

# Shropshire Council – Passenger Transport Commissioning Group

## Vehicle Operating Guidance

### Introduction

Shropshire Council herewith sets out its policy for the provision and operation of vehicles in support of its provided Council services. The principles below also apply to schools and community groups, and to the Council's 'grey fleet' employees/drivers. The Council treats road safety as a matter of paramount importance. Aligned with this policy document are those for 'Driver Policy', 'Fuel Card Procedure' and 'Transport Policy' and these are applicable as well.

The Council's vehicle fleet is managed by TOG (Transport Operations Group) who provide services for procurement, maintenance and disposal. A vehicle will be provided on Contract Hire or Operating Lease. TOG act as both agent and 'gatekeeper' for Council service area vehicle provision, and in some cases for schools and Community Groups. The fleet operating expertise within TOG is used to ensure the Council gets best value and good vehicle outcomes for its provided services. Moreover TOG helps ensure that both road, service and financial risk to the Council are reduced to the minimum.

### Role of Vehicle Client

At the outset, the vehicle client will agree with TOG vehicle type and specification required and delivery date. The client is fully responsible for funding all the vehicles' lifetime costs and responsible for the operational management of the vehicle provided, which includes driver selection and training, journey planning, fuelling, ensuring safe operation and adhering to all driver, vehicle and road traffic regulations. The client is also responsible for ensuring vehicles are delivered to the appropriate location for maintenance and servicing as set out by TOG.

### Preamble

The Council recognises the need to ensure that employees, service users, (pupils, people in care, etc.), members of the public and volunteers are protected with the highest possible standards regarding its arrangements for motor vehicle transport in accordance with its commitment to provide a safe place of work and a safe system of work.

It is important both from a general safety viewpoint and in order to avoid accidents that transportation is controlled and local rules and procedures are produced by each directorate to combat the risks relevant to their particular work activity.

Managers and supervisors will need to bring such rules and procedures to the attention of all persons involved in transportation together with a copy of relevant risk assessments that affect them.

## **Vehicles**

All client managers are to ensure that the design of vehicles they use are suitable for staff and service user needs. Where client managers require a vehicle they should contact TOG in the first instance. TOG can advise on vehicle type, model and specifications, and offer alternative solutions to client managers. In this respect, TOG will act as a 'gatekeeper' for the Council, to help ensure that cost, service and road risk are kept to a minimum.

A senior member of staff at each establishment where vehicles are held will be designated to have 'local' responsibility for the vehicle/s. This responsibility will include:

- Ensuring that vehicle daily/weekly checks are carried out by the drivers and ensuring 'Nil Defect Reports' are completed
- Having the authority to keep vehicles off the road when necessary (i.e. when defects require this, etc.)
- Co-ordinating all scheduled maintenance
- Ensuring that risk assessments are carried out
- Maintaining vehicle Log Book records
- Journey planning

Before starting any journey the relevant vehicle checks are to be undertaken in accordance with the departments Driver's Handbook. Details of the checks are to be entered into the 'Nil Defect Report' book and filed. All defects are to be brought to the attention of line management, who is to ensure that appropriate remedial/maintenance action is taken.

Scheduled servicing dates are to be adhered to.

## **Vehicle equipment**

All vehicles should be equipped with a suitable fire extinguisher, warning triangle and travelling first-aid kit. Copies of the TOG Fleet User Guide will be on each vehicle in the glove box, and this provides guidance for drivers and contact phone numbers, amongst other things.

Where vehicles are required to carry wheelchairs then each vehicle must be equipped with sufficient wheelchair passenger safety belts and webbing restraints to secure the chairs in the vehicle.

The driver will be responsible for ensuring that all emergency equipment is in good condition and that the first aid kit is replenished as necessary.

All drivers and PAs must be made aware of and trained in the use of all on-board safety equipment.

Vehicles fitted with passenger lifts are to have on board, the operating procedures for the use of the lift. All drivers and PAs using a vehicle with such equipment are to receive adequate training for the operation of the lifts and must adhere to the operating procedures. Only authorised personnel are allowed to operate vehicle lifts.

Vehicle passenger lifts are to be regularly checked and maintained. Faulty lifts are to be taken out of use until the fault is rectified.

### **General arrangements for ensuring a safe journey**

Drivers are to carry out frequent visual checks on the following items especially before the commencement of any journey: lights brakes, brake fluid levels, horn, windscreen washers and wipers, indicators, tyres (e.g. pressure, tread, cuts), break lights, wheel nuts (for tightness), roadworthiness and seat belts.

Although failure of most of the above will be self-evident, a continuous pro-active approach of looking for faults must be adopted, with vehicles being withdrawn from service until any faults identified have been rectified.

Other items that will require an inspection on a daily basis include: oil level, oil leaks, battery level, interior seats, driver panel lights, first aid kit, fire extinguisher, spare wheel and stability of load.

Vehicles must be mechanically maintained on a regular basis in line with the manufacturer's recommendations. Vehicles with more than 8 passenger seats must have an MOT certificate where required.

Should a vehicle be three years old then an MOT certificate must be obtained every year from year one. This requires a test to be carried out at an approved garage authorised to carry out the MOT test.

### **Charging Clients for Vehicles**

Actual costs per individual vehicle are set out in the initial VPAF process and will be re-charged by TOG to vehicle clients monthly, using the Council's internal SAMIS system by Journal Transfers, via the Council's Finance Team. Client monitoring of these costs is via the SAMIS system or by contacting TOG for specific cost advice. For schools, Community Groups or other external clients, invoices will be sent monthly for settlement of costs for vehicles provided.

## **Contract Term**

This is set out in the VPAF. Typically, the contract term is likely to be 3 years for small vehicles and up to 7 years for larger vehicles, the former more likely on a Contract Hire arrangement and the latter on an Operating Lease.

## **Agreement at Outset - VPAF**

This form sets out the contract term and SLA at the outset of the vehicle provision arrangement and effectively pre-determines the disposal date. It forms the agreement between TOG and vehicle client, and as such is signed off by appropriate officers for the client, Finance and TOG, or by the appropriate person for external clients.

## **Approach of 'End of Term' date**

TOG routinely list vehicles which are within 6 months of the end of their contract term.

These vehicle clients are contacted and reminded of the end date, and that the vehicle is required to be returned on that date to TOG.

The client is given the option procuring a replacement vehicle, if they so wish, via the VPAF process.

The client must return the vehicle to TOG on the designated date and time. If relevant, a replacement vehicle will be provided for a seamless vehicle switch where possible.

## **Driver Qualifications/Insurance**

Drivers using Council vehicles must be in possession of a Valid Driver Assessment Scheme Permit, which TOG/TOG can provide details about.

Because the authority's motor insurance cover is by way of a "blanket policy" which applies to a wide variety of different types of vehicles, no requirement relating to driver qualifications or age are specified in the policy document other than the possession of a current licence, valid for the particular vehicle driven.

The Council insurers recommend that drivers of Council mini-buses should be 25 years of age or older and possess a "clean" licence, i.e. clear of any endorsements or penalty points. It is accepted that in exceptional circumstances minibuss drivers may be younger than 25, but 21 years of age is the minimum.

The insurers do however expect the Council to lay down and enforce their own controls to establish a safe system of working as with any other operation undertaken. At present Council policy is that all drivers of its vehicles must have passed an internal test appropriate to the vehicle they drive, in

addition to any statutory licence requirement. Managers are responsible for the appointment of drivers, including checking the validity and status of licences, ensuring necessary training and monitoring the performance of their drivers, particularly with regard to involvement in road traffic accidents, licence endorsements and general health.

### **Supervision and control of drivers**

The responsibility for ensuring that drivers have appropriate licences and comply with all regulations rests with relevant service managers or for schools, their governing body or for Community Transport groups, the manager.

### **Section 19 Permits**

For passenger carrying vehicles, a s19 permit is required.

Organisations that provide transport on a 'not-for-profit' basis can apply for permits under Section 19 of the Transport Act 1985. These permits allow the holder to operate transport services for hire or reward without the need for a full public service vehicle (PSV) operator's licence.

Full guidance can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/section-19-and-22-permits-not-for-profit-passenger-transport/section-19-and-22-permits-not-for-profit-passenger-transport>

### **Accident reporting**

Shropshire Council's reporting standards require that all accidents, incidents, violence, aggression and dangerous occurrences including near-misses, irrespective of seriousness, must be recorded and reported using the Council's Accident Reporting System (CARS). More information is available via the Council's Accident Reporting Arrangement in the intranet based H & S Policy.

Road traffic incidents/near misses should be reported using the CARS if the road traffic incident occurred whilst "at work". Completed forms should be signed off by line managers and sent to the H&S Team without delay.

Most injuries resulting from vehicle movements on public roads are not reportable under RIDDOR, with the Council's Accident Reporting Arrangement, as above. The Council's H&S Team are the focal point for reporting all RIDDOR incidents. For more information, please contact the H&S Team on 01743 252819.

### **Emergencies**

Risk assessments are to be carried out for the use of the vehicle to identify any foreseeable events for which emergency procedures may be required. Where identified, procedures are to be established to cover, for example collisions/accidents, fire, vehicle breakdowns, distracting events by service users, incapacitation of driver, etc.

Information to all relevant persons is to be given to ensure awareness of emergency procedures to be followed. Such information is to be documented.

### **Safe system of work**

The Council treat the safety of its staff, passengers, members of the public and road users with the highest of priorities and all efforts should be maintained to ensure that everyone is kept as safe as possible. All vehicle, road and traffic regulations/requirements must be met at all times and if anyone has any concerns they must report these to their manager as quickly as possible.

The following arrangements should be followed in order to ensure that drivers, PAs, passengers and other road users are not exposed to hazards or drivers to fatigue which can increase the risk of an accident occurring:

- Plan the journey and allow sufficient time for travelling.
- On long journeys consider two drivers to prevent fatigue - changing half way.
- Before the journey, carry out the aforementioned checks on the vehicle.
- Ensure that, where statutory requirements regarding hours of work exist, they are complied with to prevent driver fatigue.

In the event of a collision/accident or vehicle breakdown comply with the generic risk assessment details.

*PTCG*

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