requirements in CBC’s policy – e.g. tail-lifts – which is why GCC tend to use vehicles licensed elsewhere e.g. Tewkesbury. Consequently Andy would like to be involved in the discussion about CBC’s policy standards for accessible vehicles.
- Fire extinguishers: the working group recently agreed to remove the requirement that all licensed vehicles must have fire extinguishers, but to leave it as a recommendation or to leave it at the driver / proprietor’s discretion. Andy B said that it is a requirement in accessible vehicles to carry 2 fire extinguishers but it was agreed that CBC’s policy doesn’t override that, so they would still have to carry fire extinguishers if the law or GCC’s contract required them to.

In each of these cases it was confirmed that CBC’s policy would not preclude a proprietor from making an application to the council to license a vehicle that does not meet policy requirements. For example if a vehicle has a non-factory tint which is required for medical reasons, that application could be considered on its merits. It was further agreed that it would be appropriate for Andy B to be invited to a meeting of Gloucestershire’s county-wide licensing officer’s forum (known as GLOG) where he could more generally discuss the standards they require for their contracted vehicles. GCC will also be included in the formal consultation process once this policy review gets to the consultation stage.

END