

Extract from the minutes of the Council meeting on 21 October 2015

95(vi) Cleaning Up Colchester's Air

Ron Levy of Colchester Retail Business Association (CORBA) addressed Council pursuant to the provisions of Council Procedure Rule 6(5) to stress that a solution based on a congestion charge would not work. This would only divert traffic onto perimeter roads and would have a devastating impact on the town centre economy. CORBA had put forward a solution to reduce traffic on the High Street at low cost to the Essex County Council Portfolio Holder at a traffic symposium. Despite being welcomed it had not been implemented. He suggested that Councillor Jowers and Bentley should help CORBA present its proposals to the new Portfolio Holder at Essex County Council and the motion should be withdrawn until the proposals had been trialled.

It was proposed by Councillor Hayes that:-

This Council:

(1) Condemns the Government for inaction in failing to implement Article 13 of the European Union Directive 2008/50/EC on ambient air quality and cleaner air, which requires the Government to ensure compliance throughout the UK with air pollution limits for concentrations of nitrogen oxides and other toxic gases formed during combustion which reach significant levels in areas of high motor vehicle traffic such as Colchester town centre.

(2) Congratulates the environmental lawyers Client Earth for winning a landmark case against the Government, resulting in an order of the UK's Supreme Court requiring ministers to present a plan to tackle the problem.

(3) Condemns the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) for publishing a plan for consultation on 12 September 2015 which, in relation to the Borough of Colchester, was based on out of date and incomplete data, without DEFRA having asked for this Council's recent data and research.

(4) Notes with great concern the new calculation by DEFRA officials, based on World Health Organisation information, that the number of premature deaths in this country caused annually by nitrogen oxide gases is 23,500, in addition to 29,000 premature deaths from particulate pollution.

(5) Fears that the harm to public health from pollution in Colchester's Air Quality Management Areas has been underestimated.

(6) Calls on the Government to explain why it failed to crack down on defeat devices in motor vehicles which cheated emissions tests, as in the case of Volkswagen, despite the European Commission outlawing such devices as long ago as 2007, and to carry out its own vehicle type approval tests based on real driving emissions instead of under laboratory conditions as a matter of urgency.

B. This Council believes that in the absence of political will in Westminster to tackle the problems from fossil fuel-based motor vehicle technologies, local government needs to take action to protect public health from polluted air in this Borough, of which virtually the sole source is vehicle exhaust emissions.

C. This Council therefore, as the authority responsible for the Borough's Local Air Quality Action Plan, in order to encourage transition to zero or ultra low emission forms of transport in Colchester's Air Quality Management Areas:

(1) Calls on Essex County Council as the authority responsible for highways and for public health across Essex to assist by phasing in one or more Low Emission Zones in appropriate streets in Colchester's Air Quality Management Areas (including but not limited to the High Street and Brook Street), and monitoring and regulating them, as in comparable schemes elsewhere, by number plate recognition technology to identify the vehicle type and, by means of either a road pricing system on the polluter pays principle or, if so advised, a system of fines, to discourage persons driving polluting vehicles, whether cars, vans, trucks, buses or coaches, from entering those streets, with appropriate exemptions for special cases such as blue badge holders or persons requiring local access.

(2) Declares its support for all those, whether public authorities or private sector individuals or organisations, who will install more electric vehicle charging points across the Borough, whether in new residential or commercial developments, off-street car parks or on-street bays, so as to help create the necessary infrastructure for the transition to zero emission transport.

As the motion related to an executive matter, it stood referred to Cabinet.

It was *RESOLVED* that Council Procedure Rule 11(2) be suspended to allow Council to debate the motion and inform Cabinet of its view.

On being put to the vote, the motion was lost (seventeen voted in favour, twenty one voted against).