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**To: Business, Economy and Enterprise Scrutiny Board**

**Date: 18<sup>th</sup> March 2020**

**Subject: Coventry Local Air Quality Action Plan**

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## **1 Purpose of the Note**

- 1.1 To brief Scrutiny Board on the Coventry Local Air Quality Action Plan (CLAQAP).

## **2 Recommendations**

- 2.1 The Business, Economy and Enterprise Scrutiny Board (3) are recommended:
- 1) To consider the content of this report and makes any recommendations that it would wish the Council's Cabinet to consider when finalising the Full Business Case for the CLAQAP.

## **3 Information/Background**

- 3.1 Government has issued an updated Direction instructing Coventry City Council to implement an action plan to achieve compliance with legal limits for nitrogen dioxide (NO<sub>2</sub>) levels within the city in the shortest possible time. The Direction was issued on 13<sup>th</sup> February 2020 and makes it clear that the Council's preferred package of measures is to be implemented. The accompanying Ministerial letter to the Council accepts that a charging Clean Air Zone is not appropriate for Coventry, and that the Council's preferred option will meet Government requirements.
- 3.2 Government has also approved grant funding of £24.5 million for the implementation of the Action Plan. £4.5 million of this funding has already been received by the Council, with the balance of £20 million being subject to the conclusion of Funding Agreements between the Council and the Government. This funding will need to be added to the Council's capital programme.
- 3.3 The preferred option comprises an engagement programme aimed at reducing the number of local journeys made by car, and encouraging alternative, sustainable, modes of travel such as walking, cycling and public transport to be used for these journeys. This programme is complemented by significant investment in a segregated cycle route between Coundon and the city centre providing a high-quality route that will provide an attractive alternative to driving along the Holyhead Road corridor.
- 3.4 There are also a series of highway improvements aimed at reducing the volume of traffic on Holyhead Road, where NO<sub>2</sub> levels are at their greatest. These include improvements on the B4106 at Spon End and at Junction 7 on the ring road, which will remove capacity constraints on this alternative route into the city centre from the west. Improving capacity on this route will provide the flexibility to divert traffic onto this route from Holyhead Road when air quality conditions on Holyhead Road are identified as being poor. Traffic and air quality modelling has been undertaken for the LAQAP strategy, and this indicates that NO<sub>2</sub> levels remain below legal limits in this scenario, demonstrating that this approach does not simply shift the air quality problems onto the parallel routes.

- 3.5 Similarly, the package includes the opening-up of Upper Hill Street onto the ring road at Junction 8. This scheme will allow the closure of Barras Lane, and the removal of the Holyhead Road / Barras Lane traffic signals, which currently are a major factor in the high level of NO<sub>2</sub> on Holyhead Road due to the resulting queuing traffic on Holyhead Road. By removing the signals, traffic flows on Holyhead Road will be smoother and emissions lower as a result. Discussions are underway with St Osburg's School regarding the impact on their access arrangements with a view to improving these.
- 3.6 A further package of traffic management measures are proposed for Foleshill Road, with the aim of removing extraneous through traffic and reducing traffic flows, congestion, and NO<sub>2</sub> emissions on this route into the city centre from the north. Through traffic will be encouraged to use the A444 instead, which is the designated route for through traffic accessing the city centre from M6 Junction 3.
- 3.7 The Action Plan will now be taken forward for consultation prior to the development of the Full Business Case (FBC) for submission to Government by 19<sup>th</sup> June 2020. A presentation of the consultation material will be presented to the Scrutiny Board at its meeting on 18<sup>th</sup> March. The consultation will run from 16<sup>th</sup> March to 26<sup>th</sup> April, this timetable being dictated by the need to complete the FBC in sufficient time to seek Cabinet approval for its submission to Government by 19<sup>th</sup> June. Any amendments to the preferred option for the Action Plan, and additional funding requirements, will need to be set out in the FBC.
- 3.8 Approval from Cabinet is required for the submission of the FBC, and for the inclusion of the grant funding within the Council's capital programme, and this will be sought at the most appropriate Cabinet meeting in May or June once these dates have been set.
- 3.9 The following table provides a summary of the measures contained in the Council's preferred package.

<b>Measure</b>	<b>Description</b>
Capacity improvements on the B4106 through Spon End	Scheme part funded through the £5.8 million Transforming Cities Fund grant awarded by the WMCA. Includes improvement of the B4106 / Hearsall Lane junction and widening the road at the railway viaduct. Incorporates improved pedestrian and cycle routes and green infrastructure. By removing a capacity constraint and reducing congestion on this alternative route into the city centre from the West, the scheme will make it possible to divert traffic away from the Holyhead Road route when air quality conditions are poor on that route.
Capacity improvements at Junction 7 on the Ring Road (A4053 / B4106)	This scheme re-models the existing junction to reduce congestion and provide improved pedestrian and cycle routes across the ring road linking the Spon End area with the city centre. Linked to the Spon End scheme, this will provide an attractive alternative route into the city centre from the West, allowing the diversion of traffic from Holyhead Road.
Opening of Upper Hill Street onto the A4053 Ring Road giving left-in, left-out access onto	This scheme will facilitate the closure of Barras Lane to through traffic, thereby allowing the removal of the Holyhead Road / Barras Lane

<p>the ring road via the clockwise slip road at Junction 8.</p>	<p>traffic signals that are a primary cause of queuing, and therefore high emissions levels, on Holyhead Road. A significant factor in the design of this scheme will be the aim of improving access to St Osburg's School, which currently has pedestrian and car park access from Upper Hill Street and Council officers are already in close dialogue with the school to agree the best option for this. The potential to improve access to the allocated housing site at the former Gas Works site will also be a design consideration.</p>
<p>Closure of Barras Lane between the A4114 Holyhead Road and Coundon Road / Upper Hill Street.</p>	<p>This will allow the removal of the traffic signals at the Holyhead Road / Barras Lane junction, thereby allowing Holyhead Road to move more freely. These signals are considered to be a major contributor to the high NO<sub>2</sub> levels on Holyhead Road.</p>
<p>Peak time traffic restrictions and additional interpeak time traffic restrictions on the eastern section of the A4114 Holyhead Road on the approach to Junction 8.</p>	<p>The exact form of these restrictions is yet to be determined, and options will be explored through the consultation process. The outcome to be achieved is the reduction in traffic flow, and removal of the most polluting vehicles, from the section of Holyhead Road between Barras Lane and the ring road. Options include the introduction of a Low Emission Zone, banning the most polluting vehicles from this section of Holyhead Road, the introduction of in-bound or out-bound restrictions on all traffic during the peak periods or at other times of day, or dynamic traffic management techniques rationing road space and limiting the number of vehicles passing along this section of Holyhead Road through the use of traffic signals (similar to the use of ramp-metering on busy motorways to control the flow of traffic entering the motorway from slip roads).</p>
<p>Engagement initiative (travel planning) with schools, businesses and communities along the Holyhead Road corridor to encourage mode shift.</p>	<p>This measure seeks to remove car trips from the network by working with residents, commuters and schools to encourage local trips to be made by other modes of travel than the car. This will build upon the success of a similar programme undertaken in the Walsgrave corridor as part of the Early Measures programme.</p>
<p>Construction of a segregated cycle route linking Coundon with the city centre along Coundon Road / Upper Hill Street.</p>	<p>This scheme will support the engagement programme (see above) by providing a step change in cycle route on a parallel corridor to Holyhead Road, serving the schools at Bablake and St Osbergs as well as linking residential areas with the city centre. This is one of the key cycle routes identified as a priority through the Local Cycling and Walking Investment Plan and will complement planned investment in a similarly segregated cycle route between the City centre and the Hospital. Collectively, these schemes will provide a spine route linking the city from east to west.</p>

Removal of through traffic from Foleshill Road.	This measure is aimed at reducing congestion on Foleshill Road, with the aim of improving the flow of traffic, and thereby reduce emissions, on Foleshill Road. The main aim is to reduce the amount of through traffic using Foleshill Road, and to divert this onto the higher standard, parallel, A444. A range of approaches to achieve this, whilst maintaining access for residents and businesses, will be considered during the consultation process.
HGV ban on part of Foleshill Road,	The precise location and nature of this ban will be subject to further assessment, based on the need for HGV traffic to service shops on Foleshill Road and access neighbouring industrial estates. However, the volume of through traffic, including HGVs, has been a source of concern for the local community
Assigning electric buses to Foleshill Road.	Ten new electric buses are due to enter into operation in Coventry during 2020, on the Walsgrave corridor serving the Hospital and potentially the Foleshill Road corridor. These have been funded through the ULEBS grant, and the Council is looking to introduce further electric buses across Coventry. Foleshill Road is one of the busiest bus corridors in the city, and it is seen as being important to ensure that bus services on this corridor are operated by zero emission buses as soon as possible.

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