# PIN Notice - Hardship Scheme

**Background**

GM considers that it is individuals and the smallest businesses who will be most economically vulnerable to the GM Clan Air Zone (CAZ) charge and that the proposed amount of grant funding to help upgrade to a compliant vehicle may not be enough to adequately mitigate the potential adverse economic impacts.

In its recent consultation GM proposed a Hardship Fund of at least £10m to support individuals, companies and organisations who are assessed to be most economically vulnerable to the CAZ charge.

**Brief Description**

Transport for Greater Manchester (TfGM) is undertaking some preliminary market consultations to determine the current market availability and functionality of Hardship providers to provide support, in relation to the future provision of a Hardship Fund in relation to the GM Clean Air Plan.

**Description of Procurement**

Transport for Greater Manchester (TfGM) is seeking to engage with market providers in relation to the current availability of a Hardship partner to provide support to potential candidates as part of the process of determining hardship and the allocation the GM Clean Air Plan Hardship Fund to eligible applicants. The scope for the partner will include the provision of a customer support function to evaluate individual applicant circumstances and funding eligibility through financial health checks and business mentoring. TfGM would like to understand your organisational capabilities in terms of determining Hardship, funding scheme experience, and capabilities to deliver a service which includes;

* Applicant processes
* Fraud management systems
* Provision of additional services and training
* Reporting and exchange of data

As a first step in market consultations, TfGM is inviting responses from relevant partners to complete a questionnaire which explores the functionality and key features of available Hardship Support.

**Complimentary information**

Suppliers are invited to attend a market engagement session on Monday 8th March 2021 at 1400 for 1 hour, which will provide an overview of the Greater Manchester Clean Air Programme (GM CAP) and specifically the Clean Air Funds which have been designed to provide financial assistance to enable eligible applicants to upgrade to compliant vehicles.

Following the session all interested organisations are required to submit the below questionnaire in line with the dates identified in the PIN notice being no later than **noon on Wednesday 10th March**. The purpose of this engagement is to allow TfGM to understand supplier capabilities as part of the initial scoping exercise prior to any subsequent procurement. This engagement does not obligate TfGM in any way to further proceed to formal procurement.

**Questionnaire to Hardship Provider**

**Please confine responses to 4 A4 sides**

Q1) What is the definition of “Hardship” used in your organisation and how is Hardship determined?

Q2) Could you please define your organisational processes established for the purposes of delivering the following.

* Applicant eligibility for funds
* Auditable authorisation for fund awards
* Applicant affordability calculator
* Ability to process decisions (example of current SLA turnarounds which is applicable to this industry sector)

Q3) In respect to the provision of Hardship Support to the SME sector

* What is your current and previous experience of providing Hardship Support?
* What experience do you have of the provision of Hardship Support to the SME sector?
* What types of organisations have you worked with to provide Hardship Support?
* What types of support outcomes have you provided to Hardship cases in the SME sector?
* Please evidence your above responses with references for up to three contracts, in any combination from either the public or private sector; voluntary, charity or social enterprise (VCSE) which are relevant**.**  Contracts for services should have been performed during the past three years.
* Provide examples of grant or alternative finance products/services which you have previously provided to disadvantaged sole-traders and SMEs, individuals or communities to provide opportunities for local people.
* Explain concisely your current GM foot-print and track-record in engaging with sole-traders and SMEs, including your capability and capacity to successfully work with those clients, on-line and face to face when required (pre-and post-Covid restrictions);

Q4) What data sources do you use for applicant affordability evaluations?

* Ability to service the loan
* Valuation of asset to be financed

Q5) Do you provide any additional services?

* What additional services do you currently supply that would be of use for the Hardship Support process to achieve a good outcome for the Applicant?
* Describe what current contact channels you utilise, including those pathways you currently manage to link sole-traders and SMEs with the existing GM ecosystem of Business Support Services, for example: Carbon Reduction services; Vocational training and publicly supported Finance products/advice

Q6) What are your current capacity levels to process applications?

* What are the minimum and maximum Application levels you can administer support?
* Do you have capacity to take on additional volumes of Hardship Support cases?
* What levels of recruitment would be required?
* What would be your mobilisation timeline to set up a Hardship Support function?
* How do you manage peaks and troughs of demand?

Q7) Does your organisation have any specialised training in Hardship support?

* What types of training does your team undertake and how often?
* Are mentoring options provided for unsuccessful applicants?
* What outcomes are expected for clients who undergo mentoring?

Q8) What Fraud management systems do you utilise ?

* How are these managed?
* What fraud management products do you use?
* How do these align with the expected applicants from this process?
* How do these align to processes used by Asset and Motor Finance companies?

Q9) What are your reporting capabilities, specifically in acceptance and failure applications?

* What format are the reports provided?
* What are the SLA’s for the updates on reports?
* What level of detail are you able to provide in reporting?

Q10) How do you exchange data (integration purposes)?

* How often is the data exchange updated?
* What established connections do you have to 3rd party data sources?

Q11) What Regulatory authorisations do you hold?

* Are you FCA compliant?
* Do you hold other relevant authorisations?

Q12) How much of your system is off the shelf?

* What level of development/tailoring is required for the requirements?
* How much of this process exists
* What % off shelf systems support
* How much development
* Timeline for a Go Live of a system
* Exiting resources – how would they price for set-up (any capex) and the ongoing charges
* How manage peaks and troughs of demand cycle
* Estimate of Applicant success – what is “success” – Applicant being granted fund?
* How manage draw down on funds as an Applicant goes through process – indicative ring-fencing etc
* Digital customer services
* Timeline for an Applicant

Q13) What commercial model do you apply for your service?

* What is the approach to mobilising consultancy support in terms of delivering phase 1 outputs?
* What is your consultancy fee structure?
* How are your fees structured?
* Would operational management of the service be reimbursed through a monthly service charge?