



TAXI News

www.warwickdc.gov.uk

Issue 2 | November 2018



Welcome to Taxi News, a newsletter from Warwick District Council to help keep licensed drivers in the district updated with the latest news and useful information.

Changes to Licence Checks

As of January 2019 we will no longer be using the paid for Mandate service to check your DVLA driver licence status, we will be using the free of charge DVLA Check Code service instead.

The service requires you to provide us with a single use 'Check Code' which is generated from the Gov.uk web site. Full instructions on how to get the code have been included in the renewal pack and the existing £10 mandate charge has been removed from the 2019 fees.

We hope that the change will speed the application and renew process up, and save you a bit of money!

Please contact us if you have any concerns about using the service.

Enforcement Update

Officers were out on joint enforcement activities in October with Wolverhampton City Council officers. A number of WCC Uber vehicles were inspected, and 2 were given warnings about not having the correct signage on display.

One WDC driver was spoken to about not displaying his large drivers ID badge and a few drivers took the opportunity to talk to the WCC enforcement officers about their concerns.

Officers were out again earlier this month checking on vehicles and drivers and were satisfied with the levels of compliance in most cases.

If you don't know, don't guess!

Over the past 3 months the Licensing Team has refused temporary transfer applications and sale and transfer applications. In some cases costing Drivers/ Owners money or lost earning.

In every case the Driver/Owner of the vehicle could have asked for our advice before they purchased vehicles or agreed to insure vehicles.

If you have any questions about changes to your Vehicles or Operators licences either call us or email us before you make any financial commitments.

The Importance of Declarations

On any application form for any licence type where you are asked to sign a declaration, it is really important that you read it and fully understand it before you sign it.

A number of renewal applications have been held up while we have had to wait for committees to be convened as applicants have failed to detail all of their DVLA points or previous convictions on application forms.

These are legally binding documents, and are properly inspected at application and renewal. We use the information provided to assess your applications and we compare it to previous applications. We also share some of the information you provide with other enforcement organisations for the purposes of Fraud Detection and in order for us to meet other legal obligations.

We have now published our Privacy Statement for Taxi applications on our web site.

For more information please contact the licensing team on 01926 456705 or licensing@warwickdc.gov.uk or visit www.warwickdc.gov.uk

Uber Update

We are in contact with all of the local authorities that have Uber licenced as a Private Hire Operator. We pass our concerns from Enforcement activity on to them, and can chase for updates on action taken in relation to individual drivers.

In almost all circumstances if we intervene the issuing authority leaves the investigation up to us. This has resource and cost implications for us, and therefore, you. The burden of investigation should fall to the licence issuing authority. Therefore, all complaints should go to the issuing authority.

We believe that the most effective way to tackle 'bad behaviour' is for you to make formal complaints about individual vehicles and drivers directly to each local authority, forcing them to investigate and ensuring that 'repeat offenders' are highlighted and dealt with appropriately.

Ministerial Working Group on Taxis

The group has now published its report: Taxi and Private Hire Vehicle Licensing: Recommendations for a safer and more robust system. The full report can be found on the Gov.uk web site.

It makes a number of recommendations and suggestions, some of which would be transformational and very helpful, however, some of them are unworkable and unrealistic.

Very briefly, the report recommends that we keep the 2 tier system of Private Hire and Hackney Carriages, but it asks for updated legislation to meet the needs of both activities with current technologies taken in to account.

It advocates for national minimum standards for licenced drivers. It requests that the government call together a panel of interested parties and industry representatives to determine what those standards should be.

It urges the government to allow for better regulation by allowing enforcement officers to inspect any vehicle or driver working within their district or area.

These are just a few of the highlights from the report. In total there are 34 recommendations from the group. I would welcome any feedback that you may have after reading the full report.

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If you have any questions you would like answered or any areas discussed or clarified please contact us via the email address and mark your email for the Newsletter.

## Air Quality/Emission Standards

A few licence holders have contacted us with their thoughts on how we can improve emissions standards in the District.

All suggestions are welcome and are being considered as part of the Taxi Handbook review that is currently underway.

If you have any suggestions please contact us via email and someone will get back to you.

## Short Fare Refusals

We are still getting regular complaints from members of the public that have approached hackney carriage vehicles on the rank and have had their journey refused.

Any hackney carriage vehicle presented in a rank at any time is available for hire by any member of the public. If you are approached by a customer you are required to accept their fare unless they wish to travel out of the District (i.e. beyond the WDC boundary), they are drunk and look like they are going to be sick in your vehicle or they are aggressive.

It is an offence under the Town Police Clauses Act 1847 to refuse a fare "without reasonable excuse". The current penalty for this offence is a fine not exceeding £500 for each offence.

We have issued a number of points under the Licence Holders Conduct Scheme for this offence. Any repeat offenders will face formal action which may include prosecution and fine.

If you are approached by any customer – regardless of your position on the rank – you are required to accept the journey. You cannot be selective about a customer, but a customer can select you or your vehicle. Telling a customer to go to the front of the rank is effectively a refusal. Telling a customer to go back to a vehicle and driver that have refused their fare is also a refusal. In the event you feel the need to refuse a fare or if a customer gets into your cab who has been refused by another driver, you should safeguard yourself by reporting it to us. Provide us with the date, time and plate number of the vehicle that refused the fare and encourage your customer to do the same.

Rank etiquette is important, vehicles should be moved on as spaces become available, drivers must stay with their vehicles, and parking restrictions (walkways, double yellow lines etc.) must be followed. The safety of drivers, passengers and members of the public is vital.

We will be renewing our reporting complaints campaign via social media and investigating every complaint.