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# Briefing to Overview and Scrutiny Board

**Date:** 3 March 2019

## **Subject:**

Council Motion - Clean Air Outside Our School

## **For Discussion**

## **Report of:**

Lori Hughes, Constitutional Services Officer

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### **Summary of the issue:**

At the Council meeting on 6<sup>th</sup> November 2019, the following motion was referred to the Overview and Scrutiny Board:

“This Council notes that:

- Our residents, staff and children are exposed to unsafe levels of pollutants outside of schools at peak times in the morning and afternoon.
- Road transport is one of the biggest contributors to particulate matter and pollution in Oldham Borough.
- Epidemiological studies show that symptoms of bronchitis in asthmatic children increase in association with long-term exposure to pollutants, as well as stunting lung growth.
- Only a handful of schools across the country are trialling ‘No Vehicle Idling zones’ yet they bring many health benefits.
- Air pollution poses a serious threat to the health and development of young people. While many of the policy interventions to rectify this problem would have to come from central Government or the Greater Manchester Clean Air Plan, this Council can do more and needs to be proactive on this issue.
- That there should be No-Vehicle-Idling zones around schools across the Borough.

This Council resolves to:

- Review the work done by No-Vehicle-Idling nationally in other local authorities and work this into Oldham’s action plan for No-Vehicle-Idling Zones.
- Implement No-Vehicle-Idling Zones, around as many primary schools in the Borough as possible, by the end of 2022.
- Work closely with schools that are part of the scheme to inform parents and carers of the No-Vehicle-Idling Zones.
- Encourage local businesses to sponsor green walls on school buildings and tree planting near schools and the appropriate cabinet member include this in their action plan.”

### **Recommendations to Overview and Scrutiny Board:**

It is recommended that Overview and Scrutiny Board address the motion with the GM Clean Air Plan when received by the Board.

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## **1.0 Background**

- 1.1 In March 2018 the Secretary of State issued a Direction under the Environment Act 1995 requiring Oldham Council to produce a feasibility study to identify the option which will deliver compliance with the requirement to meet legal limits for nitrogen dioxide in the shortest possible time. The Council complied with this Direction by the production of a feasibility study submitted to the government's Joint Air Quality Unit (JAQU) in July 2018. The Council is also required to address the exceedances that have been identified within its boundary during the Target Determination exercise and the Council confirmed in its supplemental plan that the exceedance identified in Oldham was being addressed as part of the Greater Manchester plan. This has been acknowledged by government.
- 1.2 Oldham Council has therefore been developing the study collectively with the other 9 Greater Manchester local authorities and the GMCA, coordinated by TfGM in line with Government direction and guidance and an Outline Business Case (OBC) was duly submitted in April 2019.
- 1.3 The key features of Greater Manchester's feasibility study and its Outline Business Case (OBC) to reduce nitrogen dioxide exceedances in Oldham and across Greater Manchester in the shortest possible time were approved on 25 March 2019 at the Council's Cabinet meeting for submission to the government's Joint Air Quality Unit (JAQU).

## **2.0 Current GM Position – Vehicle No Idling Zones**

- 2.1 The Clean Air conversation in Spring 2019 highlighted that many people are concerned about vehicle idling, prompting questions about what GM can do to crack down on people who leave their engines idling.
  - 2.2 In the UK, it is illegal under the Road Vehicles (Construction and Use) Regulations 1986 to leave a vehicle's engine running unnecessarily while that vehicle is stationary on a public road. Doing this can incur a £20 fixed-penalty fine under the Road Traffic (Vehicle Emissions) Regulations 2002.
  - 2.3 This is only imposed if the driver fails to turn off their engine when asked to do so. Enforcement of this legislation, either through a Fixed Penalty Notice (FPN) or via the magistrates' court sits with local authorities.
  - 2.4 As the enforcing officer must give the driver the opportunity to switch off the engine first and the penalty for idling is relatively small (£20), Greater Manchester Local Authorities do not consider the Regulation to be an effective deterrent.
  - 2.5 In addition, government has recently announced proposals to consult on toughen up rules on vehicle idling and increase fines for drivers who leave their engine running while parked.
  - 2.6 Given the limited enforcement deterrent GM Authorities are planning to undertake more awareness raising campaigns to inform of the health impacts that idling has on air quality.
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- 2.7 In parallel, GM Authorities have written to the Transport Secretary asking them to bring forward the launch of the public consultation on this issue.
- 3.0 Council motion – The key points within the motion are highlighted below and considered in the context of the GM approach to which the Council is signed up to.**
- 3.1 *“Review the work done by No-Vehicle-Idling nationally in other local authorities and work this into Oldham’s action plan for No-Vehicle-Idling Zones.”* – This work will continue alongside the GM commitment to raise awareness on the health risks presented through poor air quality. It is planned to work with schools to increase awareness based on best practice and a further report will follow.
- 3.2** *“Implement No-Vehicle-Idling Zones, around as many primary schools in the Borough as possible, by the end of 2022”* – GM consider that this position should not be pursued at the current time and that the Government should be approached to strengthen the legislation.
- 3.3** *“Work closely with schools that are part of the scheme to inform parents and carers of the No-Vehicle-Idling Zones”* – As given in 3.1 above work to increase awareness through working with schools is to be undertaken. Members views are requested on priority schools to inform the programme.
- 3.4 *“Encourage local businesses to sponsor green walls on school buildings and tree planting near schools and the appropriate cabinet member include this in their action plan.”*- This work would require additional resource to engage with the schools direct. However, the Council does have a contract in place to seek sponsorship of public areas e.g. roundabouts. It is therefore suggested, in the first instance, that work is undertaken to assess the opportunity working through the current arrangement to arrange eco / green messaging on the boards via sponsorship from Immediate Solutions or other 3rd party organisations.
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