

MEETING OF MEMBERS OF THE COMMUNITIES & HOUSING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Meeting: 1 July 2021
At: 6.00 pm

PRESENT

Councillor Mark Roberts (Chair) in the chair; Councillor Lisa Walker (Vice-Chair); Councillors Shan Alexander, Malcolm Allan, Rory Leonard, Colin MacAlister, Kerry Waters and Matt Wynne.

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillors and officers were invited to declare any interests which they had in any of the items on the agenda for the meeting.

No declarations were made.

2. GM CLEAN AIR FINAL PLAN

The Corporate Director (Place) & Deputy Chief Executive submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) setting out the proposed Greater Manchester (GM) Final Clean Air Plan (CAP) and policy following a review of all of the information gathered through the GM CAP consultation and wider data, evidence and modelling work which is to be agreed by the ten Greater Manchester local authorities.

Representatives of the Economy & Regeneration Scrutiny Committee were also present at the meeting to participate in the discussion on this item in view of the cross-portfolio nature of the GM Clean Air Plan.

The Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Resources, Commissioning & Governance (Councillor Tom McGee) and the Cabinet Member for Sustainable Stockport (Councillor Sheila Bailey) attended the meeting to respond to questions from the Scrutiny Committee.

The following comments were made/ issues raised:-

- It was disappointing that the government had rejected a Hardship Fund to further support businesses on the grounds that they did not consider that such a fund was the best way to mitigate against the impact of uncertainty due to the pandemic.
- It would have been beneficial for clean air schemes to have been co-ordinated nationally rather than on a local authority level as this may lead to a degree of confusion amongst motorists unfamiliar with the rules surrounding each scheme.
- It was confirmed that vehicles would not be charged a second time for crossing a local authority boundary within Greater Manchester area.
- Concern was expressed in relation to the inflexibility of the charging mechanism around midnight which would result in a vehicle being charged twice should they happen to start their journey on one day and finish on the second. It was suggested that there

may be unforeseen consequences to this approach that may for example result in vehicles speeding to avoid a further charge.

- There needed to be a clear communications policy with residents so that the scheme was widely understood.
- It was important that businesses were made aware of the funds available to them to support them with the compliance of their vehicles.
- The overall GM Clear Air Plan was broadly welcomed and the consultation was considered to be thorough and had been engaged with well by residents.
- There was a limited window of opportunity to amend the locations of any of the repeater signs and members were encouraged to contact officers as soon as possible if there were any concerns as the specific locations of these.
- It was not proposed to provide for a moratorium on the imposition of fines associated with commencement of the zone.
- It was intended that any income received from the scheme should be used to fund the operation of the zone, and any surplus would be returned to the general transportation budget.
- Mobile ANPR vehicles would be used if any issue was found with regard to the displacement of traffic trying to avoid fixed camera locations pending the installation of fixed cameras.
- Motorists would have a period of time to pay the charge before a fine would be levied.
- Concern was expressed that the signage that was proposed to be erected did not make it clear what category of vehicle would be subject to charging. In response it was stated that the content and design of the signage was largely prescribed by government.
- It was important to note that cars were exempt from any proposed charges. It was queried whether there was a guarantee that private vehicles would never be subject to charges under this scheme, In response, it was stated that the modelling undertaken in Greater Manchester concluded that it was only necessary to include the proposed categories of vehicles within the scope of the scheme and that unless there was a change in legislation it would not be necessary to expand this further.
- Concern was expressed in relation to the range of delegations afforded to Greater Manchester with regard to the range of vehicles that might be subject to charges in the future.
- There would be a network of testing stations at various locations throughout Greater Manchester to assess air quality.
- The strategic road network needed to have been included within the scope of the scheme and it was regrettable that this was not the case with the exception of two routes in Tameside.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

The meeting closed at 7.15 pm