

From: Ilsa Butler
Sent: 06 April 2021 09:55
To: Mark Jones
Cc: James Williams PC 46011187 ; Lorraine Neale <LorraineNeale@maidstone.gov.uk>; oliver.obrien ; Nigel Downes
Subject: RE: TROUBLE AHEAD

Hello Mark

Thank you for your email.

I'm on leave myself until 13 April but there is an NTE meeting on 8 April that might be a good opportunity to discuss it.

I copy in Lorraine and James from Council and Police licensing and Olly and Nigel in case you'd like to join the NTE meeting on Thursday.

Ilsa

Sent from my Galaxy

----- Original message -----

From: Mark Jones
Date: 04/04/2021 18:58 (GMT+00:00)
To: Ilsa Butler
Subject: TROUBLE AHEAD

Hi Isla

My name is Mark Jones and I own Sapphire Cars Private hire Company in Pudding Lane Maidstone.

As we welcome the news that Maidstone is slowly going to open in the evenings, we in the Taxi and Private hire Industry can see a problem that will be looming.

Due to the Covid-19 outbreak over the last year we as an industry have struggled immensely, due to lack of trade, lock down and a high percentage of drivers leaving the industry because they could not earn enough money.

Unfortunately, as far as I am aware, there has not been ANY new drivers tested for over a year which means Sapphire cars and the other main companies (Express & Streamline) will not have enough drivers to help clear the town center in the evenings.

That will mean a lot of drunk people hanging around on the streets trying to get home and we all know that will increase the chances of anti social behavior, vandalism, fighting and maybe more stabbings!!

We need to make Maidstone attractive AND safe for people to enjoy their nights in the town without fear of being stranded in a town that will get a growing reputation of not being SAFE.

I would like to arrange a zoom meeting, as quickly as possible, with perhaps other Private hire and taxi companies and the Maidstone Licensing team to discuss how we can help alleviate the problem that will arise from this shortage of drivers

I feel that this is an urgent situation that has not really be looked at or discussed

Please feel free to reply by email or call me 01622 663000

Kind regards

Mark Jones

Sapphire Cars

From: GRANT, Helen <helen.grant.mp@parliament.uk>
Sent: 01 February 2021 11:00
To: MP Correspondence <MPCorrespondence@Maidstone.gov.uk>
Subject: Taxi Licensing - Maidstone

Dear Sir/ Madam,

I have recently been contacted by one of the local taxi companies in Maidstone about the licensing of new drivers prior to the end of the current restrictions.

I have included the text of their email below and I would be grateful if you could respond to the concerns they have raised about a potential backlog in licensing affecting the supply of taxis in the local area.

I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Yours sincerely



Member of Parliament for Maidstone and The Weald
UK Special Envoy for Girls' Education
Prime Minister's Trade Envoy to Nigeria

House of Commons | London | SW1A 0AA | 02072197107
Constituency Office: 109/111 Week Street, Maidstone, Kent, ME14 1RB

From:
Sent: 29 January 2021 10:31
To: GRANT, Helen <helen.grant.mp@parliament.uk>; CROUCH, Tracey <tracey.crouch.mp@parliament.uk>; Tom Tugendhat MP <tom.tugendhat.mp@parliament.uk>
Subject: Licensing new drivers

Good morning,

I hope this email finds you all well?

I wanted to write to you all to raise a concern I have in relation to us emerging from lockdown.

As I'm sure is obvious I run a taxi Company. We like all other operators have been hit extremely hard

over the course of the last year and we are looking forward to emerging from the other side of the pandemic with what's left of our businesses. Recently the Prime Minister announced he would be outlining the lifting of restrictions as of the 22nd February, combined with the rollout of the vaccine I am hopeful that this will see a drastic uplift in demand.

Unfortunately the supply is not there to meet that demand. We are currently working at low levels and whilst I know the drivers we still have will be extremely glad of the added work they will not be enough. We have like all other operator's lost a lot of drivers over the last year and whilst some will return to the trade most will not leaving a huge shortfall. This is not just with my company but will be the same for everyone else.

I have contacted the relevant councils today to see what the state of play is with regards to getting new drivers licensed and they are not able to get new applicants in until restrictions are lifted. This will be too late as the process takes 2-3 months to obtain a license. This will take too long and the knock on effect will be a problem, we need to be able to get things moving now not when restrictions are lifted. I in no way am criticising the councils here as they can only work within the guide lines they have but I really feel this needs to be looked at.

If movement starts to happen but people can not get around the economic recovery will be slowed, if people cant get into towns and pubs and restaurants it will put them off going. If they can not get home from a meal of a pub they will be more likely to drink drive. The police will be flooded if people cannot be moved away from the town quick enough (no one is naive enough to think it wont be a nightmare for the first few months that people are able to get a drink). Taxis get people where they need to be to spend money, if that's not happening then recovery wont be as quick as it needs to be.

I would welcome your views on this and how we get people into the industry and working in time to take advantage (for a huge range of industries) of the Boom in spending that should happen once people are able to do so.

Kind regards

From: JOHN IANDOLO
Sent: Jan 13, 2021 at 3:22 PM
To: lorraineneale@maidstone.go.uk
Subject: Private Hire licences

Hi Lorraine

I've been trying to lobby a couple of councillors about getting some changes to the current rules around granting private hire licenses. This is mainly due to a shortage of drivers and the length of time and energy that it takes to get a badge.

I'm sure you will think I'm lowering standards but I truly believe if we make an easier path more able and suitable applicants will apply.

The difficulty of the knowledge test is really off putting for many applicants and this is the main obstacle for most people.

With the modern navigation equipment available to all this is now really unnecessary. In ours and most companies the job is sent and the driver clicks navigate and this takes them the shortest route. We train all our drivers to use the device properly so the customer gets the best possible route every time. This is what the public expect.

Police checks, medicals and driving tests are necessary and I have no objections to these.

I am sure the council could include all plying for hire rules in an agreement signed by the driver after completing medical/police check etc.

The waiting time for knowledge tests is unacceptable and of course this knowledge is never used in this day and age. Certainly not by new drivers even if they have learnt the routes they will use Sat Nav.

With Brexit and the current situation we will need to be able to recruit drivers quickly and with a realistic time frame. Many good applicants are lost due to the onerous knowledge test.

Please feel free to chat to me about this indeed I hope that it maybe discussed at the next licensing committee. Tomorrow I believe? I would like to assure you that I'm not interested in lowering standards quite the opposite. On many occasions the only people studying for the test are those not capable of getting any other work.

Kind Regards

John landolo (Express)

Sent via BT Email App