



To: Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee

Date: 10 February 2016

Subject: Air Quality Action Plan

1 Purpose of the Note

- 1.1 To update Members on developments in air quality management in the city, and the new air quality management proposals from Government.

2 Recommendations

- 2.1 It is recommended that Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee note the contents of this briefing note, in particular the broader actions being undertaken to manage air quality.

3 Information/Background

- 3.1 A report was considered by Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee on 5 November 2014 which provided an update on the impact of poor air quality on health, how it's measured and how it can be improved.
- 3.2 This report seeks to update Committee on changes to how air quality is measured and modelled in the city, recent changes to how air quality is managed nationally, and what actions are being taken locally.

4 Air quality management in Coventry

- 4.1 Under the Local Air Quality Management (LAQM) system, local authorities are required to assess air quality in their area and designate Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs) if they find the limit values for certain pollutants are being exceeded or are likely to be exceeded in the future. If an AQMA is declared then the local authority must produce an action plan to improve air quality.
- 4.2 In Coventry, the levels of nitrogen dioxide (NO₂), were forecast to exceed the limit values within the statutory timescale so a citywide AQMA was declared in 2009. Nationally 700 AQMAs have been declared, mostly because of high nitrogen dioxide levels. NO₂ is produced by burning fuel in air, the major sources of which are road vehicles but also domestic and commercial heating, and air travel.
- 4.3 In 2014, the European Union commenced legal action against the UK for failing to meet the limit values for nitrogen dioxide in 16 of 43 air quality zones, one of which is the West Midlands. The air quality directive required that each zone meets the limit value by the end of 2015 but most cities' plans show that compliance will only be achievable by 2020, or in the case of London, 2025.
- 4.4 Any legal action will take many years but if limit values continue to be exceeded then the Government faces legal action and potential fines of up to £300m. Government has already signalled that it believes provisions in part 2 of the Localism Act 2011 allow some or all of this fine to be passed down to local authorities. For local authorities where limit values are exceeded it would be prudent to demonstrate that a range of options are being

pursued to reduce NO₂, quite apart from the pressing need to improve air quality to ensure peoples' health is not being affected.

- 4.5 In December 2015, to help demonstrate that appropriate action is being taken to reduce nitrogen dioxide levels the Government published a number of air quality plans to achieve compliance with the EU limit value. The relevant one for Coventry is the Coventry/Bedworth agglomeration zone which covers most of Coventry and part of Bedworth, broadly following the line of major roads into the city, please see appendix 1.
- 4.6 The Government has stated that the limit value was exceeded in 2013 but is likely to be achieved by 2020 as a result of local measures listed and national initiatives. The local initiatives comprise 50 actions from Coventry City Council, 7 from Nuneaton & Bedworth Borough Council, 21 from Rugby Borough Council, and 19 from Warwick District Council.
- 4.7 These measures are a long list of local actions of all kinds which will reduce nitrogen dioxide levels to varying degrees, examples include:
 - Construction of new bridge at Whitley to reduce queuing traffic at Jaguar Land Rover
 - Junction improvement at A45/Kenilworth Road to reduce congestion
 - Improved access to Coventry Station to encourage increased rail use
 - Public realm works within Coventry city centre to encourage cycling and walking including the introduction of 20 mph zones and the removal of traffic lights.
 - NUCKLE rail scheme to increase the number of journeys by rail
 - Trial of low emission vehicles within City Council fleet
 - Heatline district energy scheme to reduce emissions from gas boilers in the city
 - Pedestrianisation of Broadgate to encourage modal shift
 - Fuel poverty works such as boiler swaps and upgrades to more efficient units
 - Relocation of taxi ranks to avoid congested streets
 - On street parking enforcement to reduce congestion
 - Participation in the West Midlands Low Emissions Towns and Cities Programme
- 4.8 This plan does not remove the requirement for the City Council to produce an Air Quality Action Plan (AQAP), however the Government has revised the framework for local air quality management in two ways. Firstly, it has removed the need for councils to report on four pollutants which are now considered to be under control (1,3-butadiene, benzene, carbon monoxide, and lead). Secondly, it proposes to streamline some of the reporting requirements so that a single Annual Status Report (ASR) replaces five different reports which were previously required.
- 4.9 An ASR must include a public facing executive summary, a clear statement of improvement measures being taken, an update on progress, information on how the main pollutants are being measured, modelled and assessed, how the plan links with transport and public health activities, and to identify any new hot spots of pollution.
- 4.10 The ASR must be published by 30 June for the first year and thereafter by 30 April each year.
- 4.11 DEFRA has recently consulted on revised guidance for the production of AQAPs identifying the following common requirements:
 - Develop the AQAP in stages
 - Undertake appropriate local monitoring and assessment (including apportioning sources)
 - Decide what levels of actions are required
 - Establish links to other key policy areas and strategies

- Establish a Steering Group with key stakeholders at an early stage
- Undertake the selection of appropriate measures and how their impacts will be assessed
- Agree monitoring and evaluation of success, and
- Undertake consultation (local and statutory)

4.12 It is anticipated that the production of an AQAP will take 12 to 18 months. This will allow discussions with neighbouring authorities, especially those within the West Midlands Combined Authority, to be undertaken. Common actions across the WMCA can then be identified and incorporated into the AQAP to ensure a joined up approach is taken and we make the best use of resources.

5 Air quality measurement and modelling in Coventry

- 5.1 At the time of the last report to Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee air quality within the city was measured using five automatic monitoring units along with 118 diffusion tubes which monitor nitrogen dioxide. Modelling of air quality was carried out using an Indic Airviro software package.
- 5.2 Since the last meeting, the Department of Environment Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) has established an automatic monitoring unit in Allesley as part of the Automatic Urban and Rural Network. This is maintained at Government expense and measures background air quality levels – the information is then accessible through the DEFRA website.
- 5.3 To make better use of our resources the City Council has decommissioned the automatic monitoring units, reduced the number of diffusion tubes to 59 (in areas of greatest need) and has decommissioned the Airviro modelling software.
- 5.4 As replacements, the City Council is currently trialling three examples of a new design of air pollution monitor called an Air Sensa. This is a small unit about the size of a briefcase which can be installed on lamp posts and in other street locations to monitor nitrogen dioxide and two other common urban pollutants. The units require little maintenance and send their data to a website via the cloud, making them far more cost effective and user friendly, in future they will also allow residents to view the data online. The three units are located in Hillfields, Walsgrave and Allesley Park to cover both roadside and background locations. The trial is due to be completed around December 2016 and, if successful, funding has been obtained from DEFRA to allow a further 12 to 15 units to be purchased.

6 Low Emissions Towns and Cities Programme

- 6.1 The City Council is an active member of the Low Emissions Towns and Cities Programme which includes six other West Midlands authorities and acts as a strategic forum to promote best practice in air quality management and advise on the delivery of AQAPs. The group is part-funded by DEFRA and will be important in effectively addressing air quality improvements across the West Midlands Combined Authority.
- 6.2 In the short term membership of this programme has allowed detailed NO₂ modelling to be carried out by Walsall Borough Council as its contribution to the overall plan of activities. A detailed model of NO₂ levels throughout Coventry is expected later in the year. This will be a key input to the AQAP and will inform monitoring and improvement actions in the future.

7 Local Development Plan

- 7.1 Coventry's draft Local Development Plan has accommodated concerns around poor air quality by including air quality considerations within chapter 11, Environmental Management. The role of AQMAs and the Low Emissions Towns and Cities Programme is outlined and a draft policy EM6 is proposed.
- 7.2 EM6 proposes that

- Major development schemes should promote a shift to the use of sustainable low emission transport (electric vehicles and vehicles that use biofuels) to minimise the impact of vehicle emissions on air quality.
- Development will be located where it is accessible to support the use of public transport, walking and cycling. All major development proposals should be suitably planned to design out any adverse impact on air quality.
- Major Development proposals will require the submission of an air quality assessment, as they may lead to a significant deterioration in local air quality resulting in unacceptable effects on human health, local amenity or the natural environment. The air quality assessment should address:
 - a) The existing background levels of air quality;
 - b) The cumulative background levels of air quality (related to the cumulative impact of developments in an area);
 - c) The feasibility of any measures of mitigation that would prevent the national air quality objectives being exceeded, or would reduce the extent of the air quality deterioration.

A Supplementary Planning Document will be developed to support this policy.

8 Joint work with Public Health

- 8.1 Poor air quality is a key determinant of ill health and mortality making it vital that Public Health colleagues are closely involved in planning the management of air quality in the city and beyond. To help achieve this aim, a Coventry and Warwickshire Air Quality Alliance is in the process of being established to form a partnership between city, county, districts and boroughs of Warwickshire. The alliance also includes representation from planning, transport, environmental health, as well as Public Health England.
- 8.2 The purpose of the Air Quality Alliance will be to:
- Provide a multi-profession partnership forum for the sharing of ideas and evidence-based practice related to reducing the negative health and environmental impacts of poor air quality, and to identify opportunities for collaboration.
 - Agree an overarching set of areas for action, identifying all relevant and planned work in these areas as well as gaps.
 - Raise the profile of air quality in appropriate professional and political fora, and the health, environmental and financial benefits associated with addressing the problems associated with poor air quality.
 - Co-ordinate collective actions required to address poor air quality, including acting as a vehicle for national, regional and local campaigns.

Appendix 1: Air Quality Action Plan for the achievement of EU air quality limit value for nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) in Coventry/Bedworth (UK0017) DEFRA December 2015

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