

Full Council 14th September 2022

Conservative Group Non-strategic theme motion ULEZ

Council notes that on 4th March the Mayor of London announced his plan to expand the Ultra-Low Emission Zone (ULEZ) from its current boundary of the North and South Circulars to cover almost all of Greater London, including Merton. These plans would see the ULEZ expanded by 29th August 2023.

Council notes that, whilst the ULEZ was originally introduced covering the same area and with the same boundaries as the Congestion Charge Zone, on 25th October 2021 it was expanded by 18 times its original size to its current boundaries. Council therefore notes that this significant change took place less than a year ago and that the ramifications have yet to be fully assessed.

Council notes that due to the limited public transport options in Merton, many residents and families need access to a car to live their daily lives and to travel to work. TfL figures show that 64 per cent of Merton households own a car and ONS figures show that 60 per cent of London households earning between £23,192 and £29,546 own a vehicle.

Council notes that expanding the ULEZ to Merton will financially burden many residents whose vehicles do not meet the ULEZ standard with a daily charge of £12.50 every time they drive their car. For families that drive every day this will mean additional costs of over £4,500.00 per year. This charge will also apply to family members and carers driving into London, thereby creating an additional burden for families, the elderly and those in care.

Therefore, Council opposes measures to push up the cost of living in Merton by imposing taxes and charges on Merton residents who rely on motor vehicles without providing them with realistic alternatives. Council notes that the Mayor of London has set aside almost £400 million towards expanding the ULEZ and related projects, and suggests this money would be better spent on such measures as:

- a faster upgrade to a zero-emission bus fleet;
- increasing the roll out of rapid charging points.
- encouraging more freight consolidation schemes.
- bringing back the previous Boiler Cashback Scheme to encourage Londoners to upgrade their boilers to reduce household emissions
- financing a generous scrappage scheme to support Londoners in replacing their vehicles

Furthermore, council recognises that the administration has:

- Failed to introduce low emission bus zones in the town centres as specified by a Conservative motion passed in February 2019;

- Failed to provide any dates and times of meetings with TfL regarding low emission bus zones as was promised by Cabinet Members in the September 2020 and February 2021 meetings of the council;
- Failed to provide details of discussions with TfL to reduce the financial burden of the ULEZ on Merton residents;
- Imposed taxes on parked cars which has had no meaningful reduction on air pollution;
- Failed to embrace technology led solutions to the pollution crisis which have been implemented by other London boroughs notably LB Wandsworth and LB Waltham Forest.

Therefore, council calls upon the Leader of the Council to:

- Ensure that his administration makes air quality a priority by implementing low emission bus zones in the town centres, with a quarterly report being provided to the Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel detailing the steps that have been taken and listing the dates of meetings with TfL;
- Writes to the Mayor of London to demand that he abandons his plans to harm Merton's families and businesses by expanding the ULEZ to Merton and to use the £400 million he has set aside for it on fairer and more effective ways of improving London's air quality.

Cllr Eleanor Cox

Cllr Michael Paterson

Cllr Nick McLean