

Taxi and Private Hire Newsletter

Summer 2022

issue **7**

Taxi and Private Hire Newsletter Summer Edition 2022

Message from Councillor Philip Page, Chair of the Statutory Licensing Committee and Regulatory Committee.

“I am extremely proud to announce that, since our last edition, the council has successfully influenced a national policy change which will help those Hackney Carriage and Private Hire drivers who receive manual DBS certificates save hundreds of pounds in fees.

Drivers who receive manual DBS certificates, and are therefore unable to subscribe to the Update Service, will now be refunded their DBS fees

This is a fantastic result, and I will continue to work tirelessly to help support the private hire trade.

The service has also been working hard with Wolverhampton railway station to create a system which allows taxi rank permit holders to access the toilets.

Whilst delivery of access cards has not yet completed, as an interim solution the train station has offered to allow access to drivers who show their hackney carriage rank permit and driver badge to station staff.

We will provide further updates once the train station has received the access cards and have written terms for their use”.



Councillor Philip Page



Highway Code update

Drivers are reminded that The Highway Code has now been updated, following a change in the law that affects the sentences for some driving offences. The updates are to the penalties for:

- causing death by dangerous driving
- causing death by careless driving under the influence of drink or drugs

The maximum sentence for both offences has increased from 14 years' imprisonment to life imprisonment.

The obligatory disqualification period for both offences has increased from a minimum of 2 years to a minimum of 5 years.

The changes have been updated in annex 5 (penalties) of The Highway Code.
New driving offence

A new offence has also been created for causing serious injury by dangerous driving. This carries a maximum penalty of 2 years' imprisonment, an unlimited fine and an obligatory driving disqualification.

Drivers can find a summary of all the changes in [The Highway Code](#) updates list on GOV.UK.



Access to Taxis and Private Hire Vehicles for Disabled Users

On 28 June 2022, the Department for Transport (DfT) announced that the Taxis and Private Hire Vehicles (Disabled Persons) Act 2022 would come into force.

The 2022 Act amends the Equality Act 2010 to place duties on taxi drivers and Private Hire Vehicles (PHV) drivers and operators, so any disabled person has specific rights and protections to be transported and receive assistance when using a taxi or PHV without being charged extra.

As part of the amendments, taxi and PHV drivers could face fines of up to £1,000 if they fail to provide reasonable mobility assistance to disabled passengers taking a pre-booked vehicle.

This will also ensure that visually impaired passengers will be assisted by drivers to help them identify or find the vehicle. There will also be a duty for councils to publicly identify wheelchair-accessible vehicles in their fleets.

The measures will apply to drivers in England, Scotland and Wales and will help to provide consistency of experience for affected passengers.

Drivers can read the statutory and non-statutory guidance [here](#).

Electric Vehicles

Thinking of getting an electric vehicle? Click [here](#) for a database of all electric vehicles.

Successful lobbying for national policy change

City of Wolverhampton Council has successfully influenced a national policy change which will save Hackney Carriage and Private Hire drivers across the country hundreds of pounds in fees.

Drivers who receive manual DBS certificates, and are therefore unable to subscribe to the Update Service, will now be refunded their DBS fees after successful lobbying by Councillor Phil Page, chair of the council's regulatory committee.

Councillor Page wrote to the Home Secretary Priti Patel and the Chief Executive of the Disclosure and Barring Service highlighting the unfair financial burden placed upon drivers who receive manual DBS certificates.

Under the Statutory Taxi & Private Hire Vehicle Standards, published by the Department for Transport (DfT), drivers must either be registered to the DBS Update Service (for a £13 annual fee) or provide an Enhanced DBS Certificate (£38 + admin) every six months.

However, drivers with manual DBS certificates are ineligible from subscribing to the DBS Update Service, meaning a brand-new certificate must be purchased every 6 months.

Over the course of a three-year licence, a driver on the Update Service whose certificate remains current would pay £92.49.

Drivers who are issued a manual certificate are forced to pay £320.94, a staggering £228.45 difference.

Councillor Phil Page said: "In a time where there cost of living is rising, this is extremely welcome news that will benefit hackney carriage and private hire drivers across the entire country.

"There is a shortage of licensed drivers available to safely transport people, particularly those contributing to the night-time economy, and the trade does not need any more barriers to entry.

"This is a fantastic result, and I will continue to work tirelessly to help support the private hire trade".

Success Story

We would like to extend our thanks to one of our hackney carriage drivers, Ranjit Singh, for his help in assisting police to apprehend an offender.

Mr Singh helped a lone student Police Officer detain the offender until other officers arrived and obstructed the path of the offender when he tried to evade capture.

As a result of Mr Singhs' actions, the subject was successfully arrested for two offences and taken into police custody.

West Midlands Police have since put Mr Singh forward for one of their awards for his willingness to come to the aid of the officer.

Mr Singh said: "I was happy to help a police officer and would urge everyone else to do the same in a similar situation."

Do you have a story for us? Email Jessica.Rowley@wolverhampton.gov.uk

Daily DBS Checks

City of Wolverhampton Council's Licensing Services are "leading the way with public safety", with daily checks of taxi drivers' criminal records now being undertaken.

The council have invested in an automated system which can check drivers' criminal records with the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) every day of the week, as opposed to manually checking every six months, as recommended by the Department for Transport.

Under the new automated system, created in partnership with the Disclosure and Barring Service, officers receive a report alerting them to any new information listed on a driver's certificate. Where new information is found, the Council can take swift enforcement action against the driver in question.

Councillor Phil Page, chair of the council's regulatory committee, said, "City of Wolverhampton Council is believed to be the first licensing authority in the country to carry out daily criminal record checks on drivers to help ensure the safety of passengers.

Councillor Page added: "By launching this system, we're leading the way with public safety. It's a fantastic achievement which provides far greater protections for the public than required by Government.

"Wolverhampton have always been at the forefront of implementing stringent taxi licensing standards and we will continue to use the latest technology to ensure both public and passenger safety".

As part of the Statutory Taxi & Private Hire Vehicle Standards, published by the Department for Transport (DfT), drivers must either be registered to the DBS Update Service or provide an Enhanced DBS Certificate every six months to allow for a check to be undertaken.

The Update Service allows drivers to register their certificate and pay an annual subscription, as opposed to buying a new certificate every six months.

Card payments

Drivers are reminded that it is unlawful to impose surcharges on customers for using the following methods of payments:

- Consumer Credit Cards, debit cards or charge cards
- Electronic payment services i.e. PayPal
- Similar payment methods that are not card-based i.e. Mobile phone-based payment methods

Customers should not be charged any more than the amount which is displayed on the meter or the agreed fare. The pre-agreed fare cannot include any additional charge for using a debit or credit card payment. Please note, this does not apply to transactions using a corporate or business credit card.

Hackney Carriages are required to offer contactless payment facilities.

Marion Wilson, Senior Trading Standards Officer, said: "Following a decision made by the regulatory committee earlier this year, it is a requirement that all Hackney Carriages have the facility for contactless card payment.

"We have received several complaints from customers stating that this service was not offered or that drivers attempted to impose a surcharge for using debit or credit cards.

"This is not allowed by law and our compliance team will investigate any such complaints.

"Drivers found to be imposing such surcharges could be subject to legal action through Trading Standards.

"Further advice and guidance on when a capped surcharge fee can be charged and the rules that apply can be found [here](#)".

HMRC Tax Check

A HMRC Tax Check Code is required for all Renewal driver/operator applications and new applications if you hold or have held a similar licence within the last 12 months.

To carry out a **tax check**, you need a Government Gateway user ID and password. If you do not have a user ID, you can create one when you start the check. You'll also need to know:

- When you first got your licence
- The length of your most recent licence
- How you pay tax on the income you earn from your licensed trade.

A renewal application is deemed incomplete if you do not provide this information at time of application and we will be unable to process your licence renewal application which means you may not be able to work.

Applicants experiencing difficulty are advised to contact HMRC's customer helpline on 0300 200 3300.

Other useful links to assist:-

- [Creating a Government Gateway Account](#)
- [Signing in to Government Gateway](#)
- [New Tax Check Guidance](#)
- [Tax Check Factsheet](#)
- [Completing a Tax Check](#)
- [Confirming Tax Responsibilities](#)

Access to Tax Codes Improved

HMRC has confirmed that the UK driving licence now exists on the Government Gateway as an evidence category for all customers across services that use Identity verification.

This includes licence applicants that need to use the tax check service to renew a licence to drive a taxi, private hire vehicle including mini cabs, operate a private hire business or deal in scrap metal. The issue was flagged up to HMRC as applicants tried to register on the Gateway to access tax codes.

Compliance Update

Following a series of complaints, new safety cameras have been installed on taxi ranks in Wolverhampton's city centre.

These cameras will be operating 24/7 on Lichfield Street to record vehicles stopping or parking in designated taxi ranks.

Private Hire Drivers are reminded that taxi ranks are for authorised hackney carriages only and that it is a criminal offence to park or stop in a designated taxi rank, as well as a breach of Wolverhampton's licensing conditions.

Private Hire Drivers must not stop on taxi ranks, even when picking up or setting down customers. Drivers found to be using these ranks may be subject to fines or enforcement action for breaching licensing conditions.

Drivers are also reminded that they must notify Licensing Services via the My Licence Portal 12 hours before starting work with an operator and that they cannot work with two operators at the same time. Compliance officers will be undertaking checks with operators and any drivers found to be working for multiple operators will be subject to a review of their licence.

Your FAQs answered

My Vehicle is licenced as a taxi elsewhere can I licence it with Wolverhampton?

City of Wolverhampton Council do not permit multi-licensing of vehicles.

In relation to the private hire vehicles multi-licensed with other authorities, these will be in breach of our Licensing conditions. Please refer to our private hire vehicle conditions section.

This means you are required to either surrender the Private hire licenses:

- with the other authorities
- with ourselves

How do I replace the vehicle on my existing licence?

For help on replacing vehicles on your existing licence, and to fill out our Vehicle replacement form, please click [here](#).

When should I renew my licence?

Renewal letters are sent out via email one month prior to the expiry of your licence. We are currently very busy with a high number of applications. Therefore, drivers are advised to submit their renewal application at the earliest possible opportunity to avoid any delays.

If you are due to renew but have not received your renewal letter, please email Driver.Lic@wolverhampton.gov.uk with your badge number and a member of the team will assist you.

I haven't received my DBS yet. Can I still apply for my renewal?

DBS certificates should be applied for at the earliest opportunity. If you have not received your DBS certificate, you can still apply for your renewal by entering your e-reference number as part of your renewal application.

Your e-reference number is provided with the receipt given by the DBS when applications are submitted.

Do City of Wolverhampton Council allow CCTV?

Yes, provided the conditions outlined in the Taxi CCTV Policy (available [here](#)) are met.

Contact Us

For driver enquiries –
driver.lic@wolverhampton.gov.uk

For vehicle enquiries –
Vehicle.lic@wolverhampton.gov.uk

Please make sure to include your name and badge/plate number in all correspondence. If you are a new applicant, please include your WTP reference number in all enquiries.

Please note, we no longer operate from out of the Civic Centre, St Peters Square. All operations are now at Hickman Avenue, Wolverhampton, WV1 2HS.