

# Vehicle Idling: the role of Warwick District Council in anti-idling enforcement and awareness

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## Executive Summary:

This document will outline the work of other local authorities on how they have adopted their anti-idling powers. In 2002, the legislation under the Highway Code delegated these powers (to fine and issue fixed penalty notices) to local authorities. It states under Rule 123, that leaving a vehicle's engine running unnecessarily on a public road while stationary is an offence. Despite this, few of them have produced anti-idling policies or a strategy on how to limit idling in their jurisdictions. As enforcement options have been widely criticised for their ineffectiveness, many Councils have focused their efforts on raising anti-idling awareness and the health and legal implications of idling an engine. Therefore, this document will explore the campaign options for Warwick District Council and how idling awareness may be raised throughout the District.

### 1.0 What is Vehicle Idling?

Idling is essentially running your engine unnecessarily while your vehicle remains stationary. While idling can occur when in traffic, many vehicles idle in certain hotspots which have sensitive age groups within them, such as children or older people. These include at bus stops, outside of schools or shops or in long traffic pauses. In these cases, idling can be avoided.

Idling your engine in this way is highly polluting and can produce twice as many exhaust emissions as an engine in motion. Exhaust emissions contain pollutants, principally carbon monoxide (CO), oxides of nitrogen (NO<sub>x</sub>), volatile organic compounds (VOCs) and particulates (PM<sub>10</sub>). These can seriously affect the air quality of the surrounding environment and the air we breathe. Indeed, these pollutants have been linked to asthma and other lung diseases and approximately 50,000 deaths a year in the UK are linked to air pollution (according to the Lancet Commission on Pollution and Health, 2017). Cutting out vehicle idling within the District will invariably improve air quality in congested areas, but only through awareness and enforcement will idling offences be reduced.

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#### Legal Definition:

Vehicle idling is an offence against the Road Traffic (Vehicle Emissions) Regulations 2002. The law states under Rule 123 of the Highway Code that:

*"You must not leave a vehicle's engine running unnecessarily while that vehicle is stationary on a public road."*

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The Clean Air Strategy report released in January 2019, stated that the Government will be considering updating the existing anti-idling guidance for local-authorities. This would allow for changes in the laws and involve potentially increasing fines for those who do not turn their car engines off when requested to.

## 2.0 Evidence and Enforcement

How is it evidenced?

By committing this offence, local authorities have the power to issue a £20 fixed-penalty fine. However, this fine is only imposed if a motorist refuses to switch off their engine when asked to do so by an authorised person. This is known as a "stationary idling offence," which is the failure to comply with so much of Regulation 98 (stopping of engine when stationary) of the 1986 Road Vehicles (Construction and Use). Even parked vehicles which do not have their engines switched off, are committing an idling offence.

West Suffolk Council recommend that, when referring to vehicle idling, that they restrict this to vehicles idling at a destination whilst safely parked. This is the general consensus followed by other Councils also. Although there is no time which has been quantified to constitute 'idling,' Councils tend to leave this at the discretion of enforcement officers but this can mean 30 seconds to 1 minute then thereafter. It is then left to the enforcement officer to tell the vehicle to switch off their engine or receive a fine (£20 - £80, this varies according to local authority policy).

What enforcement measures are taken and is there consistency?

For the past 17 years, local authorities have had the power to fine drivers for leaving their vehicles idle. An FOI investigation asserted that only 59 motorists have been fined in this time and that only 10 Councils have enforced this law. Westminster City Council have issued 20 and Southwark Council issued 9 last years, but this has raised concern over how effective council strategies actually are when it comes to idling and enforcing the law. While 9 motorists were fined in Southwark, 568 were asked to turn their engines off. Yet 57 refused to do so and drove away before the fine could be issued. This showcases the ineffectiveness of the current enforcement system in place across Councils. Although Councils do confirm that they have adopted the anti-idling legislation from 2002 and formed relevant policies, in practise, the majority have failed to both enforce Fixed Penalty Notices and to follow the Government's recommendations to create 'No Idling Zones.'

Local authorities have instead, prioritised inciting behavioural change by educating motorists. They have found this to be more effective than issuing fines, particularly Westminster City Council, who claim the enforcement laws are 'impractical' and 'inefficient' to carry out. Despite the dispute, some Councils such as Richmond deployed parking enforcement officers who recorded car registrations of the vehicles that are idling their engine during March 2018 and March 2019. This was a part of the Vehicle Idling Action campaign followed by the local authorities in London, which was funded by the Mayor's Air Quality Fund. Yet as evident, this only occurred in 1 month of the year and therefore is not a sustainable enforcement option in the long term.

# Idling is fuelish

Idling creates fumes that can damage your health



Switch off engines for cleaner air



Vehicle idling action

SUPPORTED BY  
MAYOR OF LONDON

Idling engines contribute to local air pollution, which is harmful to health. If you would like to help improve local air quality, please switch off your engine if parked for a minute or longer.

## Idling: the myths and the truth

Idling is 'fuelish' for all sorts of reasons, yet many of us still do it. So our myth-buster guide is here to give you the facts:

### Myth

### Truth

If it's cold outside, I need to keep the engine running to keep the heater on.

If you switch the engine off when you park and keep the ignition on, the heater should stay warm for up to 30 minutes.

If I'm parked on a yellow line, keeping my engine running means I won't get a fine.

Traffic wardens can fine you if you are parked somewhere you shouldn't be, whether your engine is running or not.

But surely it's better to idle because stopping and starting will wear out the engine?

This is no longer a problem with modern engines.

But surely idling does not contribute very much to air pollution in the grand scheme of things.

Research has shown that switching off engines when parked can reduce pollution levels in the street where the vehicle is parked.

## But, but, but...No ifs, No buts, No idling!

Idling your engine unnecessarily is an offence in Waltham Forest and you could be fined.

## Air pollution and idling

Poor air quality is a major health concern, and the main source of pollution is road transport. Some vehicle journeys cannot be helped, but leaving your engine running when parked (idling) creates unnecessary pollution. Putting a stop to idling is a simple way we can all help to clean up the air that we breathe.

## Vehicle Idling Action

Air Quality Champions in London and across the country are encouraging behaviour change in a positive way. They are asking drivers to switch off their engines when parked for more than a minute, to help improve local air quality.

To find out more about air quality and idling, please visit <http://walthamforest.gov.uk/content/air-quality>

For more information:

Twitter: @wfcouncil

Tweet: #airquality | #NoIdling



Image 1: Idling is Fuelish campaign. Source: Waltham Forest.



Image 2: Mime artist used by Richmond Council to raise idling awareness. Source: NAQTS.

### 3.0 Case Studies

#### Case Study 1: Oxford City Council Anti-Idling air quality campaign in Schools

This Council ran an Anti-Idling Campaign in partnership with Oxford Friends of the Earth. This campaign aimed to educate people on air pollution and promote clean travel behaviours for parents of school children. The campaign outlined the dangers of air pollution and advised people to turn off their engines when stationary. It also encouraged the adoption of sustainable travel behaviours, such as walking, cycling or using public transport.

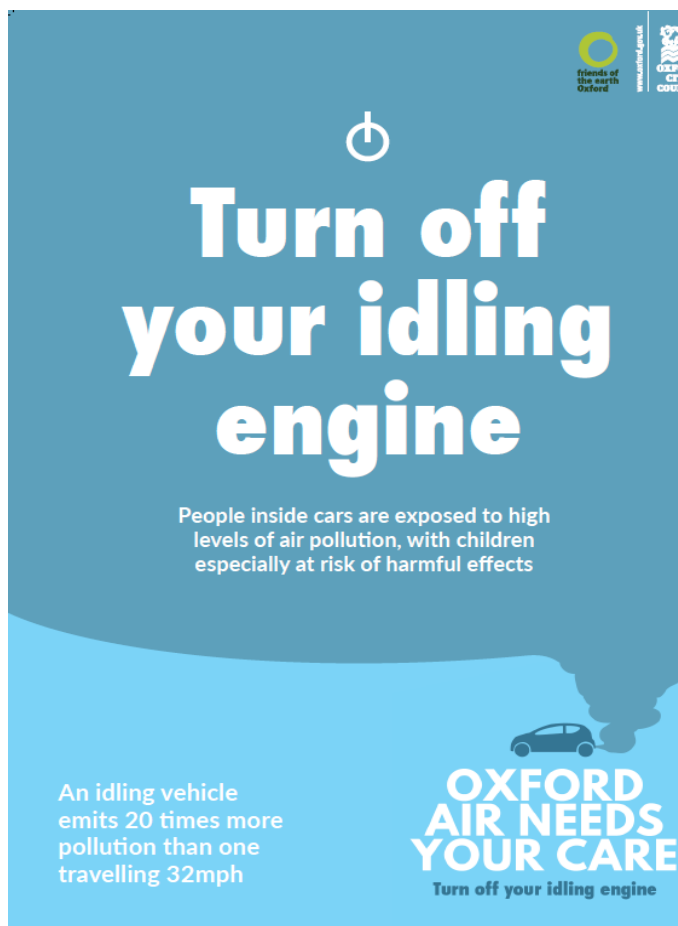


Image 3: Idling Poster by Oxford City Council

#### Case Study 2: Tower Hamlets #BreatheClean campaign

Under this Council's #BreatheClean campaign, a new policy was introduced to implement the £20 fine for vehicle idling. This formed part of the anti-idling enforcement, which aimed to tackle air pollution in the area. This is following air pollution had been linked to 7.4% of all deaths in the area.

#### Case Study 3: Reading Borough Council and Idling is Fuelish Event

Reading Council have issued zero fines and have stated that, "we prefer to use education as a way of persuading people to change their behaviour."

This Council has launched a public information campaign and aim to target vehicle idling in hotspot areas of the borough.

To target idling, anti-idling signs will be put up in various locations. Any repeat offenders will receive £20 fixed penalty notices.

The Council are currently recruiting volunteers, known as the local Air Quality Champions, who will be trained to be persuasive in delivering a message to other members of the public about the dangers of idling. The volunteers will be used to dispel idling myths about air pollution and will be encouraged to invite those idling to join the campaign by switching off their engines. Reading Borough Council have reported at 75% success rate of using this bottom up, on the ground movement.

Each Air Quality Champion will be given a hi-vis vest during the event and will be told to go to specific zones to find drivers idling and ask them to switch off. It would be interesting to contact this Council after the event to assess how successful this education and behaviour change campaign was.

#### Case Study 4: London Borough of Southwark (apart of Idling Action London)

This authority rolled out council parking enforcement officers in January 2018, who would be issuing an £80 Penalty Charge Notice to cars, buses, taxis and HGV drivers who would refuse to switch off their engines when asked. They have also, like Reading Borough Council, encouraged voluntary anti-idling patrols known as 'idling hotspots' to raise driver awareness of health risks of engine idling. They found drivers were very willing to comply with switching off their engine when informed on the fine.

#### 4.0 Other Local Authorities work on Anti Idling

Local Authority	Designate specific 'No Idling Zones'	Use of Fixed Penalty Notice Powers	Promotional material or campaigns	Timing
Croydon Borough Council (as a part of Idling Action London)	No	First London borough to use powers in 2005  Continued to carry out awareness training and enforcement patrols (targeting sensitive areas such as bus stands and schools)	Idling vehicle signs outside of 20 borough schools  Holds the 'Clean air 4 Croydon' Schools Project each year targeting 5 schools	Has used enforcement powers since 2005
Glasgow	No	Yes, however in the majority of cases drivers co-operate when requested to switch their engine off and advice is given. Few FPNs are issued	There has been an annual publicity campaign by the Scottish Government to raise awareness with the general public	
London Borough of Tower Hamlets	Borough wide enforcement	Publicised that they will now use FPNs as publicised in July 2018	Uses the Anti-Idling campaign of London	July 2018
Norwich City Council	Focussing on areas of particular concern in the city centre where buses, taxis and commercial vehicles are idling for extending periods of time	Intended to start using in September 2018	N/A	September 2018

#### 5.0 Department of Transport Recommendations on Enforcement:

The Department of Transport have outlined guidance on enforcing an idling fine. It is recommended that local authorities should ensure motorists know of the Fixed Penalty Notices which can be issued to them if they leave their vehicle idling whilst parked. These should be issued only to uncooperative motorists, but generally should be a last resort. They have suggested local press, radio, poster campaigns and publicity events, in particular display that Idling is an offence in garages and petrol stations. Publicity should make clear:

1. The need to switch off engines when vehicles are parked (how this benefits health)
2. The penalties for failing to comply.

## 6.0 Improving local awareness

By displaying signs locally that warn of the dangers and legality of idling, may be a viable option, particularly in central idling locations in the District (an example of an anti-idling sign can be seen in Image 4). This may include bus stops along the Parade in Leamington Spa, or outside the schools located in the central areas of Warwick Town and Kenilworth.

This could be run in conjunction with National Clean Air Day which takes place on the 21<sup>st</sup> June every year. The potential campaigns which could be run below have been sourced from other Council's campaigns and from NICE.

### Potential Campaign/initiative options:

<p><b>SWITCH OFF &amp; SWITCH TO</b></p> <p>SWITCH OFF your car when waiting for more than 1 minute.</p> <p>SWITCH TO:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• cycling and walking for local trips</li><li>• bus or train for longer journeys.</li></ul>	<p><i>Guidance by the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) from June 2017</i></p> <p>The Council should introduce by-laws and other action to support 'no vehicle idling' areas, particularly in areas where vulnerable groups congregate (outside schools, hospitals, care homes and even bus stops). Also in areas where exposure to road-traffic related air pollution is higher than the average, for example on Bath Street in Leamington.</p>
<p><i>Richmond's Idle Free Borough: Mime Artist</i></p> <p>In January 2019, Richmond Council used a creative awareness method to bring awareness to the launch of the Council's "Idle-free borough campaign." Using a mime artist with signs, the local councillors conveyed the damaging effects of idling. This can be found on page 5</p>	<p><i>Idling is Fuelish Campaign:</i></p> <p>By training Air Quality Champions, boroughs across London have been empowering volunteers to put a stop to idling. Waltham Forest and Reading Borough Council have followed this campaign. The infographics used by Waltham can be found on page 5.</p>
<p><i>Portsmouth's Cough, Cough Engine Off</i></p> <p>Portsmouth City Council have positioned slogans saying "Cough, Cough Engine Off" across the Air Quality Management Areas (AQMA) of the city. They also have been sharing myth-busting facts via the council's social media to engage a wider audience.</p>	

### Funding Available:

Currently there is no funding available from the central government, as the Clean Air funding does not cover tackling vehicle idling. Although this is the case now, the Government's intention of expanding the scope of the funding may allow for vehicle idling enforcement to be covered.

### Key Information to convey:

- Being inside an idling car, exposes you to high levels of air pollution and its harmful effects.
- An idling vehicle emits 20 times more pollution than one travelling 32 mph.
- For each 1 liter of fuel used by a diesel engine, 2.64 kg of CO<sub>2</sub> is released to the atmosphere



*Image 4: Signage used in Kensington and Chelsea boroughs of London*

### 6.0 Overall Recommendations

For Warwick District Council, to have enforcement officers on the street may prove ineffective, particularly given the lack of success this has had in other Councils. A viable option for the Council, would be to produce a targeted awareness campaign to effect behaviour change in the District residents. Another few sustainable options would be to install Anti-Idling signage in hotspot/sensitive areas, press releases on Clean Air Day or even making certain areas of the District Idle-Free Zones. The option of utilising local volunteers to promote anti-idling and for educational purposes may also be beneficial for the District. Even running a similar campaign like London has done for 1 month every year (March 2018 and March 2019), which allows trained volunteers to support anti-vehicle idling, may be another option. Despite the overall lack of success of implementing anti-idling fines, Warwick District Council should form new policies which allows the District to adopt delegated powers to use Fixed Penalty Notices (Under the Traffic Regulations 2002).