

**Manchester City Council
Report for Information**

Report to: Licensing and Appeals Committee – 7 June 2020

Subject: Minimum Licensing Standards – Initial Summary of Consultation Findings

Report of: Director of Planning, Building Control and Licensing

Summary

The report provides an update on the Minimum Licensing Standards (MLS) project and sets out a summary of the public consultation responses.

Recommendation

The Committee is requested to note the report.

Wards Affected: All

Environmental Impact Assessment - the impact of the decisions proposed in this report on achieving the zero-carbon target for the city

Licensed vehicles are a significant section of the public transport offer and are currently included in all categories for proposed implementation of a Clean Air Zone (CAZ) in the City, with the majority of licensed vehicles in Manchester not currently compliant with the Euro Emissions standard that would be required by the CAZ. Vehicle age and maintenance are key factors in the environmental impact that a vehicle has.

The CAZ and Minimum Licensing Standards seek to address the current emissions standard within the whole GM fleet, including the provision of government funding under a 'Clean Taxi Fund' to help proprietors replace non-compliant vehicles.

Manchester Strategy Outcomes	Summary of the contribution to the strategy
A thriving and sustainable City: supporting a diverse and distinctive economy that creates jobs and opportunities	The considerations within the Minimum Licensing Standards project, seek to balance the desire to support the licensed trade to remain viable and assist in their recovery from the impacts of the pandemic, against the public safety and environmental objectives of the City.
A highly skilled city: world class and home-grown talent sustaining the city's economic success	

A progressive and equitable city: making a positive contribution by unlocking the potential of our communities	
A liveable and low carbon city: a destination of choice to live, visit and work.	

Full details are in the body of the report, along with any implications for:

- Equal Opportunities Policy
- Risk Management
- Legal Considerations

Financial Consequences – Revenue None

Financial Consequences – Capital None

Contact Officers:

Name: Danielle Doyle
Position: Licensing Unit Manager
E-mail: danielle.doyle@manchester.gov.uk

Background documents

Various reports to the GMCA and briefing notes with regards to the Clean Air Zone and Minimum Licensing Standards

1. Background

- 1.1 Hackney and Private Hire services are a hugely important part of the transport sector. Collectively, they provide more journeys for residents and visitors than Metrolink or local rail, and they represent a significant part of the economy, employing over 20,000 people across the city region.
- 1.2 Minimum Licensing Standards (MLS) for Taxis and Private Hire across all GM local authorities represent a means of achieving a range of shared goals, including:
- improving public safety;
 - helping deliver clean air and reducing carbon emissions;
 - supporting the locally licensed hackney and private hire trades; and
 - complying with the Governments statutory guidance on safeguarding.
- 1.3 Overall, the approach looks to provide:
- the public with safe, visible and high-quality hackney and private hire services
 - the hackney and private hire trades with clarity over what the required standards will be over the long term, and through the GM Clean Air Plan, with unprecedented investment to help renew the fleet
 - GM authorities with a level playing field in their regulatory role in relation to driver, vehicle and operator licensing; whilst retaining local ownership and the scope to exceed the MLS as agreed locally by elected members.
- 1.4 Members will be aware that the proposed Minimum Licensing Standards were subject to public consultation from 8 October to 3 December 2020. This was undertaken alongside the consultation for the proposed Clean Air Plan, given the significant links between the two workstreams in relation to licensed vehicles.
- 1.5 The proposed minimum licensing standards cover four main areas:
- Drivers:** Common standards of DBS checks; medicals; local knowledge; English language proficiency; driver training; and dress code.
- Vehicles:** Vehicle emission standards of Euro IV for petrol engines and Euro VI for diesel from 2021 (with an ambition to zero emission capable vehicles by 2029); Age policy of under-five at first licensing and licensed until ten years old; All hackney carriages to be black and private hire vehicles white; Hackney carriages to be all wheelchair accessible; Common livery; CCTV in vehicles and other design and licensing requirements.
- Operators:** Private hire operators and base staff to have basic DBS checks. Updated conditions and record keeping requirements.

Local authorities: Common timescales for submitting applications and receiving granted ones. A common enforcement approach and a consistent framework to which fees will be set.

Roadmap to zero emission capable (ZEC) vehicles: GM is also proposing a road map to reducing harmful vehicles emissions with the aim of an entirely Zero emission capable fleet by 2029. This will support the city region's Clean Air Plan to reduce harmful nitrogen dioxide emissions. The Government has announced plans to ban the sale of petrol and diesel vehicles from as early as 2032. The proposed timetable to move to a ZEC fleet is as follows:

2025 – All new to licence vehicles need to be ZEC

2028 – All licensed vehicles need to be ZEC

2029– an entirely ZEC Taxi/PHV fleet across GM

- 1.6 With authorities at varying degrees of compliance with the proposed standards, securing these ambitions will require a rolling, progressive programme of reform, with several elements to be designed, developed, agreed and implemented over time.
- 1.7 The GM Licensing Network, comprising of the 10 Licensing managers across GM, is currently working through the consultation responses alongside new government guidance, and will be cognisant of Member feedback, before making final recommendations for each standard. Further reports will be brought to Members for discussion and decision.
- 1.8 The purpose of this report is to provide the Committee with a summary of the consultation on MLS.

2. Consultation summary

- 2.1 The consultation yielded a total of 1683 responses as follows:

- 1552 via online questionnaire
- 84 paper questionnaires
- 47 via email

In addition, and concurrently, a qualitative phase of four online focus groups and A series of focus group and 40 in-depth interviews took place to gain greater understanding of stakeholder views on the proposed changes. The split of responses was follows:

- 59% of responses from the public
- 21% of responses from private hire drivers
- 14% of responses from hackney drivers

A presentation will be given to Members on the headline findings, and are summarised below:

2.2 Driver Standards

- Extremely high levels of agreement from members of the public (94%) citing expectations that their safety and experience would improve from the proposals
- Overall agreement with proposals from Trade (Hackney 58% and PH 57%) but substantial proportion did not agree (Hackney 28% and PH 29%)
- Drivers saw the benefit in improving the customer experience but expressed concern at cost implications and felt the dress code was unnecessary.

2.3 Vehicle Standards

- High level of agreement from members of the public (88%)
- Greater overall level of disagreement from Trade (Hackney 69% and PH 63%)
- Trade mostly commented on age policy proposals; disagreeing
- Concerns raised about the charging infrastructure for electric vehicles
- Public liked the proposal of CCTV but concerns raised by the Trade with regards to cost and data privacy
- Comments and disagreement across trade and public with regards to colour policy proposals

2.4 Operator Standards

- Much broader agreement across both members of the public (94% agreed) and Trade (Hackney 67% and PH 65%)
- Main comments were in support of DBS checks for Operator staff, whilst some concern was also raised about cost and frequency
- Members of the public felt proposals could help improve customer service

2.5 Local Authority Standards

- High level of agreement again from members of the public (90%) and the Hackney Trade (72%) but Private Hire trade responses were split with only 51% agreeing
- Many Hackney and PH respondents commented that the licensing fee should be more affordable
- Members of the public were more in support of the licensing award than drivers who did not feel it would be beneficial

3. **Key Policies and Considerations**

(a) Equal Opportunities

Equality Impacts have been undertaken at each stage of the MLS project and will continue to be assessed by each authority.

(b) Risk Management

No further risks to those already identified within the report.

(c) Legal Considerations

Legal risks associated with the MLS work are being considered on behalf of the 10 authorities and will be detailed in the final recommendations report.

4. Conclusion

- 4.1 The report sets out a summary of the MLS consultation responses. Members are requested to note the report.