

Minutes of General Meeting

Date	6 November 2018
Time	10.00-12.00
Venue	Ridgway Room Stoke Town Hall

Agenda topic	Action				
<p>Attendees:</p> <table border="1" style="width: 100%;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%;"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • John Beech (Chair) • Pam Bryan • Geoff Bryan • Jennifer Pardue • Stephanie Wood • Horace Hodson • Rita Dale </td> <td style="width: 50%;"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jo Coulson Disability Solutions • Angie Bunn Disability Solutions • Mick Jones • John Burgess • Sheila Farmer • Lesley Smith (Access Officer Stoke City Council) • Jamil Ahmed (Hackney Carriage Association) </td> </tr> </table> <p>Apologies received from:</p> <table border="1" style="width: 100%;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%;"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Simmy Akhtar • Phil Woodward • Winston Green </td> <td style="width: 50%;"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • John Walmsley • Rob Lamonby </td> </tr> </table>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • John Beech (Chair) • Pam Bryan • Geoff Bryan • Jennifer Pardue • Stephanie Wood • Horace Hodson • Rita Dale 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jo Coulson Disability Solutions • Angie Bunn Disability Solutions • Mick Jones • John Burgess • Sheila Farmer • Lesley Smith (Access Officer Stoke City Council) • Jamil Ahmed (Hackney Carriage Association) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Simmy Akhtar • Phil Woodward • Winston Green 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • John Walmsley • Rob Lamonby 	
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<p>1. Mr Ahmed Hackney Carriage Association (HCA)</p>					
<p>Mr Ahmed thanked the group for allowing him to attend to bring to their attention an issue which will potentially impact on disabled people. Stoke City Council Licensing Team have begun to permit some taxi drivers to transfer their hackney carriage licenses to saloon vehicles. It is Stoke Council policy that all new hackney carriage licenses can only be issued to drivers of wheelchair accessible vehicles (WAVs).</p> <p>This is because drivers are applying to the council and saying that their health does not permit them to drive WAV. The council has recently lost a court case and has had to pay compensation to a man who been refused a transfer to a saloon on the basis of his health. Mr Ahmed believes that this is because the council had already set a precedent by allowing a few</p>					

drivers to swap on the basis of their health. This loophole is opening the floodgates and Mr Ahmed is aware of at least other 3 or 4 drivers who will be applying to swap.

Mr Ahmed believes that the city council are making decisions without proper process. He feels that some of the drivers' claims to have a disability that makes it impossible for them to drive a WAV are dubious.

WAVs are expensive to buy and run so money is motivating some of the applications to swap to a saloon.

The HCA has asked the council to do sting operations as they are aware of a number of drivers who claim they are too disabled to assist with the loading of wheelchairs but who will happily load cases into the boot. The council have said that they can't afford to do it, but Mr Ahmed believes that income for Licensing is around £800k.

He also believes that it should be required that saloons are fitted with a swivel seat as it is in Stafford.

He says his Association is struggling to communicate their concerns to the City Council but advised STAND members that they will soon begin to notice a decrease in the number of WAVs available.

Pam asked if some of the drivers had disabilities when they were granted their license. Mr Ahmed said drivers have to have a medical every three years.

Pam said she failed to understand why the council had allowed them to swap vehicles. Surely if a person can drive a saloon they can drive a WAV? John Beech said it was purely because the drivers were unable to assist disabled people with loading.

Mr Ahmed said the council could have solved the issue by issuing drivers with acquired disabilities to display a sticker in their vehicle stating that they were unable to help load or push wheelchairs etc. due to their own disability

John Beech said that in 1995 the Disability Discrimination Act came in but didn't cover transport at that time. He and fellow councillors fought for 5 years to change council policy to ensure that all new hackney carriage licence holders had WAVs and despite opposition from traders and council officers, the new policy was introduced. He said he sees no reason why the policy that took years to get should be taken away. He asked if the HCA had spoken to Councillor Joy Garner who chairs the Licensing Committee. Mr Ahmed said he had been unable to arrange a meeting.

Relevant council officers are Rachel Wallwork and Martyn Brindley.

Lesley Smith said that there was clearly a communication problem between the council officers and the HCA. What is needed is a council consultation with disabled people and an agreed policy and procedure for dealing with this issue so everyone is treated fairly but the supply of WAVs is maintained. Pam agreed.

Geoff said that he felt that this was the short end of the rope and asked why hackney carriage licence holders unable to drive WAVs could not swap to a private hire licence. There must be alternatives to reducing the number of accessible taxis on our roads.

Jennifer expressed concerns that by refusing a swap to a saloon for disabled drivers are we stopping disabled people from working? John Beech felt we were not if we could offer alternatives such as allowing loading exemptions for WAV drivers who could not assist or

<p>offering private hire licence alternatives. He expressed concern about the standard of medical evidence offered as a reason for applying for a swap to a saloon. It should not be a GP as applicants can put pressure on their own doctor but should be a consultant who has a specialism in the particular field of health relevant to the case. Mr Ahmed said anyone can buy a note from a private consultant such as those who deal with claims.</p> <p>Mick said cab firms are often at fault when disabled people request an accessible vehicle and a standard taxi is sent. John Beech said that was private hire not hackney carriages.</p> <p>Mr Ahmed said that hackney carriages can only pick up off a rank and are not legally allowed to charge more for disabled passengers. But, he said, private hire are still overcharging and getting away with it. Licensing won't tackle the issue but the law also applies to private hire.</p> <p>John Beech said the problem was catching them.</p> <p>Rita Dale asked how many WAVs had hackney carriage licenses. Mr Ahmed said there used to be 104 but that number had now reduced by about 10</p> <p>Jo said we do need to bear in mind the legitimate needs of drivers with disabilities. Pam said she was in favour of exemptions for legitimate disabled drivers but many drivers with disabilities could still drive WAVS even if they cannot help load or assist wheelchair users.</p> <p>Horace said point A to point B far should be the same fare for people with disabilities. He agreed that if drivers were not able to assist wheelchair users or anchor down the chair for safe passage, they should have an exemption sticker in the window. Mick said that many wheelchair users would have their own supporters with them to assist.</p> <p>John Beech thanked Mr Ahmed for advising the group about this issue. Mr Ahmed said we need to work together before the situation snowballs and the supply of WAV taxis is further reduced.</p> <p>Agreed action: Next Executive meeting (04.12.18) will discuss a draft fair proposal for a policy amendment that meets the needs of disabled drivers and disabled passengers.</p> <p>Agreed action: A meeting will be arranged after the Exec meeting of 04.12.18 with Councillor Joy Garner, Councillor Ann James, Rachel Wallwork and Martyn Brindley.</p> <p>Action: Lesley Smith will keep Mr Ahmed up to date and will circulate copy of current policy</p>	<p>EXEC</p> <p>PM and Exec</p> <p>LS</p>
<p>2. Attendees and Apologies</p>	
<p>John Beech welcomed members to the meeting.</p> <p>Apologies received and noted.</p>	
<p>3. Accuracy of minutes of June 12th 2018</p>	
<p>Minutes were accepted as true record of meeting of 12th June 2018 with the one agreed amendment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Jennifer had not been to Llandudno on the reported trip – this was Winston 	

Lesley apologised for her error	
4. Matters arising	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> North Staffs Justice Centre – issue is on-going as they are waiting for the funding to carry out the agreed access improvements. Mick asked if some work was going on on the car park. John said part of the car park would be used for Winterfest but some spaces would be left for NSJC visitors. Dropped kerb issue has been taken up by NSJC with Newcastle council. <p>Action Pam will follow up in the new year</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pam had a reply from Councillor Jellyman to say that the council did not have the money to do the Hanley Market toilets as planned i.e. with outside market access. Hoist has been repaired in the bus station changing places WC. Mick said Stoke council had asked people for ideas about what could go on the old bus station site. He suggested more space for coaches. John Beech said the space had got to go for development. There are plans for the space if money allows it to go ahead. 	PB
5. Treasurer's report	
Pam advised members that STAND had received a donation of £150 from Unite. Members asked that Unite be thanked for their continued support	PB
6. Blue Iris	
<p>Lesley reported that the bid for Building Connections funding to continue and develop had not been successful. There had been £191 million applications for £9 million fund.</p> <p>All is not lost however as Public Health have funded another 2000 badges and outreach will be continued as much as other work allows.</p> <p>Lesley has met with Andrew Thompson CEO VAST and Steve Terry Vintage Volunteers and will continue to develop plans for bids to other funding streams.</p> <p>Mick suggested contact Denise Coats trust (Bet 365)</p> <p>John suggested try Smith Trust and Esme Fairbairn Trust</p>	
7. Red route update	
<p>John Beech advised that the Exec had met with Lesley to look at plans of the proposed 5 red routes. Feedback comments were made to Cabinet member Daniel Jellyman through submission to project lead Pet Yearsley.</p> <p>John Beech said he had a message for the city council "Please be advised that STAND will not hesitate to act if adverse impacts on disabled people are not taken into account and the scheme revised accordingly."</p> <p>Members discussed what red routes were and agreed that they felt they would have a detrimental effect on trade and disabled people. What they felt was needed was better enforcement of existing road markings.</p>	

<p>Lesley advised that consultation feedback was being reviewed at the moment and in a few weeks there should be a revised proposal for STAND members to look at.</p> <p>Lesley also told members that she had advised council colleagues that she was unable to support the scheme in its current form because of adverse impacts on disabled and older people. She is to meet with Legal to discuss Equality Act implications.</p> <p>Action: Lesley to ensure STAND is kept involved in further developments with the red route scheme.</p>	LS
<p>8. Museum Parking update</p>	
<p>Lesley explained that a proposal had been made to site the new Spitfire exhibit adjacent to the Museum. Unfortunately, the proposed location was on top of the current disabled person's parking bays. Lesley has consulted STAND Exec and NSPC (10.10.18) on proposed options to provide accessible parking in another location. Options on offer were four on-street bays within 30-40 metres of main entrance of the museum or an off-street parking area for Blue Badge holders only providing 5 bays at around 90 metres from the main entrance. The consultation group concluded that they had concerns about the safety of the on-street bays, especially for wheelchair users since Bethesda Street is a busy main bus route. However if suitable risk assessment is undertaken, these spaces may be suitable for ambulant disabled people such as people with walking or breathing difficulties who need to park close to where they want to go. This means that the off-street parking spaces are also needed to meet the needs of scooter and wheelchair users who may be at risk transferring from their car on a busy bus route.</p> <p>This feedback was passed on to the city council officers who are working on the project. On 5th November, a counter proposal from the city council was distributed to consultation group members. This proposal was to provide 5 on street bays in Bethesda Street and omitting the off-street parking. John Beech has submitted an email to the council officers objecting to the proposal and expressing his concern that the advice and needs of people with disabilities had not been taken into account. Lesley has also expressed concerns over safety and will be speaking to Legal team re Equality Act implications.</p> <p>Action: Lesley to ensure STAND is kept involved in further development with Bethesda Street Parking.</p>	LS
<p>9. Any other business</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pam asked for a volunteer to go to a meeting called by Frontline Dance (Rachael Lines) on 20th November. They are pulling together a Disability Arts Festival and would like some input from STAND. Pam has also put Rachael in touch with Disability Solutions <p>Action: Jo to ask her manager if she can attend.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pam advised that the buzzer outside the accessible entrance in Kingsway is not 	JC

working and she had stood outside for 10 minutes before someone let her in.

Action: Lesley to report repair needed as soon as possible

- Stephanie asked if Pam had received her emails about her friend who had had problems with parking at Asda. Pam said she had received a reply from Asda saying that they had contacted Steph's friends and apologised. Steph said this was untrue as he had not had any contact from Asda. Pam said she had told Asda that they had a duty under the Equalities Act to ensure that parking for disabled people was not misused by non-disabled people. On-going.
- Jennifer gave prior notice that the NORSCARF event would be held in March 2019 and STAND were welcome to attend.
- Mick reported that 3 disabled person's parking bays had been removed in Huntbach Street and replaced with double yellow lines.

LS

Action: Lesley to contact Highways and report back to group

- John Beech said that he had rang Co-op Bank and said he was unable to park close enough to the bank and they paid for a return taxi for him. Mick agreed that parking is a key issue in Hanley for disabled people and if they can't park, they will shop elsewhere.
- Pam also said that she had found out during the recent consultation about access improvement to Longton Station, that if a train station is not accessible, the train company have to pay transport to the nearest accessible station and accessible transport back to the required destination.
- Geoff asked where the funding went that was supposedly in place to provide parking at the museum. John Beech said that the money was not in place but the council would have to bid for it.
- John Beech said he had managed to speak to Mike Clarke about the charges brought in for disabled people in Kingsway and Huntbach Street car parks. He reminded Mike that STAND was set up to provide consultation on parking issues and they had not been consulted and that STAND had had an assurance from the former Leader of the City Council that the council would not make charges to Blue Badge holders. Mike said he had taken a report to Council and there is a possibility that the barriers will be removed as they are proving problematic.
- Steph said the high level barriers meant that she and other disabled people who have high vehicles cannot use the car parks

LS

Action: Lesley to contact Mike Clarke Parking Manager to explain problem for high vehicles and suggest that high level barrier is unlocked in the morning and closed at night.

LS

Next meetings:

Exec – 4th December 10.00am at Disability Solutions, Hartshill

General – 29th January 2019 10.00am at Civic Centre Stoke