

# Taxi and Private Hire Newsletter

Summer 2023

issue 10

## Taxi and Private Hire Newsletter

### Summer Edition 2023

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#### **Message from Councillor Zee Russell, chair of the Statutory Licensing Committee and Regulatory Committee.**

"I'd like to introduce myself as the new chair of the Statutory Licensing Committee and Regulatory Committee.

I was appointed to this position on 17 May and have already been working to understand how the council can better help the trade, while delivering unmatched public protection.

As your chair, I am committed to providing an efficient and cost-effective service, where we will invest in technology and new ways of working to ensure that costs to the trade are proportionate.

The Regulatory Committee has approved reductions in licence fees for drivers, vehicle proprietors and operators, with further details on page 2.

I am also pleased to report on the joint working done with neighbouring licensing authorities, where we are protecting the right of hackney carriage drivers to ply for hire. The council has a zero-tolerance approach to illegal plying for hire and drivers who do this will normally have their licence revoked.

Finally, I'm pleased to announce the return of our incredibly popular fast-track service for vehicle licence applications. I am committed to reintroducing these for new driver licences, however the current backlog of applications will be prioritised."



**Councillor Zee Russell**



## Licence fees reduced

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With effect from 1 April 2023, the City of Wolverhampton Licensing Committee approved a reduction in hackney carriage and private hire vehicle drivers licence fees.

The council has been able to do this because it may not make a profit from licence fees. Licence fees are 'ringfenced', meaning they may only be spent on certain things and the council cannot use those fees on unrelated services.

Due to the growing number of people across the country choosing Wolverhampton as their licensing authority, the service has benefited from economies of scale and these savings are being passed directly back to the trade.

Investment in streamlining processes and automated checking of driver DBS certificates has further reduced administration costs for drivers.

A review of working practices identified inefficiencies caused by additional administration of 1-year licences issued for private hire vehicles over 10 years of age, which require an additional compliance check at six months. The council was able to reduce vehicle fees even further by removing 1-year licences for private hire vehicles over 10 years of age. By law, licences for hackney carriages may only be issued for 1-year.

Key fee changes are as follows:

3-year driver licence renewal: £78 from £100

1-year vehicle licence: £95 from £135

6-month vehicle licence £95 from £169

Full details can be found via [Driver Licence Fees](#) and [Vehicle Fees](#).

## Illegal plyers revoked

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Two private hire drivers have been fined and their licences will be subject to a review after

pleading guilty to plying for hire and having no insurance.

Gulam Ahmed and Mohammed Yassin Ali were caught following a joint operation by enforcement teams from City of Wolverhampton Council and Telford & Wrekin Council.

Ahmed and Ali were licensed by City of Wolverhampton Council but illegally picked up undercover licensing compliance officers in Telford and Wrekin.

Ahmed, aged 46, and Ali, aged 54, appeared before Telford Magistrates Court and admitted the charges.

They have each been told to pay £1,135 and had six penalty points added to their driving licence. Their taxi licences are now subject to review and may be revoked.

**Councillor Zee Russell, chair of City of Wolverhampton Council's Regulatory Committee said:**

"These prosecutions come following excellent partnership working between Wolverhampton and Telford & Wrekin.

While people from all over the country apply for licences from Wolverhampton, we make sure that our officers are also working where our drivers are.

Where drivers are breaking the rules and bringing their trade into disrepute, they will be held to account.

Only hackney carriages are licensed to ply for hire; any bookings for a private hire vehicle must be through a private hire vehicle operator.

Where private hire drivers ply for hire, they are not insured and they risk being prosecuted, as well as their licence being revoked with immediate effect. If drivers want to ply for hire, then they must apply for the correct licences, like the rest of their law-abiding colleagues.

The council works with other licensing authorities all over the country to carry out undercover operations and there are many more planned this year.”

The council encourages people to report concerns about taxi drivers and vehicles which are licensed by the authority. This can be done online via [Complaints – Report a driver](#)

## CCTV in private hire vehicles

We have recently collected figures of the usage of internally recording CCTV from drivers attending their vehicle inspection appointments. The figure of drivers using internal cameras is only 9.6% and it appears that many drivers are not aware that they may install CCTV, in accordance with the council’s policy. CCTV has benefits for both the driver and the passenger. The advantages of using CCTV are:

- Visible surveillance cameras deterring individuals from committing a crime through the knowledge that evidence of it will be recorded.
- Occupants of the vehicle feeling reassured that crimes, as well as malicious complaints against drivers, are less likely to occur in an environment protected by surveillance cameras.
- Informing investigations by the council and police.

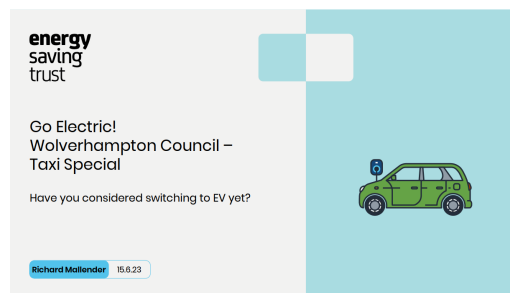
Drivers are permitted to use CCTV inside their vehicle if it has been registered with the Information Commissioner’s Office. Please see the [Taxi CCTV Policy](#) for more details. Audio recording is strictly prohibited.

## Go Electric!

The council is working to support hackney carriage and private hire vehicle proprietors in

making the transition to ultra-low emission vehicles (ULEVs).

On 15 June 2023, the Energy Saving Trust hosted a Go Electric! webinar for council licensees.



Click [here](#) to view the presentation.

## Driver’s licence revoked for refusing blind passenger’s assistance dog

A private hire driver licensed by City of Wolverhampton Council has had his licence revoked after refusing to carry an assistance dog, pictured below, for a blind passenger.

When issuing licences, the council makes it very clear that it is a legal obligation to carry assistance animals - and officers will be using the case to continue educating other drivers.



Ramesh Mahesan had his appeal against an original decision to revoke his licence dismissed after he failed to attend a hearing at Dudley Magistrates Court. He was also ordered to pay costs of more than £900.

The council investigated after a complaint was made by the victim stating that Mahesan arrived at the requested location, spotted the assistance dog and immediately left.

This was confirmed by the passenger's personal assistant who was travelling with them and the assistance dog.

After leaving, the driver cancelled the trip. The booking was assigned to a new driver and the victim was able to travel home safely.

Mahesan's legal representative denied the complaint and stated that the driver had "looked after dogs before" and "is very aware of the importance of taking guide dogs".

The incident happened in Coventry in June last year and Mahesan's appeal was dismissed by Dudley Magistrates in April 2023.

In 2021, the council took similar action against a Wolverhampton driver who refused to carry a customer with an assistance dog from Molineux Stadium. Officers will be using both the examples when educating other drivers.

Councillor Craig Collingswood, cabinet member for environment and climate change, said "Leaving a vulnerable passenger on the side of the road is inexcusable.

"When licensing drivers, it is made very clear from the outset that it is a legal obligation to carry assistance animals at no extra cost.

"As a council, we strive to ensure the best possible service for anybody who uses one of our licensed vehicles and this scenario was deeply upsetting to us.

"Due to the serious nature of the complaint, we no longer consider Mr Mahesan to be a fit and proper person to hold a licence to drive a private hire vehicle.

"Every passenger should feel safe and respected when using taxis or private hire vehicles and we believe that Mr Mahesan did not display the high standard of service that is expected from our drivers."

## Private hire vehicle door signage

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Compliance officers have taken action against several private hire vehicle proprietors not complying with their conditions of licence in relation to the display of operator door signage.

We would like to remind all private hire drivers and vehicle owners to ensure that you are complying with all your licence conditions.

Please take this opportunity to remind yourself of the conditions, especially around the display of operator signage.

City of Wolverhampton Council expects their licensed vehicles to be maintained to a high standard and display the correct operator signage, which is fixed permanently to the vehicle and not with magnets. The signs must not be altered or cut down in any way.

Over the next few months, compliance officers will be undertaking operations across the Midlands, North of England and nationally, working with local police forces and drivers found not to be displaying the correct signage on their vehicles, may be suspended from using the vehicle until officers are satisfied that the vehicle is fully compliant with its licence conditions.

Please remind yourself of your vehicle licence requirements [here](#) and your private hire vehicle licence conditions [here](#).



## Vehicle fast tracks return

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Vehicle proprietors who want to get their vehicles on the road quickly are able to have their application fast tracked again.

Fast tracks were removed from sale when the number of applications for licenses increased to the point where serious delays were being caused.

For applications that are correct and complete, an invitation to attend an appointment will be guaranteed within two working days for a fee of £180. This service is limited to eight applications per day.

## Illegal number plates

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A driver with an illegal personalised number plate was issued with a Section 68 suspension notice, preventing the vehicle from being used for work until it passed an MOT inspection.



Drivers are warned that if they are caught swapping their plates after an inspection or an MOT test for illegal plates, a suspension notice will be issued preventing them from working and their licence may be reviewed with further sanctions.

Vehicle number plates must:

- Use the standard font, with no italics
- Have correct spacing between characters
- Not use any bolts to make characters appear like other characters
- Have the manufacturer of the plate printed on it
- Be white with black characters on the front
- Be yellow with black characters on the rear
- Must be made of a reflective material
- Must be permanently and legibly marked with the British Standard number BS AU 145e for new or replacement number plates fitted to vehicles from 1 September 2021 or BS AU 145d for number plates fitted to vehicles before this date
- Must have the name, trademark or other way of identifying the manufacturer or supplier
- Must have the name and postcode of the supplying outlet

## Surrendering your private hire licence

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There are occasions when your badges/and or plates need to be surrendered. These may include medical conditions, ill health or you have decided not to continue working.

The licence holder must complete and return the [surrender form](#) that is available on our [Taxi Licence FAQs](#). In the event of badges and/or plates being surrendered to City of Wolverhampton Council before the expiry of said licence there shall be no entitlement to a refund.

## City Centre taxi ranks

The Halls Wolverhampton re-opened on Friday 26 May following refurbishment. The events planned at The Halls will see people flocking to Wolverhampton to enjoy the live entertainment. Please familiarize yourself with the taxi ranks around the city centre – a full map with the times of the ranks is available [here](#).



## DBS Update Service

Drivers with an Enhanced DBS Certificate have 30 days to subscribe to the DBS Update Service at the cost of £13 a year.

The DBS Update Service allows the council to obtain information relating to any changes to your current status, for example, if a conviction has been added.

The annual subscription fee is taken via a recurring card payment. If your bank card has either expired or been replaced due to the previous card being lost or stolen, you must ensure that you login to the Update Service and update your card details, or your subscription will be cancelled.

Failure to register or remain registered with the DBS Update Service means you will need to pay in excess of £50 for a new certificate and

will result in your licence being reviewed. Subsequently, this could mean that your licence is revoked or suspended, or a renewal is refused.

To subscribe to the DBS Update Service please click [here](#).

## Contacting licensing services

All drivers are asked to please register to use the "My Licence Portal". You can use the portal to maintain your licence details and notify us of any amendments and changes you may have.

The email address you use to register with the portal **must** be the same email address on your driver/vehicle records. Register your email address here: [Signup](#).

You must verify the email address before you can log in - check your junk/spam folder for a verification email from "IAPPLY". Once you have verified your email address you can log in [here](#) - if you are having issues on your mobile device, try a laptop/PC.

If you have forgotten the password that you have used and verified previously then use the "Forgot Password" – again, please check your junk/spam folder for password reset as this email will be from "IAPPLY".

If you are notifying us of a change address, please ensure you include a copy of your driving licence showing your new address. A replacement paper licence cannot be issued showing your new address until we have received a copy of your driving licence showing your new address.

When sending emails to the licensing team, please ensure you include your badge and/or plate number. This will allow us to locate your records and respond to your enquiry quickly and efficiently.

## Your FAQs answered

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### **How do I renew my existing licence?**

In order to renew your current private

hire/hackney carriage driver licence you will require a personal reference number that will be issued to you at least 4 weeks prior to expiry via email in the form of a renewal letter.

The letter will detail the documents that are required in order to renew along with the personal reference number. It is important to ensure Licensing Services have your current email address on file.

If you haven't received your renewal letter with less than 4 weeks to expiry please email [driver.lic@wolverhampton.gov.uk](mailto:driver.lic@wolverhampton.gov.uk) with your current badge number and current email address.

### **Can I put a private reg on my vehicle?**

In order to have your private hire vehicle licence registration amended to your private DVLA registration you are required to provide us with the following documents via email. The V778 Retention Document, V750 Certificate of Entitlement with the online reference number or V5 document and insurance certificate showing the new registration has been transferred.

Please contact us using our [web form](#).

Once received you will be contacted via telephone to make the £37 payment and then emailed with an appointment to attend to collect the new licence plate.

## Contact us

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For driver enquiries –

[driver.lic@wolverhampton.gov.uk](mailto:driver.lic@wolverhampton.gov.uk)

For vehicle enquiries –

[Vehicle.lic@wolverhampton.gov.uk](mailto: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 Hickman Avenue, Wolverhampton, WV1 2HS. All operations are now at Chapel Street, Bilston WV14 0PH.