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# Air Quality Status Reports 2020

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<b>Committee considering report:</b>	Joint Public Protection Committee
<b>Date of Committee:</b>	1 November 2021
<b>Chair of Committee:</b>	John Harrison
<b>Date JMB agreed report:</b>	11 October 2021
<b>Report Author:</b>	Suzanne McLaughlin
<b>Forward Plan Ref:</b>	JPPC4064

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## 1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 To inform the Joint Public Protection Committee of the submission and results of the annual air quality reports for West Berkshire Council and Wokingham Borough Council. These reports are for the monitoring data and action plan progress for the calendar year 2020. The Bracknell Forest Council report will be presented to a future meeting once the response is received from DEFRA.

## 2. Recommendations

The Committee:

- 2.1 **NOTES** the contents of the Report and the two separate Air Quality Annual Status Reports;
- 2.2 **NOTES** the feedback from the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) on the reports, and
- 2.3 **NOTES** the progress on the measures to improve air quality set out in each report, and
- 2.4 **APPROVES** the ongoing and planned future measures to improve air quality set out in each report.

## 3. Implications and Impact Assessment

Implication	Commentary
<b>Financial:</b>	<p>Work relating to Air Quality monitoring and reporting is funded from the general revenue budget allocated to the Public Protection Joint Committee. A number of proposals in the action plans continue to require additional funding to implement whilst others are relatively low cost and are covered from PPP revenue budget. Grant funding from DEFRA has been available annually.</p> <p>In addition West Berkshire Council (on behalf of the Partnership) has been awarded £259,406 from DEFRA to fund a project focused on behavioural change for the 448,000 residents who drive in the three boroughs by launching an anti-idling campaign.</p>

<b>Human Resource:</b>	<p>Staff who conduct this work are a shared resource under the Inter Authority Agreement (IAA). One benefit of the shared service is the ability to have staff that specialise in areas such as this and the service is fortunate to have a number of officers with significant expertise on environmental matters generally and air quality specifically.</p> <p>In 2020 the Covid restrictions reduced our ability to progress this work but we have focussed on submitting the reports and maintaining our monitoring programme.</p> <p>The fixed term to March 2023 Air Quality Officer post (funded from the DEFRA Grant) has been recruited to and the post holder (Jason Webb) joined the PPP August.</p>			
<b>Legal:</b>	<p>Under the Local Air Quality Management (LAQM) system local authorities are legally required to assess air quality in their area and designate Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs) if improvements are necessary. Where an AQMA is designated, local authorities are required to produce an Air Quality Action Plan (AQAP) describing the pollution reduction measures it will put in place.</p>			
<b>Risk Management:</b>	<p>This is a legal requirement under the Environment Act 2005. Failure to comply with our statutory obligations could present the risk of challenge to the PPP partner authorities.</p>			
<b>Property:</b>	<p>There are no direct property implications arising from this report.</p>			
<b>Policy:</b>	<p>The Inter-Authority Agreement (IAA) identified Environmental Protection as one of the five Strategic Priorities for the Joint Public Protection Committee. Under this heading the Committee in turn identified air quality as a priority for 2020/21. Two authorities (West Berkshire and Wokingham) have both declared climate emergencies. They have embedded Air Quality improvements into their Environment Strategy and Climate Emergency Action Plans. Bracknell Forest Council – Bracknell Forest Council’s Climate Change strategy was completed and published in January 2021 and have a target of net carbon zero by 2050.</p>			
	<b>Positive</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Negative</b>	<b>Commentary</b>
<b>Equalities Impact:</b>				
<b>A</b> Are there any aspects of the proposed decision, including how it is delivered or accessed, that		x		<p>No specific groups are affected by the contents of the proposals as there are no decisions being made. Poor air quality can be particularly harmful to the young, elderly, pregnant and those suffering ill health. Consideration to all these matters are given in this report and appendices and / or the national clean air strategy.</p>

could impact on inequality?				
<b>B</b> Will the proposed decision have an impact upon the lives of people with protected characteristics, including employees and service users?		x		No specific groups are affected by the contents of the proposals as there are no decisions being made. Poor air quality can be particularly harmful to the young, elderly, pregnant and those suffering ill health. Consideration to all these matters are given in this report and appendices and / or the national clean air strategy.
<b>Environmental Impact:</b>	x			Under the Local Air Quality Management (LAQM) system local authorities are legally required to assess air quality in their area and designate Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs) if improvements are necessary. Where an AQMA is designated, local authorities are required to produce an Air Quality Action Plan (AQAP) describing the pollution reduction measures it will put in place.  These reports are therefore designed to have a positive impact on the environment
<b>Health Impact:</b>	x			Although there has been a reduction in air pollution since the 1970s, poor air quality is still the largest environmental risk to public health in the UK. It shortens lives and reduces quality of life, particularly amongst the most vulnerable, the young and old, and those living with health conditions.  Ongoing monitoring and where appropriate the creation of action plans is designed to improve the quality of lives of our residents.
<b>ICT or Digital Services Impact:</b>	x			None  The Air Quality Status Reports will be published on the PPP website.
<b>PPP Priorities :</b>	x			The Inter-Authority Agreement (IAA) identified Environmental Protection as one of the five Strategic Priorities for the Joint Public Protection Committee. Under this heading the Committee in turn identified air quality as a priority for 2020/21
<b>Data Impact:</b>		✓		None
<b>Consultation and Engagement:</b>	Local authorities are required to submit an Annual Status Report (ASR) to the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) each year and a template is provide			

## 4. Executive Summary

- 4.1 Local authorities are required to submit an Annual Status Report (ASR) to the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) each year and a template is provided. The overall aim of this document is to report on progress in achieving reductions in concentrations of emissions relating to relevant pollutants below air quality objective levels. It is also where local authorities identify new or changing sources of emissions.
- 4.2 On completion, local authorities are required to submit their report to the Secretary of State (DEFRA) for consideration, who will provide comments back in a timely manner and to which the local authorities are expected to have regard.
- 4.3 Core requirements of the ASR:
- To report progress on the implementation of measures in the local air quality action plan and other measures and their impact in reducing concentrations below air quality objectives.
  - To provide a summary of monitoring/modelling data (either locally retrieved and/or from the national network) in order to assess the air quality situation in your area and likelihood of air quality breaches, and to provide the necessary evidence base for the impact of air quality measures.
  - To report on significant new developments that might affect local air quality; and
  - To present information in a public-facing executive summary for the lay reader so that the local public can more easily engage with local air quality issues and measures taken to improve it.
- 4.4 Annually DEFRA set a deadline for submission and there are implications of late submission in respect of whether air quality grant bids will be favourably received. We again have completed and submitted these within the appropriate timescales.
- 4.5 The PPP understands the importance of DEFRA approving the reports as the data is used by third parties in planning applications, as well as in-house decisions by Highways and Transport Planning colleagues. In addition the increased significance is recognised as identified actions are now intrinsically linked with Climate Emergency Plans and Environmental Strategies.

## 5. Reports submission

- 5.1 Air quality monitoring and improvement contributes to a number of principal priorities of the PPP, and continues to be identified as such in 2021-22 with synergies directly with climate change and environmental protection. In Summer 2019 all PPP local authorities made commitments with respect to climate change, and air quality continues to be regularly in the news, alongside, the cross cutting climate change theme.
- 5.2 The three Annual Status Reports were completed in-house by the deadline (which was not changed due to the pandemic). The reports were submitted as follows;

Bracknell Forest      30<sup>th</sup> June 2021

Wokingham 30<sup>th</sup> June 2021

West Berkshire 30<sup>th</sup> June 2021

- 5.3 It should be noted that the onset of the Covid pandemic had an impact on air quality due to reduced traffic movement and as a consequence Indications are that every unit (Downshire Way Bracknell, A339 Newbury, Twyford Crossroads and Peach Street Wokingham) saw at least a 35% reduction in measured NO<sub>2</sub> .
- 5.4 Notwithstanding this the results received for West Berkshire and Wokingham local authorities continue to show trends of a reduction of air pollution levels and a summary can be found in the Executive Summary at the beginning of each report. Although responses have been received for West Berkshire and Wokingham, Bracknell Forest's Response has not as yet been returned. This is not an indication of any issues with the report and is simply down to the administration of the contractors assessing the report on DEFRA's behalf.
- 5.5 Due to the size of the documents they have not been included as appendices to this report but they are available on the Public Protection Partnership website. <https://publicprotectionpartnership.org.uk/environmental-health/air-quality/air-quality-monitoring/>

## 6. Report appraisals and next steps:

- 6.6 The appraisals were provided by DEFRA as follows;

Wokingham 22 September 2021

West Berkshire 23 September 2021

- 6.7 The reports and conclusions have been accepted and a summary of the comments received are detailed below.
- 6.8 Bracknell Forest Council's Report will be presented to the Committee at the first meeting after it is received. It will be published on the website as soon as it is received and we will notify Bracknell Forest Members of its existence.

## 7. Bracknell Forest

- 7.9 As noted above DEFRA has not yet returned the Bracknell Forest Council Report. This is not an indication that there are any issues with the report, it is an administrative delay and it will be published on the PPP website, circulated to Bracknell Forest Council Members and brought to next Committee meeting after it is received.

## 8. Wokingham

- 8.1 DEFRA has commented that overall the report is very detailed, thorough and satisfies the criteria of relevant standards, and the report is an example of best practice. The Council should continue their excellent work.

- 8.2 The Council have provided clear mapping of the automatic and diffusion tube monitoring network, and very detailed and thorough trend analysis and discussion throughout the report, which is commendable.
- 8.3 The Council have provided a very detailed discussion and analysis of concentrations and traffic data regarding the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on air quality, and highlighted the opportunities and challenges going forward.

## **9. West Berkshire**

- 9.1 DEFRA has commented that the Council have completed a detailed and thorough report that satisfies the relevant criteria. The Council should continue their good work for future ASRs.
- 9.2 Trends are clearly presented and discussed and a robust comparison with air quality objectives is provided, and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic during 2020 was duly noted.
- 9.3 Following a comment from last year's ASR appraisal, the Council have included a detailed discussion relating to measure to bring about PM2.5 emissions reductions, which is commendable and welcomed.
- 9.4 The Council have provided a good summary of the impacts from COVID-19 on air quality, clearly showing the benefits of reduced traffic flows on NO2 concentrations in particular, and highlighting the challenges to LAQM as well as opportunities for behavioural change and potential positive impacts from these.

## **10. Other air quality related matters of note**

- 10.1 As mentioned previously the Public Protection Partnership (PPP) have been awarded £259,000 from DEFRA for an air quality project which aims to change the behaviour of those 448,000 residents who drive in the three boroughs by launching an anti-idling campaign.
- 10.2 The air quality project will involve all schools in the PPP area, engaging pupils in air pollution and anti-idling focused activities, educational sessions, and competitions. The project will further target idling hotspots across the boroughs such as taxi ranks and school drop-off/pick-up locations, through the presence of increased signage and behaviour change measures.
- 10.3 The DEFRA funded project is due to be delivered by March 2023, current progress since the award of the funding includes the recruitment of an Air Quality Officer to help deliver the project, opening of schools 'Bumper Sticker' anti-idling competition, and the commencement of procurement activities to supply PM2.5 monitors for schools.
- 10.4 The Air Quality Officer has also started attending the Taxi Trade Liaison meetings to discuss ways in which the taxi trade are able to assist with the anti-idling campaign.

## 11. Concluding Observations

- 11.1 Air Quality continues to be high profile area of work and the links with the sources of pollutants and health impacts becoming more apparent during the Covid pandemic. The authorities must continue to not only monitor the levels of pollutants affecting their residents but ensure that we continue progress actions set out within the action plans.
- 11.2 The evaluation provided by DEFRA is positive and the JPPC is asked to both note the reports and the DEFRA evaluation and endorse the proposals set out in the action plans.
- 11.3 One area of note is that there appears to be support for the PPP in seeking to undeclare the Air Quality Management Areas within Newbury and Thatcham if levels continue to drop in the same manner they have over the last couple of years. The PPP and the three authorities cannot be complacent should this take place as we need to continue to ensure our policies and decision making does not impact on this positive work.
- 11.4 The duty on local authorities to both monitor and improve air quality is not just a legal requirement but a public demand. The effects on health of poor air quality are indisputable and Councils have been given a range of tools to tackle the causes.
- 11.5 In simple terms the causes are known but the solutions are wide ranging. The proposals set out in the plans appended to this report seek to address several approaches ranging from raising awareness, changing human behaviour and matters of infrastructure.

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## 12. Background Papers:

12.6 Defra: National Clean Air Strategy 2019

12.7 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/clean-air-strategy-2019>

### Subject to Call-In:

Yes:  No:

**Wards affected:** All Wards

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