

GREATER LONDON AUTHORITY

REQUEST FOR MAYORAL DECISION – MD3263

School Filter Project expenditure

Executive summary:

The Mayor has identified improving air quality as one of his key priorities, given its impact on public health and inequality.

While the Mayor has delivered transformational work to improve outdoor air quality, the issue of indoor air quality remains important and under-addressed, especially for vulnerable groups such as young children. The Mayor's work on air quality is bringing London within legal air-quality limits; however, London's children continue to attend school in areas where air quality does not meet the separate World Health Organization guidelines for the pollutant PM_{2.5}.

The Mayor's school and nursery audit programme identified that indoor air-quality filters could be an effective way to improve air quality in London's schools. In so doing, they could help protect the health of pupils, especially those who are particularly vulnerable to the effects of poor air quality.

The Mayor announced in February 2024 that £2.7m of funding would be committed through the 2024-25 Capital programme to deliver the School Filter Project. This aims to deliver indoor air-quality filters across approximately 200 of London's most polluted schools.

This decision seeks approval for expenditure against the budget committed to deliver the Schools Filter Project in 2024-25 (£1m) and 2025-26 (£1.7m). Outputs from the project will include installation and ongoing maintenance of the filters, and an awareness-raising campaign in the schools selected to receive them, which will improve understanding of outdoor and indoor air quality. Expenditure will also cover monitoring, evaluation and reporting around the project, which may inform further rollout of filters to other schools.

Decision:

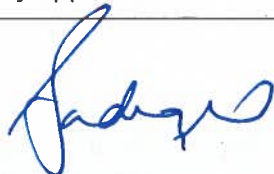
That the Mayor approves expenditure of £2.7m to deliver the School Filters Project in 2024-25 and 2025-26, with an approximate spend of £1m in 2024-25 and £1.7m in 2025-26.

Mayor of London

I confirm that I do not have any disclosable pecuniary interests in the proposed decision and take the decision in compliance with the Code of Conduct for elected Members of the Authority.

The above request has my approval.

Signature:



Date:

12/6/24

PART I – NON-CONFIDENTIAL FACTS AND ADVICE TO THE MAYOR

Decision required – supporting report

1. Introduction and background

- 1.1. Poor air quality remains the greatest environmental risk to public health in the UK, and primary school children are one of the demographics most vulnerable to the effects of poor air quality. It can stunt the growth of their lungs, causing significant health problems in later life.
- 1.2. Through his London Environment Strategy, the Mayor has delivered a series of ambitious policies and programmes to improve air quality. These include London-wide interventions such as the ULEZ, and the electrification of the bus and taxi fleet. He is also delivering projects to improve air quality around schools through the rollout of over 400 school streets and funding borough-led projects to reduce the impact of pollution on pupils through the Mayor’s Air Quality Fund. These measures have helped cut the number of educational establishments with illegal levels of nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) pollution by 94 per cent – from 793 schools in 2016 to 50 in 2019 (the most recent year for which data is available).
- 1.3. Children are not only exposed to pollution outdoors, however. Indoor air quality is increasingly considered a critical but under-addressed issue. Its relative importance continues to increase as outdoor air quality improves. The Chief Medical Officer’s Annual Report for 2022 stressed this importance, and highlighted that far more work and research is needed to tackle air quality in buildings where people spend over 80 per cent of their time.¹
- 1.4. The current World Health Organization (WHO) “safe” annual average guideline for PM_{2.5} (considered the pollutant of greatest concern in London) is 5ug/m³. Modelling for 2019 highlighted that that no primary school in London met this concentration: the average was 10.7ug/m³.² Modelling also indicates that no primary school is estimated to meet the WHO guideline in 2030 with an average of 8.8ug/m³.
- 1.5. The Mayor remains committed to meeting WHO guidelines (which apply indoors for PM_{2.5}) and protecting the health of young Londoners.
- 1.6. To tackle the challenge of air quality at schools, the Mayor commissioned school and nursery audit programme. These audits, conducted between 2017 and 2020, identified that indoor air-quality filters could be a cost-effective intervention to improve air quality in classrooms and help protect the health of pupils.
- 1.7. In early 2024, the Mayor commenced a research project to identify the most cost-effective types of filters for reducing concentrations of PM_{2.5} in classrooms. This work was approved as part of Mayoral Decision (MD) 3136.
- 1.8. In February 2024, the Mayor announced that £2.7m of funding would be committed through the 2024-25 Capital budget to deliver a School Filter Project. This aims to deliver cost-effective indoor air-quality filters (informed by the results of the research project, due to conclude in summer 2024) across approximately 200 primary schools in London.³

2. Objectives and expected outcomes

- 2.1. This project will support the Mayor’s overall ambition to reduce the impact of poor air quality on the health of Londoners; and will contribute towards supporting and empowering London and its

¹ Department of Health and Social Care, [Chief Medical Officer’s annual report 2022: air pollution](#), 8 December 2022

² This data is from the latest version of the [London Atmospheric Emissions Inventory](#) (2019).

³ GLA, [Cleaner air for London’s children as air filters to be rolled out to first 200 schools in the capital in ground-breaking initiative](#), 20 February 2024

communities, particularly the most disadvantaged and those in priority locations, to reduce their exposure to poor air quality.

- 2.2. The project also contributes towards the aims of the Mayor's Health Inequalities Strategy in helping ensure that every child has a healthy start in life, no matter where they live or which school they go to. It will also action the recommendations of the Chief Medical Officer's 2022 report by addressing indoor air quality.
- 2.3. This project will be delivered over 2024-25 and 2025-26, and will include the following elements:
 - rollout of cost-effective filters to classrooms in approximately 200 primary schools in London (approximately 11 per cent of all primary schools in London), and maintenance of these filters
 - education in schools around the filters and air pollution more broadly
 - monitoring, evaluation and reporting, including provision of air-quality monitors to some classrooms
 - a final report providing commentary on the potential for further rollout of filters to more schools.
- 2.4. The filters chosen are expected to reduce concentrations of PM_{2.5} in classrooms, and result in improved health outcomes for pupils.
- 2.5. The filtration units will require ongoing educational support and engagement, as well as annual maintenance and filter changes. Officers hope to provide this support to the schools for five years so that they get best use of the equipment.
- 2.6. Pending the results of monitoring and evaluation, as well as any lessons learnt during its delivery, this project could be rolled out to further schools in London once it concludes.
- 2.7. If the evaluation concludes that the project should not be rolled out further, or not be extended, we have a plan in place to manage this and for exiting the project in a way that schools are supported, and risks managed (please see risk assessment for further details).

3. Equality comments

- 3.1. The GLA and other public authorities must have due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation; and to advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations, between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not, under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010. This involves: having due regard to the need to remove or minimise any disadvantage suffered by those who share a relevant protected characteristic; taking steps to meet the different needs of such people; and encouraging them to participate in public life or in any other activity where their participation is disproportionately low.
- 3.2. The protected characteristics and groups are: age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, sex, religion or belief, sexual orientation and marriage/civil partnership status. Compliance with the Equality Act may involve treating people with a protected characteristic more favourably than those without one. The duty must be exercised with an open mind, and at the time a decision is taken in the exercise of the GLA's functions. Conscientious regard must be had that is appropriate in all circumstances.
- 3.3. In June 2023, the GLA published updated analysis on exposure to air pollution showing not only that there are huge health impacts of pollution, but also that these fall disproportionately on: the most vulnerable; more deprived people (including more deprived primary school children); and Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities. It is also established that those who contribute the least to poor air quality suffer the most from it. This means that improving air quality is fundamentally about tackling social injustice and health inequalities.

3.4. Primary school children are one of the demographics most vulnerable to the impacts of air pollution. This project aims to target reductions in the impact of poor indoor air quality on this demographic and focuses this effort in areas of higher deprivation and poorer air quality across all boroughs and the City of London. As such, it is expected that the project will help alleviate the impact of health inequalities pupils may experience simply because of which school they go to.

4. Other considerations

Key risks and issues

4.1. The key risks and issues, and their mitigating actions, are outlined in the table below.

Risk description	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigating action
Lower school uptake of filters than planned.	Medium	Medium	Officers will engage with schools as early as possible, highlighting the potential benefits of the scheme. Officers will use existing contacts, including those established through the school and nursery audit programme. The successful bidder will be required to install and maintain the filters themselves, reducing barriers for schools in engaging with the scheme. The GLA will pay schools for the expected energy cost of the filters if needed.
Education element is not taken on by many schools due to lack of capacity and time for planning.	Medium	Medium	The successful bidder will deliver assemblies and other elements directly, so as not to burden schools. The content delivered will be developed to align with the school curriculum to encourage schools to take part.
Safety risks of filter infrastructure installed in schools.	Low	Medium	The successful bidder will be required to supply filters that are safe and suitable for the school environment. Installation and maintenance of the filters will be done in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions; and the filters will be installed by a competent person. The successful bidder will be required to create and maintain a risk assessment for each school. The filters will also not be on at night.
Storage of filters post-project closedown.	Low	Medium	Officers will ensure that the successful bidder is contractually required to store the filters themselves if schools wish to return them at the end of the project. Officers and the supplier will encourage schools to retain the filters by highlighting their benefits to air quality and the health of pupils and staff.

Links to Mayoral strategic and priorities

4.2. This project will contribute towards delivering the Mayor's London Environment Strategy and Health Inequalities Strategy.

4.3. The project will help deliver on the following London Environment Strategy policies:

- Objective 4.1: "Support and empower London and its communities, particularly the most disadvantaged and those in priority locations, to reduce their exposure to poor air quality." This

project would specifically address proposal 4.1.1.b: “The Mayor will aim to do more to protect London’s young and disadvantaged people by reducing their exposure to poor air quality, including at schools, nurseries, other educational establishments, care homes, and hospitals.”

- Objective 4.3: “Establish and achieve new, tighter air quality targets for a cleaner London by transitioning to a zero emission London by 2050, meeting World Health Organization health-based guidelines for air quality.” (This includes indoor settings, where the WHO guidelines apply.) This project would specifically address proposal 4.3.4: “Work to reduce exposure to indoor air pollutants in the home, schools, workplace and other enclosed spaces.”

4.4. The project will also contribute towards the following objectives of the Mayor’s Health Inequalities Strategy:

- Objective 1.2: “Early years settings and schools nurture the health and wellbeing of children and families, with programmes reaching the most vulnerable.”
- Objective 3.1: “London’s air quality improves, and fewer Londoners are exposed to harmful pollution – especially in priority areas like schools.”

Conflicts of interest

4.5. The officers involved in the drafting or clearance of this form do not have an interest to declare in accordance with the GLA’s policy on registering interests that might, or might be seen to, conflict with this MD. Schools will be selected using a systematic and quantitative process which will not be influenced by the connections of GLA officers to these schools.

5. Financial comments

- 5.1. The Mayor is requested to approve expenditure of up to £2.7m to deliver the School Filters Project across the 2024-25 and 2025-26 financial years.
- 5.2. The majority of the expenditure will be to engage a subcontractor for the provision and installation of Air Quality filters to approximately 200 schools across London as well as support with initial maintenance costs. Further expenditure will be required to support education as well as monitoring, reporting and evaluation work.
- 5.3. The budget to fund this was included within the approved 2024-25 Capital Spending Plan for 2024-25 only. When scoping the project, following the approval of the budget request, it was identified that due to the value of the Air Quality Filters being purchased the expenditure should be accounted for within Revenue rather than Capital. Therefore, as part of the standard GLA quarterly reporting process it will be requested to move the budget from Capital to Revenue to allow for this. It should be noted that this is only possible because the £2.7m Capital budget was originally Revenue funded in the first place.
- 5.4. While the funding for this project was initially assigned only to 2024-25, on scoping the project, following the approval of the budget request, officers have identified that it will not be possible to deliver the full project effectively in one year whilst allowing scope for further engagement and filter replacement. As a result, an underspend of £1.7m is expected for 2024-25 which will be accounted for within the GLA’s quarterly reporting process.
- 5.5. The planned expenditure is outlined in the table below:

Financial year	Estimated total spend
2024-25	£1,000,000
2025-26*	£1,700,000

- 5.6. Note, the £1.7m requested for 2025-26 will need to be requested and approved as part of the 2025-26 budget setting process. To mitigate any risk of the programme not being sufficiently resourced in future years to cover costs following the budget-setting process, any contractual agreements will include the usual break clauses that could potentially be exercised if required.
- 5.7. All relevant budget adjustments including reserve transfers will be made.

6. Legal comments

- 6.1. The foregoing sections of this report indicate that the decisions requested of the Mayor concern the exercise of the Authority's general powers, and fall within the Authority's statutory power to do such things considered to further, or that are facilitative of, or conducive or incidental to, promoting the improvement of the environment in Greater London. In formulating the proposals in respect of which a decision is sought, officers have complied with the Authority's related statutory duties to:
- pay due regard to the principle that there should be equality of opportunity for all people
 - consider how the proposals will promote the improvement of health of persons, health inequalities between persons and to contribute towards the achievement of sustainable development in the United Kingdom
 - consult with appropriate bodies.
- 6.2. In taking the decisions requested, the Mayor must have due regard to the Public Sector Equality Duty; namely the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by the Equality Act 2010; and to advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations, between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic (age; disability; gender reassignment; marriage and civil partnership; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion or belief; sex; sexual orientation) and persons who do not (section 149 of the Equality Act 2010). To this end, the Mayor should have particular regard to section 3 (above) of this report.
- 6.3. The decision seeks approval for expenditure of £2.7m to deliver the School Filters Project in 2024-25 and 2025-26. Officers are reminded to comply with the requirements of the Contracts and Funding Code when they procure services or supplies in furtherance of the project, or when they award grant funding. Furthermore, officers are reminded to put in place appropriate contracts and grant agreements between the GLA and the relevant service providers and/or recipients.

7. Planned delivery approach and next steps

- 7.1. The project will be delivered according to the following timetable:

Activity	Timeline
Procurement launch	Summer 2024
Supplier(s) appointed	Winter 2024
Schools launch	Winter 2024/spring 2025
Project close	Spring 2026

Appendices and supporting papers:

None.

Public access to information

Information in this form (Part 1) is subject to the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FoIA) and will be made available on the GLA website within one working day of approval.

If immediate publication risks compromising the implementation of the decision (for example, to complete a procurement process), it can be deferred until a specific date. Deferral periods should be kept to the shortest length strictly necessary. **Note:** This form (Part 1) will either be published within one working day after it has been approved or on the defer date.

Part 1 – Deferral

Is the publication of Part 1 of this approval to be deferred? YES

If YES, for what reason: To allow time for the procurement process to be completed, and for launch and communications around the project.

Until what date: 17 January 2025

Part 2 – Sensitive information

Only the facts or advice that would be exempt from disclosure under the FoIA should be included in the separate Part 2 form, together with the legal rationale for non-publication.

Is there a part 2 form? NO

ORIGINATING OFFICER DECLARATION:

Drafting officer to confirm the following (✓)

Drafting officer:

George O’Ferrall has drafted this report in accordance with GLA procedures and confirms the following:

✓

Sponsoring Director:

Philip Graham has reviewed the request and is satisfied it is correct and consistent with the Mayor’s plans and priorities.

✓

Mayoral Adviser:

Seb Dance has been consulted about the proposal and agrees the recommendations.

✓

Advice:

The Finance and Legal teams have commented on this proposal.

✓

Mayoral Delivery Board

This decision was agreed by the Mayoral Delivery Board on 3 June 2024.

INTERIM CHIEF FINANCE OFFICER:

I confirm that financial and legal implications have been appropriately considered in the preparation of this report.

Signature:

Simon - Brown

Date:

10/06/2024

CHIEF OF STAFF:

I am satisfied that this is an appropriate request to be submitted to the Mayor.

Signature:

D. Bellamy

Date:

10/06/2024

