

CHELTENHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL

STATEMENT OF WITNESS

**(Criminal Procedure Rules, 2005 r27.1(1);
Criminal Justice Act 1967, s.9 Magistrates' Courts Act 1980,s. 5B)**

Statement of XX name removed

Age of witness: Over 18

Occupation of witness: N/A

This statement consisting of 4 pages (signed by me) is true to the best of my knowledge and belief and I make it knowing that, if it is tendered in evidence, I shall be liable to prosecution if I have wilfully stated in it anything which I know to be false or do not believe to be true.

Dated the 9th November 2022

Signed

I would like to make an official complaint regarding serious abuse from a Cheltenham Borough Council Taxi driver (driver number 254, vehicle number 198, registration number TX51MAL) at 12:30 on the 20th October 2022 in Pittville Street.

I had driven into the end of the taxi rank to reverse into the disabled bay situated to the rear of the rank. I had put my car into reverse when the taxi driver pulled up directly behind me in the disabled bay, initially preventing me from reversing into the disabled bay.

The taxi driver came up so close to me, so quickly, it was almost like it was intentional. I was already reversing, I know this as my reversing sensors on my car went haywire when the car got close. I looked behind and I could see the taxi, and I thought "where the hell have you just come from"?

It was clear from seeing his car that he was a taxi driver and I thought he'd move back and then go in front of me onto the taxi rank. There was space in front of me

Signed

for him to pull into but he didn't move, he just sat there.

I attempted to reverse a little bit more, so the driver would see that I'm reversing into the disabled space. I only went back a few inches and he beeped his horn at me.

At first he refused to move and finally after a while, probably only a minute but it often feels longer, he moved out. I reversed into the disabled space and the taxi driver then pulled into the taxi rank in front of me.

I placed my blue badge onto my dashboard and got out of my car.

The driver was positioned directly in front of me on the rank, there were no other cars behind him. I could see that in the taxi there were customers, I'm not sure if there were two customers, but I could definitely see one. They had not got out of the car at this point.

As I walked past the taxi I looked into the car. The driver looked at me and gestured to me by putting his hands up into the air. It looked like he said something too but I couldn't hear because his window was up.

I shrugged my shoulders in the same way back to him and he then opened the door and said "come here" and proceeded to get out of his car. The customer was still in the back of the car.

When I said to him "did you not see me reversing? Me reverse back into the disabled bay? My reverse lights were clearly on" he then just said to me, "well you're in a taxi rank".

I said to him, "that's a disabled bay, you can't park there anyway"

The passenger was starting to get out of the car at this point, it was an elderly lady. I could see the discomfort on their face, he was ignoring the passenger getting out of the car.

He then said "you're not disabled there's nothing wrong with you" and I said to him, "the badge is on the dashboard, go and have a look"

The driver then said "Oh, I don't care about the badge, there's nothing wrong with you, you're not disabled". I responded, "Whatever" and started to walk away. I probably only walked about the length of one and a half cars when I heard the driver shout to me as he got into his car. I can't recall what it was that was said but it triggered me to turn back round. As I walked back I could see him shutting his

Signed

door and I thought he would drive off.

I walked towards his car and I took photos of him, his car, and plate. At this point the driver got back out of his car and I said to him that I was going to report him.

He was carrying on about me not being disabled, and again, I suggested he go to my car and look at my disabled badge. He appeared to walk towards my car and had a look over the dashboard towards where my badge was positioned. As he was doing this I walked around his car and clocked his ID badge on his dashboard, so I took a photo of that as well.

The driver came back towards my car, pointing, saying that I was not disabled and that I was "abusing the system" and "there's nothing wrong with you". I said to him "how do you know, I could have terminal cancer which isn't necessarily noticeable?" and his response was "well that's the good news, what's the bad?". I took a photo as this was happening. You can see his hand raised in the photo taken.

The driver, he wasn't quiet. I was a good car and a half away from him and he was shouting down to me. You could hear people giggling at what he said when he said 'that's the good news, what about the bad'. It left me feeling disgusted and appalled, not to mention uncomfortable. I shouldn't need to explain my disability to anyone, let alone in front of the eyes of so many members of the public.

The driver then went back to his car.

I then decided to go back and sit in my car until he left the area. I was concerned that if I left my car the driver might cause damage to my vehicle as a form of retaliation.

After roughly fifteen minutes the driver finally got a customer and I then left my car to get on with what I had intended to do before I was verbally attacked by this man.

From the start of me parking up, to me finally leaving my car to go into town, about thirty minutes had gone. I know this as I had to change the clock for my badge from 12:30 to 1pm.

I have decided to report this to the Council as I felt it was rude to be accused of not being disabled in front of members of the public. I don't look old, I don't have mobility issues, but I shouldn't have to explain myself. It is an uncomfortable feeling. I don't easily get offended but that is not to say that I don't get uncomfortable. I felt uncomfortable, like everyone was looking at me, probably thinking that I was abusing the system and using someone else's badge.

Signed

3

I have previously had incidents where licensed taxi drivers have parked in the disabled bay in Pittville Street before and haven't made complaints, but this driver took it to another level and I felt I needed to report it.

Given the circumstances, the way he was talking, how loud he was, and the fact he was kicking off so much, even though he had a passenger, I felt this was another level.

It was the last comment about "that is the good news, what about the bad", that did it for me. I have had a lot going on. I have lost my Mum, and other members of my family and this comment was too much. I thought, I'm not having this.

I am an ex traffic warden and have taken a lot of abuse whilst I did that job, more than this incident, but what if this happened to someone with skin not so thick? What if someone else had terminal cancer? This may see them breaking down in the street.

I didn't like it and I can take a fair amount of abuse, but the comment about the cancer really did it. I probably wouldn't have reported it otherwise, but I don't want it to happen again to someone else. You don't know how others will react in the same situation. There are a lot of people that can take it, but many that can't take it and keep it hidden inside.