



Notice to business operators to renew Business Premises Licences

Blantyre City Council through her vision of wanting “To be a City of choice in the SADC Region with a conducive environment where people shall take ownership, live, do business and prosper” has a mandate to create a favourable environment for doing business. Therefore, the Council through business licencing activities has a number of conditions that have to be met in order to create the desired environment of doing business.

The Council’s vision was framed to ensure that the status of a commercial capital is maintained. Creating a friendly environment for doing business in the City is what the Council would always want to achieve. Considering the challenges that are normally faced with regard to the implementation of the Laws of the land, it is always necessary that a notice such as this one is issued to ensure that areas of misunderstanding are clarified and barriers are eliminated to ease doing business in the commercial capital. It is anticipated that a properly coordinated and easier process of acquiring a business premises licence will help improve Malawi’s ranking on the global “ease of doing business” index.

Operations of businesses in Malawi are among other laws governed by the provisions of the Local Government Act, the Liquor Act, the Business Licencing Act, the Town and Country Planning Act, the Public Health Act and the Environmental Management Act. A number of By-Laws such as the Business Premises Licence By-Laws, the Liquor By-Laws, the Food By-Laws, the Opaque Beer By-Laws, the Peddlers By-Laws also complement the provisions in the various principle laws.

Section 12 of the Business Licencing Act requires every business entity to have a licence in order for it to conduct its business activities. The licences are renewed every year at the beginning of the new Government financial year. This implies that all licences currently being used will expire on 30 June 2019. It is our expectation that come 1 July 2019, every business MUST have renewed its business premises licence.

It should be noted that the 2012 Business Licencing Act empowers the Local Authorities (in this case Blantyre City Council) to licence all businesses that are owned by Malawians. Foreign owned businesses are licenced by the Ministry of Industry, Trade and Tourism. It must however be emphasised that Local Authorities still have the mandate to licence foreign owned business on other aspects such as the business premises, food processing, selling of liquor, manufacturing, just to mention a few. It therefore follows that a business may be licenced by both the Ministry of Industry, Trade and Tourism and Blantyre City Council.

Fellow residents, business licencing activities are done frequently to achieve the following objectives;

- Check on illegal businesses / trading activities
- Check on compliance with various legal provisions such as the Town Planning regulation
- Check on hygiene and safety in compliance with the provisions of the Health Regulations and Safety Regulations.

The Council has powers to close all business premises for operating without a licence. All business that do not have licences once spotted are closed. Business owners have most of the times felt that the Council has taken a harsh decision whenever their premises have been closed for operating without a licence. City residents have also raised their concerns on how some businesses are operating as they are felt to be operating without regard to the existing laws as well as society standards.

The Council would therefore like to implore upon all business owners to contact the Council now for inspection of their premises in readiness for issuance of licences for 2019/2020 financial year. It is in their interest now to request for the inspection and renewal of the licences as the Council would give them ample time to rectify on the shortfalls identified if any. It should of course be mentioned that some of the shortfalls may require immediate closure of the business premises in order to safeguard public health and safety. In such a case, the premises will only be subjected to issuance of business licence once all shortfalls have been abated to conform to the Council's standards.

Blantyre City Council would like to encourage the business community to take advantage of this open window to ensure that their businesses are regulated. The business community is being assured that licences will be issued within 72 hours from the date of inspection. It is our expectation that 6 984 businesses that were licenced in the current financial year will renew their licences. There were 365 new businesses that were licenced during the 2018 – 2019 financial year up from 241 new businesses in 2017 – 2018 financial year. It is further anticipated that about 500 new businesses will be licenced in the 2019 / 2020 financial year. It can be confidently said that business activities are on the increase in the City. The Council had in her register 6 378 businesses in the 2016/2017 financial year, 6 619 businesses in the 2017 / 2018 financial year and has 6 984 businesses in the current financial year. It is anticipated that 7 500 businesses will be licenced in the 2019 /2020 financial year.

Effective 1 July 2019 all businesses operating without a licence will be closed.

The businesses community is also being reminded to be on the alert of tricksters. Others take advantage of any opportunity to make quick money by presenting themselves as Council officers carrying out licencing activities. Council Officers carry with them valid identity cards which they should always show before being allowed to conduct any business licencing related activity. The business community is further being advised not to make any form of payment to our officers. All payments will have to be made at the Council's offices at Civic Centre.

Blantyre City Council

TAKING THE CITY BACK TO THE PEOPLE!!!!