

TRAFFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL

STATEMENT OF EXECUTIVE DECISION

<u>DATE OF DECISION</u>	Wednesday, 15 November 2023	<u>DECISION MAKER</u>
<u>DECISION REFERENCE</u>	E/15.11.2023/6	Executive (Councillors Participating: Ross, Adshead, K. Carter, Harding, Hynes, Patel, Slater, Thompson, Williams, and Wright)

RECORD OF THE DECISION

DRAFT REVENUE BUDGET PROPOSALS 2024/25 AND MTFS 2025/26 - 2026/27

- a) That the 2024/27 proposed budget strategy, including the 2024/25 draft revenue budget and the 2025/27 MTFS be approved and the income and savings proposals be included for the purposes of consultation only (where necessary) and these proposals will also be referred to the Scrutiny Committee for their consideration;
- b) That the proposal to increase Council Tax by 4.99% in 2024/25 (comprising 2.0% adult social care precept and 2.99% general increase) and by 2.99% for the remaining years of the MTFS 2025/27 be noted;
- c) That the assumptions made in setting the MTFS in Section 4 and the degree of uncertainty be noted;
- d) That the remaining budget gap for the years 2025/26 to 2026/27 be noted;
- e) That the commentary of the Director of Finance and Systems, the Council's statutory S151 officer, regarding the financial sustainability of the Council in Section 1 be noted.
- f) That the draft proposals are subject to various consultation exercises, further analysis of reserves, savings and income including impact assessments, potential future movements in core funding and specific grants, revised costings and robustness assessments be noted.
- g) That the review of the Capital Programme which is ongoing and the prioritisation process to be undertaken to compile an affordable capital programme 2024/25 to 2026/27 be noted.
- h) That the continued use of flexible use of capital receipts to support in part the cost of the Modernisation Team in developing the Council's Finance and Change Programme for 2023/24 and 2024/25 be noted.

REASONS FOR THE DECISION

To enable the Council to explore proposals in order to develop a balanced, robust budget and Council Tax level to be approved in accordance with statutory requirements.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED AT THE MEETING/BY MEMBERS

The budget proposals included in this report assume an overall increase to the level of council tax of 4.99% in 2024/25 comprising an increase of 2.0% for the 'adult social care precept' to be earmarked for adult social care expenditure and 2.99% general increase in the 'relevant basic

amount'. An alternative option could be made to increase its 'relevant basic amount of council tax' above these levels. However, this would exceed the referendum limits, which would mean a local referendum would be required to be held before any such increase could be implemented. Alternatively, not increasing council tax by the level recommended in this report, subject to the final referendum level being notified in December 2023, would increase the overall funding gap by up to £6.01m in 2024/25 which would mean further reductions to expenditure on council services would be necessary.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST DECLARED AND ANY ASSOCIATED DISPENSATION

None

Scrutiny Call in Deadline

Thursday, 23 November 2023

(Decision can be implemented on the next working day, unless called in).

PUBLICATION DATE

Thursday 16 November 2023

RECORDED BY:

Director of Legal and Governance

TRAFFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL

STATEMENT OF EXECUTIVE DECISION

<u>DATE OF DECISION</u>	Wednesday, 15 November 2023	<u>DECISION MAKER</u>
<u>DECISION REFERENCE</u>	E/15.11.2023/7	Executive (Councillors Participating: Ross, Adshead, K. Carter, Harding, Hynes, Patel, Slater, Thompson, Williams, and Wright)

RECORD OF THE DECISION

HACKNEY CARRIAGE AND PRIVATE HIRE LICENSING POLICY 2023-28

- 1) That the content of the report be noted;
- 2) That the approval of the proposed Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing Policy which includes the amendments detailed at 3.19 be recommended to Council;
- 3) That the delegation of authority to the Corporate Director of Place, in consultation with the Executive Member for Communities and Safety to bring the implementation date for vehicle age and emission standards (for existing licensed vehicles) forward from 1st April 2026 should it be deemed appropriate in support of the Clean Air agenda be recommended to Council.

REASONS FOR THE DECISION

In 2018, Greater Manchester's ten local authorities agreed to collectively develop, approve and implement a common set of Minimum Licensing Standards (MLS) for taxi and private hire services.

At that time, the primary driver for this work was to ensure public safety and protection, but vehicle age and emission standards in the context of the Clean Air and the decarbonisation agendas were also major considerations.

This collaborative approach sought to establish a basic and common minimum in key areas, whilst allowing Districts to exceed these minimums where they considered this to be appropriate. As licensing is a local authority regulatory function, the standards were devised by the Greater Manchester (GM) Licensing Managers Network.

The GM MLS was ready to be consulted on when the Department for Transport published statutory guidance for taxi and private hire licensing authorities in July 2020. In the Standards the Department recommended that all licensing authorities make publicly available a cohesive policy document that brings together all their procedures on taxi and private hire licensing. This should include but not be limited to policies on convictions, a 'fit and proper' person test, licence conditions and vehicle standards. The Department went on to state that when formulating a taxi and private hire policy, the primary and overriding objective must be to protect the public.

A GM wide public consultation took place between 8 October and 3 December 2020 on the MLS proposals. In Trafford an additional consultation exercise was undertaken on a proposed overarching Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing Policy incorporating the MLS.

Due to the breadth of the proposals, following the consultation it was decided that the MLS should be reported to full Council in two stages; and that the decision on an overarching Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing Policy be deferred until all the MLS recommendations had been approved and implemented.

On the 13th October 2021 the Council approved the Stage 1 recommendations on the Driver, Operator and Local Authority Standards and on the 24th November 2021 it approved the Stage 2 recommendations on Vehicle Standards.

It has been 2 years since the Council approved Stage 1 and 2 of the Minimum Licensing Standards as part of the harmonisation of standards project across Greater Manchester (GM). These standards are still not fully adopted or implemented in large part due to the continued delay of the Clean Air Plan which has in turn delayed access to Clean Taxi Funds upon which many policy decisions are dependent.

In view of these delays Officers decided to move forward with plans for an overarching policy and have now prepared a document which brings together all the Council's current policies and procedures. The proposed policy includes amendments to the policies and conditions in respect of the Greater Manchester Minimum Licensing Standards which were adopted by the Council in 2021 for reasons which are explained further in the report.

The purpose of the policy is to explain how the Council undertakes its functions when licensing hackney carriage and private hire vehicles, drivers, and operators. The primary focus being on safeguarding and public protection; particularly, the protection of children and vulnerable adults in accordance with the recommendations of the Statutory Guidance.

The policy explains the process for applying for licences; what checks the Council will carry out and how it will determine applications including the checking of criminal records; requiring medical reports for drivers and checking their right to work. It explains how it will manage a Local Area Knowledge Test for new drivers; assess standards of English speaking and listening; and conduct induction training for all new drivers covering topics of equality, safeguarding, modern slavery and compliance with licence conditions. The Policy also explains how the Council will enforce against non-compliance with licence conditions by way of an internal Penalty Points System and when it will refer matters to the Public Protection Sub-Committee for consideration.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED AT THE MEETING/BY MEMBERS

The Council has three options:

- accept as initially proposed;
- accept with suggested amendments as outlined in the report; or
- it could decide not to accept the proposals.

If the Council decides not to adopt the proposed Policy this would not prevent it from continuing to carry out its statutory licensing functions; however, it could open up the possibility of challenges to the Council's processes and procedures on the basis that they are not clear or consistent.

It is the view that to adopt the policy as a whole, with the amendments as outlined in this report, would be the best approach for Trafford given that the proposals focus on best practice; is consistent with the approach taken by other GM Authorities; and is in accordance with the

recommendations of the DfT's Statutory Guidance on Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Vehicle Licensing.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST DECLARED AND ANY ASSOCIATED DISPENSATION

None

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