

TAXI AND PRIVATE HIRE NEWSLETTER No 9

April 2008

Welcome to the ninth edition of this newsletter. This newsletter and previous newsletters are available on our website www.stroud.gov.uk. Also an updated copy of the document 'Stroud District Council - Information on Taxi and Private Hire Licensing' is on the website. This document contains our current policies and conditions relating to taxis and private hire. The document can be accessed by the following link or if you would like a copy sent in the post please ring the Licensing Team on 01453 754440.

http://www.stroud.gov.uk/info/licensing/taxi_info.pdf

1 The Licensing Team

Vicky has left the Licensing Team for 12 months maternity leave following the birth of her baby daughter and has been replaced by Claire. The Licensing Team are:

Principal Licensing Officer	Mike Lewis
Licensing Officer	Rachel Andrew
Licensing Assistant	Claire Barton
Licensing Assistant	Judy Kilmister

Please remember that if you need to come to the offices at Ebley Mill to see a member of the team you need to ring first to make an appointment otherwise you may have a wasted journey.

2 Licensing and Regulation Committee Meeting 19th March 2008 – Decisions.

Removal of Stonehouse Taxi Rank

Following consultation with the taxi trade and Stonehouse Town Council regarding the use of the hackney carriage stand (taxi rank) in the High Street, Stonehouse and having given consideration to the comments made, Committee has agreed to recommend to Gloucestershire County Council Highways that the hackney carriage stand (taxi rank) located outside the police station in High Street, Stonehouse be removed.

Decision not to limit the number of licences issued.

Committee considered a request by the taxi trade to limit the number of hackney carriage licences within the district and to conduct an un-met demand survey in order to do so. Having discussed the request and considered best practice guidance by Office of Fair Trading and Department of Transport, Committee does not support the request to fund an un-met demand survey and has resolved not to limit the number of licences issued.

Removal of requirement to carry a booster cushion in licensed vehicles.

Committee agreed to amend Stroud District Council's Conditions to remove the conditions requiring vehicles to carry a children's booster cushion with immediate effect.

Child restraint regulations state that the correct size child restraint for the age and weight of a child must be used. It is impractical to expect a taxi or private hire vehicle to carry a selection of restraints to cover all age ranges and you would be committing an offence if you carry a child in the wrong size seat. For this reason there is an exemption in regulations that permits such vehicles to carry children in the rear of the vehicle without a child restraint.

To remind you the regulations for taxis and private hire vehicles are as follows:

- children under 3 may travel unrestrained but in the rear seat only
- children 3 years and above in the rear seat must use an adult belt if the appropriate child seat or booster is not available.
- children up to 12 years old or up to 135 cms in a front seat of **any** vehicle including taxis and private hire vehicles must use the correct child seat or booster.

The driver of the vehicle is responsible for seat belt wearing by children under 14 years (except in taxis with fixed partitions).

Removal of requirement for new driver applicants to provide references

Committee agreed to amend Stroud District Council's 'General Information about Taxis and Private Hire Licences' to remove the requirement for new applicants for a taxi and private hire driver's licence to provide references. This has immediate effect.

New applicants have to undertake enhanced criminal record checks, DVLA checks, driving assessments and medicals and the results of these enable us to determine if a person is fit and proper to hold a licence. References tend to be of limited value so therefore are an unnecessary requirement.

3 Criteria for vehicle licensing.

Concerns have been raised within several licensing authorities regarding the safety of panel vans that have been converted to minibuses, and vehicles that have been converted to accommodate wheelchair access, that are licensed for use as hackney carriages or for private hire vehicles. As a result of these concerns one authority has suspended the licences of all vehicles converted from panel vans until they have passed the Voluntary Single Vehicle Approval test (including Class D and P tests) and amended its licensing criteria refusing to licence **any** vehicle that started out life as a panel van.

Within Europe vehicles designed and constructed for the carriage of passengers, and comprising of no more than 8 seats in addition to the driver must comply with M1 whole vehicle type approval. VOSA advice to local authorities (including Stroud District Council) has been that some vehicle conversions are unsafe and a vehicle type approval certificate ceases to apply once any conversion has been made.

Stroud District Council has a duty to ensure the safety of the travelling public and is responsible for ensuring that any vehicle it licences is safe and fit to be licensed.

As a result of the safety concerns regarding converted vehicles and in the interest of public safety a proposal will be put to the Licensing and Regulation Committee to amend the criteria for licensing vehicles. The proposal to be put to the Licensing and Regulation Committee will be:

From (* a date to be determined) Stroud District Council will only licence vehicles that are either:

- ❖ type approved to M1 Whole-vehicle, or M1 (Low volume) category standards, and have not been unaltered since type approval, or
- ❖ vehicles that have been issued with a certificate of compliance having undertaken a Voluntary Single Vehicle Approval test under class P (Personal Import) and (if fitted with a Disabled access and seating position) class D (Disabled persons vehicle); and has not been altered since that approval has been obtained.

Vehicles that are currently licensed by the Council shall continue to be able to renew that licence until (* a date to be determined). Thereafter the Council will not renew the vehicle licence unless it complies with the above requirements at the time of renewal.

The proposed dates as indicated above are,

- * immediate effect on committee agreeing the proposal
- + 31 December 2009.

Whilst we believe that this change in policy is necessary to ensure public safety, it is appropriate that we consult with you and provide you with an opportunity to make your views on the proposal known to the Committee. Your views are important to us. If you wish to comment on this proposal please do so by either writing to us at the address below, emailing us on licensing@stroud.gov.uk or by telephoning us with your details and comments on 01453 754440.

Licensing Section Contact Details

Personal visit to: Stroud District Council Offices Ebley Mill, Westward Road, Stroud. (Please ring first to make an appointment)	Writing to us at: The Licensing Section, Environmental Health Service, Stroud District Council, Council Offices, Ebley Mill, Westward Road, Stroud, Glos. GL5 4UB
Email: licensing@stroud.gov.uk	Phone: 01453 754440 / 754404 9.00 to 17.00 Monday to Thursday 9.00 to 16.30 Friday
Internet: www.stroud.gov.uk	Fax: 01453 754963