



# Taxi and Private Hire Newsletter September 2019



Welcome to September's edition of the taxi and private hire newsletter. We hope that the licensed hackney carriage and private hire trades had a good summer, and that you find the latest updates from the Council's Licensing Team of interest.

Once again, if you have a good news story or have any ideas about the content you would like to see in the newsletter then we would be very pleased to hear from you. Similarly, if you would like to contribute an article relevant to the Guildford trade then please let us know...after all this is your newsletter. Please email us at [regulatoryservices@guildford.gov.uk](mailto:regulatoryservices@guildford.gov.uk)

## TAG Meeting

The first Taxi and Private Hire Advisory Group (TAG) meeting with the new Lead Councillor for Licensing, Councillor David Goodwin took place on 25 July. The meeting was well attended by the trade, and it was very positive to see a number of new faces.

The meeting began with a presentation by Surrey County Council Highways on planned works to Walnut Tree Close. We will provide details of this work when we have received it.

The meeting was also an opportunity to discuss other issues relevant to the trade both locally and nationally.

We would like to thank all members for attending and will provide details of the next TAG meeting in due course.

## Change of Vehicle Applications

Following feedback at the TAG meeting, where proprietors raised concerns about the processing of 'Change of Vehicle' applications, we are pleased to announce the trial of a new procedure for these applications, which should minimise any time off the road in circumstances where a licenced vehicle is being changed.

Proprietors can notify us in advance that they are intending to change their vehicle on a certain date. If a complete application is made by 10:00 on that date, the Licensing service will process the application that same day. A complete application is where there are no missing documents, the form has been fully completed and the fee paid.

Please note that this service is only available for 'change of vehicle' applications as a result of feedback from the trade. Any other application, including renewals, should be submitted in good time prior to the licence expiring.

## Still the only town in Surrey with a Purple Flag!

For the sixth year in a row Guildford town centre has been recognised by the Purple Flag assessors for providing evenings and nights out that are safe, vibrant and varied. It remains the only town in the county to fly the flag and one of around 70 in the UK to hold the award.

The Guildford Town Purple Flag Partnership Group (GTPFP) is led by Guildford Borough Council and Experience Guildford (the town's Business Improvement District), includes a broad range of town and county organisations including Surrey Police, the Safer Guildford Partnership, Street Angels and Guildford Pub Watch. The Licensing service sits on this group and leads on the Purple Flag application submission.

The Purple Flag accreditation is similar to Blue Flag for beaches or Green Flags for parks (for which this year we have 10, the most in the South East). It's a mark the public can trust when choosing where to visit. Purple Flag for nights out, Blue for seaside and Green for parks and countryside.

Cllr David Goodwin, Lead Councillor for Licensing, Parking, Refuse and Recycling, says: 'We are delighted to receive this prestigious award for the sixth year in a row. It means we are not only recognised as one of the safest but also one of the most thriving towns in Surrey. The evening and night-time economy makes a significant contribution to the borough's total local economy of £5.5bn per year. I'd like to thank everyone involved in the Purple Flag partnership and beyond for their hard work and dedication.'

'The Purple Flag is key in promoting our exciting historic town, ensuring visitors and residents continue to choose Guildford. Ensuring our town centre bars and restaurants are a safe, vibrant places to visit in the evening is a fundamental part of being awarded the acclaimed Purple Flag.'

He added: 'Safety is a large part of the assessment and we have put a variety of initiatives in place. We have a night bus running six days a week. Behave or be Banned was introduced by Experience Guildford, in partnership with Guildford Pubwatch and Surrey Police in 2013, and has resulted in a 25% reduction in reported alcohol related anti-social behaviour. We also have 500 taxi drivers that have completed a BTEC qualification in taxi driving and safe guarding awareness.'

The first Best Bar None awards were launched in February 2014 by Experience Guildford, recognising and rewarding venues that demonstrate best practice investing in staff training and security. The Taxi Marshal initiative has resulted in 70% reduction in alcohol-related incidents at the taxi rank since 2013.

Amanda Masters, Chief Executive Officer at Experience Guildford agreed: 'It's an amazing achievement to be awarded the Purple Flag again and it will have a positive impact on the town's existing reputation as one of the top destinations in the South East. With over 100 places to eat, three theatres, three shopping centres and one cinema, Guildford comes alive after 5pm and caters for all ages and tastes. For example last year over 1,500 live theatre and music events took place in the town. Purple Flag is the brand customers can have confidence in when choosing a night out. It also increases the town's appeal for current and potential businesses moving into the borough.'

She added: 'We run an annual survey to ask residents, visitors, students and businesses what they think of going out in Guildford in the evening and 90% confirmed they feel safe in the town at night.'

## Incidents at Friary Rank

We have been notified by the Taxi Marshals of two incidents which took place at the Friary Rank during the evening of Saturday 15 September into Sunday morning, at just before 03:00 hours.

The first involved a deaf customer who was being refused a service. The Marshals report that the customer, who was clearly wearing hearing aids in both ears, was knocking on the windows of taxis, but drivers were refusing to speak with him. The gentleman became increasingly agitated culminating in him assaulting a Marshal. The Marshals advise that this incident could have been avoided had drivers spoken to the gentleman.

The second incident involved a group from the travelling community who were refused by drivers. The Marshals advise that drivers were refusing this group as they were from the travelling community.

It is an offence for hackney carriage drivers to refuse a fare without reasonable cause. We can understand refusing customers who have previously caused problems for drivers, however it is also against the provisions of the Equality Act 2010 to discriminate against any person based upon their race. Travellers are included within this group.

If drivers have concerns about taking customers, then there are measures which can be used to negate any issues. Paying the fare up front will reduce the risk of any dispute at the end of the journey and providing good customer service will reduce the risk of any potential difficulties escalating. Finally, drivers are able to install CCTV within their vehicles to improve safety.

We would remind members of the trade that we have asked the Taxi Marshals to report details of any driver and vehicles who refuse fares or do not obey the rule to us for investigation.

## Freshers Week

Moving in Weekend for new University of Surrey students will be 28<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> September, followed by Fresher's Week from Monday 30<sup>th</sup>.

It is anticipated that town will be busy with new students, many of whom will be getting to grips with the freedom of being away at university for the first time. The University will have Street Marshalls in attendance over Moving In Weekend, every night of Fresher's Week, and on Monday, Wednesday and Friday of the following week.

We very much hope that the licensed taxi and private hire trade will welcome the new students into the town and provide them with an excellent service during their time in Guildford. If you have any questions, you can contact the University at [publicengagement@surrey.ac.uk](mailto:publicengagement@surrey.ac.uk). Please report any concerns or incidents of anti-social behavior to our Security Team on 01483 682002 and call Surrey Police on 101.

## Rugby World Cup Set for Kick Off

The 2019 Rugby World Cup is set to Kick off on Friday 20 September. The event runs for 6 weeks and as it is being held in Japan, a number of the matches have early kick offs. We would therefore recommend that members of the trade keep an eye on the fixtures in order to anticipate any increase in demand for a service at these times.

## DVLA Licence Checking

Drivers will be aware that the Council carries out checks on a DVLA licence as part of the application process. Previously we have required applicants to sign a paper mandate in order to carry out this check.



### DAVIS (Driver and Vehicle Information Solutions)

Dear

Your employer, Guildford Borough Council, has requested access to your DVLA driver record in order to confirm your eligibility to drive a vehicle for business purposes and thereby address their corporate legal responsibility to other road users and duty of care to you as an employee. Your approval is required to do this.

Our suppliers Licencecheck Davis have launched a new e-consent mandate, where applicants receive an email where they can provide their consent. A copy of the email is shown on the left.

We appreciate that applicants are licensed by and not employed by the Council, and we are working with our suppliers to try to change the wording.

However, if you receive this email, it will be that the Council is carrying out the required checks on your DVLA licence. The e-consent system is more efficient than the old paper mandates. If drivers are required to have their DVLA licence checked, and do not sign a mandate then this can delay or invalidate an application.

## Hate Crime Awareness Week 12 – 19 October

Surrey Police are running a communications campaign for this week in order to improve awareness and reporting of Hate Crime. A hate crime is any criminal offence which is perceived by the victim or any other person, to be motivated by hostility or prejudice based on a person's race or perceived race; religion or perceived religion; sexual orientation or perceived sexual orientation; gender identity or perceived gender identity; disability or perceived disability.

More information is available at: <https://www.healthysurrey.org.uk/your-health/community-safety/hate-crime> or by calling the Stop Hate UK 24 hour hate crime helpline on 0800 138 1625.

Crucially, in order to improve reporting there is the Hate Crime Reporting App specifically developed for Surrey which can be downloaded from your App store.

