

## Diesel Premium

I am unable to attend the Call-in on 14 December but I hope that members of the Overview and Scrutiny Commission can consider these comments:

**In summary, a much lower surcharge would still grab attention; properly announced, a delayed introduction of the surcharge would still result in a marked shift from diesel. The surcharge schedule as proposed is disproportionate and unfair. It will be seen as a purely revenue-raising measure penalising captive residents. Cabinet should review their decision.**

### 1. Amount and speed of introduction of the surcharge

As a member of the Sustainable Communities Scrutiny Panel I took part in the pre-decision scrutiny of an emissions levy on 7 September. The discussion revolved around a paper to cabinet suggesting a diesel surcharge of £50 to £100. The cabinet decision is for a surcharge, in just a few months' time, pitched almost at the top of this range and then increasing significantly.

Although cabinet was under no obligation to follow Panel advice, such a draconian introduction to the levy is not consistent with the Scrutiny Panel's discussion, pitched as it was around a potential £50 surcharge. Nor does it reflect the Panel's consensus over timing: *"members expressed their concern about residents not being given sufficient notice (of at least a year) so they have a chance to change their behaviour before the levy is imposed."* (Item 6 in the minutes.)

### 2. Changing behaviour and maintaining fairness

Cabinet has the opportunity to signal very clearly that an emissions surcharge will be introduced in the future. Vehicle owners can and will adapt. (This is precisely the approach announced on 2 December by the mayors of Paris, Mexico City, Madrid and Athens when they committed to excluding all diesel-powered cars and trucks by 2025.)

Instead, the effect of the Cabinet decision would be to punish owners of diesel vehicles. But in many cases their decision to purchase a diesel car was encouraged by government policy as the consultants' report to cabinet noted: *"The diesel fleet was generally newer, with the highest number of Euro 5 vehicles (from 2011) which reflects the recent shift to purchase diesels. The reasons for this may be due to the fact that diesel vehicles have lower CO2 emissions and have been incentivised by the government through schemes such as discounted car tax to reflect this."* (Report page 8.)

What impact might the announcement of a future surcharge have? Although the report conducted several hypothetical calculations, strangely it did not consider the likely impact that announcing a future surcharge might have on residents' car purchases. Presumably this was excluded from the consultants' remit but **such professional advice should have been obtained so that this key alternative could have been properly considered.**

*Cllr John Sargeant*

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