

READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT BY DIRECTOR OF ENVIRONMENT AND NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES

TO:	STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENT, PLANNING AND TRANSPORT COMMITTEE		
DATE:	23 NOVEMBER 2016	AGENDA ITEM:	9
TITLE:	READING'S AIR QUALITY ACTION PLAN - CAMPAIGN TO REDUCE VEHICLE IDLING		
LEAD COUNCILLOR:	COUNCILLOR PAGE	PORTFOLIO:	STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENT, PLANNING AND TRANSPORT
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**1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

- 1.1 Vehicles idling while stationary cause unnecessary use of fuel, an increase in emissions and can also create a noisy environment. This report seeks to inform members of the intention to carry out anti-idling campaigns in the borough to raise awareness of the effect idling vehicles have on local air quality. The campaigns will initially focus on hotspot locations such as outside schools, taxi ranks and building developments.
- 1.2 The Road Traffic (Vehicle Emissions) (Fixed Penalty) (England) Regulations 2002 give discretionary powers to officers to issue fixed penalty notices of £20 to drivers (rising to £40 if unpaid) who allow their vehicle engines to run unnecessarily while the vehicle is stationary. Although it is not the intention to use these powers extensively, the report seeks to gain authorisation for officers to use these regulations in order to aid them in their campaign work.
- 1.3 Reading's Air Quality Action Plan, adopted in 2015, made a commitment to reduce emissions from idling vehicles at hotspot locations within the Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) to help improve air quality.

**2. RECOMMENDED ACTION**

- 2.1 That the Committee agree the content of the report and proposals put forward.

2.2 That the Committee approves a campaign to reduce idling and as set out in Section 6 authorises delegated authority to the Head of Planning, Development and Regulatory Services to exercise the powers in Regulations 6(3) and 12 of the Road Traffic (Vehicle Emissions) (Fixed Penalty) England) Regulations 2002 on the basis set out in paragraph 6.3.

### 3. POLICY CONTEXT

3.1 Under the Environment Act 1995, Reading Borough Council has a duty to constantly review and assess the air quality within its borough, and compare pollution concentrations against a set of European and national air quality standards. Monitoring has shown that Reading has areas where concentrations of nitrogen dioxide (NO<sub>2</sub>) are exceeding both European and national standards, and as such Reading Borough Council has declared an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) and implemented an Action Plan. The national plan is the approach to achieving compliance with European air quality standards set out by the Government.

3.2 Particulates are classified by their mass (PM10 and PM2.5), with the smaller particulates, PM2.5 being more harmful due to their ability to travel further into the lung. PM 2.5 is understood to have no safe limit for health, it is therefore beneficial to reduce levels at all locations, not just hotspots that break a set limit.

### 4. CURRENT POSITION

4.1 The Air Quality Action Plan (AQAP) 2015 made a commitment to reduce emissions from idling vehicles at hotspot locations within the AQMA to help improve air quality.

4.2 Officers have researched what other local authorities are doing and found that many local authorities have adopted the Regulations and have the option of taking enforcement action, but few seem to do so, for example:

#### 4.2.1 Transport for London

- Have an information campaign which is in partnership with the Mayor of London to discourage idling.

#### 4.2.2 Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council

- Have carried out awareness raising such as improved website and information for schools with a view to reducing car journeys to school and the idling of car engines outside schools.
- Have taken action to reduce idling vehicles and report smoky vehicles.
- Have helped to develop an infrastructure to encourage uptake of electric vehicles.

#### 4.2.3 Corporation of London

- During 2016 on the first Wednesday of each month, an idling engine action day is being undertaken. Trained City residents, partners and staff patrol the streets asking drivers to switch off when parked. These

action days are being rolled out across 10 additional London boroughs with the support of the Mayor's Air Quality Fund.

- Is working with City businesses, to support 'no-idling'
- Engages with construction and streetwork sites to encourage and enforce 'no idling' deliveries and site management
- Has incorporated no-idling into the City's Procurement Policies
- Responds to complaints and logs hot-spot areas for targeted action (e.g. placing signs asking drivers to switch off)
- Utilises Street and Civil Enforcement Officers to enforce the no-idling message

4.3 Reading Borough Council Licensing officers have been in discussion with the taxi trade with the view to sign up to an agreement that would reduce idling at taxi ranks. This would apply to hackney carriage vehicles and the agreed set of criteria would be based on that currently used in Edinburgh:

4.3.1 The driver must switch off his engine when the vehicle is stationary to avoid unnecessary vehicle idling, (especially in the vicinity of sensitive areas such as schools, hospitals and residential areas) except in the following circumstances:

a) where the licensed vehicle is stationary owing to the necessities of traffic - e.g. when vehicles are queuing at traffic signals;

b) where an engine is being run so that a defect can be traced and rectified - e.g. when a defective vehicle is being attended to by a breakdown/recovery agent;

c) for short periods on occasions where the weather conditions are extreme either to operate the vehicle's heating or air conditioning.

4.3.2 In addition Reading Borough Council Licensing officers sought approval from the Licensing Applications Committee (28<sup>th</sup> September and 2<sup>nd</sup> November 16) to agree a proposed time scale for the introduction of higher emission standards within the licensed hackney carriage fleet.

4.3.3 The outcome was a 15 year maximum age for taxis and a 2 year window for drivers to get an extra 5 years licenced to the fleet, by either purchasing an ULEV or converting their taxi to run on LPG.

## 5.0 PUBLIC TRANSPORT

5.1 The Council owned bus company, Reading Buses, takes its environmental responsibilities very seriously and already runs some of the greenest buses in the UK. Huge investment has been made in the latest fuel

technologies to reduce the impact on the environment and improve air quality. Reading Buses was one of the first to adopt electric hybrid buses and now also run a growing fleet of gas buses using fuel from a carbon neutral bio-methane source.

5.2 Details of the buses and their emissions include:

- 83% have Euro IV engines or better, meeting the very latest green engine standards
- 38% are 'ultra-clean' with 31 electric hybrid and 34 gas powered buses drastically reducing emissions
- The gas buses produce almost no particulates or hydrocarbons, almost zero carbon and 99% less nitrogen oxide
- The hybrid diesel electrics are British-built buses which reduce CO2 emissions by around 30%

5.3 Over the past two years alone the company has reduced its vehicle carbon emissions by 8% and has ambitious targets to reduce this even further.

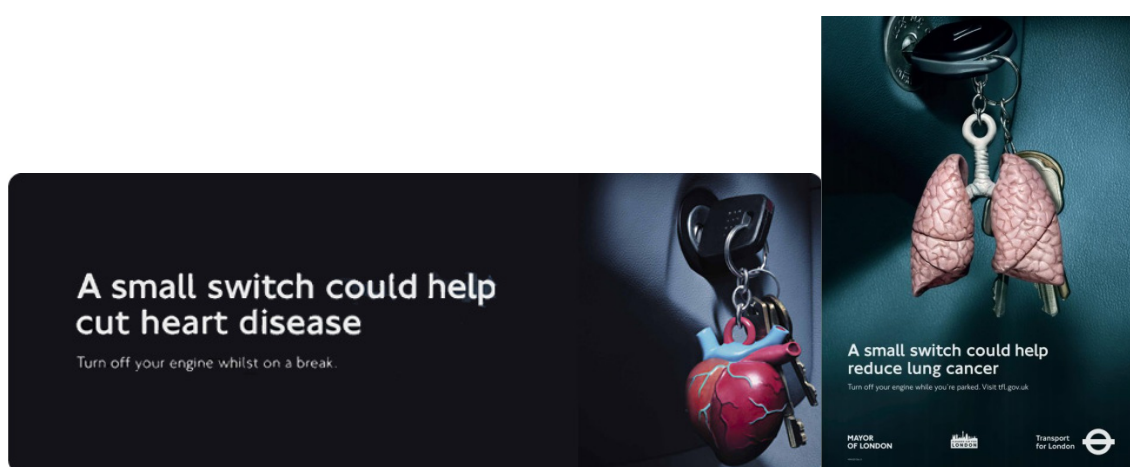
5.4 Reading Buses currently issue guidance to drivers which is to switch off if the driver is going to be more than 2 minutes at the stop. In addition there is a telematics system (known as DriveWell) which uses a dashboard mounted display to alert drivers to an overly assertive or uneconomic driving style. This triggers amber warnings and "red lights" at pre-set values for speed, acceleration, braking and idling events. The idling gives a warning at two minutes and red light at four minutes on all vehicles, routes and locations.

5.5 Reading Buses is now specifying stop-start technology as standard on new vehicles. They are currently waiting on a number of new buses to arrive which will take the total number on the fleet with this technology to 13. Start - Stop technology is when the engine automatically turns off when the car is stationary and turns back on when you need it. This technology is aimed at saving fuel and reducing emissions. In addition to the technology being used by Reading Buses this technology is becoming more common in modern cars. It is believed that these systems can save around 10 per cent on emissions.

5.6 As part of the campaign officers within the Regulatory Service Team will look to work with Private Coach Hire and other privately owned bus companies to encourage them to follow the same guidance as Reading Buses and understand their fleet and what technology they currently work with to reduce emissions. They will be made aware of the idling campaign.

## 6.0 PROPOSAL

- 6.1 Campaigns: The focus of attention relates to the promotion of good practice by a number of active campaigns. A number of different targeted campaigns would be explored e.g. schools, construction, recreation areas along with a borough-wide awareness raising campaign similar to that used in London. We would look to combine a media campaign with day(s) of action utilising the fixed penalty notice legislation only for those not turning off the engine when asked. Officers will look to bid for Air Quality funding to assist in resourcing the campaign work. Officers would look to encourage a behavioural change, targeting sensitive areas within Reading's Air Quality Management Area.



- 6.2 Policies: Officers will look to explore the implementation of 'switch off' policies for the Council's fleet and contractors and encourage partners to adopt a similar approach.
- 6.3 Enforcement: Anti-idling signs would be put up at taxi ranks and outside schools.

Vehicle idling is an offence against the Road Traffic (Vehicle Emissions) (Fixed Penalty) (England) Regulations 2002. The law states that it is an offence to idle an engine unnecessarily when stationary. Failing to turn an engine off after being spoken to can result in a fixed penalty notice of £20, rising to £40 if unpaid.

As above, the focus of attention on this matter relates to a delivery of a proactive campaign to raise awareness of the issue and to seek improvements via policy change. However, it may be necessary, on an exceptional basis, to use the powers set out in the 2002 Regulations and serve a fixed penalty notice. Delegation is sought as part of the recommendation to allow officers to do so but they would only issue a fixed penalty notices to 1) those not turning off their engine when asked to do so and 2) those who have been asked previously to turn their

engine off and where such request has been documented and who repeat an offence.

## 7.0 CONTRIBUTION TO STRATEGIC AIMS

7.1 The delivery of the Air Quality Action Plan helps to deliver the Council's Corporate Plan Service Priority: Keeping the town clean, safe green and active. Within this it is a key action to narrow the gap to the national average of 5.3% deaths in over 25s linked to air pollution.

## 8.0 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

8.1 On-going community engagement through campaign work to encourage behavioural change and self-controlling the unnecessary idling.

8.2 Using informative messages: **Turn off your ignition if you're waiting more than 10 seconds.** Contrary to popular belief, restarting your car does not burn more fuel than leaving it idling. In fact, idling for just 10 seconds wastes more fuel than restarting the engine. This is one of the reasons why vehicles are being designed with stop-start technology.

## 9.0 EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

9.1 Not required at this time.

## 10.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

10.1 Vehicle idling is an offence against the Road Traffic (Vehicle Emissions) (Fixed Penalty) (England) Regulations 2002. The law states that it is an offence to idle an engine unnecessarily when stationary. Failing to turn an engine off after being spoken to can result in a fixed penalty notice of £20, rising to £40 if unpaid.

10.2 The legislation covers all vehicles on public roads including buses, taxis and private cars. It does not apply to vehicles moving slowly due to road works or congestion; vehicles stopped at traffic lights; vehicles under test or repair; or defrosting a windscreen.

## 11.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

11.1 Given the low level of the penalty, unless there was a widespread issue of non-compliance, then this is unlikely to result in Civil Enforcement Officers (CEOs) being involved and therefore there would be no financial implications for the delegated authority. Our CEOs are dedicated to parking enforcement and currently provided under contract. Should we want to use the CEOs any changes with the way in which they operate may require contractual change and a business case to support cost recovery. Officers within Regulatory Services would be empowered to issue the fixed notice.

11.2 Resources for campaign work would come from existing Defra air quality grant funding, which has been awarded to us for the anti-idling campaign to include promotional work. Existing funding would also be used for monitoring equipment to assess the impact the idling campaign has had on localised pollution levels.

11.3 There are no direct financial risks associated with this report.

## 12.0 Background Papers

- Air Quality Action Plan
- [http://www.reading.gov.uk/media/4209/Air-Quality-Action-Plan/pdf/AQAP\\_Proposed\\_actions.pdf](http://www.reading.gov.uk/media/4209/Air-Quality-Action-Plan/pdf/AQAP_Proposed_actions.pdf)
- Hackney Emissions Paper 28/9/16