

Delegated Cabinet Member Decision Report

**Decision Maker
and Portfolio area:** **Councillor Arooj Shah
Cabinet Member for Social Justice & Communities**

Date of Decision:

Subject: **Greater Manchester Minimum Licensing Standards
Consultation**

Report Author: **John Garforth**

Ward(s) Affected: **All**

Reason for the decision: To seek approval for Oldham Council to take part in the Greater Manchester Licensing Minimum Standards Consultation.

Summary: The ten Greater Manchester Councils have been working together for the past eighteen months to develop a set of common minimum licensing standards for the taxi and private hire industry across our conurbation.

This has resulted in a set of proposals which are highlighted in the attached briefing note at Appendix 1.

The proposed minimum standards have been developed to create a single vision for licensed, drivers, operators and vehicles in the future which support the GM Clean Air Plan.

The Cabinet Member and Chair of Licensing have previously attended briefings and meetings with the GM Mayor and other elected members and Officers to hear about the proposals.

What are the alternative option(s) to be considered? Please give the reason(s) for recommendation(s):

The alternative option is to not take part in the Greater Manchester consultation and let Oldham Councillors make their own decision on changes to policy.

Recommendation(s):

That approval be given to take part in the joint Greater Manchester consultation to consider licensing minimum standards for the taxi and private hire sector.

Implications:

What are the financial implications?

There are no financial implications.

What are the procurement implications?

Any procurement implications will be dealt with according to policy once decisions are made following consultation.

What are the legal implications?

In general terms the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 enables a Council to impose conditions on driver, vehicle and operator licences. There are currently no national minimum standards/conditions. There is no restriction on Councils adopting joint minimum standards/conditions (subject to undertaking appropriate consultation/decision making process in relation to any proposals).
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What are the Human Resources implications?

None

Equality and Diversity Impact Assessment attached or not required because (please give reason)

An EIA will be issued alongside the Greater Manchester consultation.

What are the property implications?

None

Risks:

Any policy decision is open to challenge but as of yet no policy has been determined as consultation has not yet taken place.

Co-operative agenda:

Being a co-operative Council we work in ways which are ethical, fair and deliver good social value as well as value-for-money. It also means giving residents the opportunity to work in collaboration with us to design and even help deliver services. The aim of this piece of work is to design future services and work collaboratively with other GM Councils so support the aims of the vision.

Has the relevant Legal Officer confirmed that the recommendations within this report are lawful and comply with the Council's Constitution? Yes

Has the relevant Finance Officer confirmed that any expenditure referred to within this report is consistent with the Council's budget? No implications


Are any of the recommendations within this report contrary to the Policy Framework of the Council? Yes


List of Background Papers under Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972:

There are no background papers for this report

Reasons for Exemption from Publication: Not applicable

Recommendation Approved

Report Author Sign-off:	
Cllr Arooj Shah Cabinet Member for Social Justice and Communities	
Date: 25 th July 2019	

Supported by:	
Cllr Norman Briggs Chair of Licensing Committee	
Date: 25 th July 2019.	

Please list any appendices:-

Appendix number or letter	Description
Appendix 1	Briefing note on minimum standards

Greater Manchester Minimum Licensing Standards

The ten Councils in Greater Manchester are leading the way in relation to taxi and private hire minimum standards by issuing a set of proposals for reform.

The Greater Manchester (GM) Strategy identifies key priorities to establish:

- World-class connectivity in transport
- A thriving and productive economy
- A region where people want to live and work
- A green city region
- Safer and stronger communities
- Age-friendly Greater Manchester

Taxi and private hire services have an important role in supporting all of these aspirations, as they are an important part of our transport provision. They do a vital job, providing essential transport links, for example, at times when public transport is not available, for those who have limited mobility and need accessible vehicles, and for visitors to Greater Manchester.

We all want to see are taxi and private hire services in Greater Manchester that consistently deliver safe and high-quality services for the public. By establishing Greater Manchester-wide minimum standards in taxi and private hire licensing, we can ensure a consistent approach for all residents and visitors in Greater Manchester.

The function of licensing is the protection of the public. Any person using a licensed vehicle must be able to trust its driver, be assured the vehicle is safe, and not contributing to poor air quality that harms drivers, passengers and residents of Greater Manchester alike. They must also be able to trust any operator who booked that journey that their information is safe and will not be misused.

The Clean Air Agenda

You may have seen the proposals from the Greater Manchester Councils on the creation of a clean air zone across GM. We face significant challenges in relation to keeping our air clean for our future generations. Poor air quality currently contributes to some 1200 early deaths a year across GM.

If a clean air zone is created from 2021 there will be a significant impact on our transport infrastructure. We currently licence some 2,00 hackney carriages (taxis) and 14,000 private hire vehicles.

We estimate that almost 1400 taxis (around 69%) and just over 4000 private hire vehicles (around 36%) licensed in Greater Manchester would need to pay a daily penalty if a Clean Air Zone was introduced in 2021. Officers will continue to work with the trade to support, guide and inform. Funding of £28m has been sought from the Government to support vehicle owners' transition to compliant vehicles. To view current information in relation to the clean air proposals visit cleanairgm.com

Licensed Drivers

We are proposing the following minimum standards for drivers to create consistency:

- Undergo an enhanced criminal records checks and register for the update service,
- Undertake a Group 2 medical examination,
- Have a local knowledge test,
- Have an English language assessment
- Undertake driver training and proficiency
- Comply with a dress code.

Licensed Vehicles

The proposed GM minimum licensing standards must support the Clean Air Plan proposals to improve air quality across GM in the shortest possible time. Therefore, it is proposed that all GM licensed vehicles meet the standards in the Government's Clean Air Framework: Euro 4, manufactured from 2004 for petrol engines and Euro 6, manufactured from 2015 for diesel engines or an ultra-low emission engine.

Vehicles first being licensed would be under 5 years from date of manufacture and will only be licensed until they are 10 years old.

Standard livery will apply across all vehicles with Council issued door and bonnet stickers being placed on private hire vehicles which will all be white in colour and on black, wheelchair accessible, taxis.

Other proposals in relation to vehicle licensing includes:

- CCTV installed in all vehicles and this may include audio in addition to visual recording.
- Local authority specific licence plates to be displayed on the front and rear of vehicles
- No retrofitting of engines into older vehicles (although retrofit emissions technology may be installed if CVRAS approved)
- All vehicles over the age of three will be tested at least twice a year
- No vehicles that have been written off in any category to be licensed
- No roof signs permitted on private hire vehicles

Private Hire Operators

It is proposed that that:

- Operators and their staff will be DBS checked to ensure that only safe and suitable people have access to Operator records.
- Operators will not be able to use the word 'taxi' in materials relating to their business
- Operators will have to abide by a more stringent set of requirements in relation to their booking record

Common Licence Conditions

Whether licensing drivers, vehicles or operators it is proposed that the same conditions apply whichever of the ten licensing authorities you are licensed by.

Criteria for Safe and Suitable Licence Holders

A GM policy on the suitability of licence holders and applicants will be consulted upon.

Local Authority Standards

It is also important that there are a common set of standards from a regulatory perspective which will be outlined in due course as part of the forthcoming consultation.

