

**GREATER MANCHESTER MINIMUM LICENSING STANDARDS FOR TAXI AND  
PRIVATE HIRE (STAGE 1)**

Report of the Deputy Chief Executive

**1. INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 This report asks Members to approve the recommendations relating to Stage 1 of the Greater Manchester Minimum Licensing Standards for Taxi and Private Hire Drivers, Operators and Local Authorities.
- 1.2 The recommendations are brought before Members for the final stage of governance, under the Constitution of Stockport Council.
- 1.3 The full recommendations are attached at **Appendix A, 1, 2 and 3** of this report, which provide a full background and rationale for each standard. A summary of those recommendations is provided in Tables A-C below.

**2. BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 The proposals set out below were endorsed by the Greater Manchester Combined Authority during their September meeting.
- 2.2 This report represents the final stage of governance for the Stage 1 proposals.
- 2.3 The Stage 2 proposals in respect of vehicle standards will be brought forward for governance later in the year.

**3. CONSULTATION FINDINGS**

- 3.1 A consultation on the standards took place between October and December 2020. In total across Greater Manchester, nearly 1700 responses were received with 59% of responses being from the public, 21% from private hire drivers and 14% from hackney carriage drivers.
- 3.2 The consultation findings both across GM as a whole, and locally in Stockport, are included in **Appendix A**.

**4. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 4.1 Each recommended standard is set out in Tables A – C below.
- 4.2 Any standard that is also contained within the Department for Transport Statutory Guidance of July 2020 is highlighted with an asterisk\*.
- 4.3 The summary below also includes standards to which Stockport already apply or partially apply, however they are included in their entirety to ensure Members have sight of the full set of recommendations.

**Table A Driver Standards**

<b>Standard 1* Enhanced Criminal Record Check</b>	<p>It is proposed that all drivers will be required to undertake an enhanced disclosure check through the DBS to include barred lists (such as details of unspent convictions and police cautions). Drivers must also register to the DBS Update Service and maintain that registration to enable the licensing authority to routinely check for new information every 6 months as a minimum.</p> <p>NB. If a licence has not been issued within 6 months of a DBS certificate issue date, then a further enhanced DBS will be required (unless the applicant is registered with the Update Service)</p> <p>It is proposed that officers will reflect and engage with government further on the requirement for certificates of good conduct overseas and prepare a further report if necessary.</p>
<b>Standard 2 Medical Examinations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Group 2 medical examinations are used to check drivers are medically fit to drive [the same examinations as applied by the Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA) for lorry and bus drivers]</li><li>• That the medical assessment is conducted by a registered GP or registered Doctor who has reviewed the applicant and has access to their full medical history</li><li>• That the medical certificate is no more than 4 months old on the date the licence is granted</li><li>• Medical certificates are required minimally (unless otherwise directed by a medical professional) on first application; at age 45; and every 5 years thereafter until the age of 65 when it is required annually</li></ul>
<b>Standard 3 Knowledge Test</b>	<p>It is proposed that applicants undertake a knowledge test. Authorities will be able to determine what is included in their local test but topics covered may include; local area knowledge, local conditions, licensing law, road safety, highway code, numeracy and safeguarding.</p>
<b>Standard 4* English Language Test</b>	<p>It is proposed that new drivers undertake an assessment to ensure they are able to communicate in spoken English and in writing to a standard that is required to fulfil their duties, including in emergency and challenging situations.</p> <p>Whilst the standard is not specified further and will be for authorities to determine, the expectation is that that all authorities have a test requirement that can demonstrate the ability to communicate effectively to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Establish the passenger(s) destination and provide answers to common passenger queries or requests</li><li>- Be able to provide customers with correct change</li><li>- Be able to provide a legibly written receipt upon request</li></ul>

<b>Standard 5 Driving Proficiency Tests</b>	It is proposed that all new drivers will be required to pass a taxi/private hire on-road assessment with a GM approved supplier. It is also proposed that this standard be met in respect of reviews of licences as appropriate, where the licensees standard of driving may have been called into question.
<b>Standard 6 *</b> <b>Driving Training</b>	It is proposed that all authorities require drivers to undertake training in the following areas as a minimum: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Safeguarding</li> <li>- Child Sexual Exploitation</li> <li>- Human Trafficking and County Lines</li> <li>- Disability and dementia awareness</li> <li>- Licensing Law</li> </ul>
<b>Standard 7 Dress Code</b>	It is proposed that a dress code is introduced to promote an improved and positive image of the licensed trade across the region. The recommended code is attached at <b>Appendix 1</b> .
<b>Standard 8 Drug and Alcohol Testing</b>	It is proposed that a policy is developed for future approval, to introduce testing for drivers based on complaints or intelligence received.
<b>Standard 9 Private Hire Driver Licence Conditions</b>	A set of proposed licence conditions for Private Hire Drivers are attached at <b>Appendix 2</b> . The conditions cover a comprehensive set of expectations with regards to driver behaviour, including customer service and requirements on reporting.

**Table B Operator Standards**

<b>Standard 1 Private Hire Operator Licence Conditions</b>	A set of proposed licence conditions for Private Hire Operators are set out at <b>Appendix 3</b> . The conditions set out expectations and responsibilities with regards to how records should be kept in relation to booking, vehicle and drivers working for their company.
<b>Standard 2 *</b> <b>Criminal Record Checks for Operators and Staff</b>	To introduce a condition on the Operator licence requiring operators and their staff (paid or unpaid) who have access to bookings to be DBS checked annually to ensure that only safe and suitable people have access to operator records

**Table C Local Authorities**

<b>Standard 1 Timescales for applications</b>	It is proposed that authorities ensure processes are in place to allow customer licence holders to submit renewal applications up to 8 weeks prior to licence expiry; and to ensure that once any application has been determined, the licence will be issued to the customer within a maximum of 5 working days.
<b>Standard 2 An agreed common enforcement approach</b>	It is proposed that a common enforcement approach is developed and adopted to ensure that standards are adhered to in practice across Greater Manchester and are applied consistently by each Licensing Authority.
<b>Standard 3 A Common Fee Setting Framework</b>	It is proposed that a common methodology for setting the costs and calculating the taxi and private hire fees is agreed and adopted. This is not proposing a standard fee across GM, but ensuring the method for calculating costs is applied consistently by each Licensing Authority.
<b>Standard 4 Councillor Training*</b>	Most Councillors already receive training, but this proposal ensures that this is embedded as a consistent standard and confirms that those with responsibility for taxi and private hire licensing, receive relevant training prior to sitting on any hearing panels.
<b>Standard 5 Delegated powers for Licensing Managers</b>	It is proposed that we review how we make urgent safeguarding decisions to ensure that there is always the appropriate available governance in place to facilitate immediate action on the grounds of public safety.
<b>Standard 6 Excellence in Licensing Award</b>	It is proposed to reflect on how a scheme would be operated, funded. Future direction from Members will be sought about developing a scheme further.

## **5. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

5.1 The Committee is asked to resolve to:

- 5.1.1 Note the endorsement of the Stage 1 recommendations by the Greater Manchester Combined Authority on 10<sup>th</sup> September 2021.
- 5.1.2 Adopt the new policy on DBS criminal records checks in terms increasing the frequency of checks and requiring compulsory sign-up for drivers to the DBS update service.
- 5.1.3 Agree to retain our current policy on medical examinations for drivers and to relax the requirement for 5 yearly checks after an initial medical assessment until the age of 45. This is in line with medical requirements for Bus and HGV drivers.
- 5.1.4 Agree to retain our current policy on driver knowledge tests.

- 5.1.5 Adopt the new policy on the assessment of an applicant's knowledge of spoken and written English.
- 5.1.6 Retain our current policy on driving proficiency tests for applicants whilst noting a new provider.
- 5.1.7 Adopt the new policy on driver training.
- 5.1.8 Adopt the dress code policy for taxi and private hire drivers.
- 5.1.9 Agree in principle to adopting a policy for drug and alcohol testing of drivers subject to content and final approval being agreed at a later date. This will allow the policy to be developed and consultation to commence before being brought back to Members at a later date.
- 5.1.10 Agree a revised set of private hire driver licence conditions which will be consistent across Greater Manchester.
- 5.1.11 Agree a revised set of private hire operator licence conditions which will be consistent across Greater Manchester.
- 5.1.12 Adopt the policy on criminal record checks on private hire operators and their staff who have access to booking records.
- 5.1.13 Agree a common standard across Greater Manchester for the submission of applications in terms of timescales for determination.
- 5.1.14 Endorse proposals for officers to develop a common enforcement approach across Greater Manchester so that the standards can be applied consistently by each Licensing Authority.
- 5.1.15 Endorse a common methodology for the setting of licensing fees across Greater Manchester, to ensure that administration and enforcement costs are recovered consistently by each Licensing Authority.
- 5.1.16 Retain and strengthen our current position on Members receiving relevant and timely licensing training, to allow them to make effective decisions in line with relevant legislation, practise and guidance.
- 5.1.17 Agree to a review of how we make urgent safeguarding decisions, to ensure that there is always the appropriate and available governance in place to facilitate immediate action against a licence on the grounds of public safety.
- 5.1.18 Allow officers to further explore the potential benefits in the introduction of an Excellence in Licensing Award.
- 5.1.19 Bring into force all revised and new policies from 1<sup>st</sup> December 2021.

#### List of Appendices

Appendix A – Stage 1 Recommendations Report – Greater Manchester Minimum Licensing Standards for Taxi and Private Hire

Appendix 1 – Licensed Drivers Dress Code

Appendix 2 – Proposed Private Hire Driver Conditions

Appendix 3 – Proposed Private Hire Operator Conditions

Appendix 4 – Tabled changes to Appendix 3

## BACKGROUND PAPERS

The consultation document and findings can be accessed at [www.gmtaxistandards.com](http://www.gmtaxistandards.com)  
Equality Impact Assessment

Anyone wishing to inspect the above background papers or requiring further information should contact Sarah Tooth by email [sarah.tooth@stockport.gov.uk](mailto:sarah.tooth@stockport.gov.uk)