

WITNESS STATEMENT

(Criminal Procedure Rules r27.1(1); Criminal Justice Act 1967, s.9; Magistrates' Courts Act 1980, s.5B)

Statement of Simon Guest

Age if under 18 "over 18" (if over 18 insert "over 18")

Occupation Licensing Officer

This statement (consisting of 1 page (s) each signed by me) is true to the best of my knowledge and belief, and I make it knowing that if it is tendered in evidence, I shall be liable to prosecution if I have wilfully stated anything which I know to be false, or do not believe to be true.



Signature

Date 17th May 2023

My name is Simon Guest and I am a Licensing Officer employed by Sedgemoor District Council. On attending work on 24th October 2022, I took a phone call from PC Patrick Quinton of Avon and Somerset Constabulary, that on the 21st October, he had stopped one of our licenced private hire vehicles at a routine stop at Bristol Airport. The vehicle was found not to be displaying Private Hire Plates, and the driver at the time, [REDACTED], appeared to be unlicenced. He would follow up with more details in the coming days.

I have checked our computer records and can find no trace of a [REDACTED] licenced with us as either a Hackney Carriage or Private Hire Driver. I have worked in the service for over 8 years with taxis and private hire licences as my primary task, and I do not recognise the name either currently or from the past. Our computer records go back to 2005.

On 26th October 2022, I took a call from [REDACTED] when she telephoned the council offices asking to speak to me in person, to which she gave a basic overview of a situation that had arisen a few days before involving the police at Bristol Airport. I did ask how and where she got my name from, and she indicated she was given my name by the staff at Fairview Minibuses.

She confirmed that she lived in Wedmore, and had been driving for Fairview for around 4 to 6 weeks. For the last month, she had been doing a school run every day, both morning and afternoon in this vehicle. She had done 3 or 4 other jobs in other vehicles, one of which was to take a passenger to Heathrow Airport on 23rd September 2022.

She said that she did not know anyone personally at Fairview, but enquired about a job via a friend who drove for them in the past. She stated that she got an email from Fairview on 16th September 2022 that she could now drive for them, and a subsequent text message on 19th September 2022 that her DBS had now been sorted. She only ever provided them her driving licence as proof of identification. This is insufficient personal information to

complete a DBS application, and at the time we spoke, she had not received a DBS result certificate in the post.

I asked what contact she had made with the then Somerset County Council school transport team, as they administer drivers for school runs, and passenger escorts. She knew nothing of this. I made subsequent contact with the School Transport team and they had never heard of her. She confirmed that Dave and Gemma were her points of contact at Fairview.

I went on to explain that based on what she had told me, every journey she had undertaken for Fairview, meant that both her and her passenger, including the child on the school run, were not insured in the case of accident. She was horrified and said she would be returning the vehicle keys to Fairview tomorrow and never driving for them again.

I can confirm that a silver Renault registration [REDACTED] has been licenced as a Private Hire Vehicle (indicator number P 28) continuously without breaks by Sedgemoor District Council since March 2019 to Fairview Minibuses. Since this date, this vehicle has never held "prestige" status or any exemptions, so in line with our policy and national taxi and private hire legislation, would be required to display a roof sign, and identifier licence plates on both the exterior front and rear of the vehicle at all times, whether on or off duty. It would also be required to display a smaller interior licence plate attached to the inside of the front windscreen, to be visible to persons outside the vehicle.

In January 2023, our taxi policy changed in preparation for the new unitary council, and the requirement to display a roof sign was removed.

On 15th May 2023, I received confirmation from PC Patrick Quinton that the matter had been heard at Bath magistrates Court on 24th April 2023. Fairview pleaded guilty and received a £512 fine and £294 costs awarded.

At no time between October 2022, and the time of writing this statement, have I received contact from Fairview Minibuses regarding this matter, or declaration of the conviction in the magistrates court.

I make this statement from a combination of memory, notes made at the time, and our internal IT computer records.



Signature

Signature witnessed by