

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Health and Environmental Services 6 November 2008
Portfolio Holder

AUTHOR/S: Corporate Manager, Health & Environmental Services / Health
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LOCAL AIR QUALITY STRATEGY

Purpose

1. To consider the draft Local Air Quality Strategy for South Cambridgeshire District Council and endorse the contents for consultation.
2. This is a key decision because adoption of the Local Air Quality Strategy will bring together various Policies and teams both within the Council and from external organisations on a common goal of working towards achieving cleaner air and sustainable development within the District. This will result in key decisions having to be made with regard to the following reason(s):
 - it is likely to be significant in terms of its effects on existing, new and proposed communities living or working in an area of the District comprising two or more wards (District-wide)
 - it will provide a framework to which the Council can build on towards achieving a better quality of life for the local population

Executive Summary

3. Air quality is legislated for under Part 4 of the Environment Act 1995 which introduces Local Air Quality Management, guided by The Air Quality Strategy for England, Wales and Northern Ireland published by DEFRA in 2000.
4. Local Air Quality Management is a statutory obligation for all Local Authorities. It involves a rolling programme of air quality assessment, impacting on decisions made by all internal and external bodies responsible for transport planning, highways, growth agendas, development plans and environmental protection.
5. The National Air Quality Strategy provides Local Authorities with air quality objectives and a year by which the objectives should be achieved. With the use of prediction tools and air quality modelling, it is possible to estimate future concentrations of a pollutant at various receptors. If exceedence of any one of the objectives is identified at a receptor point, an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) is declared. The AQMA is then subjected to further detailed assessment and air quality improvement measures.
6. The 1st round of review and assessment began in 2000 when air quality monitoring results indicated that relevant objectives would be met by the achievement year of 2005. It was decided that due to traffic growth forecasts on the A14, air quality monitoring would continue for the foreseeable future.
7. In early 2003, the Council completed an updating exercise. Two monitoring sites alongside the A14 were continuously measuring NO₂ and particulate matter (PM₁₀).

The air quality data once again indicated that all relevant objectives would be met by 2005. This was confirmed using projections of concentrations to future years.

8. By 2005, the air quality monitoring stations at Bar Hill and Impington began to show exceedences of the annual mean NO₂ and the daily mean PM₁₀ objectives. As a result, detailed assessments were carried out for both nitrogen dioxide and PM₁₀. The conclusions of the detailed assessments have resulted in the declaration of an Air Quality Management Areas along this stretch of the A14, owing to exceedences of the objectives for NO₂ and PM₁₀.
9. Given the major growth proposed for the Cambridge Sub-region, it is important that the Air Quality Management Areas are recognised within the Local Development Framework and the Local Transport Plan.
10. Certain industrial processes within the District also have an impact on local air quality. However, with the introduction of the Pollution Prevention and Control Act 1999, both South Cambridgeshire District Council and the Environment Agency have a statutory duty to control pollution from certain prescribed processes. The Council is statutorily obligated to ensure industries are compliant with relevant industrial emissions limits.
11. Increasingly, climate change has risen up the agenda of environmental issues. It is recognised that methods used to slow down climate change will have a direct impact on local air quality, especially when considering improvement to vehicle emissions and reducing road usage.
12. This air quality strategy aims to bring together all of these issues and lays out a framework upon which all those affected by an Air Quality Management Area build a positive relationship with a common goal of improving air quality without causing significant detriment to any other stakeholder.

Background

13. South Cambridgeshire has been identified as one of 4 major growth areas within the Eastern Region. The expected increase in population within the District will create new challenges in the field of air quality as we attempt to manage the accompanying growth in traffic and emissions from new homes, new industry and business. We aim to continue to work together with developers, local business and industry to ensure that the impact of operations has a minimal impact upon the environment and to promote sustainable development across the District.
14. The Rogers Review 2007 has placed air quality in the top 5 priorities for Local Authorities to consider because it affects health, quality of life, shortens life expectancy and damages ecosystems. It is so important because it impacts on whole populations, particularly the elderly and those more susceptible to air pollution. We have a vital role to play in delivering better outcomes, reducing the impact of poor air quality and contributing to national outcomes.
15. Taking our lead from the national air quality strategy, this document sets out our vision for short medium and long-term progress towards a district with ever improving air quality, ensuring that the present and future population of the District is protected from the potentially harmful effects of air pollutants.
16. Within South Cambridgeshire District Council, we are committed to enhancing the lives of the local population and improving the quality of the environment within which they live. We will achieve this vision by continuing this commitment and by:

- Recognising the needs of everybody within the District
 - Working in partnership at local, sub-regional and regional level
 - Empowering our local communities to engage in improving air quality
 - Promoting sustainable development and sustainable communities
 - Focusing on the service user.
17. Although this Strategy sets out our direction, much is said about how we will go about achieving our aims and targets working in consultation and in partnership with any group, person, organisation or authority who wishes to have a voice on the environment where they live or work. Most decisions made or activities carried out by the Council have the potential to impact on air quality and this should be considered at every level.

Considerations

18. The Local Air Quality Strategy (LAQS) is not a statutory document.
19. The LAQS contains various actions that the Council will follow as standard procedure for the duration of the existence of the Strategy.
20. The LAQS refers to other documents and policies that are already adopted within the Council. It identifies common areas and goals within each of those documents that are related to improving health, quality of life and air quality. It is not intended that the LAQS will contradict these documents and policies, rather to work successfully alongside them.

Options

21. The Council is not statutorily obliged to submit a LAQS to DEFRA. However, adoption of the Local Air Quality Strategy will allow South Cambridgeshire District Council to set out its objectives and detail how it will achieve improvements in air quality.
22. In not adopting the LAQS, there remains the risk within the Council that the varying documents and policies that will have an impact on air quality will become unknown to each other, resulting in a detrimental impact on air quality.

Implications

23. The Local Air Quality Strategy aims:
- To achieve National Air Quality Standards
 - To improve local air quality
 - To carry out the above using cost effective and sustainable methods
 - Raise awareness of and promote air quality issues and sustainable environments
 - To emphasize the role South Cambridgeshire District Council has in improving air quality within the District
 - To work together to achieve our goals
 - To encourage partnerships between local industry, businesses and residents
 - To raise the profile of air quality amongst the wider community
 - Where possible, to suggest objectives for continued good working practices and to link the varying appropriate Council Policies, Plans and Strategies to the Air Quality Strategy

24. Further actions are already being considered by South Cambridgeshire District Council in order to improve air quality within the District, include:
- a) The creation of a developers guide to air quality which is hoped will enable a consistent approach to dealing with air quality via the development control process
 - b) South Cambridgeshire District Council is working on a joint Air Quality Action Plan with Cambridge City Council, Cambridgeshire County Council and Huntingdonshire District Council, which will identify and propose common actions that will be implemented to improve air quality along the A14.

25. Financial	A budget for the future air quality monitoring programme has been identified within the Environmental Health Forward Plan.
Legal	The European Union's Air Quality Framework and Daughter Directives prescribe limit values for certain pollutants, which all member states must meet. The Environment Act 1995 continues to provide the framework for local air quality management in England and Wales, Part IV of the Act prescribes those duties required to be carried out by Local Authorities including periodic review, declaration of AQMA's and production of Action Plans for those areas. The Air Quality Strategy for England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland 2000 and associated legislation prescribe air quality objectives and deadlines for meeting them, which are broadly in line with EU requirements.
Staffing	Production of an Action Plan will entail a lot of work bringing together a number of external organisations which can be a time consuming task. This may impact on other work areas leaving them less well resourced.
Risk Management	Failure to improve air quality to meet National Air Quality Objectives will present a risk to public health and may incur penalties through the EU.
Equal Opportunities	Poor air quality particularly affects those individuals who already suffer with asthma or associated bronchial ailments and are more susceptible to pollutants in the atmosphere. Improving air quality gives everyone an equal chance of enjoying the outdoor environment and the associated benefits to health that this facilitates.

Consultations

26. Internal consultation has occurred to include comments and input from the following relevant Officers within the Council:
- Planning Policy Manager
 - Corporate Manager – Planning and Sustainable Communities
 - Growth Area Project Manager
 - Strategic Sustainability Officer and
 - Strategic Partnerships officer

Comments received back from this initial consultation were positive and in support of the Local Air Quality Strategy.

27. A further period of consultation will begin involving a wider internal and external stakeholder base following consideration of this report. Although this is not a statutory document, all parish councils and statutory consultees will be approached including the following organisations:

- i. Highways Agency
- ii. Environment Agency
- iii. English Nature
- iv. English Heritage
- v. Cambridgeshire County Council
- vi. Cambridge City Council
- vii. Huntingdonshire District Council
- viii. East Cambridgeshire District Council
- ix. Forest Heath District Council
- x. North Herts District Council
- xi. Mid Beds DC

Effect on Corporate Objectives and Service Priorities

28.	<p>Work in partnership to manage growth to benefit everyone in South Cambridgeshire now and in the future</p> <p>Air pollution and its causes do not respect boundaries, therefore partnership working is essential in reducing emissions to improve air quality. Work is currently ongoing with Cambridgeshire County Council, Cambridge City Council, Environment and Transport Planning, South Cambridgeshire District Council Planning Policy and Development Control, Highways Agency.</p>
	<p>Deliver high quality services that represent best value and are accessible to all our community</p> <p>The air quality framework requires a risk-based approach which when followed ensures best value allocation of resources to those areas at risk of exceeding the air quality objectives.</p>
	<p>Enhance quality of life and build a sustainable South Cambridgeshire where everyone is proud to live and work</p> <p>The overarching aim of the LAQS is to bring together all areas of work that have an impact on air quality or decision making processes that have an impact on air quality to reach a common goal and give the Council direction towards improving air quality within the District, and therefore improving health, inequalities and quality of life.</p>

Conclusions/Summary

29. The Local Air Quality Strategy has been produced in order to give a platform upon which the local air quality within the District can be improved, bringing together all those with an interest or responsibility for air quality.
30. People are keen to see action on air quality issues, driven by the perceived benefits and the general improvement to local environments and quality of life. The National Air Quality Strategy states that all authorities are capable of improving air quality. Therefore, all authorities should seek to draw up an air quality strategy, whether an AQMA has been declared or not.

Recommendations

31. It is recommended that the Portfolio Holder:
- (a) endorses the Local Air Quality Strategy for the District,
 - (b) notes the potential impacts of proposed major development within the District on air quality,
 - (c) notes the existence of the air quality management area alongside the A14 between Bar Hill and Milton,
 - (d) notes the statutory requirements of Part 4 of the Environment Act 1995, and
 - (e) supports the Air Quality Strategy for consultation.

Background Papers: the following background papers were used in the preparation of this report:

Air Quality Review and Assessment – Cambridgeshire Local Authorities Updating and Screening Assessment 2008.

Detailed Assessment of PM₁₀ Along the A14 Corridor, South Cambridgeshire District Council. December 2007.

Detailed Assessment of Nitrogen Dioxide Along the A14 Corridor, South Cambridgeshire District Council, November 2006

The Role of the Highways Agency in Local Air Quality Management, January 2005.

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