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To all holders of Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Vehicle and Drivers' licences

February 2010

Dear Sir or Madam,

INFORMATION ON IMPORTANT HACKNEY CARRIAGE AND PRIVATE HIRE LICENSING ISSUES

The Licensing Team would like to update you on issues affecting your trade:

1. Advertising/signage on taxis

There has been an extraordinary amount of coverage in the Echo and nationally recently mainly concerning stickers on Hackney Carriages which refer to 'English speaking driver'. This had been raised with us by a trade representative at the January Consultative Meeting.

The Council's position on this is clear. It will use the condition currently in place to ensure the removal of such notices. The condition is as follows:

6.1 No advertisement, sign, notice, mark, illumination or other feature, other than as required by law or permitted by these conditions shall be placed on the exterior of any licensed hackney carriage including the windows.

At no time, contrary to Echo reports, has any driver or proprietor been told to remove any charity stickers.

2. Illegal ranking by hackney carriages

- (a) The Licensing Team has, on numerous occasions, witnessed hackney carriages parked in the bus stops to the south of the Above Bar taxi rank. The practice seems to be that when a space appears at the rear of the rank the taxi then reverses the whole length of the rank into the space. This practice must cease immediately as the manoeuvre is both highly dangerous and illegal.
- (b) On the south side of the Central station taxis are still, after advice from Licensing and parking enforcement, continuing to block the whole of the space between the station short term parking and the island adjacent to the taxi rank. This inevitably causes an obstruction to buses trying to turn into the station from Western Esplanade. In the near future the City Council will have the ability to deal with parking offenders through the post with photographic evidence obtained from static cameras. Please do not block this area - don't be caught.

3. Public nuisance in Bellevue Road

A number of complaints have been received regarding excessive noise in Bellevue Road when taxis are queuing for the London Road late night rank, particularly on Tuesday nights, but also at weekends.

Please do not get in and out of cars slamming doors and talking loudly with other drivers as this does cause a nuisance and disturbs residents of Bellevue Road. We have been informed that taxis were queuing into the closed end of Bellevue Road near Dorset Street. Please be considerate and refrain from this, as this is where most residents live. If extra queuing is required that should be in Kings Park Road.

Also please refrain from queuing across the walkway at the junction of London Road with Bellevue Road

4. Licence fees

A report will be taken to the Licensing Committee on 11th March 2010 seeking approval for an increase in fees for hackney carriage and private hire vehicle licences from £150 to £165 and for transfer of licence and replacement vehicle fees from £25 to £35 to reflect increasing service costs. The full report will be available via the taxi notice board in due course and any comments will be presented to the committee.

5. Hackney carriage fares

A request has been received from the Southampton Hackney Association for the variation of the table of fares for hackney carriages. The request is in line with that originally considered by the Licensing Committee in August 2009. The full report to the Licensing Committee on 11th March 2010 will be available via the taxi notice board in due course.

6. Taxi cameras

If your vehicle is required to have a camera fitted, you should contact Verifeye direct, and well in advance of the licence expiry date, to pay the full price of the camera, which is currently £710.88. *There are arrangements in place to pay locally, if required; please contact the Licensing Team for details.*

You should then contact the camera fitter and make an appointment to have the camera fitted (allowing sufficient time for the funds to clear). When the funds have cleared, Verifeye will notify the Licensing Team who will release the camera to the fitter.

When you present your vehicle to be licensed, you will be asked to confirm whether or not you are VAT registered and the appropriate reimbursement will be arranged within the financial limits specified by the Licensing Committee as soon as possible, which ordinarily is about 10 days.

Verifeye contact details:-

Verifeye Technologies Ltd
41 Moorlands
Wing
Leighton Buzzard
Bedfordshire
LU7 0TL

Tel: 07810 541 207

Yours faithfully,

Licensing Team
for Solicitor to the Council