

Air Quality and Anti-Idling Campaign Update

Report number:	OAS/WS/21/021	
Report to and date(s):	Overview and Scrutiny Committee	11 November 2021
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Decisions Plan: This item is not included in the Decisions Plan.

Wards impacted: All.

Recommendation: It is recommended that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee:

Note the work undertaken with respect to air quality and anti-idling campaign.

1. Context to this report

- 1.1 At the request of the St Edmundsbury Borough Council Overview and Scrutiny Committee, a report on vehicle idling was brought to the meeting of the 7 November 2018. This report provided a summary of the technical issues around vehicle idling; the legislation; and a review of other Local Authority activities.
- 1.2 This report recommended that the officers undertake an anti-idling campaign, initially targeted at schools and expanding as necessary. If possible, this would be as part of a Suffolk wide campaign. This recommendation was approved by the Committee. Undertaking formal action using powers as available under the Road Traffic (Vehicle Emissions) (Fixed Penalty) (England) Regulations 2002 was not recommended at this time.
- 1.3 Officers were requested at the West Suffolk Council Overview and Scrutiny committee of the 2 September 2021 to consider using the Civil Enforcement Officers (CEO) to issue Fixed Penalty Notices under the 2002 traffic regulations.
- 1.4 Officers did not consider issuing FPN was appropriate but did agree that CEO would undertake informal action and record the findings of interactions with idling drivers.
- 1.5 This report provides an update on the anti-idling campaign, other air quality improvement work and an initial update on the work of the CEOs.

2. Proposals within this report

- 2.1 West Suffolk Council have Local Air Quality Management (LAQM) duties as set out in Part IV of the Environment Act (1995). The LAQM process places an obligation on all local authorities to regularly review and assess air quality in their areas, and to determine whether or not the air quality objectives are likely to be achieved. A statutory requirement also exists to report the results of monitoring within a yearly report known as the Annual Status Report (ASR). The Annual Status Report also provides details of all actions undertaken within the district including actions undertaken in conjunction with Suffolk County Council. The most recent ASR is available to view on the West Suffolk Council air quality website pages (<https://www.westsuffolk.gov.uk/environmental-services/airquality.cfm>).
- 2.2 Although the monitoring and reporting duties around air quality fall to West Suffolk Council, many of the primary influencing factors sit within departments at Suffolk County Council. For example, SCC have primary responsibility for public health, highways, sustainable transport, and school transport.

- 2.3 Given the overlapping nature of responsibilities around air quality it is essential that promotional work is carefully assigned and coordinated with messages that are consistent and clear.
- 2.4 West Suffolk Council worked with colleagues from across the county as well as the specialist consultants Cool World Consulting, who had been responsible for running the Idling Action London project to produce a series of posters, leaflets and banners to promote the anti-idling campaign. These materials were finalised in 2019 and are freely available on the West Suffolk Council air quality pages.
- 2.5 West Suffolk Council worked closely with the Suffolk County Council Junior Road Safety Officers (JRSO) to reach out to local schools and promote vehicle anti-idling. The Suffolk campaign material was sent to all schools via the JRSO scheme, and we also reached out to schools via this literature and social media. No schools came forward directly, but a small number of schools were nominated by parents, residents, or councillors.
- 2.6 We approached the nominated schools to arrange in-school anti-idling days, which all schools that were approached agreed to. The in-school element of the project started in the spring term 2020 with the first four schools receiving an assembly, a workshop and a school pick up anti-idling event with students educating the parents who were observed leaving engines on. These events were extremely well received by the schools, students, and parents and have been used as best practice example by the national clean air project www.cleanerairsooner.org. This work was advertised in the local press and on our social media platforms.
- 2.7 Unfortunately, the intention to roll out the programme across the district was delayed by the COVID-19 pandemic, which caused the closure of schools. When schools did re-open during the 2020/21 school year, they were operating in 'bubbles' and restricting visitors to a minimum. However, we have recently written to all schools in West Suffolk requesting that they remind parents of the impacts of idling outside schools and again offering our anti-idling education days. However, we know that current rates of COVID-19 in Suffolk are again causing schools to limit activities.
- 2.8 Outside of schools, we continue to provide anti-idling literature to interested parties and have provided this to businesses, residents, and Councillors over the last few months. For example, the Churchgate Area Association requested approximately 500 leaflets which they distributed to residents in their area. We have also discussed the campaign with sustainability officers at the hospital and provided them with digital leaflets for circulation.
- 2.9 We have also promoted the campaign at external events such as the Bury St Edmunds Green Fayre and have supported a Bury St Edmunds resident promote the campaign at the town market.

- 2.10 As part of the wider Suffolk, the air quality officer at Ipswich Borough Council has worked with colleagues at Suffolk County Council to produce educational videos and podcasts.
- 2.11 Suffolk County Council public health department are currently developing a plan to ensure that awareness of the health impacts of air pollution are better promoted to all key stakeholders in Suffolk, including Councillors, transport colleagues, health workers and the general public. This document is in development and is continuing to progress with detailed input from district and borough officers, relevant NHS staff and other stakeholders.
- 2.12 SCC Public Health are also organising an online Suffolk Public Health Air Quality Summit later this year. The aim of this Summit is to start the awareness raising work, but also to get further input into the development of the detailed action plan. Councillors should receive an invitation from SCC Public Health shortly.
- 2.13 We continue to undertake other actions to improve air quality, including working closely with the planning department and SCC Highways to limit the impact of air pollution from new developments and ensure appropriate mitigation. We are continuing to roll out electric vehicle charge points to enable and encourage the uptake of zero tailpipe emission electric vehicles. We have already installed charge points in Brandon, Haverhill and Mildenhall this year, with active projects covering Bury St Edmunds, Haverhill and Newmarket due to be delivered this financial year.
- 2.14 We continue to undertake social media posts highlighting the impacts of air pollution from vehicles and other sources such as domestic log burning stoves. We have numerous social media posts prepared for the COP26 and we are planning on promoting numerous various online resources to the general public. We have also recruited to the Environment & Energy Team to allow further resource to deliver the in-school and other promotional work.
- 2.15 Civil Enforcement Officers have started approaching idling drivers as agreed at the Overview and Scrutiny meeting on the 2 September 2021.
- 2.16 In the first six weeks of this activity occurring, CEO officers approached 22 idling vehicles as part of their day-to-day activities. Of these 22 motorists, 15 drove away when approached, and 7 switched their engines off.
- 2.17 The Parking Services team have agreed to report data on a quarterly basis.

3. Alternative options that have been considered

- 3.1 This paper is an update on activity and therefore no alternatives have been considered.

4. Risks associated with the proposals

- 4.1 This paper is an update on activity and there are no associated risks.

5. Implications arising from the proposals

- 5.1 This paper is an update on activity and there are no associated implications.

6. Background documents associated with this report

- 6.1 2021 Air Quality Annual Status Report - <https://www.westsuffolk.gov.uk/environmental-services/airquality.cfm>