


REPORT TO

Economy, Skills, Transport and Environment Scrutiny Board

18 January 2018

Subject:	Air Quality in Sandwell
Cabinet Portfolio:	Councillor Elaine Costigan - Cabinet Member for Public Health and Protection
Director:	Director – Prevention and Protection – Stuart Lackenby
Contribution towards Vision 2030:	
Contact Officer(s):	Margaret Gardiner Group Environmental Health Officer margaret_gardiner@sandwell.gov.uk

DECISION RECOMMENDATIONS

That Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Board:

1. Consider the measures to reduce air pollution in Sandwell described in the draft Air Quality Action Plan (AQAP) 2018 – 2023 and the proposed public consultation process.
2. Recommend the inclusion of any additional measures they wish to be incorporated within the draft AQAP
3. Recommend any additional steps officers should take in conducting public consultation of the draft AQAP

1 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 Cabinet has recently considered the measures to reduce air pollution in Sandwell described in the draft AQAP and agreed that a public consultation exercise be conducted to receive the views of statutory and non-statutory consultees.

- 1.2 Before embarking on the public consultation exercise, the views of Scrutiny Panel are sought regarding the draft AQAP and the proposed consultation process.

2 IMPLICATIONS FOR SANDWELL'S VISION

- 2.1 Ambition 2: "Sandwell is a place where we live healthy lives and live them for longer and where those of us who are vulnerable feel respected and cared for." Poor air quality is known to be a significant factor in premature deaths; the Committee on the Medical Effects of Air Pollutants estimate that particulate emissions and nitrogen dioxide account for nearly 40,000 premature deaths per year in the UK.
- 2.2 Ambition 6: "We have excellent and affordable public transport that connects to tall local centres and to jobs in Birmingham, Wolverhampton, the airport and the wider West Midlands." The AQAP will promote the use of low emissions public transport vehicles on these routes to reduce the exposure of residents to air pollution.
- 2.3 Ambition 7: "We now have many new homes to meet a full range of housing needs in attractive neighbourhoods and close to key transport routes." The AQAP will encourage consideration of air quality issues at the planning stage of new residential developments to ensure that there is no conflict between this ambition and that described in 2.1 above.
- 2.4 Ambition 9: "Sandwell has become a location of choice for industries of the future where the local economy and high performing companies continue to grow." The AQAP will promote the consideration the impact on air quality at the planning stage of industrial developments to ensure there is no conflict between this ambition and that described in 2.1 above.

3 BACKGROUND AND MAIN CONSIDERATIONS

- 3.1 In the past, the main source of air pollution in the UK was the burning of fossil fuels, such as coal, in homes and factories. This produced high levels of smoke and sulphur dioxide, which were usually visible and this has greatly improved since the Clean Air legislation were enacted. Today we have a complex mixture of pollutants, most of which we cannot see. They are a mixture of gases and fine particles, largely resulting from processes of fuel combustion.
- 3.2 They originate from a combination of domestic, commercial, industrial and transport sources. Traffic pollution has become worse and is now the major threat to lung health and contributor to climate impacts. In Sandwell, elevated nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) levels are observed at busy junctions, narrow congested streets and in town centres

- 3.3 Air pollution is associated with adverse health impacts and early deaths. It is recognised as a contributing factor in the onset of heart disease and cancer. Air pollution particularly affects the most vulnerable in society: including children and older people with heart and lung conditions. There is often a strong correlation with equalities issues, because areas with poor air quality are also less affluent. The annual health cost to society of the impacts of particulate matter alone in the UK is estimated to be around £16 billion.
- 3.4 Evidence has emerged that the burden of ambient particulate pollution on health is significant at relatively low concentrations, there is no safe lower limit and that public health benefits will result from any reduction in concentrations. Interventions to reduce levels of particulate pollution require a concerted action by a host of sectors with a vested interest in air quality management (environment, transport, energy, health, housing) at regional, national and international levels.
- 3.5 The significant toll of ill health brought about by traffic-related particulates means that forward-looking and integrated transport policies are critical for the improvement of urban environments. Traffic must be reduced and we must ensure a cleaner and greener element to what remains on the road.
- 3.6 The council has already taken action in 5 key areas to reduce air pollution arising from vehicle emissions, these include:
- Promoting health initiatives that support sustainable transport and behavioural change
 - Reduce congestion and minimise transport emissions through traffic management and highway improvements.
 - Implementation of guidance and policy, working in partnership with key stakeholders to improve air quality outcomes.
 - Improve understanding of pollutant behaviour particularly at hot spot locations.
 - Review the council's impact on air quality through an assessment of its vehicle fleets, taxi licencing and employee vehicle use

4 THE CURRENT POSITION

- 4.1 The aims of the draft action plan 2018 2023 are:
- To reduce the overall health impacts and burdens or poor air quality
 - To achieve the national air quality NO₂ annual mean objective across the Borough in the shortest possible timeframe.
 - To reduce PM₁₀ and PM_{2.5} concentrations in order to protect human health

4.2 Priority 1 - Hot-spot Locations

Hot spots have already been identified for further investigation however; it is intended to develop an air pollution model of the borough to ensure all hot spot locations are identified. These locations will be prioritised and source apportionment undertaken where necessary. Transport planning and traffic infrastructure management will be reviewed at each hot-spot location to identify where additional resource is needed and prepare a programme of works for each zone

4.3 Priority 2 - Sustainable Transport Initiatives

To continue promoting walking, cycling, car sharing and public transport initiatives and to undertake additional health promotion campaigns to increase physical activity and the use of low emission vehicles.

4.4 Priority 3 - Review what impact the council has on air quality and develop a plan to reduce emissions from its activities.

It is intended to carry out a full review of council vehicle fleets, licencing activities and employee vehicle use to understand and prioritise council related air quality initiatives.

4.5 The AQAP outlines how the council will tackle poor air quality within its control. It will continue to work with regional and central government on policies, such as vehicle emission standards, to secure further reductions in vehicle emissions.

5 **CONSULTATION (CUSTOMERS AND OTHER STAKEHOLDERS)**

5.1 In formulating and adopting an air quality action plan the Environment Act 1995 (Schedule 11) requires local authorities to consult the following:

- Environment Agency;
- Highways England;
- The Mayor of London (for London Boroughs only);
- All local authorities neighbouring the local authority in question;
- The County Council (if a District Council);
- Any National Park authority as appropriate;
- Other public authorities as appropriate; and
- Bodies representing local business interests and other organisations as appropriate.

The consultation will also include the local communities and existing neighbourhood groups. A summary leaflet and display material will be produced to raise awareness of the consultation in public places. People wishing to respond to the consultation can do by variety of means, including post, email or completing an on-line survey.

5.2 The views of Scrutiny Board are sought on the draft action plan approved by Cabinet on the 20 October 2017. Board members are asked to consider the following:

5.2.1 Do you agree with the priorities set out in the draft plan and are there any others you feel need to be included?

5.2.2 How do you think the draft action plan can be improved?

5.2.3 What other actions/measures, if any, would you suggest that should be included, which have not been included already within the draft Air Quality Action Plan (see pages 29-35)?

5.2.4 Should any other individuals or groups be consulted regarding the AQAP?

5.2.5 Should any other methods be used to draw the attention of the general public to the draft AQAP and receive their comments?

6 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

6.1 The purpose of conducting a consultation exercise is to give statutory and non-statutory consultees the opportunity to comment on the draft AQAP. It is possible that alternative or additional proposals will emerge from the consultation and these will be considered before the AQAP is finalised.

7 STRATEGIC RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

7.1 The purpose of this report is to recommend conducting a consultation exercise, the cost of which will be met from within the target budget for Regulatory Services.

7.2 Many of the actions described within the AQAP rely on additional funding or will need to be carried out jointly with partner agencies.

7.3 Actions that require changes in policy or significant investment will be the subject of future reports to Cabinet.

8 LEGAL AND GOVERNANCE CONSIDERATIONS

8.1 The Environment Act 1995 (Part IV) requires all local authorities to regularly review and assess air quality within their boundaries. Where pollutant concentrations exceed national objectives, the local authority must declare an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) and produce an action plan detailing how they intend to improve air quality within these areas. The borough was declared as an Air Quality Management Area

(AQMA) on 26 July 2005 due to of the annual mean concentration of NO₂ being exceeded at a number of locations.

- 8.2 The Air Quality Action Plan (AQAP) sets out what action the council will take to improve air quality in Sandwell between 2018 and 2023. This action plan will replace the current one which was adopted in September 2009. The principle aim of the plan is to secure reductions in NO₂ concentrations and comply with the national air quality objective. Although there are no areas where the objective for particulate matter (PM₁₀) has been exceeded, we will continue to work with our partners to secure reductions in concentrations.

9 EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 9.1 A screening assessment has been carried out which indicates that the proposal does not discriminate against any disadvantaged or vulnerable people. A full Impact Assessment is therefore not required.

10 DATA PROTECTION IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 10.1 No personal information will be collected as part of the proposed consultation exercise.
- 10.2 The requirements of the General Data Protection Regulations will be observed in the design and management of any data collection exercises that form part of the final action plan.

11 CRIME AND DISORDER AND RISK ASSESSMENT

- 11.1 There are no crime and disorder implications arising from the recommendations of this report.
- 11.2 The Corporate Risk Management Strategy (CRMS) has been complied with – to identify and assess the significant risks associated with this decision. This includes (but is not limited to) political, legislation, financial, environmental and reputation risks. Based on the information provided, it is the officers' opinion that for the significant risks that have been identified, arrangements are in place to manage and mitigate these effectively. This assessment has identified there are no current "red" risks that need to be reported.

12 SUSTAINABILITY OF PROPOSALS

- 12.1 The draft AQAP which is the subject of this report, when finalised is intended to have a life of five years, but the council is required to conduct an annual review and submit an Annual Status Report to Defra.

13 HEALTH AND WELLBEING IMPLICATIONS (INCLUDING SOCIAL VALUE)

- 13.1 In 2010 the Committee on the Medical Effects of Air Pollutants (COMEAP) estimated that air pollution in the UK resulted in 29,000 premature deaths and an associated loss to the population of 340,000 life-years.
- 13.2 These findings were updated in 2016 in a subsequent report published jointly by the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health (RCPCH) and the Royal College of Physicians (RCP). Whilst the COMEAP report estimated the health impact of particulate emissions, the more recent report accounts for the additional impact of nitrogen dioxide on health and estimated that the mortality burden of air pollution is closer to 40,000 deaths per year.
- 13.3 The implementation of a revised AQAP will contribute to a reduction of premature deaths in Sandwell due to air pollution, currently estimated to be more than 200 per year.

14 IMPACT ON ANY COUNCIL MANAGED PROPERTY OR LAND

- 14.1 There are no immediate implications regarding the council's assets arising from the proposed consultation exercise.
- 14.2 Implementation of actions in the AQAP which are designed to encourage the use of low emissions vehicles may require the installation of electric charging points in council owned car parks and at council buildings.

15 CONCLUSIONS AND SUMMARY OF REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

- 15.1 All local authorities are required to regularly review and assess air quality within their boundaries. Where pollutant concentrations exceed national objectives, the local authority must declare an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) and produce an action plan detailing how they intend to improve air quality within these areas.

15.2 The original AQAP produced in 2009 has been reviewed and this report seeks approval to carry out a public consultation on the revised action plan. This outlines the actions to be delivered between 2018 and 2023 to reduce population exposure to air pollution and improve the health and quality of life for its residents and visitors to the borough.

16 BACKGROUND PAPERS

16.1 These are referenced within the draft AQAP.

17 APPENDICES:

Draft Air Quality Action Plan 2018 – 2023



Stuart Lackenby
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