

LEGAL, DEMOCRATIC SERVICES

RICHARD IVORY, Solicitor,

Head of Legal and Democratic Services

Southampton and Eastleigh Licensing Partnership

Southampton City Council

Civic Centre,

Southampton SO14 7LY

Please address all correspondence to:

Licensing – Southampton City Council,

PO Box 1767, Southampton SO18 9LA



Direct dial: 023 8083 3002

Our ref:

E-mail: licensing@southampton.gov.uk

Please ask for: Mr. Bates

Name

24th February 2014

Dear Sir or Madam,

Consultation on life of licensed vehicles and ending the subsidy for taxi cameras

It is proposed to submit two separate reports to the Licensing Committee to consider reducing the life of licensed vehicles by two years ie back to the age limit that was in place before it was revised last year and to set in motion the structure to bring an end to the subsidy provided to proprietors of licensed vehicles for the cost of taxi cameras.

Life of licensed vehicles:

Private Hire Vehicles and Hackney Carriages fall into one of two categories. Category A vehicles are certified to 'M1' standard wheel chair accessibility and Category B are all other vehicles.

On the 19th September 2013 the Licensing Committee resolved category A vehicles can be licensed on application or renewal up to the age of 12 years and Category B up to the age of 9 years. This was an increase of 2 years from the previous condition. The argument presented was to ease the burden on proprietors at a time of recession.

Since that date the business community has expressed concern about the negative impact this change will have on the image of the city and business in general. In addition improved EU standards on newer vehicles making significant improvements to emissions and the Council's desire to reduce emissions generally are reasons to revert back to younger vehicles.

Taxi Camera subsidy:

Since 2009 when it became compulsory for licensed vehicles to have fitted an approved taxi camera the council has paid a subsidy so the cost to a proprietor for the first camera for that licence did not exceed £250 plus VAT plus the cost of fitting. At the time of introduction there were various funding streams available to finance this. These funding streams are no longer available. Owners have had since 2009 to fit cameras although there is no requirement to fit a camera until the vehicle is replaced or on a new application. There is an average of 100 new private hire vehicles being licensed each year. This would incur a significant ongoing cost to the council's general budget rather than falling on the licensing budget. In times of unprecedented financial cutbacks the Council can no longer afford to subsidise cameras but wish to continue with the need for them to be fitted..

The cameras required meet specifications recommended to ensure the data is of sufficient quality to meet the standards required to be presented as evidence in court. There is also substantial security attached to the data to ensure compliance with the relevant pieces of legislation. The council will look at any system recommended to them as long as it meets the specification required by the council.

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If you require this letter or future correspondence from us in a different format (e.g. tape, Braille or disc) please do not hesitate to let us know.

HMRC have advised the full costs of the camera and fitting can be recovered by the owners in the first year as legitimate costs.

The Licensing Committee will be considering the matter with a recommendation to end the subsidy for cameras fitted on or after the 1st June 2014.

This letter has been sent to you as part of the consultation process. If you wish to respond to either or both of the above subject areas please write to or e-mail the licensing team at the above addresses by 23rd March 2014. All responses will be put before the committee which will also be open to the public for you to address the committee if you wish.

Yours faithfully,

Phil Bates
Licensing Manager
for Head of Legal and Democratic Services

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