

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Environmental Services Portfolio Holder 6 November 2008
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AIR QUALITY ACTION PLAN

Purpose

1. To inform the portfolio holder of the ongoing work to develop an Air Quality Action Plan currently being compiled with Huntingdonshire District Council and Cambridge City Council.
2. This is not a key decision at this juncture. But the adoption of the Air Quality Action Plan by Cabinet will be a Key decision because progressing the Action Plan will bring about changes to various Policies that affect air quality and bring together teams both within the Council and from external organisations on a common goal of working towards achieving the national air quality objectives 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)

Executive Summary

3. Following declaration of the Air Quality Management Area, work has been progressing on the development of an Air Quality Action Plan (AQAP). This is being carried out in partnership with Cambridge City Council and Huntingdonshire District Council with respect to the cross boundary affect of air quality and shared issues along the A14.
4. The creation and implementation of the AQAP is a statutory obligation for Local Authorities who have declared an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA). Once the declaration has been made it is expected that the Council will submit an AQAP to Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) within 18 months.

Background

5. The Environment Act 1995 statutorily requires this council to continually review and assess the air quality of seven key pollutants (ozone, nitrogen dioxide (NO₂), carbon monoxide, particulate matter (PM₁₀), sulphur dioxide, benzene and 1,3-butadiene) against nationally set health based targets. The process involves monitoring air quality and modelling (forecasting) the dispersion of pollutants from domestic, transport and industrial processes to determine whether there may be a risk to public health.
6. In November 2006 and December 2007 Detailed Assessments were completed of NO₂ and PM₁₀ respectively. The results of both detailed assessments concluded that

an AQMA is required along a stretch of the A14 between Bar Hill and Milton. Therefore in July 2008 an AQMA was declared for NO₂ and PM₁₀.

7. Following declaration of the AQMA, it is a statutory duty for the Council to carry out a Further Assessment of the pollutants of concern in order to confirm the conclusion of the detailed assessment.
8. In order to improve poor air quality, and thereby improve the health and quality of life of the community, mitigation measures and emission reduction methods are required. Such solutions are identified and analysed for feasibility and cost-benefit to form the AQAP. From this collection of solutions, the Council can begin to implement actions that will have health and environmental benefits across the District.

Considerations

9. The AQAP is a statutory document, however, whilst there are no prescriptive timescales for the preparation and delivery of the plan, DETR guidance document LAQM.PG(03): Local Air Quality Management suggests that AQAP's be submitted to the DEFRA within 12 - 18 months of the declaration of an AQMA.
10. The Further Assessment of NO₂ and PM₁₀, completed in July 2008, shows that South Cambridgeshire District Council was correct in determining and declaring an AQMA for those pollutants. In addition, it confirmed that there is no requirement to change the shape or size of the AQMA. The Action Plan makes up the next stage of local air quality management as required in the national air quality strategy.
11. Traffic along the A14 is the major contributor to two of Huntingdonshire District Councils' AQMAs and the AQMA in South Cambridgeshire. This was confirmed by the Further Assessment, which concluded that there was a 7% improvement required in emissions of NO₂. Source apportionment has shown that the major contribution to this pollutant is from heavy goods vehicles (HGV's). For PM₁₀ whilst background contributes the largest proportion of particulates traffic is the other largest contributor in particular HGV's. It is therefore apparent that resolving the issues of stationary and congested traffic with an emphasis on freight and larger vehicles will attain the greatest improvements in air quality. In addition, given that the A14 is a major access route to and from Cambridge, any actions taken to improve air quality along the A14 may lead to improvements in air quality within the Cambridge City AQMA.
12. The proposed growth around Cambridge and close to the A14 will cause greater stress on the local road networks and may potentially worsen the poor air quality along the A14 and within the city. A consistent and effective approach is required by all 3 affected Councils to minimise the impact of the proposed development. It is for this reason coupled with paragraph 11 (above) that it is appropriate for the three Councils to be working closely together on the action plan.
13. The Action Plan is structured in such a way that the 5 "priority" actions for each Council are drawn out from the list of possible or ongoing actions. These 5 actions are those that are considered to have the most benefit on air quality.
14. The list of possible actions is not exhaustive and contains actions split into the following categories:
 - Managing the network – actions to improve and maintain the infrastructure, public transport and demand management.

- Lowering vehicle emissions – actions to improve the emissions from cars and heavy goods vehicles and to raise awareness of vehicle emissions.
- Lowering emissions from domestic and commercial buildings – actions to improve the energy rating of new and old premises and to tighten up existing policy on sustainable development.
- Development control – actions aimed at tightening up existing policies and creating new policies to improve the emissions from proposed developments.
- Promote smarter travel choices – actions to promote cleaner fuels and public transport.
- Raising awareness – actions to publicise and raise awareness of air pollution issues.

The list of possible actions is presented within **Appendix 1** of this report.

Options

15. The Council is required to submit an AQAP to DEFRA. Therefore, following consultation, the revised AQAP will be reported to the Cabinet for submission to DEFRA.

Implications

16. The AQAP will initially focus on 5 main priority actions for each Council. For South Cambridgeshire District Council, the following actions are considered from the further assessment to be the most likely to have a beneficial impact on air quality within the District:
 - Completion and opening of the Cambridgeshire Guided Busway.
 - Widening of the A14 carriageway between Fen Drayton and Histon – increasing the number of lanes from 2 to 3 on both Eastbound and Westbound carriageways should help to alleviate congestion and speed traffic through-flow.
 - Re-alignment of the A14 and the construction of a local road between the M11 and Bar Hill junctions during the A14 Improvement Scheme Histon to Fen Ditton – as in 2 (above).
 - Establish a Freight Quality Partnership. If improvements in air quality are to be achieved on the A14 between Bar Hill and Milton, it is vital that the Council seeks to give an understanding of local air quality issues to freight operators who may in turn be able to offer invaluable input into reducing emissions from their fleet.
 - Embedding the LDF Air Quality Policy in Local Development Documents – this will ensure that air quality is considered at the planning stage and therefore not adversely impacted by new development.
17. In addition to the five priority actions, further actions have been identified that may be necessary to achieve the objectives or will be undertaken anyway as part of other initiatives for example action on climate change or transport plan policies.

18. Financial	<p>A budget for the future air quality-monitoring programme has been identified within the Health & Environmental Services Service Plan.</p> <p>There is unlikely to be significant new financial implications for South Cambridgeshire D.C. arising from the actions in the draft AQAP over and above the financial commitments already included within the Council's budget estimates.</p>
Legal	<p>The European Union's Air Quality Framework and Daughter Directives prescribe limit values for certain pollutants, which all member states must meet.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p>
Staffing	<p>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, but is not anticipated to require the employment of additional staff.</p>
Risk Management	<p>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.</p>
Equal Opportunities	<p>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.</p>

Consultations

19. The aim of consultation will be to provide stakeholders with the relevant information in support of the AQAP and to raise awareness of the AQMA. A full consultation strategy will be drawn up.
20. It is envisaged that the consultation process will involve the setting up of a forum for stakeholders from internal and external Departments and organisations, during which presentations will be given introducing the subject of the air quality action plan and how the work has been carried out. The forum will allow stakeholders the opportunity to discuss possible actions and implications of those actions and raise any concerns regarding the direction of the project.
21. In addition, it is proposed that at least 2 separate events will be carried out, one at Cambridge Service Station on the A14 which may involve vehicle emissions testing, specifically aimed at freight transport and awareness raising. The second event will

be largely the same as the first but is proposed to be held at Tescos, Bar Hill, and will target local residents.

22. At all points of the consultation process, the views of the public and other stakeholders will be sought. A survey regarding air quality, action planning and travel behaviour is proposed for feedback from these events which will allow any interested person(s) the opportunity to have their say.
23. Specialist expert advice in this kind of research and educational event will be sourced.

Effect on Corporate Objectives and Service Priorities

24.	<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, Huntingdonshire District Council, CERC and the 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>For South Cambridgeshire District Council, the overarching aim of the AQAP is to identify and implement feasible and cost-effective solutions to improve the existing poor air quality conditions along the A14 and therefore to improve health and quality of life across the District and to implement measures that will prevent deterioration of air quality when the future proposed developments begin to take shape.</p>

Conclusions/Summary

25. The AQAP is being constructed in partnership with Cambridge City Council and Huntingdonshire District Council. Each Authority is giving consideration to the various measures available to improve the air quality within their areas and achieve the national air quality objectives.
26. Within South Cambridgeshire District Council, five priority actions have been identified, some of which are already underway or close to being agreed and are focussed mainly upon the Air Quality Management Area along the A14.
27. Implementation of the action plan will not stop at the 5 priority measures. The Council will seek to implement other measures over medium term and long term timescales. Many measures will act to improve air quality across the entire District whilst others will be specific to the area of implementation (such as the A14).

Recommendations

28. It is recommended that the Portfolio Holder:
- (a) Endorses the five priority actions and content of the AQAP for wider public consultation, prior to the AQAP being adopted by Cabinet in the spring of 2009 for submission to DEFRA.
 - (b) Notes the joint approach to the Air Quality Action Plan currently under development.
 - (c) Note the actions that are proposed to improve air quality along the A14.
 - (d) Note the statutory requirements of Part 4 of the Environment Act 1995.

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 Further Assessment of NO₂ and PM₁₀ Along the A14 Corridor, South Cambridgeshire District Council, July 2008

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

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