

## AIR QUALITY- VEHICLE IDLING CAMPAIGN & UPDATE

Cleaner & Greener Advisory Committee - 13 June 2023

**Report of:** Deputy Chief Executive and Chief Officer Planning and Regulatory Services

**Status:** For Consideration

**Also considered by:** N/A

**Key Decision:** No

**This report supports the Key Aim of:** Green Environment & Healthy Environment

**Portfolio Holder:**

**Contact Officer(s):** Nick Chapman, Ext. 7167 / Holly Harris, Ext. 7116

**Recommendation to Cleaner & Greener Advisory Committee:**

That the contents of the report be noted.

**Reason for recommendation:**

To update Members on the vehicle idling campaign which correlates to Measures 11 and 12 from the Air Quality Action Plan 2022.

To provide Members with an insight into our two new campaigns which we are in the process of implementing.

## Introduction and Background

- 1 Sevenoaks District Council is required to produce an Air Quality Action Plan (AQAP) which details measures it intends to take to mitigate air pollution within its designated Air Quality Management Areas (AQMA) over the next 5 years. We released this document in summer 2022.
- 2 Within the AQAP there are 32 measures. Measure 11 is to reducing vehicle idling and Measure 12 is Educational campaigns for schools. The Air Quality Promotions Officer (AQPO) developed an engagement campaign which was delivered with schools in September/ October 2022.

## The Idling Campaign

- 3 Every school (primary & secondary) within the district was emailed on two occasions in summer 2022 and a paper letter sent out to them in autumn 2022 to gain interest in the campaign.
- 4 We received replies back from 15 schools across the district who wanted to be involved in the campaign in a variety of ways.
- 5 We distributed our poster competition resources to all schools who replied. We ultimately collected posters from 5 schools in December 2022. In total, we received 66 entries from these 5 schools across the district (Westerham, Swanley, Shoreham, and Sevenoaks x2).
- 6 In January 2023, the entries were judged by Cllrs Fleming, McArthur and Hunter, along with colleagues in the Communications Team and the Air Quality Promotions Officer (AQAP). Owing to the quality of entries received, each school was awarded a 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> place entry. Each winner received a WHSMITH voucher for their entry varying from £10, £20 or £30.
- 7 Of the five 1<sup>st</sup> place entries, an overall district winner was decided and they received an additional £50 voucher. In total, Environmental Health awarded £350 in WHSMITH vouchers to winners throughout the district.
- 8 In February 2023, the AQPO arranged with the five schools to return with Cllr Fleming and a photographer. We returned the posters and presented certificates to all students who entered, along with a certificate and prizes for the winners. In 3/5 of the schools, Cllr Fleming and the AQPO gave whole school assemblies on the idling campaign and in 1/5 they gave an extended eco assembly which included the idling campaign.
- 9 Within each school, photographs were taken of the winners with their posters with Cllr Fleming and other Cllrs for the wards of those schools if they were able to attend. These were then used within InShape along with an article on the idling campaign.
- 10 In March 2023, the print studio were asked to design banners/posters for the schools to choose from to display outside their premises. These were in two designs - one with the district winner's poster and SDC designs and one

without with just SDC designs. These could then be selected in a large banner, small banner or posters within the A size ranges.

- 11 Unfortunately, production of the banners was delayed during the election period but we believe these will be available to issue to participating schools shortly.
- 12 The next stage of the campaign will include reaching out to all the schools within the district and asking them to pick a poster/banner to display outside their gates to inspire drivers to support the campaign. We will also target other locations where children will be on a regular basis such as scout huts, day cares, etc.
- 13 We will conduct a survey to monitor a select number of schools who request banners and posters. This will involve obtaining data from locations outside schools to quantify how many drivers are seen idling prior to banners being installed and after. This will help us assess the impact of the campaign. We will repeat this survey 3 months after banner installation to see if the impact has been significant in comparison to the first figures collected.
- 14 Where we identify an idling vehicle our officers will challenge this behaviour informally providing advice. We do not currently intend to issue fines for idling and will focus on awareness and changing behaviours.
- 15 The AQPO will also be sending out resources to support schools to run their own independent idling campaigns with their students. The AQPO will be designing resources for schools to use, such as lesson resources, letters to parents and presentations.

#### **PM<sub>2.5</sub>**

- 16 The Environment Act 2021 committed the government to introducing new limits for PM<sub>2.5</sub>. In April 2023, DEFRA consulted on its Draft Air Quality Strategy that proposed the following limits:
  - a. an annual mean concentration target for PM<sub>2.5</sub> of 10 µg/m<sup>3</sup> by 2040 and an average population exposure reduction target of 35% in 2040 compared to a 2018 baseline
  - b. An interim target of 12 µg/m<sup>3</sup> by 2028 and an average population exposure reduction target of 22% in 2028 compared to a 2018 baseline.
- 17 Domestic combustion is a major source of particulate matter emissions in 2021, accounting for 16 per cent of PM<sub>10</sub> emissions and 27 per cent of PM<sub>2.5</sub> emissions.
- 18 Most emissions from this source come from households burning wood in closed stoves and open fires. Within the rural areas of Sevenoaks District, we are aware that many properties rely on solid fuel to keep their properties warm. Wood burners are also become increasingly popular for aesthetic reasons.

- 19 The use of wood as a fuel accounted nationally for 75 per cent of PM<sub>2.5</sub> emissions from domestic combustion in 2021. Emissions of PM<sub>2.5</sub> from domestic wood burning increased by 124 per cent between 2011 and 2021, to represent 21 per cent of total PM<sub>2.5</sub> emissions in 2021.
- 20 In late 2023/24, the AQPO will lead on two campaigns focused around PM<sub>2.5</sub> awareness and domestic burning education.
- 21 Our campaign(s) will focus on three main elements:
- a. Monitoring  
We aim to either relocate our existing AQ mesh monitor or purchase portable monitoring devices which we can install in our rural communities. This will provide us with the data we need, for example, areas and times of day with highest emissions. This will inform us of patterns and trends within our rural areas, which we hope will support the need for education of domestic burning.
  - b. Engagement with parishes  
Local parish engagement will be crucial in these campaigns. Their support in community awareness and education will help reinforce the need to reduce the emissions in our rural communities.
  - c. Advice  
Communicating this information with residents will be the main source aim of this campaign. This will be in the form of:
    - Promotional activities to demonstrate the health impact of such emissions in rural communities and methods for reducing such emissions.
    - Targeted advice to residents to warn and inform of the air quality and health impacts associated with bonfires.
- 22 This supports the Burn Better information campaign which Defra launched the in 2020. This aimed to raise awareness about the impact of domestic burning in the air we breathe to reduce air pollution from domestic burning. The initiative encouraged solid fuel users to make positive changes to their burning habits, including using better quality fuels, getting their chimney swept or upgrading their appliances.

### **Defra Funding Grants**

- 23 In March, we found out they were unsuccessful in our individual application for funding provided for Air Quality. We were however successful in our joint bid with Medway and Kent Air Quality Partnership.
- 24 This bid will fund a joint Kent-wide web portal designed to support healthcare professionals communicate air quality health impacts and methods of reducing exposure. Materials on the portal will include e-

learning and resources, certified and accredited training as well as printable materials for patients.

- 25 We will be working with colleagues in both Communications and Health Teams to release this information. We will be able to provide an update on this later in the year, when we receive more information from the Medway and Kent Air Quality Partners.
- 26 We will be bidding again for future funding opportunities, for applicable projects when they become available.

## **Key Implications**

### Financial

None

### Legal Implications and Risk Assessment Statement.

None

### Equality Assessment

The information in this paper has a remote or low relevance to the substance of the Equality Act. There is no perceived impact on end users.

### Net Zero Implications

The decisions recommended through this paper have a remote or low relevance to the council's ambition to be Net Zero by 2030. There is no perceived impact regarding either an increase or decrease in carbon emissions in the district, or supporting the resilience of the natural environment.

## **Appendices**

Appendix A - Winning Vehicle Idling Posters- 2023

**Richard Morris**

**Deputy Chief Executive and Chief Officer - Planning & Regulatory Services**