

Hackney Carriage & Private Hire Newsletter May 2019



Welcome to the West Suffolk Council May 2019 hackney carriage and private hire newsletter. This is the first in what will be a quarterly newsletter with the simple intention of sharing important information with all our hackney carriage and private hire drivers, vehicle proprietors and operators. This will include updates on changes to Council policies, procedures, and anything else that you want and need to know.

We will look to address any issues affecting your profession both nationally and locally. The aim of this will be not just to benefit you individually but also to benefit the wider reputation of your profession here in West Suffolk.

Please take the time to read through this and we hope 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.

West Suffolk Council

On 1 April, St Edmundsbury Borough Council and Forest Heath District Council became West Suffolk Council. We have aligned the two sets of policies and standards so that we ended up with one which applies to everyone. We would like to thank you for your patience and understanding while this was being carried out.

Licence numbers

Due to the creation of the new West Suffolk Council you will find that upon a renewal of your licence it will be associated to a new number.

We understand there are some who have held the same number for many years and while we recognise this may cause some frustration, this change is necessary.

Although your licence number will change when you renew your licence, it still acts as the same licence so you do not need to take any action such as notifying insurance brokers.

West Suffolk hackney carriage & private hire policy handbook

We regret to inform you that due to an administrative error an incorrect version of the covering letter and handbook was sent to drivers in February this year. The correct version is on our

website at <https://www.westsuffolk.gov.uk/WSCTaxiHandbook>. In particular, we need to draw to your attention that the correct version should have read '*Hackney carriage saloon replacement vehicles will be no more than 3 years 3 months old*'. We acknowledge that this may cause an issue for some of you. We don't want anyone to be disadvantaged by this. If you feel that you may be affected, please contact us at licensing@westsuffolk.gov.uk

It is important that all drivers, vehicle proprietors and operators read and understand the new changes, so if you haven't already please take the time to do so.

Submission of documents by email

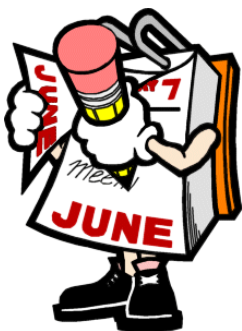
While we encourage vehicle documents such as insurance and MOT certificates to be sent to us via email, it is important that they go to the correct place. We strongly advise that such documentation is sent to the team inbox and not to individual officers. The reason for this is that all officers have access to the team inbox and it is monitored on a daily basis, whereas there is the possibility that an individual officer could be on leave at any given time and so will not be able to action your email and nor will anyone else see it. Our team email address can be found at the bottom of this newsletter.

Licence renewals

Please can we remind licence holders to check when their licenses expire and ensure they are prepared to submit renewal applications, should they wish to renew, in good time and most importantly before the expiry date. We encourage a minimum of 14 days prior to expiry to allow for applications to be processed and approved. There have been a number of incidents recently where various licenses have expired and not been renewed by the owner, when they in fact intended to continue using them. By law we cannot renew a licence once it has expired except in exceptional circumstances. Simply forgetting is not an acceptable reason. It is illegal to use an expired licence and if you do so you could be prosecuted.

Please also bear in mind that in the case of vehicles, if a licence isn't renewed by the time it expires, it can only then be reapplied for as a new licence and it will be subject to conditions. From 1 April a private hire vehicle cannot be over five years old at the time a new licence is granted and a hackney carriage must be a wheelchair accessible vehicle under one year from first registration. That means you could find yourself in a position where you cannot relicence your vehicle. We currently send out reminder letters to licence holders but it is ultimately your responsibility to ensure that you keep on top of expiry dates for both the licence itself and any associated documentation such as insurance and MOT's. It is also important that we have

your correct contact details. We must be notified in writing of any change of address within seven days.



External licence plates

Licensing have received a number of reports and sightings of licensed vehicles which have not had their external plates on display at the rear of the vehicle. Please remember that unless you have specific authorisation not to do so, it is a condition of your licence that "the plate will be fixed to the rear of the vehicle so as to be clearly visible". It must be on display at all times and securely fitted so that it cannot fall off or be removed easily.

Failure to do so results in 6 penalty points being allocated against the vehicle's licence. An accumulation of 12 or more points within a 3 year period will result in the licence going before the Licensing and Regulatory Sub Committee to decide whether to suspend or revoke it.

Internal licence plates

You will find that vehicle licenses issued since April now include a plastic pouch as opposed to the clip which was previously used. As before, this must be on display at all times and please ensure it is fitted the correct way round. The licence inside the pouch is double sided and contains near

identical information. However, one side has extra wording which is relevant for passengers travelling in the vehicle. It is this side which must face inwards.

Unofficial ranks

It is important that we operate a level playing field for all. We have had reports of Hackney Carriage vehicles forming unofficial ranks within Bury St Edmunds and Newmarket town centres. This is against the conditions set out in your driver handbook, specifically condition 3a which states "proceed with reasonable speed to and station the vehicle on the rank within their licensed zone". Unless you are waiting for a customer, and you can evidence this, you must not stand for hire in any areas other than designated taxi ranks. Offenders will receive penalty points against their licence.

West Suffolk Council vehicle depot

The depot has recently undergone renovation works and its price lists have been set for the remainder of the current financial year.

Taxi/Private Hire Test - £55

MOT - £45

Re-test (Taxi/Private Hire test only) - £15

Please be advised there are now six different approved vehicle examiners that may be used for vehicle tests. Their details are viewable on the taxi licensing page of the Council's website.

E-Mail addresses

We are increasing the use of electronic communication to save on paper with the eventual target of being fully paperless. We would like to encourage you to provide us with your e-mail addresses on application forms and thank those of you who have already done so and are receiving this newsletter by email. Not only will this mean we are able to communicate far quicker than by post, it is also better for the environment. Until next time, our contact details are below.



Licensing team contact details

E-Mail – 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