

PUBLIC PROTECTION COMMITTEE: 8 February 2011

Report of the Chief Strategy and Enterprise Officer

HACKNEY CARRIAGE DRIVER CODE OF CONDUCT.

1. Background

- 1.1 At its meeting of 3 February 2009 the Committee agreed in principle to support the establishment of a “Gold Star” project aimed at improving driver standards. A report on the establishment of driver and passenger code of conduct was subsequently approved in principle by the Committee subject to consultation.
- 1.2 The report is to provide details of the scheme for consideration by the Committee.

2. Details.

- 2.1 The Authority receives complaints about the behaviour of licensed drivers in respect of customer care issues such as overcharging, refusal to be hired, dirty or unsafe vehicles, and rudeness. There is frequent criticism in the press of some taxi drivers who are portrayed as unfriendly, unhelpful and lacking in professionalism.
- 2.2 In addition, taxi drivers are the first point of contact for many visitors to our city and can therefore play an important role in welcoming visitors and promoting Cardiff. Providing a friendly, welcoming and knowledgeable service is key to this. However the feedback received from visitors, either through our own surveys or anecdotally via businesses such as hotels, indicates that this is not always the case. Taxi drivers have highlighted in recent consultations many issues concerning the lack of customer care by drivers and the problems of passenger behaviour which a code of conduct could address.
- 2.3 In order to address these issues, the idea of developing a code was proposed, to remind drivers of the basic standards of customer care that they should be providing to their passengers, and to advise passengers what they should expect from their driver and how to complain to the Authority about the service they have received, or compliment it. Licensed drivers would be expected to sign up to the code when they renew their licence and it would be promoted by the Authority. The code was to have been a part of the improvement of taxi ranks under the Gold Star project but this is still ongoing. The Code would be valuable in its own right and could be introduced immediately.
- 2.4 The Code is based on the existing licensing regime and on the requirements laid down by Acts of Parliament, the Byelaws relating to Hackney Carriages, and the Council’s Drivers’ Licence Conditions. The Code will therefore merely underline the behaviour that is already expected of drivers and operators. The Code is detailed in Appendix A to the report.

- 2.5 A complementary Passenger Code has also been proposed, as a reminder of how passengers should conduct themselves. A draft passenger code is detailed in Appendix B for consideration.
- 2.6 It is therefore recommended that the Committee agree in principle to the introduction of a Taxicab Driver Code.

3. Consultation

Consultation with the hackney carriage and private hire trade on the introduction of a Taxicab Drivers Code took place when details were published in the first edition of the “Taxi News”. Feedback on the draft code was requested but no comments or representations were received. The draft reports were made available for comments in the Licensing Offices at Sloper Road and City Hall to enable interested parties to make comments. Additionally draft copies of the reports were sent to trade representatives and the published on the Licensing Web Pages.

The following comment has been received from Mr M Khan of the Hackney Carriage Association

“The Application for code of conduct for H/C drivers (Gold star) project is not acceptable either, if it targets H/C drivers only. And in any event because no matter how much training you provide with the drivers, there will always be some drivers who will not care about the code of conduct what so ever, regardless. And unless proper enforcement is in place, these problems will always be there. Therefore instead of using the resources to provide further training it would probably be more expedient to strengthen the enforcement side. May be increase the enforcement regime by few more Licensing enforcement officer, which will have much better result. The reason I am saying this is because unless you have resources to police these rules it usually get ignored because perpetrators believes that nothing will happen anyway so what is the point.”

4. Achievability

The report contains no equality, personnel or property implications.

5. Legal Implications

Drivers have to be fit and proper persons to hold a taxi driver’s licence. The proposed Code may assist drivers in acting in a fit and proper manner.

6. Financial Implications.

The licensing service is required to be self financing with all expenditure being met from fees and charges which are reviewed annually. It is not envisaged that

the introduction of the Codes will require additional financing other than for printing, which will be borne by the existing budget.

7. Recommendation

It is recommended that the Committee approves the Taxicab Driver Code and Passenger Code for publication by the authority.

Sean Hannaby

10 January 2011

CHIEF STRATEGIC PLANNING AND ENVIRONMENT OFFICER

This report has been prepared in accordance with procedures approved by Corporate Managers.

Background Papers:

1. Codes of Conduct issued by various licensing authorities details of which can be found on the internet.

CARDIFF TAXI DRIVER CODE
Our Promise to our Passengers

Cardiff taxi operators and drivers are firmly committed to offering the highest levels of service to all our passengers and promise the following:

- Drivers will be clean and tidily dressed, with their badge visible at all times.
- Drivers will greet passengers in a friendly way and offer reasonable help with their luggage at both ends of the journey.
- Drivers will take all reasonable steps to assist disabled passengers.
- Passengers can expect their taxi to be clean, safe and well-maintained, with a working taximeter.
- It will be clear from outside the taxi that it is for hire. If indicated that the taxi is for hire, this means that the vehicle is ready to be hired by anyone, wherever their journey within the city.
- Drivers will not discriminate against passengers for any reason or turn passengers away without good reason.
- Current fares will be displayed in the taxi. The driver will use the meter on all journeys within Cardiff.
- If going outside the city, the driver and passenger will agree the fare before setting off, to avoid disputes.
- Passengers will be able to expect their driver to drive safely and within the law, e.g. not using a mobile phone while driving.
- Passengers will be able to expect their driver to be familiar with all the city's hotels, attractions, entertainment and sports venues, and take the most direct routes to them.

APPENDIX B

Licensed taxi drivers can expect passengers to:

- treat licensed vehicles and drivers with respect
- provide clear details of the proposed journey and their destination
- be in a fit state to travel. If not they may be refused carriage
- have sufficient means to pay for the journey about to be undertaken
- not smoke whilst in a licensed vehicle
- behave in a civil manner. Drivers have the right to turn away passengers who are abusive or aggressive

If you wish to comment on the service provided by your driver, contact Cardiff Council's licensing team on 029 2087 1651, or by email at Licensing@cardiff.gov.uk quoting the driver's badge number, registration number or Plate number which is displayed within or on the rear of the vehicle.