

## **LICENSING COMMITTEE**

# **Licensing Policy – Taxi & Private Hire**

## **Report of Executive Member for Housing & Licensing**

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**12<sup>th</sup> June 2025**

### **Executive Summary**

This report sets out the current position with regards the Clean Air Plan, the related financial support for our licensed trades and how this effects our current emissions policy.

### **Recommendations**

That Members:

- 1) Note the report; and
  - 2) Approve the proposals
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## **1. Purpose of the report**

This report sets out the current position with regards the Clean Air Plan, the related financial support for our licensed trades and how this affects our current emissions policy.

## **2. Introduction**

2.1 The Council in its capacity as licensing authority is responsible for the licensing of private hire and hackney carriage drivers and vehicles, and private hire operators.

2.2 Best practice suggests that licensing authorities adopt a single licensing policy in order to unify all its decisions, procedures and conditions as a single source of information for licensees, applicants and interested parties.

2.3 Oldham has had such a policy for a number of years and from time to time it is reviewed in order to keep up with decisions made by the Licensing Committee, revised application procedures, guidance and best practice.

2.4 The Council's vehicle emissions and age policies are important factors for our licence holders in considering investment options and viability.

2.5 Due to the changes and delays to the Clean Air Plan (CAP) for Greater Manchester since work began in 2018, both taxis and private hire vehicles have been continuously affected.

2.6 To support the case for funding and provide assurance it would deliver the changes required, Greater Manchester offered commitments to government that emissions policies would mandate the transition to cleaner vehicles and prevent non-emission compliant vehicles from being licensed in the future.

## **3. Proposals**

3.1 Extend the emissions compliance date to 31 December 2026 for existing vehicle licence holders with non-compliant vehicles.

3.2 Allow existing vehicle licence holders to continue to renew their vehicle licence with the same non-emissions compliant vehicle until the age limit of that vehicle in accordance with the vehicle age policy.

3.3 Extend the age limit for purpose-built hackney carriages and wheelchair accessible private hire vehicles from 15 years to 17 years.

## **4. Background**

4.1 In October 2024 the final CAP submission was made by Greater Manchester to government, and this was accepted in January 2025. However, the government did not agree that all grant funding requested was required to support the taxi and private hire vehicle owners to transition to emission compliant vehicles.

4.2 It did not consider that the evidence supported the ask for £30.5m. The fact that the private hire fleet had achieved around 90% emission compliance across GM without funding support was a likely factor in this decision. However, in relation

to hackney carriages, it considered that financial support was required and therefore provided £8m to support the hackney trade transition its fleet.

- 4.3 Based on the grant levels set out in the Clean Taxi Fund that formed part of the final submission to government, £8m may not be enough to support every single non-emission compliant hackney within GM, as there remain around 1076 hackney carriages that are not compliant with the emission standard.

- 4.4 Our current policy on emission and age are outlined below:

	<b>Hackney Carriage Vehicle</b>	<b>Private Hire Vehicle</b>
<b>Current Age Policy</b>	Upper age limit 15 yrs	Upper age limit 12 years Upper age limit 15 years if wheelchair accessible
<b>Current Emissions Policy</b>	All new to licence vehicles must be Euro 4 (petrol) or Euro 6 (diesel) emissions standard  All existing licences must transition to have emissions compliant vehicles attached to them by 31 December 2025	

## 5. **Clean Air Plan & GM – latest position**

- 5.1 Following the settlement from government, the leaders of the 10 GM authorities have considered how best to move forward in the circumstances.

- 5.2 Whilst many districts have had emissions policies in place prior to the work with CAP, the compliance date of 31 December 2025 was approved by all in support of the Clean Air Plan submission. Although government have not provided sufficient funding as part of the CAP to support each non-compliant licence holder, it is still important we continue transitioning our fleets to euro emissions compliant vehicles to:

- provide resilience within our clean air plan
- ensure licensing authorities are operating with DfT Best Practice Guidance which outlines that LAs should implement emissions policies for licensed vehicles
- provides a better foundation for a pathway to transitioning to zero emissions capable vehicles in the future.

- 5.3 Leaders recognise that taxis and private hire vehicles are an important part of the transport network, providing crucial services for many sectors and groups, including some of the most vulnerable and poorer groups in our society. Leaders have expressed a desire to support the industry as much as possible so that it can continue to provide these essential services whilst aligning with clean air objectives.

- 5.4 On 16 December 2024, the Government also announced their intention to consult on a proposal to make all Local Transport Authorities responsible for

taxi and private hire licensing. This was proposed as a way of helping to deal with the issue of large scale out of area working and for local authorities to 'take back control'. Whilst there may be some benefits to such a proposal, it would not prevent licence shopping and so there is a recognition that supporting our trade and the principles of local licensing regimes need to come in the form of significant legislative reform beyond that proposed in the Devolution White Paper. It is understood that this consultation is currently on hold, however it would be pertinent for all GM authorities to consider their response to this proposal in readiness to respond.

- 5.5 It is in this context that Leaders consider that the best way forward at this point in time is not to make any final decisions with regards to the £8m Hackney funding and any support for the private hire trade without further engagement to ensure that funds are spent as effectively as possible. This also presents a timely opportunity to also engage with the trades with regards to the Governments White Paper proposal and to better understand the issues and motivations surrounding out of area working / licence shopping.

## **6. Recommended way forward as endorsed by Leaders**

- 6.1 It is in the context set out above that Leaders discussed a potential way forward, driven by a strong intention that all 10 authorities retain a consistent position with regards to the emissions policy. This would ensure that access to any funds is fair and equitable, and to mitigate against an increased risk of licence shopping between the GM authorities. Taking advice from lead officers in GM, Leaders endorsed the following proposals for consideration in turn by the relevant decision makers in each authority:

1. To deliver a 12-week engagement programme (independently carried out by Arup/Aecom) with the trade, officers and Members across Greater Manchester to inform:
  - How best to allocate the £8m Hackney funding
  - What financial assistance to offer PHV licence holders
  - Why do individuals living within GM choose to licence elsewhere
  - What can be done (if anything) to make being licensed within GM more attractive
2. Launch a campaign, led by GM Mayor Andy Burnham as Chair of the GMCA, to call on the government to take legislative action to stop the out of area issue and allow local authorities to retain control of licensing policy in its own area
3. Extend the emissions compliance date to 31 December 2026
4. Allow exemptions to the emissions policy as follows:
  - Where a district age policy is in effect: To permit the non-emissions compliant vehicle licence holder to have the current maximum age limit on that vehicle

- Where a district age policy is not in effect; to permit non-emissions compliant vehicles up to 31 August 2030 to transition to an emissions compliant vehicle
- 6.2 On 16 April 2025, trade representatives from across Greater Manchester were invited to a round table event hosted by the GMCA Chair to communicate the position that all 10 Leaders had discussed and to officially launch the campaign; 'Backing Our Taxis: Local. Licensed. Trusted'. Representatives from the Oldham trade were in attendance and the proposals were generally well received.
- 6.3 An officer working group has been established led by Sara Todd, Chief Executive of Trafford Council and GM portfolio lead for Taxi and Private Hire Licensing. Danielle Doyle, as Chair of the GM Licensing Manager's Group will attend this meeting.
- 6.4 A Trade representative working group is to be established in May 2025 to help inform the wider review, and engagement with the wider trade will be in via:
  - An online survey
  - In person surveys
  - In depth interviews
- 6.5 In addition to the emissions policy amendment, the committee are asked to consider the following amendments to the vehicle age policies:
  - Extend the upper age limit for purpose-built Hackneys and wheelchair accessible Private Hire vehicles from 15 years to 17 years
  - Extend the upper age limit for non-wheelchair accessible Private Hire vehicles to 12 years
- 6.6 These proposed amendments are made in recognition of the level of financial investment required for purpose-built Hackneys and to encourage investment in wheelchair accessible PHVs to increase the provision available to our residents and visitors
- 6.7 Members may be concerned about the condition of vehicles that are older, and it is important to note that any extension to the vehicle age limit would not affect the requirement to pass the vehicle compliance test carried out by our in-house vehicle examiners, and to comply with the following vehicle licence conditions:
  - 3.1 *The Licensee shall ensure that the vehicle is always maintained in a good mechanical and structural condition and be capable of satisfying the Council's mechanical and structural inspection at any time during the period of the licence.*
  - 3.2 *The interior and exterior of the Hackney Carriage shall be kept in a clean condition by the Proprietor*

3.4 *The Licensee of the vehicle shall: -*

- *ensure fittings and furniture of the vehicle are kept in a clean condition and well maintained and in every way fit and safe for public use;*

6.8 The proposed easements on the vehicle age policies are also due to be considered by the other authorities within GM over the coming weeks.

7. **Legal Comments**

7.1 Under section 57 of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976, the Council can require an applicant for a licence under the Town Police Clauses Act 1847 (in respect of hackney carriages) or the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 (in respect of private hire vehicles and private hire operators) to submit such information as they may reasonably consider necessary to enable them to determine whether the licence should be granted or whether conditions should be attached to any such licence. Any person aggrieved by the refusal to grant him a licence may appeal to the magistrates' court. (A Evans)

8. **Co-operative Agenda**

8.1 Not applicable

9. **Environmental and Health & Safety Implications**

9.1 None

10. **Equality, community cohesion and crime implications**

10.1 None

11. **Equality Impact Assessment Completed?**

11.1 No – not required

12. **Key Decision – No**

12.1 Key Decision Reference - N/A

13. **Background Papers**

13.1 Consultation document

14. **Appendices**

14.1 None