

**TRAFFORD COUNCIL**

**DELEGATED EXECUTIVE MEMBER DECISION REPORT**

**Report to:** Executive Member for Environmental Services  
**Date:** November 2022  
**Report for:** Decision  
**Report of:** Corporate Director, Place

**Report Title**

**Approval for a Trial of Personal Delivery Devices (PDDs) to operate in an area of Trafford**

**Summary**

**'Personal Delivery Devices' or 'PDDs' are designed to carry food, groceries, parcels, and industrial supplies directly to a customer. This report outlines the proposal for a trial to operate in an area to the west of the A56 (Broadheath, West Timperley, Sale West and Ashton upon Mersey) for a period of 3 months.**

**Recommendation(s)**

**The Executive Member is recommended to:**

- a) Approve the 3 month trial of the use of 'Personal Delivery Devices' or 'PDDs' in areas of Broadheath, West Timperley, Sale West and Ashton upon Mersey.**
- b) Delegate authority to the Corporate Director of Place to agree and finalise the operating agreement**
- c) Authorise the Director of Legal and Governance to finalise and enter into all legal agreements required to implement the above decisions.**

Contact person for access to background papers and further information:

Name: Sharon Walls / Chris Morris / Andy Hague

Background Papers: n/a

## Implications:

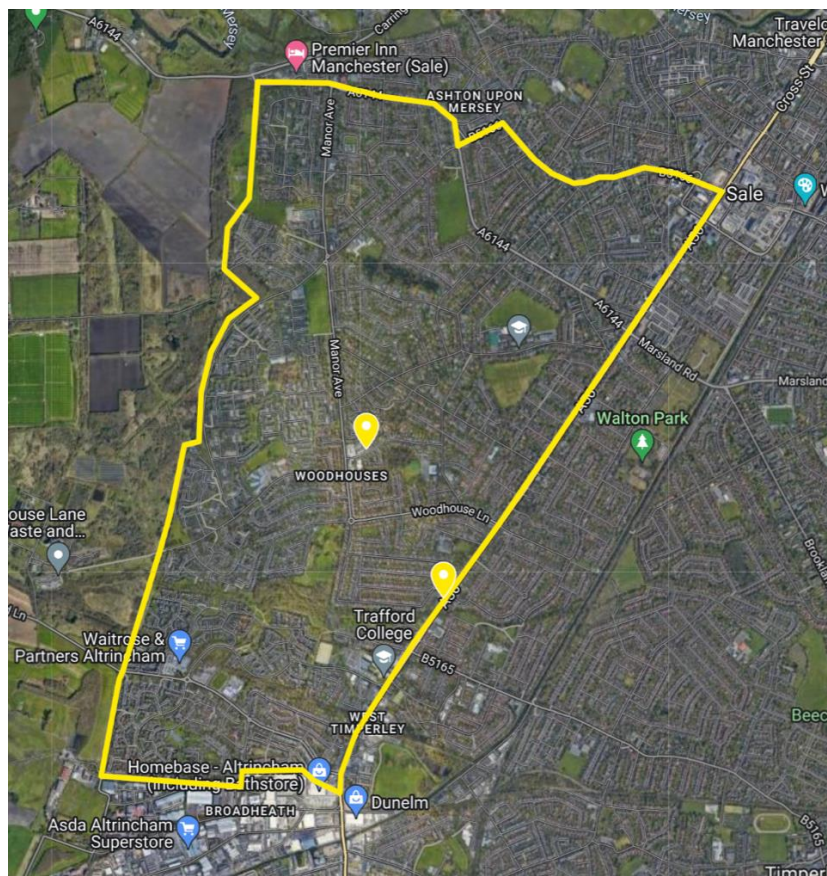
Relationship to Corporate Priorities	This report supports the Corporate Priorities: Health – can support delivery of healthy eating options Poverty – allows access to goods and services that ordinarily may not be available Climate – reduces the need to travel short journeys in the car
Relationship to GM Policy or Strategy Framework	The projects align with the GM Freight Strategy 2016 by reducing the amount of deliveries
Financial	There are no financial implications as a result of the trial – all liabilities and costs will be borne by the operator
Legal Implications:	There is no legislation that specifically relates to the use of robots in this way. There is no case law on whether the robots would be classed as motor vehicles although e-scooters have been classified as such. It is therefore unclear whether these robots can legally be used on the pavements. An agreement will be entered into with Starship Robots to authorise their use within the specified area. If the robots are motor vehicles then the Council has no power to authorise their use on pavements. The agreement will include an indemnity by the company in favour of the Council.
Equality/Diversity Implications	Potential positive outcomes for those with mobility issues to have easier access to goods and services in their locality
Sustainability Implications	This initiative looks to increase provision for alternative – non-polluting forms of delivery of goods.
Resource Implications e.g. Staffing / ICT / Assets	None
Risk Management Implications	Road safety and traffic management arrangements will be under review during the trial to ensure risks are managed.
Health & Wellbeing Implications	Increased accessibility to goods and delivery services has health benefits for the community
Health and Safety Implications	The PDD's are designed to negate any traffic and highway users conflicts

## 1.0 Background

- 1.1 Trafford Council have been approached by Starship Technologies who are one of the world's leading providers of autonomous robot delivery services, focused on making local deliveries more convenient, energy efficient and environmentally sustainable
- 1.2 Starship Technologies' 'Personal Delivery Devices' or 'PDDs' are designed to carry food, groceries, parcels, and industrial supplies and first deployed PDDs in Milton Keynes in 2018, more recently in Northampton, and now serves tens of thousands of households in the UK
- 1.3 Starship Technologies, as the Operator, now seeks to implement a similar autonomous delivery service in Trafford and are looking to commence a trial in Timperley as detailed in the attached map.
- 1.4 There is currently no national legislation to specifically govern the operation of robotic Personal Delivery Devices within the UK. Therefore, Starship Technologies and Trafford Council are looking to enter into an agreement that will regulate the operation of the Operator's PDDs in the agreed area, principally to ensure the safety of the public and compliance with all other applicable laws.

## 2.0 Proposed Area of Trial and Recommendations

- 2.1 Starship Technology 'has identified that the area chosen, within the yellow boundary below, is a good operating area for the robots practically. There are two Co-op stores here, highlighted in yellow, which means they can cover a reasonable, discreet area from those stores without long wait times for customers.



## 2.2 Numbers of units

Initially there are usually more on hand to use as people order for the novelty rather than integrating into their normal routines. The usage is usually led by demand but as part of the agreement Trafford could set a maximum number if that was important to us or seek to reduce or increase depending on customer feedback. Initially it is estimated that there would be a need of 10 robots per store.

## 2.3 The PDD's

They are zero emission robots that use a combination of sensors, artificial intelligence and machine learning to travel on pavements and navigate around any obstacles. Computer vision-based navigation helps them to map their environment very accurately and a central control centre can intervene if the robot encounters a significant issue.



## 2.4 Routes

Starship Technologies have mapped a significant portion of the area. In agreeing to let them operate, they would provide Trafford with a map of the operations area where the PDDs would operate. If there are specific areas we would want the trial to avoid, Starship Technologies would take Council advice and should problems arise during the trial it is easy to amend the area/remove certain problem pavements if requested. The robots will always prioritise safety, so they will take the safest route over the fastest.

## 2.5 Communications

Starship Technologies would also do a direct mail drop to all households explaining who they are and the service being offered (as well as advertising for Co-op). They will produce some short 'About our robots' videos that they are hoping to release soon that will quickly and visually provide answers to frequently asked questions.

2.6 Starship Technologies would provide a briefing pack for local councillors so that they have the information they need should constituents get in touch.

**3.0 Other Options**

3.1 The alternative option is to not support the trial.

**4.0 Consultation**

4.1 Local Ward members and a media campaign will be launched to support the trial as highlighted above. Feedback from local residents and Members will be collated.

**5.0 Reasons for Recommendation**


5.1 The approval of the trial will assist vulnerable residents who have limited access to local shops and offers an alternative way of receiving goods and services. It will also help reduce the need to travel by vehicle for short journeys to local shops.

**Key Decision** (as defined in the Constitution): No

**If Key Decision, has 28-day notice been given?** No

**Finance Officer Clearance** (type in initials) ....PC.....

**Legal Officer Clearance** (type in initials) ....TR.....

**[CORPORATE] DIRECTOR'S SIGNATURE** (electronic) .....  .....

To confirm that the Financial and Legal Implications have been considered and the Corporate Director has cleared the report prior to issuing to the Executive Member for decision.