

Motion: Improve Safety, Environmental Health, and Equality for Children, Pupils, and Residents in Broadclyst

Proposed by:

Cllr Liz Straw

Date:

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Motion:

This Council recognises the urgent need to address the safety, environmental, and equality impacts associated with the daily school run in Parish. The congestion, unsafe conditions, and environmental degradation caused by high levels of vehicle traffic during school drop-off and pick-up times are jeopardising the safety of children, the quality of life for residents, and the sustainability of the Parish environment.

1. Safety and Environmental Concerns:

a. Children and School Pupils:

Hundreds of children travelling to and from the two Primary Schools and the Senior School are exposed to dangerous road conditions, with vehicles manoeuvring unpredictably as children dodge, cycle, and scoot through traffic. This presents a clear and immediate threat to their physical safety.

b. Local Residents:

The streets at the heart of the communities are frequently gridlocked, creating hazardous conditions for pedestrians and residents alike. There are also significant concerns that emergency services may be unable to access emergencies during peak school times.

c. Environmental Impact of the School Run:

The sheer volume of vehicles during the school run has a detrimental impact on air quality, contributing to increased carbon emissions, particulate matter, and harmful nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) levels. Prolonged idling outside the school gates exacerbates these issues, releasing toxins that particularly affect children and the elderly, who are more vulnerable to respiratory conditions such as asthma.

The environmental impact of the school run is not limited to air quality but also contributes to noise pollution and the over-reliance on private car use, which

undermines efforts to promote sustainable and active travel. The UK Committee on Climate Change has emphasised the urgent need to reduce emissions from transport, which remains one of the highest contributors to the country's carbon footprint. Reducing car dependency for short school trips could be a powerful step in Broadclyst Parish's journey toward a more sustainable, low-emission community.

d. Broader Environmental Initiatives:

In alignment with initiatives such as *School Streets* and *Modeshift STARS*, the Council will look to propose ways to incentivise parents to engage in car-sharing, walking, cycling, or using public transport. Similar campaigns have demonstrated significant reductions in air pollution, and by working together with the Schools, we can substantially decrease vehicle congestion and its associated environmental harms.

2. Immediate Actions:

a. School Engagement:

The Council will appoint a link councillor for each school to work closely with them to update its travel plan, emphasising sustainable and safe travel options. The Chair of the Council will write to the schools' governing bodies to ask them to appoint a school governor who will collaborate with the link councillor to ensure that the concerns of pupils, parents, and the wider community are addressed.

b. Road Safety and Environmental Campaign:

The Council will authorise the link councillors to develop and launch a road safety and environmental awareness campaign targeting both safe driving and environmental impacts, with oversight from the Clerk and utilising the existing budget provision for safer streets. This will include:

- Flyers, posters, and social media campaigns to encourage responsible parking, discourage idling, and promote sustainable travel options.
- Educational videos featuring child-friendly characters such as Buddy cardboard cars to engage children and their families in promoting safer and greener travel.
- Partnerships with environmental organisations such as *Mums for Lungs* to highlight the dangers of vehicle idling near schools.

c. Infrastructure Improvements:

The Council will authorise the link councillors and others to assess the feasibility of implementing pedestrian-friendly zones, restricted parking areas, and potentially creating car-free zones during peak school hours to reduce emissions and protect children and residents and make a formal proposal to the council for funding in due course.

3. Equality Impact Statement:

The council has a duty of care to provide services and projects that meet the equality needs of all residents and visitors to the Parish. This statement outlines how this motion meets these requirements.

a. Vulnerable Populations:

The increased vehicle traffic and associated safety risks disproportionately impact vulnerable groups, including children, older adults, people with disabilities, and those with respiratory illnesses. Vehicle congestion not only creates physical barriers but also exacerbates health inequalities. People with existing health conditions, such as asthma, are more sensitive to air pollution, particularly the NO₂ emitted by idling cars, and are at greater risk of long-term health complications.

b. Disability Access:

The inappropriate parking practices during the school run, including the misuse of disabled parking spaces and parking on pavements, create significant obstacles for residents with mobility impairments. Pavement parking, in particular, blocks access for wheelchair users, people with visual impairments, and parents with pushchairs. The YouGov poll commissioned by Living Streets found that 62% of adults over 65 in England were worried about pavement obstructions, and disabled individuals are often the hardest hit. Addressing these obstructions is essential for maintaining their independence and mobility.

c. Children's Health and Well-being:

Children are disproportionately affected by the high levels of air pollution around schools. Research has shown that children exposed to higher levels of air pollution are more likely to develop respiratory problems, including asthma, and suffer from reduced lung capacity. Studies from UNICEF have revealed that children are often exposed to pollution levels up to 30% higher than adults because they are closer to exhaust pipes. Reducing vehicle use and idling around the school will directly benefit the health and well-being of the youngest members of our community.

4. Sustainable Travel and Broader Benefits:

The Council has in the past declared its support for work on a climate emergency, this motion is part of the initiatives to make travel into the parish more sustainable.

Encouraging walking, cycling, and the use of public transport not only improves safety but also supports broader environmental and public health goals. By promoting active travel, we can reduce the village's overall carbon footprint, improve air quality, and contribute to a healthier, more connected community. The Council aims to make Broadclyst a model of how small villages can lead the way in addressing climate change, improving public health, and ensuring equality for all residents.

Conclusion:

The Council is urged to approve this motion and work collaboratively with the local Schools, residents, environmental bodies, and national campaigns to enhance the safety, environmental health, and equality of the Parish.