
AIR QUALITY STATUS REPORTS - Summary Report

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| Committee considering report: | Joint Public Protection Committee |
| Date of Committee: | 28 th September 2020 |
| Report Author: | Anna Smy |

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 the 3 local authorities. These reports are for the monitoring data and action plan progress for the calendar year 2019.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1** The JPPC NOTE the contents of the Report and the three separate Air Quality Annual Status Reports;
- 2.2** NOTE the feedback from Defra on the reports, and
- 2.3** NOTE the progress on the measures to improve air quality set out in each report, and
- 2.4** APPROVE the ongoing and planned future measures to improve air quality set in each report.

3. Implications

- 3.1 Financial:** 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, if there is a 2020/21 funding round we will, if appropriate apply.
- 3.2 Policy:** 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 2019/20. 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 Plan.

- 3.3 Personnel:** Staff who conduct this work are a shared resource under the 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. In recent months the covid arrangements has reduced our ability to progress this work but we have focussed on submitting the reports and maintaining our monitoring programme. The temporary structure will allow us to maintain this.
- 3.4 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.
- 3.5 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.
- 3.6 Property:** None
- 3.7 Other:** None

4. Other options considered

- 4.1 All options considered are set out in the reports.

5. Executive Summary

- 5.1 Local authorities are required to submit an Annual Status Report (ASR) to the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs 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.
- 5.2 On completion, local authorities should 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.
- 5.3 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.

5.4 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.

5.5 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. This year there is more significance as our identified actions are now intrinsically linked with Climate Emergency plans and Environmental Strategy.

5.6 A summary of the process and Defra response can be found in the supporting information at **Appendix A** to this report.

6. Conclusion

6.1 Air Quality continues to be high profile and the links with the sources of pollutants and health impacts becoming more apparent during the current pandemic. We must continue to not only monitor the levels of pollutants affecting our residents but ensure that we progress actions set out within the action plans.

6.2 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.

6.3 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 3 organisations 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.

6.4 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.

6.5 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.

Background Papers:

Defra: National Clean Air Strategy 2019

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

PPP Strategic Aims and Priorities Supported:

The proposals will help achieve the following Public Protection Partnership aims as stated in the Inter Authority Agreement:

X 2 – Protecting and Improving Health

X 3 – Protection of the Environment

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APPENDIX A – Supporting Information and EIA

APPENDIX B – Bracknell Forest AQ Annual Status Report and Defra Response

APPENDIX C – West Berkshire AQ Annual Status Report and Defra Response

APPENDIX D - Wokingham AQ Annual Status Report and Defra Response
