

Exercise of emergency functions – Acceptance of the sum of £20,000,000 (Twenty Million Pounds) from the the Joint Air Quality Unit (“the Funding Amount”) for the delivery of the Coventry Local Air Quality Action Plan (“the Scheme”)

1. Part 2M of the constitution of the City Council provides for the Scheme of Functions delegated to Employees including to the Chief Executive/Head of Paid Service.
2. Paragraph 3.8 of Part 2M of the Constitution enables the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader to make decisions required in an emergency.
3. The Council’s Cabinet resolved at the meeting dated 12th February 2019 to approve the following:
 - 3.1 the submission to Government of the Outline Business Case for the Coventry City Local Air Quality Action Plan.
 - 3.2 Delegated authority to the Deputy Chief Executive (Place) in consultation with the Leader, Cabinet Members for Jobs and Regeneration, Cabinet Member for Public Health and Sport, Cabinet Member for City Services and the Director of Finance and Corporate Services to develop and submit o the appropriate bodies bids for grant funding for further measures that would support the objectives of the Local Air Quality Action Plan
4. Following the submission of the Outline Business Case, Government has now issued an updated Direction instructing Coventry City Council to implement an action plan to achieve compliance with legal limits for nitrogen dioxide levels within the city in the shortest possible time. The Direction was issued on 13th 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.
5. The Government has also approved grant funding of £20 million pounds for the implementation of the Action Plan. This funding will need to be added to the Council’s capital programme.
6. 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.

7. There are also a series of highway improvements aimed at reducing the volume of traffic on Holyhead Road, where nitrogen dioxide 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.
8. 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 NO₂ 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.
9. A further package of traffic management measures are also proposed for Foleshill Road, with the aim of removing extraneous through traffic and reducing traffic flows, congestion, and 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.
10. In order to ensure that the Council remains compliant with the updated Direction issued by Government, the Action Plan has been taken forward for consultation prior to the development of the Full Business Case for submission to Government which needs to be submitted by 19th June 2020. Any amendments to the preferred option for the Action Plan will need to be set out in the FBC and brought to Cabinet for approval.
11. In the meantime, the Council is required to accept the Funding Amount in order to progress the Scheme. The Council has been notified by the Joint Air Quality Unit that the acceptance of the Funding Amount needs to be delivered by 31st March 2020 as they are under pressure (where the funding is not capable of being transferred before the deadline) to have the ability to show the Funding Amount as accepted by the Council in this current financial year so that it can thereafter be accrued and carried forward into the next financial year for payment.
12. On the basis set out above, I am satisfied that the decision being taken pursuant to this emergency provision is incidental and also broadly aligns with the objectives which was authorised by Cabinet to develop the Coventry Local Air Quality Action Plans.
13. In light of the above I agree that this constitutes an emergency and I am making the decision that the City Council:
 - accepts the Funding Amount up to the sum of £20,000,000 from the Joint Air Quality Unit; and

- that this Funding Amount be added to the Council's Capital Programme

I have consulted with the Leader of the City Council to confirm his agreement to this course of action.

A report will be taken to Council at the next appropriate meeting that will include information about this emergency decision.

Signed:

A solid black rectangular box used to redact the signature of the Chief Executive.

Chief Executive of Coventry City Council

Dated: 2 April 2020