

Air Quality Status Reports 2020 – Bracknell Forest Council

Committee considering report:	Joint Public Protection Committee
Date of Committee:	14 March 2022
Chair of Committee:	John Harrison
Date JMB agreed report:	28 February 2022
Report Author:	Suzanne McLaughlin
Forward Plan Ref:	JPPC4064(a)

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 To inform the Joint Public Protection Committee of the submission and results of the annual air quality report for Bracknell Forest Council. This reports is for the monitoring data and action plan progress for the calendar year 2020.

2. Recommendations

The Committee:

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

3. Implications and Impact Assessment

Implication	Commentary
Financial:	<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 the Public Protection Partnership (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>
Human Resource:	<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</p>

	<p>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 in August 2021.</p>			
Legal:	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.			
Risk Management:	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.			
Property:	There are no direct property implications arising from this report.			
Policy:	<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.</p> <p>Bracknell Forest Council – Bracknell Forest Council's Climate Change strategy was completed and published in January 2021 and includes a target of net carbon zero by 2050.</p>			
	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Commentary
Equalities Impact:				
A Are there any aspects of the proposed decision, including how it is delivered or accessed, that could impact on inequality?		✓		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 Will the proposed decision have an impact upon the lives of people with protected characteristics, including employees and service users?		✓		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.
Environmental Impact:	✓			<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> <p>These reports are therefore designed to have a positive impact on the environment.</p>
Health Impact:	✓			<p>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.</p> <p>Ongoing monitoring and where appropriate the creation of action plans is designed to improve the quality of lives of our residents.</p>
ICT or Digital Services Impact:	✓			<p>None</p> <p>The Air Quality Status Report will be published on the PPP website.</p>
PPP Priorities :	✓			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.
Data Impact:		✓		None

Consultation and Engagement:

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.

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.

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 and 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 Annual Status Report was completed in-house by the deadline and the report was submitted on the 30th 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 the unit on Downshire Way Bracknell, saw at least a 35% reduction in measured NO₂ (Nitrogen Dioxide).
- 5.4 Notwithstanding this the results received for Bracknell Forest continues to show trends of a reduction of air pollution levels and a summary can be found in the Executive Summary at the beginning of the report.
- 5.5 Due to the size of the document it has not been included as an appendix to this report but it is available on the Public Protection Partnership website. <https://publicprotectionpartnership.org.uk/environmental-health/air-quality/air-quality-monitoring/>

6. Report appraisals and next steps:

- 6.1 The appraisal was provided to DEFRA on the 30th June 2021. The appraisal was finally accepted at the end of January 2022. The initial delay was due to a couple of minor errors in monitoring data submitted.
- 6.2 The report and conclusion have now been accepted and a summary of the comments received are detailed below.

7. Bracknell Forest

- 7.1 The local monitoring strategy has been updated during the present year and justifications have been given. The movement of monitoring locations is welcomed, allowing the Council to prioritise other areas of higher air pollution or closer to new developments as concentrations surrounding the AQMA have been below the Air Quality Objective. This demonstrates the Council's proactive and dedicated approach to improving air quality across Bracknell Forest.
- 7.2 The comments from last year's ASR have been addressed.
- 7.3 The Council has multiple measures in place that will help to tackle *PM_{2.5}. However, measures focus only on emissions from transport. Actions would also be possible on domestic emissions (through awareness campaigns for example). The Public Health Outcomes Frameworks were referred to, and this is encouraged to continue.
- 7.4 The report is a good source for members of the Public to find out about air quality in their area. The Council should continue their hard work.

(*Refers to a category of pollutant that is 2.5 microns or smaller in size)

8. Other air quality related matters of note

- 8.1 As mentioned previously the Public Protection Partnership (PPP) have been awarded £259,406 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.
- 8.2 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. It is anticipated that this funded project will continue in Wokingham once they leave the partnership as part of the Traded Services arrangement.
- 8.3 The DEFRA funded project is due to be delivered by March 23, 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 awarding of the procurement of activities to supply PM2.5 monitors for schools, with monitoring starting in February 2022. Additional procurement has commenced for the behavioural change specialist.
- 8.4 The Air Quality Officer has also attended the Taxi Trade Liaison meetings to discuss ways in which the taxi trade are able to assist with the anti-idling campaign.

9. Concluding Observations

- 9.1 Air Quality continues to be a high profile area of work and the links with the sources of pollutants and health impacts becoming more apparent during the Covid pandemic. The authority must continue to not only monitor the levels of pollutants affecting its residents but ensure that we continue to progress actions set out within the action plan.
- 9.2 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 plan.
- 9.3 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.
- 9.4 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.

10. Appendices

Appendix A - Annual Status Report Appraisal Report

Appendix B – [Bracknell Air Quality Report](#) (due to its size it's included on the website and is not attached to this report)

11. Background Papers:

11.5 Defra: National Clean Air Strategy 2019

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

Subject to Call-In:

Yes: ☒ No: ☐

Wards affected: All Wards

Officer details:

Name: Suzanne McLaughlin
Job Title: Principle Officer
Tel No: 01635 519851
E-mail: Suzanne.McLaughlin@westberks.gov.uk
