

notified recently. The general feeling was that the proposed pull off rate of £3.20p and subsequent rate of £2.00p per mile was fair but the second mile should be increased by 40p to £2.40p. It was felt that this would go some way to meeting the cost to drivers of increased licensing fees and the expense incurred from the changes to age of vehicle.

Derek Seekings summarised by saying that licensing officers would be looking at suggestions made by the trade in relation to the fare increases and taking them into account.

3. **Changes to Procedure for new Civic Offices**

Cllr Parr explained that the current system would be changing with the closure of the licensing desk. Front of House would be accepting paperwork from drivers and there would be a new payment machine.

The general reaction from the drivers was one of disappointment as it was felt that this would lower the service offered to them by RBC, despite the increase in their fees. There was concern over confidentiality (Medical & CRB forms) plus the increase in waiting time at the main reception

Cliff Cox/Derek Seekings confirmed that many forms could be posted including MOT certificates on condition that the reference details were clearly visible. Medicals could be handed into reception in an envelope addressed to the licensing dept. CRB forms would still need to be dealt with directly by the licensing admin team.

Cllr David Parr reinforced the availability of licensing officers and admin staff and the use private interview rooms in the new offices, with a prior arrangement and that RBC is open to suggestions and feedback from the trade, once the new systems were in place.:

4. **Runnymede Licensed Drivers Association**

Gary Harding has decided not to continue to establish a drivers association and feels that there would be conflict in representing the needs of hackney and private hire drivers as they each have a different perspective to licensing.

Keith O'Donnell felt that there was no need for a RLDA and that the recent drivers' petition demonstrated that the trade was united in the same view. Jack Dunbar asked if the existence of an association would give the opportunity to attend discussions at RBC offices.

Cllr Parr responded that it would not and that was the purpose of the taxi forum meeting. He stated that RBC would strongly recommend that the trade establish a drivers association as this would allow them to talk amongst themselves, thus settling any differences and allowing their representatives more focussed discussion with RBC.

5. **Conditions For Drivers and Vehicles**

Derek Seekings stated that RBC would prefer to increase the drivers licence renewals to 3yrs, in line with some neighbouring boroughs.

Many drivers objected to the max 5 year vehicle rule and felt that the requirement of newer vehicles is crucifying their business, particularly part-time drivers & those approaching retirement. They felt that the system was unfair as many of the older vehicles were of high quality and they should be judged on their individual condition not age. The majority of drivers maintain their cars well and replace their vehicles in good time. The general feeling of drivers was that 7 to 8 years is the maximum age to run a vehicle as a taxi.

Clr Parr explained that RBC cross references with other boroughs on licensing charges and conditions, which is common practice with many of the other services provided by councils.

Mr O'Donnell and Gary Harding did not agree that RBC effectively cross references with other boroughs. Mr Harding suggested that RBC give a 5 to 10 year projection on changes to vehicle and driver licensing to allow drivers to plan ahead more effectively.

6. **Taxi Ranks**

Egham Town Centre - Jack Dunbar suggested that a new rank be positioned in Egham High Street, perhaps by Woolworths.

Royal Holloway College - Gary Harding, Peter Morris and Jack Van De Toorn proposed a rank here and were happy to act in a liaison capacity for any future meeting.

Cliff Cox confirmed that Royal Holloway College were keen for an official taxi rank and pointed out that we can only propose a rank in the street with the approval of this to Surrey County Council and the Police (Egham High Street)

7. **Parking**

Clr Parr emphasised the need for drivers to observe parking restrictions as any other road user would. He requested that the trade refrain from waiting in short term parking bays, restricting availability of public parking.

8. **Any Other Business**

Mr Root thanked Mr O'Donnell on behalf of all the Runnymede taxi drivers who he represented.

Medicals – Drivers felt that the fees for medicals varied greatly. Licensing officers confirmed that medicals would be accepted from any doctor, not just the drivers own GP.

Jill Tyne stated that unfortunately it would not be cost efficient to arrange a group scheme for medicals.

Wheelchair accessible vehicles – The trade were unhappy that new licensing conditions were introduced to the age of vehicles in advance of changes imposed by the new Government directive regarding this. Licensing officers confirmed that no specific details had been received in relation to wheelchair accessible vehicles and changes imposed by central Government were not scheduled to be in force until 2012 to 2020.

Date for next meeting yet to be set