

Report to OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY BOARD

Improvement of Public Safety in Oldham's Night Time Economy

Portfolio Holder:

Councillor A. Shah - Cabinet Member for Social Justice & Communities

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Reason for the Report

The reason for this report is to update Members on work being undertaken across Greater Manchester in relation to improving public safety in the night time economy linked to the private hire and taxi trade and the suggestions made within the Council Motion, in particular the promotion of the 'Ask Angela' and 'Street Angel' schemes through Oldham College, Oldham Sixth Form and the University.

Recommendations

That Members note the work being undertaken across Greater Manchester and the ongoing work to promote the 'Ask Angela' and 'Street Angels' schemes.

Improvement of Public Safety in Oldham's Night Time Economy

1 Background

- 1.1 In 2018, GM's ten local authorities agreed to collectively develop, agree and implement a common set of minimum licensing standards for Taxi and Private Hire services that cover the whole of GM.
- 1.2 The primary driver for this work was to improve public safety, but vehicle age and emission standards in the context of the Clean Air agenda are now also a major consideration.
- 1.3 This approach seeks to establish a basic and common minimum in key areas, whilst allowing Districts to exceed these minimums where they consider this to be appropriate. The work to devise the Standards has been undertaken by the GM Licensing Managers Network, supported by TfGM.
- 1.4 A second strand of work has been to encourage Government to reform legislation and regulation regarding taxi and private hire, specifically to end the practice of out-of-area operation of private hire drivers and vehicles which undermines the effectiveness of local regulation. Government has now committed to this reform, although the legislative timetable is unclear.
- 1.5 This piece of work doesn't just cover the night time economy but covers public safety in general at any point of the day or night.

2 What do the Minimum Standards cover?

- 2.1 The consultation document being developed by GM Licensing Network will have the detail but in summary there are four areas of focus:

Drivers: Criminal Records Checks; Medical Examinations; Local knowledge test; English language; Driver training; Driving Proficiency; Dress Code and Fit and Proper criteria.

Vehicles: Vehicle emissions (diesel Euro 6 and above, petrol Euro 4 and above); Vehicle ages (under 5 years at first licensing, no older than 10 years); Vehicle colour (Black for Taxi/Hackney, white for PHV); Vehicle livery (common GM design with Council logo incorporated); Accessibly (all Taxis to be wheelchair accessible); Vehicle testing; CCTV; Executive Hire; Vehicle design and licensing requirements.

Operators: Private Hire Operators / staff will require basic criminal record check; more stringent requirements in relation to booking records; Operators to take more responsibility for the behaviour of their drivers.

Local Authorities: Applications may be submitted up to 8 weeks in advance of licence expiry; Once determined, licence issued within 5 working days; Agree to develop common

enforcement approach and a framework to which licensing fees are set; Councillors to receive training before they hear applications.

The consultation also asks for feedback on timings/phasing for the implementation of any Common Minimum Standards. The trade briefing note is attached to this report.

3 Trade Engagement

3.1 During the summer 2018, TfGM surveyed public views of taxi and private hire services. Findings included:

- 85% agreed that common identification for private hire vehicles licensed in GM would help people recognize them.
- 78% of those who expressed an opinion were comfortable or very comfortable with the idea of having CCTV in their taxi or PHV.
- More than three quarters thought the age and condition of vehicle was important. Just over half were currently satisfied with the age and condition of vehicles.
- Respondents were more concerned by the emissions from taxis than PHV
- There was less confidence that private hire drivers were fully licensed and trained than taxi drivers
- There were relatively high levels of dissatisfaction with both standards of driving and communication.

3.2 There have been several meetings bringing together GM District Licensing Chairs and Executive Members to ensure agreement with the Common Standards approach, for which there is much support, including from the GM Mayor.

3.3 Districts have also held a number of trade meetings in June 2019 to brief their local trades on both the proposed Minimum Licensing Standards and implications of the Clean Air agenda. The trades have had sight of the likely proposed Common Minimum Standards, with the vehicle age/emission/colour requirements drawing most comment, particularly from the taxi trade, given the context of the Clean Air Plan. The trade have been made aware that a Consultation will be launched at a later date.

4 Ask Angela and Street Angels Update

4.1 The Partnership Project Officer has continued to make efforts to engage with Oldham College, Oldham Sixth Form and the University in order to promote the schemes.

4.2 Prior to the end of the academic year 2018/19 the educational establishments had not provided specific schedules for engagement with students.

4.3 The Partnership Project Officer is continuing to work closely with the colleges and the University and will be scheduling engagement sessions in relation to personal safety and darker nights when the new academic year begins.

4.4 The Community Safety and Cohesion Partnership has recently received authorisation to utilise some of the Community Safety Grant (annual grant provided by the GM Mayor) for communications purposes and this now be used towards the production of localised materials promoting both schemes.

5 Recommendations

5.1 Members are asked to note the report and feedback any comments on its content.

6 Consultation

6.1 A consultation will be taking place once a timeline has been agreed. All licence holders, trade representatives and interested parties will be encouraged to respond.

7 Financial Implications

7.1 None

8 Legal Services Comments

8.1 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). D. Joy

9. Co-operative Agenda

9.1 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.

10 Human Resources Comments

10.1 Not applicable

11 Risk Assessments

11.1 Not applicable

12 IT Implications

12.1 None

13 Property Implications

13.1 None

14 Procurement Implications

14.1 None

15 Environmental and Health & Safety Implications

15.1 None

16 Equality, community cohesion and crime implications

16.1 None

17 **Equality Impact Assessment Completed?**

17.1 In progress

18 **Key Decision**

18.1 No

19 **Key Decision Reference**

19.1 N/A

20 **Background Papers**

20.1 None

21 **Appendices**

21.1 Appendix 1 – Common Minimum Licensing Standards Proposals