

REPORT OF THE DEPUTY DIRECTOR (ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH)
TO THE EXECUTIVE
6TH JUNE 2008

Air Quality Management Programme

1.0 Introduction and Report Summary

- 1.1 Under the Environment Act 1990 the Council has a duty to take action to work towards the improvement of local air quality where national objectives are breached at locations where people live. Air Quality Management Areas (AQMA) have now been declared in parts of Abingdon and Botley and Air Quality Action Plans (AQAPs) will now need to be devised and implemented.
- 1.2 By nature AQAPs are broad ranging and require the cooperation of a number of Council Service disciplines and external agencies and require extensive engagement with the public and other stakeholders. This report recommends a Council – wide approach to air quality management including the creation of a project board to oversee the process of AQAP production and implementation.
- 1.3 The contact officer for this report is David Stevens Deputy Director (Environmental Health) tel.(01235540378). Email: david.stevens@whitehorsedc.co.uk.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 *That Executive:*

- (a) *notes the background information concerning current issues that will need to be taken into account in Air Quality Action Planning; and*
- (b) *notes the importance of and implications from adopting a Council-wide approach to the management of local air quality including the creation of an advisory group by the Member with portfolio holder responsibility for Environmental Health..*

3.0 Relationship with the Council's Vision, Strategies and Policies

This report relates to the Council's Vision in that it supports objectives 2 and 4. The report does not conflict with any Council Strategies. Furthermore, the report complies with existing policies and contributes to corporate priority of creating a Cleaner, Greener, Safer and Healthier Community and Environment. There is also a relationship between local air quality management and action to address Climate Change. Air Quality management also contributes towards the stated community Strategy priority of Health and wellbeing..

4.0 Background

- 4.1 Under the Environment Act 1990 the Council has a duty periodically to review and assess local air quality and to work towards the national objectives which were set in 2005. Where these are breached and people are likely to be exposed to above objective

concentrations of air pollutants the council must declare Air Quality Management Areas (AQMA). These have now been declared in parts of Abingdon and Botley and Air Quality Plans (AQAPs) will now need to be devised and implemented.

5 Abingdon AQMA

5.1 The AQAP for Abingdon was declared in August 2006 and a Further Assessment report has recently been completed. The further assessment report concludes:

- *That the annual average Air Quality Objective (AQO) for Nitrogen Dioxide (NO₂) is still being exceeded within the AQMA, despite significant reductions in the worst affected areas and the Air Quality Management Order needs to remain in place.*
- *That further monitoring outside of the AQMA has indicated the possibility of the AQO for NO₂ being exceeded along Ock St and that consideration should be given to extending the AQMA to incorporate this area.*
- *That approximately 50% of emissions come from HDVs and 50% from LDVs*
- *That in order to reduce the levels of NO₂ to below the AQO would require a reduction in NO_x emissions of the order of 25-50% within the AQMA.*

5.2 The contents of the draft report were discussed between selected Council officers, Local Members and officers from County Council Highways at an internal fact finding meeting on 9th May 2008. Officers have supported the conclusions in the report but have proposed that the AQMA should not be extended until further monitoring has taken place to validate or refute the indications referred to above.

5.3 The final version of the Further Assessment Report has been submitted for approval and comment to the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA). The report has also been published on the Council's website at:
http://www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/Environmental_health/Air/DetailPage-3118.asp

6 Botley AQMA

6.1 Following a detailed assessment of air quality last year and AQMA was declared in parts of Botley next to the A34 in April this year. As with Abingdon the next step is to conduct a further assessment to confirm the longer term implications and to gather more information about emissions, such as source apportionment, which is needed to develop an AQAP. The Detailed Assessment Report has also been published on the Council's website

http://www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/Environmental_health/Air/DetailPage-3120.asp

7 A Council – wide approach to air quality management

7.1 By their nature AQAPs have wide ranging implications and require the cooperation of a number of Council service disciplines and external agencies to devise and implement. A considerable amount of research, liaison, negotiation, and communication is needed between affected parties. There are also significant community engagement issues ranging from consultation to raising awareness and informing local residents. An AQAP might also affect Council services which utilise their own vehicles, or their contractors and have implications for Council staff.

8 **Risk assessment**

- 8.1 The risks to the Council of failing to manage air quality effectively and correctly are primarily reputational. The Secretary of State for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs can require Local Authorities to take action where they are failing to make sufficient progress and may issue directions requiring Local Authorities to take appropriate steps.
- 8.2 To reduce the chances of failure officers have already consulted with other Councils who are implementing AQAPs. These include South Oxfordshire District Council (SODC) who have AQAPs covering parts of Henley and Wallingford. It is proposed that the creation of an officer working group will account to a Member and officer advisory group who will engage with the process of devising and implementing AQAPs. Other elements to the proposed AQAP development programme will be informed by the experiences of SODC and other Councils.

9 **Resource Implications**

- 9.1 Budgetary provision has already been made for the costs associated with air quality management. These include continued monitoring, the engagement of specialist air quality consultants, production of the necessary statutory reports and public consultation.
- 9.2 Whilst it is anticipated that the programme's financial requirements for 2008/09 can be met from this budgetary provision, an increased amount of time will need to be committed by key Members and officers if an effective Council - wide approach is adopted. These requirements are most likely to affect the Member Portfolio Holders, the Licensing and Regulatory Committee and officers from Environmental Health, Communications, Planning and Transport. It is understood that adequate provision has been made in the respective Service Plans for 2008-9

10 **Equality and Diversity**

- 10.1 The implementation of the Strategy will affect various parts of the community in Abingdon and Botley and possibly council staff. At this stage it is not possible to know which groups if any might suffer particular negative impacts. This will need to be taken into account through an Equalities Impact Assessment. .

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Background Papers: Further Assessment of Air Quality in the Abingdon AQMA, Air Quality Consultants April 2008; Detailed Assessment of Air Quality in Botley, Air Quality Consultants September 2007