



Taxi and Private Hire Newsletter October 2019



Welcome to October's edition of the taxi and private hire newsletter. The summer season has definitely finished, with the darker hours and colder, wetter weather beginning to draw in. October's newsletter brings news which in some cases unfortunately is as about as positive as the weather, with details of the sad passing of a reveller following a night out in Guildford, the passing of a former member of staff and licensed trade, and news that the Government doesn't intend to progress legislative reform. However on the positive side, unlike most other news bulletins, this doesn't mention Brexit.

Bob Mattock

We are sad to announce that Bob Mattock sadly passed away recently. Many members of the trade will be aware that Bob served as the Licensing Manager at the Council until 2011 and was also previously a Private Hire Driver.

TAG Meeting

We are pleased to advise that the next Taxi and Private Hire Advisory Group (TAG) meeting is scheduled for Tuesday 10 December at 7pm. We would be pleased to welcome all members of the licensed hackney carriage and private hire trades to discuss relevant issues. New members with new contributions are always very welcome.

Appeal for witnesses to serious assault

Members of the trade may be aware from recent media reports about a man who sadly passed away after suffering serious injury in an early hours dispute over a pre-booked taxi. The attack took place in Park Street, close to the Guildford Charcoal Grill takeaway, at around 2.20am on Saturday (October 12). One man is currently in custody in connection with the investigation, and Surrey Police are now appealing for any witnesses, and those with dash cam footage, to come forward.

Due to the location of this incident, on the one-way system, Surrey Police are asking drivers of taxis and private vehicles with dash cams to come forward. If you were driving past the area between 2.15am and 2.30am you may have captured footage without necessarily being aware of the assault itself and as such Surrey Police would like to hear from you.

Anyone who witnessed the incident or has any further information can call Surrey Police on 101, quoting crime reference number PR/45190108025.

Crimestoppers can also be called anonymously on 0800 555 111.

No Government Plans for Taxi and Private Hire Law Reform

Grant Shapps MP, Secretary of State for Transport has told the transport select committee that the Government has no plans to reform taxi and private hire licensing through the introduction of primary legislation.

Mr Shapps said the Government will instead be relying on statutory guidance to reform the licensing system to ensure passengers are safe.

Prior to Mr Shapps statement, the Minister of State, Department for Transport George Freeman MP suggested in a House of Commons debate that the Queen's Speech will be used to introduce legislation. However, this has not happened.

Daniel Zeichner MP, a long standing supporter of taxi and PH law reform, expressed his disappointment with the Secretary of State's and has since gone on to submit an Early Day Motion seeking MPs support to promote "Safety of taxi and private hire sector". The motion states:

"That this House notes the hard work of the taxi and private hire trade, and that some of the legislation which governs licensing in the industry is dated back to 1847; recognises that new technology and changing transport needs mean that the UK desperately needs updated legislation; notes that the Government's taxi and private hire Task and Finish Group report from 2018, steps towards a safer and more robust system calls for new legislation, and that the report's introduction by its Chair, Professor Mohammed Abdel-Haq, states that undue delay would risk public safety and that the onus falls on the Government to improve legislation; notes that the Queen's Speech omitted any mention of a taxi or private hire Bill; and calls on the Government to introduce new legislation as soon as possible to improve safety in the sector."

Taxi and Private Hire Licensing Policy Review

The Taxi and Private Hire Licensing Policy adopted in December 2015 was scheduled for review after 5 years. As such, the Licensing Team will begin updating the Policy in early 2020. The review will begin with the Licensing Committee being asked to discuss the strategic direction of the Policy and additional measures for inclusion in the draft at their next meeting. It is anticipated that a draft Policy will then be presented for consultation with the trade in early 2020. Naturally we will keep members of the trade informed via our newsletters and TAG meetings.

Guildford Station Redevelopment

We understand from media reports that the redevelopment of Guildford Railway Station will begin soon. We are looking to get details of the works which may affect the taxi rank and private hire pick ups and drop offs at the Station, and will communicate these with the licensed trade when we have this information.

Joint Warranting for Licensing Officers Across Surrey

On 27 September the Licensing Committee approved Guildford's participation in a scheme of 'Joint Warranting' across Surrey Licensing Authorities. This would give Licensing Officers powers to deal with drivers and vehicles licensed by other Surrey Authorities operating in their areas. For example, Guildford Licensing Officers would be able to deal with vehicles licensed by Woking operating in Guildford, and vice versa.

It is anticipated that all the other Surrey Authorities will have signed up for the scheme to be operational at the beginning of 2020.

We have also written to Transport for London requesting a discussion about receiving delegations to enable us to deal with the number of TfL licensed vehicles operating in Guildford.

Uber London Licensing Decision

Uber has been issued a temporary 2 month operating licence extension in London. In a statement issued, TfL said:

"Transport for London (TfL) has today (Tuesday 24 September) announced its decision to issue Uber London Limited (ULL) with a two-month private hire operator licence ahead of consideration of any potential further licensing application.

"The new two-month licence will have the same conditions that ULL has been subject to over the last 15 months, along with new conditions to ensure passenger safety. TfL's original decision not to license ULL has led to the app-based firm improving its culture and governance. TfL is requesting additional material from ULL and this additional information will help inform any future licensing decision.

Last year Uber received a 15-month private hire operator's licence from the Chief Magistrate with conditions when it appealed TfL's decision not to grant a new licence. The new two-month licence will have the same conditions that ULL has been subject to over the last 15 months, along with new conditions to ensure passenger safety, these new conditions cover ride sharing, appropriate insurance and driver document checks by Uber.

We can advise that we have written to Uber's new General Manager, Melinda Roylett and TfL with our concerns about Uber's continual use of TfL Licensed vehicles in Guildford, and the subsequent problems that this is causing at a local level. We have also written to TfL raising our concerns about the number of TfL licensed vehicles in Guildford, and again requesting improved assistance to deal with these.

Parking Complaint on Old Palace Road

We have received a complaint from a resident of Old Palace Road who is concerned about a number of Private Hire Vehicles parking in parking bays on the road. Whilst we have advised the resident that if vehicles are parked legally then there is no action that the Council can take, we would request that the licensed trade remain considerate of other road users and local residents when waiting between jobs.

Department for Transport Taxi and Private Hire Statistics

This statistical release presents information on taxis and private hire vehicles in England as at 31 March 2019. Figures are updated every year through surveying each licensing authority in England and Wales. Statistics on taxi and private hire vehicle (PHV) in England show at end March 2019:

- There were 291,800 licensed taxis and PHVs
- 76% of all licensed vehicles were PHVs
- 58% of licensed taxis were wheelchair accessible
- all taxis in London were wheelchair accessible
- 362,600 taxi or private hire driver licences
- 63% of licences were PHV only licences
- 15% were taxi only licences
- 23% were dual licences

The reports shows the percentage increases and decreases in the number of licensed vehicles by local authority, with the biggest increases for: Lewes (91.65%), Aylesbury Vale (64.3%), Wolverhampton (62.3%), South Gloucestershire (54.5%), and Broadland (45.0%).

The biggest decreases were: Rossendale (49.9%), St Albans (37.5%), Telford and Wrekin (33.9%), and South Oxfordshire (23.6%).

The report can be viewed online at:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/833569/taxi-and-phv-england-2019.pdf

Private Hire Operator has licence revoked for failing to provide records

A Private Hire Operator has had their licence revoked by a Licensing Sub-Committee for failing to provide booking records.

The Sub-Committee heard that the Operator had been requested on five occasion to provide their booking records, and that they had been advised that it was an offence not to do so. However the Operator failed to comply with the request and at a hearing did not convince members of the Sub-Committee that they had a 'reasonable excuse' not to provide their records. The Sub-Committee considered that the Council expects licence holders to comply with licence conditions and legislation and decided to revoke the Operator's licence.

Good ideas or contributions

Finally, 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