

## **Notes of a Taxi Forum – 25 October 2023. Hythe Centre, Egham at 11:00 hours**

Attended by 6 drivers, one operator and Cllr Harnden.

Hosted by Robert Smith, Senior Licensing Officer, RBC.

Notes taken by Clare Pinnock, Democratic Services, RBC

There was no formal agenda for the forum. Instead people were invited to raise topics of interest.

### **Private Hire Drivers**

Tess Saidmeerasah from Foxhill Transfer, a new private hire operator in the borough appealed for drivers who wanted to do school runs on a regular basis under contract from Surrey County Council.

Some drivers present said that school run work often competed with business clients seeking transport at the same time and that school run work required too great a commitment.

Tess offered her contact details which Mr Smith agreed would be included in the notes:

**If you are interested in school runs contact - Foxhill Transfer: 0759 719 3872.**

### **Taxi Ranks**

The provision of ranks in Egham was discussed in the context of the new Nexus building near Egham Station. The same number of ranks (6) would be provided at the station but in a different layout, adjacent to the railway line. South Western Railway had kept their fees at the same rate for a third year, presenting a good deal to the drivers of approximately £106 per driver, per annum compared with other boroughs such as Woking.

### **Hackney Carriage Fares Survey**

Mr Smith circulated the Hackney Carriage Fares Review Survey and encouraged people to respond. So far ¼ of the trade had responded. The survey was readily available and publicised with a closing date of 20 November 2023. A decision on fares would be made by the Council's Regulatory Committee on 3 January 2024.

It was pointed out that Runnymede's fares were now cheaper than Uber, with no price surging, and all the drivers took card payments. Mr Smith would contact Royal Holloway again to promote local taxi trade.

### **Fees and Charges**

These would be approved by the Council's Regulatory Committee on 7 November 2023 for implementation from 1 April 2024 subject to there being no objections received during the consultation period as legislatively required and advertised in the Surrey Advertiser.

### **Uber v Sefton Court Case**

Mr Smith asked the forum whether they were familiar with a recent court case where it was held that a private hire operator is 'required to enter as principal into a contractual obligation with the passenger to provide the journey which is the subject of the booking'. Mr Smith

explained that private hire firms would have to pay VAT in future unless the appeal was successful. As a local authority Runnymede would await guidance before making any changes.

## **ULEZ**

The close proximity of parts of Runnymede to the ULEZ zone was noted and how careful drivers had to be to avoid straying into areas where it applied going towards Twickenham, Feltham and West London. It was thought unfair that only TFL licensed drivers could apply for a dispensation if they had a wheelchair accessible vehicle which were often too expensive to replace compared with the level of business generated.

## **Group 2 Medicals**

Mr Smith confirmed that drivers aged 65 who held a valid DVLA Group 2 medical would be accepted so no need to undertake a second test for RBC if the timing was right.

## **Waitrose Car Park in Egham**

It was noted that RBCS (a company (special purpose vehicle) owned by RBC) operated through Park Fair the car park at Waitrose in Church Road, Egham. Some blue badge holders had been fined for not pre-registering their vehicle before using the disabled spaces in the car park, or their registration had not been recognised. The Council was aware of this problem.

## **Runnymede Hotel**

Mr Smith advised of a potential business opportunity once the Runnymede Hotel completed its refurbishment works.

## **Taxi Ranks in Egham**

The history of the previous attempts for ranks in Egham was recalled and suggestions for alternative locations were invited. For example, doubling up the loading bay by the Everyman cinema. Drivers were urged 10 years down the line to retry for new ranks.

Mr Smith thanked those attending the forum.

The forum ended at 11:45 hours.