

TAXI NEWS

7 December 2017

CHRISTMAS 2017 OPENING TIMES

Please note that the Licensing office will not be open on the afternoon of Friday 22nd December 2017 which would ordinarily be a reception open time. Therefore on this Friday only we will be operating a reception service from 10am-12pm. Please do not turn up in the afternoon as there will be no officers available. This also applies to phone calls, so please do not ring after 12pm on Friday 22nd December 2017. We will be back from the Christmas break on Tuesday 2nd January 2018.

E-mailing of Applications and Documentation

The Licensing Team are able to accept scanned copies of completed application forms, MOTs, Insurances and any supporting documentation. For renewals we will also accept digital photographs if necessary, providing they are entirely clear and legible to read and can be downloaded easily. Please send these to the general taxi email address: taxi@tendringdc.gov.uk.

Alternatively, you can now submit multiple documents using the "Submit Supporting Licensing Documents" form which can be found on the licensing webpage of the Tendring District Council

website or using the direct link:
<http://www.tendringdc.gov.uk/business/licensing-legislation/submit-supporting-licensing-documents>

Shortly you will be able to use this facility in the licensing reception area as well by using the ipad provided on the licensing desk so keep your eye out for this.

The only time when scanned or photographed documents cannot be accepted is for brand new applications for driver, vehicle, or operators licences, or is the original of the DBS (Criminal Records Certificate) which also has to be brought into us.

On line submission of applications and documents are an easy and convenient way for you to submit applications and can save you a journey and therefore save you time and money by not having to come into the Licensing office.

Return of Expired Plates

As of the 1st January 2018 all current licensed vehicles will have been issued with the new MOGO taxi plates and brackets. Our supplier at MOGO recycle the plates and therefore once yours has become surplus to requirements (most likely on renewal of licence) can we please ask that you return the old plate at the same time you collect the new plate from the Licensing office.

Bear in mind you currently sign a declaration of acceptance for doing this when you collect a new plate from the office and it's actually an offence under s.58 Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 not to do so within 7 days from the date of that notice. We will be more stringent with this going forward so please prompt yourself to return your expired plate upon collection of a new plate to save any unnecessary grief.

Bus Lanes

You may recall that in the taxi newsletter of August 2017 we provided you with an email address for registering your vehicle with Essex County Council in order to have authorised use of the bus lanes within the county. Unfortunately this information was inaccurate as ECC have since informed us that they do not take direct requests from the taxi trade. Therefore we have instead now registered all current licensed Hackney Carriage and Private Hire vehicles with ECC's 'white list' on your behalf. However this does not give a county wide exemption which can make it all a little confusing. For clarity the list of restrictions are listed below;

Hackney Carriage vehicles are now unrestricted everywhere within Essex

Private Hire vehicles are now unrestricted everywhere within Essex except in Chelmsford and Basildon bus lanes

While we believe this information to be accurate, in instances where you still receive a penalty notice you should be able to reverse it by contacting the number given on the notice and providing proof of vehicle licence.

Update on Chapman Road Station Signage

Further to our item in the taxi newsletter of August 2017, you may recall that we were looking at the possibility of installing a rank sign in the vicinity of the train station in Clacton due to concerns within the trade that the rank in Chapman Road wasn't visible enough to people who are in particular less familiar with the area. We're pleased to let you know that after a lot of time and effort, far more than you would think, we were able to obtain the necessary permissions to do this and a sign was installed on the 2nd November 2017 on the pole directly opposite the

main entrance to the station. Obviously we cannot expect it to make an enormous difference but anything positive is worthwhile and we were happy to assist where we could.



Smoking

We would apologise for bringing this topic up again but unfortunately we still to this day get regular reports of a number of drivers smoking in their vehicles and so we will take this opportunity once again to clarify the law in regards to smoking.

It has been an offence since 2007 under the Health Act 2006 to smoke or allow smoking in enclosed public areas including work places, and a licensed taxi is classed as a workplace. It's irrelevant that it may be your own personal vehicle; it is still legally a workplace at all times during which a vehicle licence is in force.

As authorised officers, we are able to issue Fixed Penalty Notices to anyone who is seen to be smoking, allowing another person to smoke, or failing to display non-smoking signs in their vehicle.

These fines are a minimum/maximum of;

£50-£200 for smoking in a licenced vehicle

£200-£1000 for failing to display no-smoking signage

The law does not currently apply to E-Cigarettes

Additionally to this, repeated breaches will call into question whether you are regarded as a 'fit and proper' person to hold a taxi licence and will likely result in you being requested to go before the Licensing Committee where you could potentially have your licence revoked. Surely it is not worth taking the risk; this has happened before and will do again if necessary.

Besides from that, we should all want to represent the district in the best way possible and leaving your vehicle clogged with the permanent smell of smoke will put off a lot of potential customers, and we have taken enough calls from the public confirming that, and it will certainly have the opposite effect of enticing tourism to the area which has a direct negative impact on the taxi trade.

While it is ultimately your duty to arrange for fitting no smoking signs in your vehicle, we do have a limited supply which we are more than happy to provide. Please contact the office if any are required.

Please take note and refrain from smoking in your taxi, it will do nothing other than cause unnecessary hassle to us and to you.

Multi-Purpose Vehicle (MPV) Seating Policy Implementation Date

This is just to remind you in advance that the MPV seating policy which was agreed at Committee on 28 September 2016 will be fully effective from 28 March 2018. We are still currently in the transitional period but it will become compulsory for any newly licensed vehicle **after** 28 March 2018 to meet the requirements of the policy.

This applies only to vehicles which seat 5 or more passengers. Further detail will be given in the next newsletter, however if you wish to remind yourself of what this means you can access this information by visiting the TDC website www.tendringdc.gov.uk and looking at either the November 2016 edition of Taxi News on the Taxi Licensing page, or the report from the Licensing Committee by clicking on; Council, Council and Democracy, Meetings and Decisions, Licensing and Registration Committee, 28 Sep 2016. If this is likely to apply to you, please familiarise yourself in good time.

Expectations When Licensing New Vehicles

We fully understand the eagerness for you to have a newly purchased vehicle licensed as soon as possible but we feel that we need to manage expectations a little and perhaps advise when is a better time to do the change and when isn't.

Bear in mind that all vehicles must first have a successful mechanical test carried out at our Northbourne Road offices, and the test days are on a Tuesday & Wednesday only. In most cases it shouldn't be a problem to book in a new vehicle for the following week (depending on availability) but you do have to appreciate that there will be a delay of at least a few days in order to complete the licensing process. We recommend that the vehicle proprietor delivers the pass certificate to the Licensing office straight after the test has been completed in order to allow us to process the licence quicker, but again there has to be an acceptance that we cannot have the plate ready instantly. We're a fairly small team and we deal with a wide variety of licenses so it is not always possible to drop everything to cater for everyone.

We aim to have new vehicle licenses processed within 2 working days from when **all** documents have been received, but will always prioritise where possible and it's often the case for us to issue a licence much sooner.

Therefore please consider and if possible tailor the purchase of your vehicle and installation of meter etc. around the test days.

New Licensing Staff

Since the issue of our August 2017 newsletter we have had a couple of staffing replacements in the Licensing team. Simon Harvey has now left his role as Licensing Manager at TDC and his replacement is Karen Townshend, who started on 7th December 2017. We also now have Charlotte Tibbles with us who is working as an apprentice, and you will likely speak to her on the phone or see her in person in reception from time to time.

Licensing Reception Opening Times Pier Avenue

Mondays - Appointments Only

Tuesdays - 10am to 12 noon

Wednesdays- 10am to 12 noon

Thursdays - Appointments Only

Fridays - 1pm to 4pm

We have recognised that the majority of licence holders have been adhering to our reception times and we appreciate your cooperation with this, however there are unfortunately still a small minority who are not, and so once again we must make it clear that the reception times exist for a reason and you are likely to be making a pointless journey which is only wasting your own time. If something is urgent you should either contact us beforehand or place any documentation in the letterbox at the front of the building. It is not sufficient to just speak to another member of staff from a different department as they understandably do not have the knowledge of what to do with your paperwork and the risk increases of bits getting lost.

Finally

We're aware of the perception that our newsletters can be somewhat negative and miserable, but we would like to make it clear that these are only written in order to advise and inform you of anything that may be of relevance for your benefit. It's just unfortunate this information is often the result of issues and problems that have occurred during the preceding months. Hopefully you'll notice if only just from this month's edition that we do go out of our way to help where possible. All we ever ask for is your cooperation.

The Licensing Team would like 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 public.



LICENSING TEAM CONTACT DETAILS

E-Mail - taxi@tendringdc.gov.uk

Phone - 01255 686565

Thank you for reading this edition of Taxi News. We always welcome suggestions for future newsletters so please let us know if you think there may be something beneficial for your colleagues in the trade to know about. In the meantime please keep safe, drive safe and always pay extra attention to the weather conditions during these dark winter months.