Committee(s): Port Health and Environmental Services Committee	**Dated:** 3/11/2026
Subject: Update on action to deal with unnecessary engine idling	**Public report:** For Information
This proposal: • **Delivers Corporate Plan 2024-29 outcomes** • **Provides statutory duties**	Leading Sustainable Environment. Providing Excellent Services.
Does this proposal require extra revenue and/or capital spending?	No
If so, how much?	N/A
What is the source of Funding?	N/A
Has this Funding Source been agreed with the Chamberlain's Department?	N/A
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Summary

Leaving a parked vehicle's engine running causes unnecessary air and noise pollution. The City Corporation uses a range of proactive and reactive measures to discourage unnecessary engine idling.

Civil Enforcement Officers can issue Penalty Charge Notices to drivers who leave engines idling while parked. Data collated over a six-month period in 2026 demonstrates a high compliance rate with 3,700 observations, 21 warning notices and 3 Penalty Charge Notices issued.

The City Corporation delivers a proportionate approach to achieving the outcome of no engine idling. Utilising available resources, legislation and guidance to encourage behaviour change in the long term by raising awareness of the health impacts. Driver engagement continues to be a very effective tool.

Recommendation

Members are asked to:

- Note the contents of this report.

Main Report

Background

1. The City Corporation has a statutory duty to assist the Mayor of London and the UK government in taking action to reduce levels of air pollution so that concentrations of pollutants do not exceed set limits. The City Corporation also has a responsibility to improve public health.

2. The City of London Air Quality Strategy 2025 – 2030 outlines action that will be taken to fulfil the City Corporation's statutory responsibility for Local Air Quality Management, and for reducing the health impact of air pollution on residents and workers. One of the actions within the strategy is to reduce the amount of vehicle engine idling as it is an unnecessary source of local air pollution. Emissions from stationary vehicles are only a small contributor to overall levels of air pollution, but they can cause discomfort to people in the immediate vicinity, particularly where they occur in sensitive areas such as near schools and residential areas.

3. The City's Transport Strategy 2024 sets out the City's future transport vision, aims and outcomes. This includes a future where the air and streets are cleaner and quieter, by introducing measures to tackle transport related air and noise pollution.

Current action being taken

4. The Environment Department takes the following proactive steps to deal with unnecessary vehicle engine idling

    - Officers speak to drivers who leave engines idling as they walk around the City on other business;
    - Temporary A-boards and permanent lamppost signs have been erected in 'hotspot' areas;
    - A no vehicle idling policy is built into City Corporation contracts;
    - Close liaison with construction and demolition companies is undertaken to ensure that vehicles waiting to access sites don't leave engines idling. The requirement to switch engines off has been incorporated into the City Code of Practice for Construction and Deconstruction;
    - The Air Quality Team carries out intelligence led targeted idling patrols to directly engage with drivers;
    - The facility to report engine idling has been added to the Report A Problem App;
    - Letters are sent to companies whose drivers leave engines idling in the Square Mile
    - The Air Quality Team is part of a London-wide idling action programme funded by the Mayor of London; and
    - A number of successful campaigns and action days have been delivered including schools, local businesses, and residents.

5. In addition to the proactive action, the City of London implemented a City wide Traffic Management Order (TMO) under the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984. The TMO turns idling into a strict civil traffic contravention. Civil Enforcement Officers can issue Penalty Charge Notices (PCNs) to drivers who do not turn engines off when parked. The PCN is £160 reduced to £80 if paid within 14 days. If a vehicle is found idling, the CEO will issue a warning notice which is held on record against the vehicle registration. Any subsequent unnecessary idling observation of the same vehicle results in a PCN being issued without further warning.

6. CEOs collated data over a six-month period in 2026 to assess the scale of unnecessary engine idling. During this time 3,700 observations were recorded. More than 85% of vehicles observed already had their engines switched off. Of the remaining drivers, 95.7% of them moved on or switched off their engines when approached. In total, 21 warning notices and three PCNs were issued. The very low number of PCNs issued, as a proportion of the observations, is an indication of the effective engagement that is taking place between the CEO and the driver.

7. The Department for Transport has issued guidance for local authorities regarding idling engine enforcement action[1]. The guidance says: 'The scheme is a very simple one – to encourage all drivers to switch off their vehicle engines when parked for more than a minute or two.' The guidance also states that 'action should be purely advisory in the vast majority of cases'. It also lists situations where vehicles are permitted to be stationary with the engine running:

    - where a vehicle is stationary due to traffic – e.g. when vehicles are queuing at traffic lights;
    - where an engine is being run so that a defect can be traced and rectified;
    - where machinery on a vehicle requires the engine to be running – e.g. where the engine powers refrigeration equipment or the compaction equipment in a refuse vehicle;
    - where a vehicle is propelled by gas produced by the functioning of plant carried on the vehicle.

8. The guidance encourages careful consideration of the level of enforcement action to take, including the consideration of mitigating circumstances for leaving an engine running, such as:

    - on a cold day at a taxi rank;
    - if the driver is elderly to keep warm;
    - if the vehicle is a recovery vehicle carrying out a recovery and needing to run lights off the engine; or
    - to help defrost a windscreen in very cold weather.

[1] DfT Guidance issued under Section 88 of the Environment Act 1995: Local Authority Powers to Require Drivers to Switch Off Engines when Parked

Corporate & Strategic Implications

9. Tackling unnecessary engine idling supports the following Corporate Plan Outcomes:

    - Leading Sustainable Environment
    - Providing Excellent Services

Financial implications

10. None

Resource implications

11. None

Legal implications

12. Enforcement is undertaken within the relevant statutory framework and guidance.

Risk implications

13. Air quality is listed as a departmental risk. Department risks are reviewed quarterly by the Environment Department Senior Leadership Team. Quarterly risk management update reports are presented to the PHES Committee.

Equalities implications

14. Action to reduce air and noise pollution has a positive impact on all sections of the population. In terms of air quality, the benefit is greatest for children and the elderly as they are more susceptible to the health impacts of air pollution. There is also a positive impact on individuals whose lives are affected by asthma and other respiratory and/or cardiovascular conditions.

Climate implications

15. Action to tackle unnecessary engine idling has a positive impact on the climate through the reduction of carbon emissions, although the overall impact is expected to be limited.

Security implications

16. None

Conclusion

17. The City Corporation is taking a wide range of action to deal with unnecessary engine idling. Enforcement powers are available, but the evidence indicates that advisory engagement generally secures compliance, and formal penalties are rarely required.

18. Data collected over six months in 2026 show a high level of compliance: of 3,700 observations, only 21 led to warning notices and three to Penalty Charge Notices.

Background Papers

- Committee Report: New approach to address vehicle idling, PHES and P&T Committees March 2020
- Committee report: Coordinated action to deal with unnecessary vehicle engine idling, PHES & P&T Committees May 2017
- City of London's Air Quality Strategy 2025 – 2030
- City of London's Transport Strategy 2024

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