

08/06/18

To Whom It May Concern,

Licensing @ Wokingham, Laura Driscoll, Julia O'Brien, Karen Court and Chair Licensing Appeals Committee.

As a licensed taxi driver I've been serving the Wokingham area for almost 20 years with an impeccable record. I have never been more concerned and disillusioned with the carry-on at Wokingham Borough Council (WBC), namely Taxi Licensing and the 'Powers to be' Licensing Appeals Committee.

Having been wilfully ignored for decades by WBC, my intention is to share this public document with my home town MP Rt.Hon. Ms May, Wokingham's MP Mr Redwood and not to mention your Chief Executive.

Firstly your letter dated 03/05/18 had only arrived 07/05/18; the deadline being 08/06/18, giving us barely 5 weeks for such seismic consequences, timely your perverse handy work has ultimately condemning consequences. As a practising Muslim, I would like to point out the relevant facts; Most Taxi drivers are Muslim and their way of life is Islam. Today is 22<sup>nd</sup> of Ramadan 1439AH / 07/06/18. It's wholly unfair, whilst observing fasting to retort and undertake the seismic task of determining whether my taxi is appropriate, given the fact I have already spent all of my life savings to the tune of £20,000 for my taxi vehicle which only a few years ago was presented, inspected, approved and accredited, conformed and complied with legislation Disabled Access section 2.9, in accordance to WBC's Disable Access policy.

Consideration be given to article no. 2.9.1 on the Disable access policy; to date, no measurements/dimensions have either been stated or shared with any Licensee until now. There is now a public purge on vehicles that have already been inspected, approved accordingly at that time. By the way congratulations to taxi licensing after 8 years finally printing and sharing. WBC has finally produced unrealistic dimensions, namely the minimum height clearance which stands at 1.5m. With the thinly veil threats of intimidation with your so called

'immediate suspension', what happened to rule of law, fair play, recourse and a fair and honest appeal process?

There has never been a clear precise policy presented, but in part cultivated gradually in inception from 2010. As listed below:

- Firstly, the proposal of amending the criteria of vehicle.
- Secondly, the so called consultation, more like public purge on taxis, by the way this is from the same Council that had previously licensed half a dozen Toyota Previa's with just the one rear passenger door, where was your Health and Safety then?
- Thirdly, the hit list of designated vehicles.
- Lastly, the so called identification and assessment for conforming of compliance. Pointedly, having to present any new vehicle for licensing to be inspected and approved prior to purchase is tantamount in being nonsensical.

All of the aforementioned delivered and executed in one session, barely over a few four weeks when most of the men are ignorant of matters added with a degree of illiteracy within the trade. Collectively the trade having a proven track record as always with their inadequate muted response. Thus WBC declaring open season on over worked underpaid men on low income. Forcing derisory unfair financial burdens constraints is a kin to alleviating hardship and furthermore suffering.

Firmly believe, WBC's taxi licensing and licensing appeals committee constantly in cahoots and forever hindering and never helping. Always placing insurmountable hurdles and always averse to the Licensee. Your abject failure in your duty of care easily computes as a vote of no confidence. Covertly racist and phobic to my way of life, otherwise explain why this subjugation on families surviving on low income, just barely getting by in contrast to your gold plated pension. Previously so called Councillors accepted the prestige of office and perks, nowadays they are only there to further their own ambitions. How the Powers to be sleep at night in their glass towers, seemingly rather well because the reality is no one gives a damn. From your racist Town Hall Mayor to the recently well documented institutionalised racism embedded in the Tory party, WBC is truly all Tory. The stench of double standards and hypocrisy is

rife; your so called public convening's conveniently overlooking the pre-groupies behind closed doors so called Democratic ways.

During my last 2 decades of taxiing, I have observed the cancelling of the concessionary fare travel tokens, closing of public loos and the eradication of CCTV. Case in hand egotistical ensuing arrogance; the new junction at Reading road and Station Relief road junction traffic lights has contrived in dozens of road traffic accidents, where a member of public has been killed, a close friend of one of my long standing regulars. To date still not fixed and simply all that requires is a separate right- hand filter turn signal. My conscience is clear but the powers to be have blood on their hands.

Yet another example, take a trip down memory lane; initially there was never any age limit, backwardly the committee produced outer upper limit of 15 years then finally introduced initial entry age limit of 5 years. The London black taxi overall age limit was 15 years. In Reading it was close to 20 years. Without warrant or merit, no logic and reasoning it's been chopped down to 10 years, yet another blatant example of financial foul play and condemning further hardship and misery on drivers and their family on earning pittance.

With the current onslaught of Uber and the decimation of late night trade in Wokingham, i.e. closure of Spin bar night club and the imminent closure of Gig house, Wokingham late night economy is well and truly finished. Patrons have no reason to visit Wokingham and now are attracted to the likes of (The Lexicon). Reading council has managed to ban Uber from their area, what has WBC done? Complete inaction. There are well over 100 licensed taxis with barely half a dozen taxi rank spaces available. Collectively, the taxi drivers at Wokingham train station hand over £50,000 to South Western trains. No other station for miles contributes financially. Why the drivers chose to play a part? Frankly they have no other choice as fore mentioned.

The equality act 2010 is only statutory Guidance, should be relative to local needs and therefore be proportionate. Given not all wheel chair users are wheel chair bound i.e. paraplegic thus proportional use. Has a survey ever been sanctioned in regards to unmet demand, how many wheel chair bound residence reside in the borough?

With your ongoing obsession/ fixation with every taxi to conform to Disable Access surely should be measured and relative. Your advent of the minimum height change to 1.5m criteria, no vehicle including London black cab, fairway, Vito, the New York yellow taxi Nissan NV200 which are worldwide accepted will meet the new demands. Much is a miss, that's how much WBC is out of touch with the rest of the entire world on licensing requirements.

Of late, I feel intimidated and threatened by a certain member of taxi licensing and in due course will be making a formal complaint against the individual, for the record, who's only been in their role for 5 mins with respect to my 18 years of impeccable service.

Yours Sincerely,

Wokingham Hackney Carriage License holder.