

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Leader and Cabinet 8 October 2009
AUTHOR/S: Corporate Manager Health & Environmental Services / Health Protection Team Leader

AIR QUALITY ACTION PLAN

Purpose

1. To bring the Air Quality Action Plan (AQAP) for South Cambridgeshire District Council to Cabinet for adoption.
2. This is a key decision because adoption of the AQAP will help to bring about the changes required to achieve the health based national air quality objectives and improve local air quality and quality of life for local residents. 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. It has been published in the forward plan.

Executive Summary

3. 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 regulation.
4. The AQAP brings together Council Services and external organisations on a common goal of working towards achieving national air quality objectives, which are currently being exceeded along the A14 between Bar Hill and Milton.
5. On a wider scale, any improvements in air quality policy and awareness in local air quality issues will help bring about cleaner air and sustainable development on a District-wide basis. Given the major growth proposed for the Cambridge Sub-region, it is important that actions are taken now to reduce local emissions and improve air quality. 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. Many actions within the AQAP will therefore help the Council achieve its goals on climate change.

Background

6. Part IV of the Environment Act 1995 provides the framework for Local Air Quality Management (LAQM) in England and Wales whereby all local authorities are required to annually review and assess the air quality within their boundaries against health-based objectives. Where air quality objectives are unlikely to be met by a specified date, Air Quality Management Areas (AQMA) must be declared and Action Plans developed to demonstrate how the local authority intends to work towards meeting the objectives.
7. Huntingdonshire District Council and South Cambridgeshire District Council have declared AQMA's along the A14 whilst Cambridge City Council has an AQMA in the

City Centre. As a result the Authorities are required to develop an AQAP and submit the same to DEFRA within 18 months of the AQMA being declared.

8. Air quality within AQMAs is likely to be influenced by factors beyond local authority boundaries. AQAPs may often need to complement those of adjoining authorities. Accordingly, endorsed by DEFRA, the three Councils have produced a joint Action Plan because of the nature of the road network and spatial distribution of housing, recreation and employment in the region. The joint AQAP is available on the Council's website at www.scambs.gov.uk A copy is also available in the Members' lounge.
9. Guidance from DEFRA (2003) specifies that an AQAP must include the following:
 - Quantification of the source contributions to the predicted exceedences of the objective allowing the Action Plan measures to be effectively targeted.
 - Evidence that all available options have been considered on the grounds of cost-effectiveness and feasibility.
 - How the local authority will use its powers and also work in conjunction with other organisations in pursuit of the Air Quality Objectives.
 - Clear timescales in which the authority and other organisations and agencies propose to implement the measures within its plan.
 - Quantification of the expected impacts of the proposed measures and, where possible, an indication as to whether the measures will be sufficient to meet the Air Quality Objectives.
10. The draft joint AQAP was presented to the Environmental Services Portfolio Holder on 6 November 2008 who endorsed the draft five priority actions and draft AQAP for wider public consultation.

Considerations

11. The continuing increase in the level of traffic is the main challenge to air quality in the south of Cambridgeshire. Although latest figures show that this has steadied, this may be a result of the current economic climate and may be temporary.
12. The Districts have completed a table of actions that will have a positive impact upon air quality. These are currently in place or planned for the near future by the County and all District Councils. Some actions are specifically designed to improve air quality, but many of the actions have been initiated to tackle other areas, for example climate change or reducing congestion. They have been arranged into the following themes:
 - Managing the network
 - Lowering emissions
 - Strategic Planning
 - Development Control
 - Smarter Travel Choices
 - Raising Awareness
13. Each District has produced a list of five or more individual actions, or packages of measures that will in their opinion have the most beneficial impact on air quality within their area. This list is not exhaustive as there are many other options put forward within the AQAP that may be implemented. For South Cambridgeshire District Council, the 5 priority actions included in the AQAP are:

- 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 as part of the A14 Improvement Scheme.
- Establish a Freight Quality Partnership – the South Cambridgeshire District Council's Further Assessment of air quality along the A14 has identified HGVs as having the greatest impact on air quality in the District. 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 Local Development Framework (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. The emphasis will be to encourage developers to adopt a low emission strategy approach to mitigate the impact of emissions arising from growth.

It is appreciated that South Cambridgeshire District Council cannot take the lead role on some actions but will seek to influence outcomes. Of the above actions, the Guided Busway falls under the responsibility of Cambridgeshire County Council whilst the improvements to the A14 are under the jurisdiction of the Highways Agency. In all circumstances, the District Council will seek to influence decisions made by both the County Council and the Highways Agency in order to bring improvements in air quality to the forefront of decision-making processes.

14. A full consultation exercise has taken place, involving all 3 participating Councils, Members, a wide variety of stakeholders and members of the public. The overarching feeling towards the AQAP is one of support and the recognition of its necessity.
15. The AQAP is a statutory document and must be submitted to defra within 18 months of declaration of the Air Quality Management Area i.e. by January 2010. The other two authorities are undertaking a similar adoption process for the joint AQAP.

Options

16. The Council is statutorily required to submit and implement an AQAP to DEFRA within 18 months of declaration of the AQMA. The AQAP contains a number of options that can be considered by the council to improve air quality within the designated AQMA.
17. The Air Quality Action Plan aims:
 - To work towards achievement of National Air Quality Standards and Objectives
 - To improve local air quality
 - To carry out the above using feasible, cost-effective and sustainable methods
 - To raise awareness of and promote air quality issues and sustainable environments throughout the wider community

- To emphasize the role South Cambridgeshire District Council has in improving air quality within the District
- To encourage partnerships between local industry, businesses and residents

Implications

18. Financial	There is unlikely to be significant new financial implications for South Cambridgeshire DC arising from the actions in the draft AQAP over and above the financial commitments already included within the Council's budget estimates.
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	It is envisaged that staff workload will continue to be high during implementation of the plan given the partnership and influencing role of the plan. Resources will continue to be monitored and work prioritised as required.
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. An Equalities Impact Assessment has been carried out on the Action Plan and no adverse impacts were identified.

Consultations

19. 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 consultation were positive and in support of the Air Quality Action Plan.

20. External consultation was carried out in March 2009 with 3 workshops. Two workshops involved local residents (one in Cambridge and one in Huntingdon) and one with stakeholders (in Cambourne). These were designed to: -
- Gain opinion on the priority and other measures proposed
 - Gain ideas, comments and suggestions from attendees
 - Identify barriers to implementing options
 - Raise awareness of local air quality issues
21. There was much support for the AQAP with a general recognition of the need for its implementation. Stakeholders and residents alike identified that traffic on the A14 is a major source of pollution and that any steps towards achieving improvements should be focussed on improving emissions from the A14.

Effect on Strategic Aims

22.	<p>Commitment to being a listening council, providing first class services accessible to all. The air quality framework requires a risk-based approach that when followed ensures best value allocation of resources to those areas at risk of exceeding the air quality objectives. Consultation has taken place with representative members of the community and their views taken into account in drafting this plan.</p>
	<p>Commitment to ensuring that South Cambridgeshire continues to be a safe and healthy place for all. The overarching aim of the AQAP is to bring about the change required to improve air quality for residents living adjacent to and adjoining the A14 by implementing various mitigation measures, providing information and bringing forward further air quality guidance and policy. The scope of the AQAP reaches further than the A14 as many actions that may be implemented will have an impact on the whole District, thereby improving health and quality of life within South Cambridgeshire.</p>
	<p>Commitment to making South Cambridgeshire a place in which residents can feel proud to live. By working together to improve air quality we can all have a positive impact on the environment resulting in a better place to live and improving quality of life for residents.</p>
	<p>Commitment to assisting provision for local jobs for all. None</p>
	<p>Commitment to providing a voice for rural life. None</p>

Conclusions/Summary

23. The AQAP has been produced jointly with Cambridge City Council and Huntingdonshire District Council in order to provide a series of feasible and cost-effective measures that will enable work to progress on driving down emissions in the local area. This will include measures that will help to reduce emissions from traffic on the A14.
24. The AQAP will bring together various authoritative bodies and organisations as well as local residents to work together to bring about the required improvements.
25. Results of the consultation exercise show that people are aware of the air quality issues within their place of residence and place of work and 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.

Recommendation

26. It is recommended that Cabinet adopts the joint Air Quality Action Plan as prepared by South Cambridgeshire District Council, Huntingdonshire District Council and Cambridge City Council for submission to DEFRA by January 2010.

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

- Air Quality Action Plan for Cambridgeshire Growth Areas: Cambridge City Council, Huntingdonshire District Council, South Cambridgeshire District Council. Draft 2008 (for adoption 2009)
- Air Quality Action Plan Final Report April 2009 CELLO mruk Social and Marketing Research
- The Detailed Assessment of PM10 Along the A14 Corridor (2007) - South Cambridgeshire District Council
- The Further Assessment of Nitrogen Dioxide and PM10 Along the A14 Corridor (2008) - South Cambridgeshire District Council
- Cambridgeshire Authorities Progress Report (2007) - South Cambridgeshire District Council, Huntingdonshire District Council, East Cambridgeshire District Council, Cambridge City Council, Fenland District Council, Cambridgeshire County Council
- Updating and Screening Assessment in fulfilment of Part IV of the Environment Act 1995. Local Air Quality Management (2009) - South Cambridgeshire District Council
- Local Air Quality Management, Policy Guidance LAQM. PG(09) (2009) - defra
- Local Air Quality Management, Technical Guidance LAQM. TG(09) (2009) – defra
- The Role of the Highways Agency in Local Air Quality Management, January 2005.

Contact Officers: Susan Walford – Health Protection Team Leader
Telephone: (01954) 713124
Dale Robinson – Corporate Manager Health & Environmental Services
Telephone: (01954) 713229