

CLEAN AIR FOR BRIGHTON AND HOVE

This Notice of motion is entirely Health driven. It is now widely accepted that particulate matter from diesel exhausts is a cause of serious and debilitating health conditions, including asthma, bronchitis and lung cancer. It is estimated that diesel accounts for 40,000 premature deaths each year.

If these figures were due to cholera, or SARS or bird flu, there would be a public outcry. But premature death is a silent killer and we as a society should be silent no longer.

When the Greens were in administration, cleaner air was one of our priorities, and I am grateful to officers for rising to the challenge and bringing about significant improvements. But there remains some stubborn hotspots within the city, from Queens Road to Rottingdean High Street, and we must do more to continue these improvements.

I applaud the fact that Brighton and Hove Bus Company has brought in low emission buses, and it is time for other vehicles to follow suit.

When I saw that Westminster Council was proposing measures to discourage high polluting vehicles in the most congested areas, it made sense to me that here in Brighton and Hove we could and should similarly discourage them. Now I don't propose that we raise parking charges by as much as 50% as Westminster proposes, but a charging differential would go some way in making people think about the effects of the vehicles they drive.

Here in Brighton and Hove we have a policy of managed growth with regard to taxis, with five new licences issued each year. I propose these new licences be for low emission vehicles, and that as existing licences vehicles are updated, we encourage them also to be environmentally friendly.

In saying this, however, I am mindful that since 2001, when the government of the day recommended diesel as the safer alternative to petrol, millions of people have bought diesel in good faith. Given that medical research had been pointing out the dangers of diesel for at least two years, it is clear that the government had not done their homework, and diesel owners feel badly let down.

So I am keen that we do not take a punitive approach, and this is why I am proposing that we take note of Greg Clarke's announcement in February of financial assistance to London taxi drivers, and ask that such assistance be available to Brighton and Hove cabbies too.

Because, Mr Mayor, we are one of the most seriously polluted cities outside London, and indeed, only last May, Brighton and Hove was named by the World Health Organisation as one of the top 40 most polluted cities in the world.

I am particularly concerned about young children, toddlers and babies, and the fact that, simply by virtue of their size, they are closer to exhaust fumes than the rest of us. And the

fact that fine particulate matter is damaging to their lung development, storing up massive problems for the future.

We must do more about engines left idling, and local authorities do have the powers to instigate fines to persistent offenders. Again, examples exist elsewhere, such as in the City of London Corporation, where they have No Idling Zones and Engine Idling Action Days involving trained volunteers, which we could look into too.

Mr Mayr, I hope that the council will support this motion this evening, as it is aimed to benefit everyone. Air pollution does not recognise political boundaries, we are all affected by it, even motorists breathe the same air, and everyone is vulnerable.

Cllr Lizzie Deane
6th April 2017