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| London Councils’ Transport & Environment Committee | | | | | | | |
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| Reducing Air Pollution in London | | | | | | Item no: | 12 |
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| Report by: | Jennifer Sibley | | Title: | | Principal Policy Officer | | |
| Date: | 16 June 2016 | | | | | | |
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| **Summary:** | Air quality is high on the new Mayor’s agenda. This paper sets out more of the background on the Mayor’s air quality proposals and gives information about the process for establishing a London Councils’ position on air quality. |
| **Recommendations:** | The Committee is asked to:   * Note and discuss the report. |

**Air quality – background**

1. Air quality presents a major health challenge in London, and transport plays a significant role in worsening air quality. Research by Kings College London that looked at the health impacts of NO2 (nitrogen dioxide) estimated that in 2010 there was the equivalent of up to 5,900 deaths across London associated with long term exposure to NO2. The equivalent number of deaths from PM2.5 (another type of particulate matter) was 3,500. These total up to 9,400 equivalent deaths in 2010 from NO2 and PM2.5.[[1]](#footnote-1)
2. Research commissioned by the GLA indicates that London’s air quality has improved in recent years due to policies to reduce emissions from road transport. However, whilst exposure to NO2 (nitrogen dioxide) is predicted to decline significantly by 2020 (86 per cent reduction), there will still be more than 300,000 people living in London in places where the average NO2 levels are above European limits. There is particular concern that on average more deprived areas in London are more exposed to poor air quality than areas of less deprivation. The researchers also found that in areas of poor air quality, schools were more likely to have higher numbers of children receiving free school meals.[[2]](#footnote-2)
3. In April 2016 environmental lawyers ClientEarth were granted approval by the High Court to pursue a Judicial Review against Defra, alleging that the government’s plans to tackle poor air quality are inadequate. This comes a year after the Supreme Court ruling which led to Defra publishing its plans to improve air quality in cities in December 2015. Defra’s plans would see London’s air meeting European pollution limits by 2025, in line with the previous Mayor of London’s plans. The new Mayor of London, Sadiq Khan, has declared himself an interested party in the case brought by ClientEarth against the UK government.

**New Mayor’s Emerging Policies**

1. The new Mayor has already focused on tackling air quality, and has announced he will consult on a series of measures this summer. These include the introduction of a toxicity charge “t-charge” for driving highly polluting vehicles in central London (the same area of the current congestion charge) and the expansion of the Ultra-Low Emission Zone (ULEZ) boundaries to the north and south circular roads.
2. The Mayor plans new, additional, standards for TfL including self-imposed ULEZ standards a year earlier on double decker buses, expanding the retrofit programme to 3,000 buses rather than the original 2,000 buses, and only purchasing hybrid or zero-emission double decker buses from 2018.
3. He will also consult on proposals for working with government to tackle air pollution and introducing ULEZ standards on heavy vehicles Londonwide from 2020. He will ask TfL to develop proposals for a diesel scrappage scheme for the government to implement.
4. Khan pledges to introduce Clean Bus Corridors which will prioritise clean buses for the most polluted routes. By 2018 he aims to purchase only clean electric or hydrogen buses and have agreement from other European and global cities to do the same.

**London Councils Position**

1. In January 2015 London Councils set out its support for the ULEZ and noted that some inner London boroughs wanted to see the boundary extended beyond the originally proposed area of the congestion charging zone. We expressed our disappointment that TfL’s targets for its own buses were not more ambitious and that private hire vehicles operating London wide did not have to meet the ULEZ standards, despite taxis having to do so. We called for TfL to introduce a scrappage scheme for cars that will not meet the ULEZ standards.
2. In our response to Defra’s plans to improve air quality, we set out the different roles of local, regional and central government. We called on the European Union to ensure that Euro 6 vehicle standards meet the required emissions reductions in real world driving conditions and recognised the strategic role the Mayor can play in tackling air quality, together with local action such as education, promotion of walking and cycling, and the development of consolidation centres.
3. We called on central government to provide ongoing financial commitment to incentivise the uptake of ultra-low emission vehicles and to ensure the increased demand on the National Grid from the charging of electric vehicles was being planned for. We sought a clearer timetable for the government’s review of the Clean Air Act 1993 as boroughs identified that it is insufficient to prevent air pollution from combined heat and power plants as the thresholds for restrictions are set too high. We called for government to reform Vehicle Excise Duty and not implement the changes planned for April 2017 which weaken incentives for ultra-low emission vehicles; to introduce a national scrappage scheme for heavily polluting vehicles; to support research and development into Euro 6 retrofit technology; allow planning authorities to take air quality into account when determining planning applications; and provide support to reduce emissions associated with nationally significant infrastructure such as London Heathrow Airport.

**Going Forward**

1. With the Mayor’s focus on air quality set to continue, London Councils will seek to establish a joint position on air quality that could set out what boroughs will do to support the Mayor’s objectives, what boroughs will work with the Mayor to achieve, and what boroughs want the Mayor and government to do. Members are asked to provide their views, over and above what is set out at paragraphs 8-10, on what could be included in a joint position to the author of this report by Monday 4 July 2016.
2. When the consultations referenced in paragraphs 3 and 4 are launched, London Councils will respond to them, which will provide an opportunity to assess where boroughs hold common or disparate views, to help inform a joint position on air quality.

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| **Recommendations:** | The Committee is asked to:   * Note and discuss the report. |

**Financial Implications**

1. There are no financial implications to London Councils arising from this report.

**Legal Implications**

1. There are no financial implications to London Councils arising from this report.

**Equalities Implications**

1. There are no equalities implications to London Councils arising from this report.

1. https://www.london.gov.uk/what-we-do/environment/pollution-and-air-quality/air-quality-and-health [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. <https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/analysing_air_pollution_exposure_in_london_-_technical_report_-_2013.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)