

Item

CHARTER FOR CLEANER AIR



To:

Councillor Rosy Moore, Executive Councillor for Environmental Services and City Centre

Environment & Community Scrutiny Committee 17/01/19

Report by:

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Wards affected:

All

Not a Key Decision

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 A new charter for cleaner air has been launched by Oxford City Council, Greenpeace UK, and Friends of the Earth, calling on the United Kingdom (UK) Government to place the health of communities first.
- 1.2 The Charter for Cleaner Air, was created by Oxford City Council with the support of the UK100 Clean Air, Clean Cities Network, of which the Cambridge City Council is a member. It is the first formal cooperation with Greenpeace UK and Friends of the Earth (EWNI) (England, Wales and Northern Ireland) to be led by a local authority.
- 1.3 The purpose of the Charter is to maintain pressure on central government to take steps to reduce illegal levels of air pollution and to recognise the crucial role local authorities play in this area by providing them with adequate funding, powers and new legislation to be able to fulfil their role and deliver local air quality action plans and other actions.
- 1.4 The City Council should sign up to the Charter to make clear to government that air quality remains an area of concern that needs central policy and funding support to deliver effectively at a local level. The Charter provides a reasoned set of steps Government can take to support local authorities working to deliver cleaner air.

2. Recommendations

The Executive Councilor is recommended to:

- 2.1 Sign up to the Oxford Charter for Cleaner Air on behalf of Cambridge City Council

3. Background

- 3.1 Public Awareness of Air Quality issues is currently high and rising. Many cities in the United Kingdom (UK), including Cambridge, have areas with air pollutants above national air quality objectives and EU limit values. Whilst Cambridge City Council has allocated and secured resources to fulfil its duties to monitor and report on air quality in the city and work to meet air quality objectives, central government support for local authority action to improve air quality is patchy and relies on council's, such as Cambridge City, submitting successful funding applications.
- 3.2 Whilst Cambridge City Council has a good record of winning funding and working with partners to improve air quality, e.g. through policies and projects to support investment in electric taxis and working with the County Council, bus operators and the Greater Cambridge Partnership to improve bus fleets, we feel central government could do much more to support the efforts of local authorities.
- 3.3 In the last few years, the UK Government has lost three court cases brought by environmental charity, Client Earth, for failing to fulfill its legal obligations to improve air quality and not having adequate plans in place to ensure compliance with legal air quality standards.
- 3.4 The Oxford Charter sets out ten well-reasoned steps Government could take to fulfill its obligations and assist local authorities implement the changes needed to provide clean air for all areas of the UK, including cities, such as Cambridge.
- 3.5 The measures, set out in the Charter below, contain many elements Cambridge City Council is already working to achieve and are included in the Cambridge Air Quality Action Plan, 2018-

23. This includes working with partners such as the Greater Cambridge Partnership to ensure alignment with the city access strategy to deliver effective low emission movement of people in to Cambridge.

- 3.6 Signing up to the Charter consolidates the ambition of the City Council to improve air quality in the Cambridge, whilst harnessing the collective power of partner authorities and non-government organisations (NGOs) to effectively lobby the UK Government to support this action with adequate funding, powers and new legislation.
- 3.7 Of particular concern to Cambridge is that national assessments of air quality, upon which some funding access is decided by central government, fail to recognise and acknowledge the current air quality problems the Council has identified in the city. This is due to the lack of geographic resolution in the national modelling and not incorporating the forecast growth of population and employment for the Cambridge area. This issue is specifically addressed in clause 8 of the Charter set out below.

3.8 The full text of the Oxford Charter for Cleaner Air is set out below:

Charter for Cleaner Air

We all have a right to breathe clean air. However, across the UK illegal and harmful levels of air pollution are damaging people's health and their quality of life and cutting lives short. It affects all of us, from the time that we are in the womb and through to old age, though some are more vulnerable, including children and older people.

It doesn't have to be this way. Together we are asking you to put the health of our communities first. We call on the UK Government to:

- 1. Show national leadership in removing the most polluting vehicles from the most polluted parts of our towns and cities to protect people's health.** Road transport is a major source of illegal and harmful levels of air pollution. We need national leadership to support the development of Clean Air and Zero Emission Zones across the UK and provide help and support for people and businesses to move to cleaner forms of transport.
- 2. Provide greater investment in public transport, walking and cycling infrastructure to give people real alternatives.** We need cleaner and fewer vehicles on the road, which will not only help reduce air pollution but also tackle congestion and make our towns and cities healthier, safer and better places to live and work.
- 3. End the sale of all new petrol and diesel cars and vans earlier than 2040.** Bring forward plans to phase out the sale of new diesel and petrol cars from 2040 to 2030 and ensure that action is taken now, not in ten years' time, to make cleaner vehicles more affordable and accessible to people and businesses.
- 4. Revise the tax regime and provide fiscal incentives to help people and businesses adopt cleaner vehicles.** Address perverse policies to, instead, encourage the take up of

cleaner vehicles, including electric bicycles. Targeted diesel scrappage and retrofit schemes, part-funded by the motor industry, could help people on low-incomes and small businesses access cleaner vehicles as well as, for example, pay for public transport season tickets and car club membership.

5. Accelerate the zero emission revolution by investing in charging infrastructure and the supporting power network. *The UK's power network must be ready to support the growing number of electrified vehicles on our roads. We also need investment in charging infrastructure that will support people and business in adopting these cleaner technologies.*

6. Ensure fossil fuels do not generate the power used to fuel electrified vehicles. *The electric vehicle revolution must not lead to increased power generation from fossil fuels, which contribute to air pollution and climate change emissions*

7. Tighten legal limits on air pollution to match safer WHO guideline levels. *Current legal limits are twice as high as World Health Organisation (WHO) guideline levels for particulate matter pollution. UK air quality law should reflect the latest scientific consensus to better protect people's health. The Government should start by adopting WHO guideline levels for particulate matter and commit to achieve these by 2030.*

8. Improve the national monitoring and modelling of air pollution to show the true extent of the problem. *The disparity of data collected locally and the data used to inform the UK's national plan is concerning. The current national system can often overlook known local pollution hotspots, which then do not receive targeted national support. All appropriate local authority data must be taken into account in national policy formulation.*

9. Adopt a new Clean Air Act, or equivalent fit for the 21st Century backed by an independent watchdog with teeth. *In the long-term, a new Clean Air Act, or equivalent is needed to tackle our modern pollution problem and safeguard our right to breathe clean air. We need post-Brexit governance arrangements for air quality, written into legislation, to create an independent watchdog that will be backed up by the courts.*

10. Launch a national public health campaign and alert system to highlight the dangers of air pollution. *Air pollution is an invisible public health problem. The public need to understand how dirty air affects their health and that of their families, as well as how they can be part of the solution. There also needs to be a comprehensive alert system for pollution episodes with clear advice to help people, schools, hospitals and care homes, for example, protect their health and those most vulnerable.*

3.9 Southampton, Nottingham and Brighton and Hove City Councils have already signed up to the Charter.

4. Implications

(a) Financial Implications

There are no direct financial implications for revenue or capital

(b) Staffing Implications

There are no direct staffing implications

(c) Equality and Poverty Implications

An EQIA has not been carried out but previous EQiA work on air quality has shown that poorer groups and the young and elderly suffer disproportionately from poor air quality and therefore work to improve air quality is beneficial to these groups.

(d) Environmental Implications

There are no direct environmental implications from signing up to this charter but additional funding and powers to improve air quality as set out in the Charter's ambitions for UK Government action could have significant local environmental benefits

(e) Procurement Implications

None

(f) Community Safety Implications

None

5. Consultation and communication considerations

Cambridge City Council officers and members have contributed to the development of the Charter, through its work with UK100 Clean Air Clean Cities Network. This means that there has been broad agreement from affected cities on the content of the Charter.

If Cambridge City Council signs up to the Charter, there will need to be promotion of the adopted Charter through web and media outlets available to the Council.

As there is no formal action to be taken as a result of adopting the Charter, formal public consultation is not necessary.

6. Background papers

No background papers were used in the preparation of this report.

7. Appendices

None

8. Inspection of papers

if you have a query on the report please contact Jo Dicks, Environmental Quality & Growth Manager, tel: 01223 - 457892, email: jo.dicks@cambridge.gov.uk.