

Recommendations of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee: 10 November 2022: Air Quality and Vehicle Idling

Report number:	CAB/WS/22/065	
Report to and date:	Cabinet	6 December 2022
Cabinet members:	<p>Councillor Andy Drummond Cabinet Member for Regulatory and Environment Tel: 01638 751411 Email: andy.drummond@westsuffolk.gov.uk</p> <p>Councillor Peter Stevens Cabinet Member for Operations Tel: 01787 280284 Email: peter.stevens@westsuffolk.gov.uk</p>	
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Decisions Plan:

The decision made as a result of this report will usually be published within 48 hours and cannot be actioned until five clear working days of the publication of the decision have elapsed. This item is included in the Decisions Plan.

Wards impacted: **All Wards**

Recommendation: **It is recommended that Cabinet endorses:**

- 1. Option 2: That Civil Enforcement Officers continue to provide informal advice and guidance to drivers as part of their day-to-day activities.**

- 2. Option 3: That the Council continues to undertake general air quality improvement work, focusing on vehicle idling where proportionate, *including education not just in schools but also includes the general public; signs; leaflets and social media.***

1. Context to this report

- 1.1 The Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 11 November 2021 received updates on air quality and anti-idling campaigns under report number [OAS/WS/21/021](#). Following on from this Councillors Hind and Wakelam requested that officers “establish the full impact and costs of obtaining formal powers to enforce idling, including the requisite resources, training and back-office system modifications and provide a report and recommendations for Overview and Scrutiny to consider before referring to Cabinet.”
- 1.2 Prior to this report being prepared, a scope was agreed with Councillors Hind and Wakelam ([Appendix A](#)), which set out the key lines of enquiry; outcomes; approach; information required; resources and support and timetable and key dates.

2. Proposals within this report

- 2.1 The Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 10 November 2022 received report number [OAS/WS/22/016](#), containing detailed information on air quality in West Suffolk; vehicle idling and air quality; enforcement powers; a summary of anti-idling research and best practice; West Suffolk enforcement implications and costs; existing air quality actions; electric vehicles and options and recommendations.
- 2.2 The Committee considered the report in detail and the options set out in Section 3 below and asked questions to which comprehensive responses were provided.
- 2.3 Discussions were held on issues such as traffic systems, poorly managed road works and the need for Highways to re-examine the flow of traffic lights; education and more work needed on appropriate idling signage and social media campaigns for example advertising on buses, digital boards; omissions from electric vehicles via their braking systems; raising air quality concerns with businesses and Cambridge park and ride.
- 2.4 Councillor Robert Everitt attended the meeting as the Chair of the Bury St Edmunds Air Quality Residents Group and thanked Councillors Diane Hind and Julia Wakelam for bringing vehicle idling to the Committee. The Committee had made valid points during its debate and agreed that to reduce idling it was about more education.

Councillor Andy Drummond, Cabinet Member for Regulatory and Environment attended the meeting and was happy to work with the communications team to develop communications with the local press around promoting the “rest button” in vehicles and to highlight how much it was costing people whilst idling.

Councillor Peter Stevens, Cabinet Member for Operations attended and thanked officers for the comprehensive report and options, and the interesting debate conducted by the Committee on all the options presented.

- 2.5 Councillor Hind advised she was at first disappointed at the enforcement outcome but agreed that education was key in reducing idling as well as social media events and proposed including additional wording under option 3 in that “education was not just for schools, but should also include the general public with signs, leaflets and more social media”.
- 2.6 Councillor Wakelam supported options 2 and 3 in the report and suggested a small budget for school education.
- 2.7 At the conclusion of the Committee’s consideration of the report and vote, the Committee recommends that Cabinet endorses options 2 and 3 including the additional wording set out in italics at option 3, on the front page of this report.

3. Options and recommendations

3.1 The various options are summarised below.

3.1.1 **Option 1: Adopt delegated powers for Civil Enforcement Officers to use Fixed Penalty Notices under the traffic regulations 2002.**

Based on the research and options appraisal, it is not recommended that this option is taken forward. Evidence from other, best practice, local authorities demonstrates that FPN would virtually never be issued. Where these are issued, there is a significant risk that they would not be paid. Given the high costs to appropriately train the CEOs and update the equipment this would not be a financially appropriate option. Any investment at this time would have diminishing returns as more zero tailpipe emission vehicles, such as EV, come on to the roads and reduce the number of vehicles that idle.

It is also worth noting that most people do not idle and of those that do, a large percentage reactive positively to an educational message. It is possible that the threat of a FPN increases the ‘switch off’ compliance, but this needs to be backed up by a positive educational message to ensure long term compliance, as the threat of a fine was considered less effect with drivers in the research undertaken by Coolworld Consulting. As FPN can only be issued on the public highway, CEOs would not be able to issue FPN for much of their day whilst patrolling carparks. Should specific areas need targeting, this would either take officers away from their day-to-day duties or would require additional staffing.

This option would have high-cost implications, would produce little, if any, income and have only a marginal short-term impact on compliance.

3.1.2 Option 2: Civil enforcement officers to continue to provide advice and guidance to drivers as part of their day-to-day activities.

CEOs can, and do, provide advice and guidance to drivers as part of their day-to-day activities with little to no impact on the core activities. This advice and guidance can also be provided in locations where FPNs cannot be issued, such as our public car parks. Where these interactions were recorded, drivers either complied with the request to switch off or drove away. It is recommended that this continues as an existing effective approach, however, recording these interactions would not be compatible with the current equipment used by CEOs and it is therefore not proposed to actively record or report the number of interactions.

3.1.3 Option 3: Continue to undertake general air quality improvement work, focusing on vehicle idling where proportionate.

Based on the research of best practice around vehicle idling, targeted educational campaigns are repeatedly sighted. This includes the Suffolk campaign which has been highlighted as best practice. It is recommended that our clean air work with schools, businesses, bus operators, taxis and other groups continues.

3.2 It should be noted that, although idling is in no way acceptable and the council continues to tackle this where appropriate, there are other practices that create greater proportions of general air pollution which also need focus. For example, the UK Clean Air Strategy 2019 states that 38% of primary particulate matter pollution comes from domestic wood and coal burning, whilst only 12% comes from transport. Of that 12% only a small proportion is from idling vehicles, with most being from moving vehicles. Therefore, clean burning campaigns are likely to have a significantly greater impact on particulate pollution than idling campaigns.

3.3 Removing vehicles from the road altogether by encouraging and/or enabling sustainable transport or encouraging a quicker transition to zero tailpipe emission vehicles would again have a more significant impact on overall air quality levels, as demonstrated by the significant drop in pollution during COVID-19 lockdowns.

3.4 This option would be a relatively low cost, business as usual approach. As campaigns are generally developed on a county wide basis costs of developing campaign materials are shared and workload and responsibility shared, with additional expertise from the Suffolk County Council sustainable transport and junior road safety teams.

4. Risks associated with the proposals

- 4.1 No identified risks associated with the recommendations

5. Implications arising from the proposals

- 5.1 Financial – No financial recommendations, with both recommended options being business as usual approaches.
- 5.2 Legal compliance – No legal compliance implications from the proposed recommended options.
- 5.3 Personal data processing – No personal data processing required from recommended options.
- 5.4 Equalities – No equalities implications from recommended options.
- 5.5 Crime and disorder – No crime and disorder implications from recommended options.
- 5.6 Safeguarding - No safeguarding implications from recommended options.
- 5.7 Environment or sustainability – The recommended options will continue to support improvements to local air quality.
- 5.8 HR or staffing - No HR or staffing implications from recommended options.
- 5.9 Changes to existing policies – No proposed changes to existing policies.
- 5.10 External organisations (such as businesses, community groups)

6. Appendices referenced in this report

- 6.1 None

7. Background documents associated with this report

- 7.1 11 November 2021 - Report number: [OAS/WS/21/021](#)
10 November 2022 - Report number: [OAS/WS/22/016](#) and [Appendix A](#)