

21 April 2016

Torbay Council
FAO: Steve Cox
Community Safety
Town Hall Circus
Torquay
Devon TQ1 3DR



24 Tor Hill Road
Torquay
Devon
TQ2 5RD

Direct:
Office: +44 (0)1803202404
Fax: +44 (0)1803407666

DX 59801
Torquay

www.wbw.co.uk

Solicitors with Notaries Public

Your ref: R-227915/SJC
Our ref: DYE/APL

Dear Sirs

Re: Mr Rodney Woolacott – Complaints to be submitted to Licensing Sub-Committee

Thank you for your letter dated 15th April 2016 regarding the above named.

Please find enclosed our client's Response to your letter dated 6th April 2016. We are grateful to you for the extension of time.

We look forward to hearing from you concerning whether the proposed hearing is to be re-scheduled for the 12th or 19th May 2016.

Whilst writing we should be grateful if you could provide us with disclosure of the CCTV footage in relation to the incident which is the subject of the complaint received by Torbay Council on 26th February 2016 relating to an incident on 24th February 2016. We also request disclosure of the identity of the persons who have made complaints against our client and whether or not any individual complainant has made more than one of the complaints which are referred to in your letter.

Finally, we note that another matter has been brought to your attention, which is referred to in your letter to our client dated 20th April 2016. We propose to let you have our client's response when we have obtained his instructions on or before 28th April 2016. In the meantime it would be appreciated if you would provide us with a copy of the screenshot referred to as that is not attached to your letter that we have been provided with.

Yours faithfully
WBW Solicitors

RESPONSE TO TORBAY COUNCIL LETTER DATED 6TH APRIL 2016

1. **Complaint 2nd December 2015**

I recall that I was approached by a lady and a gentleman in a wheelchair but I did not refuse to take the fare because they had a wheelchair. I already had another fare's shopping in the boot of my taxi in respect of a customer from the rank who had gone to the dentist. I did not have sufficient room in the boot to be able to carry the wheelchair and I therefore politely asked the customers to take another taxi. The driver of the other taxi was not happy with taking the fare and there was a brief disagreement between us, no more than that, which resulted in the other taxi driver being abusive toward me.

2. **Complaint 26th February 2016**

I understand in accordance with Torbay Council Bye Laws that taxis are allowed to use the bus bays after midnight but not in the hours leading up to midnight but it is a fact that all taxi drivers regularly do this. The general understanding is that if a bus needs to use the bus bay prior to midnight then taxi drivers move off. I believe that the incident that is referred to in the second complaint raised actually took place in or about the summer of 2015 and not February 2016. I am therefore at a loss to understand why this complaint has only been put to me in February and not the previous summer. I recall an incident in or about August of 2015 when I was in the bus bay when two young men approached me and started taking photographs of my taxi and shouting at me that I shouldn't park in the bus bay. I recall that I simply said to them words to the effect "go away before you have to fish your camera out of the harbour". I do not recall swearing or making any threats to these persons. The language used was in the form of banter in the circumstances and the young man that I spoke to actually laughed at the time.

3. **Complaint received by Torbay Council on 26th February 2016 relating to incident on 24th February 2016**

I refer to my previous response to this complaint by letter dated 1st March 2016 (copy attached). I deny punching or spitting at a member of the public. I had previously requested disclosure of the CCTB footage of this incident and have yet to receive disclosure of it. I reiterate my request for disclosure of this footage in connection with this complaint.

4. **Complaint received on 23rd March 2016 regarding driving standards**

I find this particular complaint very upsetting as I have been a professional driver for 46 years and have always driven to a very high standard. I have no idea as to the identity of the person who has made this complaint and request disclosure of that information. On the day in question, I was driving [REDACTED] a regular passenger of mine, from Bristol whom I understand would be willing to make a statement concerning the manner of my driving on the day in question. I was driving within the national speed limit and I dispute that my driving was either aggressive or

dangerous. I do recall approaching a coach that was wandering and that I flashed my lights to draw attention to the coach of my presence so that I could overtake him, but at all times I drove within the national speed limit and in a sensible manner. This will be confirmed by the passenger who was in my car on the day in question.

5. **Complaint dated 2nd April 2016**

I have previously reported this incident to Torbay Council by letter dated 3rd April 2016 (copy letter attached). As indicated in my previous letter, I was approached by two ladies with a dog and I informed them that I was sorry that I didn't take dogs. Notwithstanding that I made that comment, the first lady still put the dog into the front passenger seat well of my vehicle. I repeated that I didn't take dogs and it was then that she said that it was a guide dog. I replied that I didn't know that and she remarked "what do you expect a guide dog to look like?" My response was that I thought they would be wearing a reflective jacket. I could not see anything about the dog which indicated that it was a guide dog initially. The lady in question then remarked that it was not being used as a guide dog at the moment as the dog had been ill. She thereafter showed me the label on the dogs lead in a manner with which I was not happy. The lady in question then said to me that I shouldn't be doing the job and referred to the fact that she was a Councillor and that she wanted my name. I informed her that I was not obliged to give my name but showed her my driver ID. At no time was I rude to her or the other lady, although I would comment that her attitude towards me was appalling, particularly bearing in mind that I understand that she is a Councillor. I asked her name and she informed me that it was [REDACTED]. After she had explained the circumstances to me I had said to her that I was willing to take her and the dog, but she refused and left in the next taxi.

I also wish to refer to the incident that I reported by letter dated 7th April 2016 (copy enclosed) which occurred on 5th April 2016 on the short rank when I was verbally abused by the driver of a car that pulled alongside me who I recognised was the same driver who had made the complaint about me on the same rank on 24th February 2016. I have not had your response to this report

I believe that at all times I have exercised control of my temper and have behaved in the manner of a professional driver. I fully dispute the allegations that I became aggressive and deny that I have committed any statutory offences.

Finally, I would be grateful if Torbay Council would provide disclosure of the names of each individual who has made the complaints which are relied upon by the Council for the hearing that is due to take place before Torbay Council Licensing Sub-Committee. I would be particularly interested to know whether a single complainant has made more than one complaint against me and would be grateful if further information or documentation could be supplied to me concerning these allegations in order that I may provide a more detailed response in due course.