

Agenda Item No. 4(c)

DERBYSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

**MEETING OF CABINET MEMBER – HIGHWAY, TRANSPORT AND
INFRASTRUCTURE**

9 April 2020

Report of the Executive Director – Economy, Transport and Environment

REQUEST FOR THE USE OF ANTI-IDLING SIGNS AT DRONFIELD

(1) **Purpose of Report** To consider a request for anti-idling signs to be used outside Dronfield Infant and Junior Schools, and to consider a pilot project to measure the impacts of various air quality initiatives at school sites.

(2) **Information and Analysis**

Background

Dronfield Town Council has recently approached the Council seeking permission to erect anti-idling signs on lighting columns close to Dronfield Infant and Junior Schools. The request is on the basis of an initiative Sheffield City Council is promoting over the County boundary in South Yorkshire.

Air pollution is the biggest environmental health risk, contributing to an estimated 530 deaths and 5,400 life years lost in Derby and Derbyshire. The economic cost to the UK is in the order of £20 billion a year.

Studies demonstrate long-term exposure to air pollution (over years) can reduce life expectancy, mainly due to cardiovascular and respiratory diseases and lung cancer. Short-term exposure (over hours or days) to high levels of air pollution can also cause a range of health impacts, including exacerbation of asthma, increases in respiratory and cardiovascular hospital admissions and mortality.

Reductions in air pollution require both global, national and local action and a multifaceted approach. The impact of air pollution often disproportionately affects the young, older people, those with underlying health conditions and the most disadvantaged within Derbyshire's communities.

Children are particularly vulnerable to the effects of air pollution. Exposure to air pollution in early life can have a long-lasting effect on lung function and, therefore, it is appropriate to take a particularly focused approach on reducing the impact of air pollution on children. The most effective way to improve air quality is to reduce sources of pollution. The greatest social, health and

economic gains can be achieved where interventions also facilitate modal shift. These can also provide benefits in increasing physical activity and long term climate change benefits.

The County Council already has a statutory duty under the Education and Inspections Act 2006 to promote sustainable travel to school. In particular, the promotion of sustainable travel and transport modes on the journey to, from and between schools and other institutions. The Council's Local Transport Plan seeks to encourage healthier and more sustainable travel options for local journeys, including encouraging more sustainable travel to school.

The vision is to encourage parents and children to choose more active, healthier and environmentally friendly ways of travelling to school as an alternative to driving.

Dronfield Town Council has demonstrated a commitment to proactively reduce exposure to air pollution outside schools in the area. Anti-idling, where engines are turned off while the vehicle is stationary, provides one possible option. However, in order to be effective in reducing air pollution exposure and providing the most effective solution, it is felt a series of other measures would be required to complement.

The Council's Sustainable Modes of Travel Strategy sets out a vision to encourage parents and children to choose more active, healthier and environmentally friendly ways of travelling to school as alternative to driving. Its key objectives are:

- to contribute towards the immediate and long-term health and well-being of children and young people through active travel;
- to reduce road traffic, ease congestion and reduce carbon emissions, especially on routes to schools through active travel and the use of public transport and car sharing;
- to allocate resources, where these are available, that create, sustain and maintain a transport infrastructure that is conducive to active, healthy, safe and environmentally friendly ways of travelling to school; and
- to use travel planning to create a culture of active and sustainable travel among children and parents that has a long-term impact on future travel choices.

The County Council has various programmes and initiatives, including Travel and Scooter Smart programmes, cycle and public transport promotions and Modeshift Stars which encourages participation in the National Sustainable Travel Accreditation and Recognition for schools awards scheme, which has been established to recognise schools that have demonstrated excellence in supporting cycling, walking and other forms of sustainable travel.

District and borough councils have the responsibility for monitoring air quality levels and working with parents to agree an Action Plan where nationally

agreed thresholds are exceeded. Some areas, such as Sheffield City Council, have introduced Anti-idling projects to tackle areas around major roads where concentrations of nitrogen dioxide emissions have exceeded the agreed thresholds. Areas with poor air quality around schools have been prioritised first and also required schools to undertake publicity and education campaigns about turning engines off prior to the authority carrying out enforcement and issuing fixed penalty notices. Signs were erected showing that the areas were patrolled and contraventions enforceable.

Following on from Sheffield's Anti-idling projects to reduce air pollution in its most affected regions, Dronfield Town Council has subsequently approached the County Council with a view to erecting its own Anti-idling signs outside Dronfield Infant and Junior Schools. The signs suggested are approximately A3 in size (300mm x 400mm).

Officer Comment

Behaviour change is key to improving air quality around schools and the County Council's School Travel Planners work closely with all schools, particularly with Modeshift Stars Active Travel Plans, to encourage cycling, walking and scooting to schools, and this should form the basis of any Anti-idling engines campaign. Signage for Anti-idling alone would be unlikely to support behaviour change unless this was supported by wider education, alternative travel options or peer enforcement. There are a number of free toolkits available to support education around clean air and Anti-idling, specifically designed for use in schools. These include posters, lesson plans, pledges for parents and children, as well as resources for schools to recruit peer enforcement volunteers.

Unlike the schemes introduced in Sheffield, which are legally enforced and patrolled by the Civil Parking Enforcement Officers, it is felt that the initial approach in Derbyshire should be on a purely advisory basis as a pilot similar to other temporary poster campaigns sanctioned by the Council. The impact of this would then be monitored to determine whether it should continue annually or perhaps whether measures should be considered similar to those in Sheffield and subject to availability of the cost of legal enforcement.

The following is a link to information which could be used in promoting 'Clean Air Day' on 18 June 2020: <https://www.cleanairday.org.uk/no-idling-toolkit-download>.

It is anticipated that there will be many schools, in addition to those in the Dronfield area, interested in installing Anti-idling schemes. In the short-term, it is recommended that work is concentrated in Dronfield as a pilot project. It is recommended that terms of reference are agreed for the Dronfield area pilot and future requests.

The County Council would:

- Offer the support of the County Council's School Travel Plan Co-Ordinator to assist the schools to prepare and implement Modeshift Stars Active Travel Plans.
- Advise the schools of free toolkits available and encourage them to promote a campaign to improve air quality on routes to schools and surrounding the schools.
- Consider the installation of Anti-idling signs where the schools have a Modeshift Stars active Travel Plan adopted and has shown commitment to carrying out additional promotion of ways to reduce pollution.

At the present time, there are no schools in Dronfield with a Modeshift Stars Active Travel Plan. It is therefore recommended that Dronfield schools be approached to commence preparation of a Modeshift Stars Active Travel Plan in the first instance, to encourage more sustainable travel modes. The schools can also be advised of the available toolkits to support wider campaign to improve air quality. Once these measures are in place, the Council can then work with the schools to develop a pilot scheme project for the installation of Anti-idling signs.

Schools own designs or ones that are promoted in the toolkits can be used by the schools as promotional tools only. Any signage must be in accordance with the Traffic Signs and General Directions 2016. This prohibits the use of permanent signing unless special authorisation is gained from the Department of Transport. It is felt, therefore, in this case, the best approach is to grant permission for a poster type campaign for several months on a temporary basis. Any temporary signing would be of a purely advisory nature with no civil parking enforcement carried out and the signs would have no enforceable status. These must therefore face away from oncoming traffic and not be located in prohibited parking zones. A period of three months is suggested for any promotional campaign, this will allow enough time for any behaviour change to occur and be sustained, prevent apathy and provide opportunity for evaluation.

For the County Council to demonstrate the success of any anti-idling campaign, monitoring and evaluation of the sites also needs to take place. This may include qualitative measures (parent and student feedback) and quantitative measures (observed idling patterns, travel surveys, any before and after air quality data collected). The schools will be encouraged to carry out monitoring to help evaluate outcomes and lessons learnt for any future projects across the County. Toolkits are available to support schools to undertake such evaluation in conjunction with the Council's Data Collection Team.

Alongside measures to reduce idling of parent/carers vehicles, it is important that any campaign also includes measures to reduce contributions of

emissions from wider school transport, including buses and taxis, which often emit higher levels of pollution close to school entrances. Consideration should therefore be made to ensuring variation to existing contracts or amendments to future contracts with bus and taxi providers to prohibit the use of idling.

Road Safety Officers are prepared to support in advice upon air quality management by offering Dronfield Infant and Junior Schools Road Safety Officer led workshops which support the messages around travelling to school safer, if walking and cycling.

To summarise, the County Council, in principle, is supportive of Dronfield Town Council's proposal to pilot a temporary Anti-idling scheme outside Dronfield Infant and Junior Schools for a period of three months. The signing would be of a purely advisory status with no civil enforcement being carried out, but it is hoped that, due to the temporary nature of the signing, public awareness will be heightened during the months it is in place. Engagement, however, has to be made with the County Council's School Travel Plan Co-ordinator first to ensure they are on board with a Modeshift Stars Active Travel Plan. At the same time, they need to develop a campaign using the toolkits for a Clean Air Strategy around the schools.

Once this has taken place, and the County Council is satisfied that the schools are fully on board with promoting clean air around their schools, the County Council will then provide and erect the associated signs with an Anti-idling campaign.

Local Member Comment

Councillor Alex Dale, Dronfield East and Councillor Angelique Foster, Dronfield West have been consulted, and they are both strongly supportive of any measures to support air quality initiatives outside school sites and would like to see the Council prioritise the pilot scheme requested by Dronfield Town Council outside Dronfield Infant and Junior Schools.

(3) **Financial Considerations** The cost associated with the supply and erection of approved Anti-idling Engines signs and the monitoring of the pilot site will be approximately £1,000 which will be funded through the Highways Maintenance Revenue budget dedicated to Traffic Management.

(4) **Legal Considerations** Any signs used would be on a temporary and advisory basis and would have no legal status.

Other Considerations

In preparing this report the relevance of the following factors has been considered: prevention of crime and disorder, equality and diversity, human resources, environmental, health, property, social value and transport considerations.

- (5) **Key Decision** No.
- (6) **Call-In** Is it required that call-in be waived in respect of the decisions proposed in the report? No.
- (7) **Background Papers** Held on file within the Economy, Transport and Environment Department.
- (8) **OFFICER'S RECOMMENDATIONS** That:
- 8.1 The Cabinet Member approves a temporary Anti-idling signs pilot scheme at Dronfield Infant and Junior Schools, providing that the school engages in Modeshift Stars Active Travel Plans and adopts a Clean Air Strategy with the free toolkits available.
- 8.2 The Local Members and Dronfield Town Council be notified accordingly.

Mike Ashworth
Executive Director – Economy, Transport and Environment