

# Hackney Carriage & Private Hire Newsletter December 2019



Welcome to the West Suffolk Council December 2019 hackney carriage and private hire newsletter.

Please take the time to read through this as it contains important information and we also believe you will find it useful. If there are any future items you would like included please let us know – our contact details can be found at the end of this newsletter.

## **Driver's Forum**

The new Driver's Forum was launched on 30<sup>th</sup> October 2019 at West Suffolk House and we are pleased to see that it was well represented by members of the taxi and private hire trade.

We provided updates on the upcoming taxi policy review and responded to queries and concerns. We would like to thank those who were in attendance and we hope you felt it was beneficial.

We are arranging the next forum for Monday 17 February 2020 between 5pm-6.30pm at West Suffolk House. The forum is specifically for drivers and therefore although the Council are happy to provide a venue and be in attendance, drivers are required to elect a chair and representatives in readiness for the next meeting.

The minutes from October's forum will shortly be available for viewing on the Council's taxi licensing webpage.

## **Licence Renewals**

This topic was mentioned in the previous newsletter but unfortunately we are still experiencing high numbers of renewal applications for driver, vehicle and operator licenses being submitted to the Council very shortly before, and sometimes even after their expiry.

Please can it be emphasised again that your renewal applications must be submitted in good time before they are due to expire. You should remember that it is entirely for your own benefit as you will undoubtedly want to continue working without having any unnecessary periods of time being taken off the road. It is not

reasonable to expect the Council to receive, process and issue your renewed licenses instantly nor is it practical for us to do so.

We stipulate the minimum 14 day period as this is our guarantee to you that we will have your new licence ready before it expires, however if you decide not to do this then it is entirely at your own risk and you may find that you will not receive the new licence in time. If this happens then you cannot work without an in-date driver badge nor can you drive a vehicle with an out-of-date vehicle plate. It doesn't take long for such instances to be reported to us and we will take action against those individuals. It simply isn't worth it for the sake of submitting your paperwork a little bit earlier. We need you to help us so we can help you.

Finally and most importantly, applications for renewals submitted after the expiry date will be rejected unless we have been given an acceptable reason for the delay. In the worst case scenario this could mean losing your vehicle licence and no longer being able to licence it as a taxi or private hire. That will result in a large financial burden on you, and so it needs to be made clear. It is not our responsibility if this happens and we believe this message is sufficient notice.

As always, thank you to those who this does not apply to and we are grateful for your cooperation.

## **Keep Your Plates Clean!**

While officers have been out and about, there have been several sightings of licensed vehicles with registration plates and licence plates that are covered in so much dirt that in some cases it's impossible to read them at all. It's very important for your licence plate to be clean and clear because it provides the identification to members of the public that your vehicle is a legally licensed vehicle. We appreciate that you may drive a lot of miles in any given day and dirt can build up quickly, but we would advise you give them a wipe at the start of every working day to prevent excess build up.

It's also worth remembering that it's a criminal offence for registration plates to be illegible and you can be issued with a Fixed Penalty Notice by a Police officer.



## **Licensing New Vehicles**

We fully recognise that those who are applying to licence a new vehicle - either on a brand new licence or as a transfer from an existing licence - will be keen to have the licence issued as quickly as possible. We will always do our utmost to ensure that is achieved however we must

ask that these specific types of applications are made via an appointment with a Licensing officer rather than by handing in the paperwork to a receptionist as you would do in any other scenario. Licensing officers cover a wide range of work, which often includes being outside of the office, and so isn't possible for us to guarantee processing an application at short notice. If you have a prior made appointment you'll at least know that an officer will be able to dedicate time to processing your application, and so we would ask that you always do this when you are applying to licence a new vehicle.

### **West Suffolk Council vehicle depot**

Please be aware that the Council's testing station has now relocated from Western Way to a newly built site. The new address is as follows;

Bury Road, Fornham St Martin, Bury St Edmunds, IP31 1FE

The details of all 6 approved testing stations are accessible on the taxi licensing page of the Council's website.

### **Bus Lanes**

We may go into further detail about bus lanes in a future edition of the newsletter but we have been asked by a colleague from Ipswich Borough Council to remind drivers of Private Hire vehicles not to use the designated bus lanes within Ipswich. They are not authorised to use them and

we are told that the Police do monitor their use so please avoid them.

### **Electric Vehicle Grants**

Those present at the Driver Forum in October were given a presentation by one of the Council's Environment Officers about the current situation with electric vehicles and what incentives are available to you for purchasing one. They are very much considered to be the future and while there are no short term plans to mandate electric vehicles on the taxi and private hire circuit, it may be something for the years ahead and so this could be your opportunity to get ahead of the game. Things to consider are;

- The equivalent fuel costs per mile are a fraction of petrol and diesel; servicing costs are vastly reduced and vehicle tax is zero for most models.
- You may be able to benefit from the BEE Anglia ([www.beeanglia.org](http://www.beeanglia.org)) grant worth 30% of total project costs up to a maximum grant value of £20,000 and/or the West Suffolk Greener Business Grant (<http://www.greensuffolk.org/assets/Greenest-County/Business/Funding/West-Suffolk-Green-Business-Grant.pdf>) worth up to an additional £1,000. Combining these two grants would reduce a £25,000 car to £16,800. That's a saving of £8,200!
- As well as saving yourself money, you'll be playing your part in

reducing your carbon footprint and improving the local air quality!

### **Christmas – The busiest time of year!**

This year's Christmas is rapidly approaching and it is always the busiest and most demanding time of the year for the taxi and private hire trade. However with winter often comes poorer weather conditions and we would like to remind all drivers to keep safe, drive safe and always pay extra attention to the road conditions during these dark winter months.

Finally the Licensing Team would like to take this opportunity to wish all of you and your families a very merry Christmas and a happy New Year! Thank you for continuing to provide your vital service to the people of West Suffolk.



### **Licensing team contact details**

E-Mail – [licensing@westsuffolk.gov.uk](mailto:licensing@westsuffolk.gov.uk)

Phone – 01284 758050

Address – West Suffolk House, Western Way, Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk, IP33 3YU  
and Council Offices, College Heath Road, Mildenhall, IP28 7EY

Website – [www.westsuffolk.gov.uk](http://www.westsuffolk.gov.uk)

### **Christmas Opening Hours**

West Suffolk Council will be operating the following business hours for all of our public receptions:

Christmas Eve – closing at 2pm

Christmas Day – CLOSED

Boxing Day – CLOSED

Friday 27<sup>th</sup> December – closing at 5pm

Monday 30<sup>th</sup> December – closing at 5pm

New Year's Eve – closing at 2pm

New Year's Day – CLOSED