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| <b>Report to:</b>           | Climate and Environment Advisory Committee<br>11 April 2024                           |
| <b>Lead Cabinet Member:</b> | Cllr Henry Batchelor, Lead Cabinet Member for<br>Environmental Services and Licensing |
| <b>Lead Officer:</b>        | Matthew Axton, Scientific Officer (Air Quality)                                       |

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## Greater Cambridge Air Quality Strategy

### Executive Summary

1. South Cambridgeshire District Council (SCDC) and Cambridge City Council have produced a joint Greater Cambridge Air Quality Strategy (AQS) to cover the period 2024-2029. The principle of undertaking a joint AQS was approved at the Climate and Environment Advisory Committee on the 7 December 2023. This AQS replaces the existing SCDC AQS, approved in February 2022.
2. This report presents the findings of a public consultation on a draft copy of the joint AQS, highlights any changes made following the consultation and presents the final draft strategy proposed for adoption.
3. Cambridge City Council Environment & Scrutiny Committee approved the adoption of the Greater Cambridge AQS at their meeting of the 21 March 2024.

### Recommendations

4. The committee are recommended to:
  - Recommend to the lead cabinet member to adopt the joint Greater Cambridge Air Quality Strategy with Cambridge City Council.

### Background

5. Local authorities are required to monitor key pollutants across their district under the Local Air Quality Management (LAQM) framework. If key pollutants exceed objective levels then an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) must be declared alongside an Air Quality Action Plan (AQAP) outlining how the concentrations of pollutants will be reduced. The SCDC AQMA along the A14 was revoked in January 2022 and levels of pollutants in SCDC were below LAQM targets at relevant receptor locations at all locations monitored in 2023. Cambridge City has also recently revoked its AQMA and all results for 2023 were below UK air quality objectives.
6. The Environment Act 2021 require local authorities that do not have any AQMA or associated action plan to produce an Air Quality Strategy. Local Authorities are expected to be pro-active, not re-active to ensure that good air quality is maintained including how

they will help deliver the national fine Particulate Matter (PM<sub>2.5</sub>) targets set for 2030. The National Air Quality Strategy (2023) sets out how local authorities are expected to contribute to delivering these targets.

7. Air pollution is associated with a number of adverse health impacts. It is recognised as a contributing factor in the onset of heart disease and cancer. Additionally, air pollution particularly affects the most vulnerable in society: children, the elderly, and those with existing heart and lung conditions.

## **Greater Cambridge air quality strategy public consultation**

8. The public consultation ran from Tuesday 23 January 2024 to Monday 19 February 2024 and was hosted on the Cambridge City consultation platform but advertised from the website of both authorities as well as being promoted on social media platforms of both authorities and appearing in a number of local newspapers.
9. There were a total of 327 responses, with a split of 263 residents of Cambridge City and 54 residents of SCDC. There were 10 responses from people that were not residents of either Cambridge City or SCDC areas. This is considered a good response to a survey of this nature.
10. A summary of the responses to all questions is provided in Appendix A, however, some of the key points are as follows:
  - 71.9% of responders strongly agreed or agreed with the objectives of the strategy.
  - 66.7% of responders strongly agreed or agreed with the adoption of the WHO guideline values.
  - Infrastructure improvements was considered the highest priority by over half (50.2%) of responders.
  - Awareness raising and communication was considered the least important of the key priorities.
  - When asked for the three sources which have the most impact on air quality in their day to day lives, most responders (61%) selected vans/lorries, over half (55%) selected cars, over a third selected idling (40%) and domestic burning/chimneys (35%).
  - A slight majority (50.2%) were not aware that air quality information is included on council websites.
11. Overall, the response to the key questions on the objectives of the strategy and the adoption of the WHO guideline values and interim targets were positive with a strong majority of responders in agreement.
12. There were some responders who disagreed with the objectives and the adoption with the WHO guideline values and the reasons for this were varied but included a mistrust of the WHO and a desire to follow UK guidelines. The strategy document does explain that the UK objective levels are met within Greater Cambridge and, as evidence shows that there is no safe level of air pollution, focus should shift away from compliance with UK objective levels towards exposure reduction with alternative suitable targets set to support that reduction.
13. Other responders expressed a concern that the WHO guidelines were not strict enough or that the adoption of interim targets was a “cop out” and the strategy should commit to a target date for achieving the WHO guideline values. However, as explained in the strategy, not all of the pollution measured in Greater Cambridge is produced in Greater

Cambridge and achievement of targets is influenced by others, including international partners, which makes the WHO guidelines unlikely to be achievable in the lifetime of this strategy however ambitious the Greater Cambridge authorities are in their actions. The WHO guideline values also include interim targets which act to promote a shift from high air pollutant concentrations to lower concentrations.

14. Given the above the interim targets are still considered appropriate for this strategy.
15. A proportion of responders, principally those that strongly disagreed with the objectives of the strategy and the adoption of the WHO guideline values, raised concerns that the AQS was a tactic to bring back proposals for a Sustainable Transport Zone or similar. Although this is largely a matter relating to the city, it is worth noting that this is not the case and any such decision would be completely outside the scope of this strategy.
16. Responders to the consultation were not as strongly in agreement that the actions within the action plan would achieve the objectives of the strategy although it was still a greater number than disagreed. A large proportion of responders responded as neutral to this as they may have felt unable to make a judgement as to the effectiveness of the actions.
17. Many actions were suggested, some of which were already included in the action plan. Other actions specifically related to projects or locations within the Cambridge City district.
18. An action theme that was suggested frequently related to controls, enforcement or education around domestic solid fuel burning. Although this was already mentioned in the draft strategy under Key Priority 3: Community Engagement & Promotion and within action plan, as a result of the consultation we have given greater emphasis within the strategy for the need for promotional work related to domestic burning in SCDC area and that the City Council are considering an extension of the smoke control areas.
19. Key priority 1 has been renamed from "Policy and Development Control" to "Regulatory Policies and Development Control" to clarify that this covers policy areas other than just planning and planning policy (e.g. policies around solid fuel burning, environmental permits and taxi policies to encourage low emission taxis).
20. A number of responders discussed the lack of actions related to tree planting and other green infrastructure. Trees and greenspace can have a positive impact on air quality when used in an appropriate way and an action has been added to the action plan to reflect this.
21. When responders were asked what impacts their air quality on a day-to-day basis, it was clear that lorries/vans and cars were the most likely to be chosen, as would be expected. However, over a third of responders selected vehicle idling and domestic burning/chimneys indicating that these issues are important to a significant number of our residents.
22. Issues that were expected to be more specifically related to SCDC, such as agriculture and bonfires, were selected by fewer responders. However, further analysis was undertaken for the responses relating to agriculture, which indicated that the responses were evenly spread between SCDC and City residents equal to their proportion of overall response.
23. Responses relating to bonfires were slightly more aligned with SCDC residents than City residents indicating that this issue is of more importance to SCDC residents, but still less important than lorries/vans and cars.

24. Only 50% of responders indicated that they were aware that the council provided air quality information on their websites. This does indicate that further promotion of the work undertaken by SCDC does need to be undertaken to ensure that the general public are aware of this work.
25. Key changes to the Draft Greater Cambridge Air Quality Strategy following the consultation are as follows:
- Renaming of Key Priority 1 from “Policy and Development Control” to “Regulatory Policies and Development Control”.
  - Greater emphasis on the work to limit the impact of solid fuel burning.
  - Addition of an action to encourage green infrastructure.

## **Final Greater Cambridge Air Quality Strategy**

26. The final Greater Cambridge Air Quality Strategy proposed for adoption is included as Appendix B to this committee report, with the action plan included as Appendix C to this committee report.
27. The four Key Priorities of the proposed strategy are:
28. Key Priority 1: Regulatory Policies & Development Control
- Minimising emissions through development is key. The Strategy will be integrated into the local plan policy and can be updated in response to evolving national and local policy. This Key Priority also includes other regulatory policies linked to air quality such as regulating Environmental Permits, taxi policies and smoke control areas (relevant to Cambridge City)
29. Key Priority 2: Infrastructure Improvements
- Continuing to work with partners to deliver improved infrastructure; facilitating the uptake of more sustainable transport solutions and active travel options. Planning has a major role to play in infrastructure provision. Examples include support of public transport options, freight consolidation / last mile deliveries, road hierarchy, improvements to cycling and walking infrastructure and facilitating EVCP infrastructure provision.
30. Key Priority 3: Community Engagement & Promotion
- In parallel to active measures to reduce exposure to pollutants we need to actively promote and engage with residents and visitors enabling access to better information to facilitate behavioural change. This may include anti idling campaigns, better burning campaign, improved public engagement through accessibility of air quality data and promoting awareness on air quality. We will continue to work closely with Public Health.
31. Key Priority 4: Monitoring
- Continued monitoring is required given the scale of the future developments and the potential to introduce new hotspots where air quality could be at risk, the need for a robust and up to date monitoring network across the district is a priority.
32. To allow for the differences between Cambridge City and South Cambridgeshire areas, the action plan at the rear of the strategy states whether the action is applicable to both authorities, or just to one authority where it is a more localised issue (e.g. Smoke control area in Cambridge City or engagement with the farming community in SCDC).

## **Alignment with Council Priority Areas**

**Being green to our core**

### **Appendices**

Appendix A: Full results of the air quality strategy consultation

Appendix B: Final Greater Cambridge Air Quality Strategy

Appendix C: Final Greater Cambridge Air Quality Strategy Action Plan

### **Report Author:**

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