

Overview and Scrutiny Committee Report

Ward(s) affected: all

Report of Director of Service Delivery

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Air Quality Strategy Action Plan Update

Executive Summary

This report provides the Committee with an update on the implementation of the action plan within the Air Quality Strategy 2017-2022 adopted by Executive on 28 November 2017 and an update on emerging air quality actions since the adoption of the policy.

Recommendation to Committee

That the Committee notes the progress made implementing the Air Quality Strategy 2017-2022 adopted by Executive on 28 November 2017.

Reason for Recommendation:

To ensure the Air Quality Strategy 2017-2022 action plan is being implemented.

Is the report (or part of it) exempt from publication?

No

1. Purpose of Report

1.1 The report aims to provide the Committee with an update on progress with the air quality action plan and emerging air quality priorities.

2. Strategic Priorities

2.1 Implementing the air quality action plan supports three key priorities of the Council:

- Climate Change and Environment particularly: working with residents and businesses towards becoming a carbon neutral borough, protecting our environment and making travel easier and more sustainable

- Housing and Community by keeping the community active and well
- Economy and Regeneration particularly: encouraging sustainable and clean economic growth

3. Background

- 3.1 On the 28 November 2017, Executive approved an Air Quality Strategy drafted in consultation with the Air Quality Executive Working Group and departments across the Council.
- 3.2 On the 9 January 2018 the Committee agreed to annually monitor progress with implementation of the Air Quality Strategy work plan. This report follows previous updates to the Committee on 10 July 2018 and 15 January 2019.
- 3.3 The report focuses on reviewing progress with the existing air quality action plan and provides an update on emerging issues. The impact of COVID-19 on air quality is a significant emerging issue but has not been covered within the report as its long-term impact is unknown at this stage. It is too early to know if the reduced use of public transport and vehicle use due to increased home working and less travel for social and business purposes will be sustained. The Council will continue to monitor air quality within the borough to determine the long-term impact and where appropriate identify new priorities and propose changes to the action plan in future years.

4. Update on action plan

- 4.1 There has been good progress with the short-term measures (2017-2018) in the action plan with 11 of targets completed, 2 in progress or 1 ongoing. The most significant being the introduction of easitGUILDFORD, the schools' educational campaign and completing air quality modelling for Surrey. Below is an update on these three measures.
- 4.2 An update on all the measures in the action plan is in Appendix 1.

Schools Air Quality programme – Measure 5

- 4.3 Hundreds of local primary school children learnt how they can all make a difference in the fight against air pollution, after they watched a play which toured local schools across the Borough. In conjunction with Guildford Borough Council and Surrey County Council, Performance in Education's production of 'Abbie Ayre and the Shed of Science' toured six local primary schools (Ash Grange Primary School, Queen Eleanor's Junior School, Tillingbourne Junior School, Holy Trinity Pewley Down School, Rydes Hill Prep School and Worplesdon Primary School) during February 2020.
- 4.4 The show told the story of two children, Abbie and Charlie, who visit a top-secret laboratory, hidden inside a garden shed, where Abbie's grandmother spends her time working on inventions. The audience help Charlie to learn whether cars or factories are worse for the environment and discover the many ways he can

reduce air pollution by making small changes to his own lifestyle – such as walking to school or reducing the hours playing video games.

- 4.5 Guildford Borough Council contributed £7,000 towards the staging of the tour, plus provided officer support in making arrangements with the schools.
- 4.6 Further workshops with schools are planned but all activities associated with the Schools Air Quality programme have been postponed until further notice due to the ongoing school closures.

Surrey Air Quality Modelling – Measure 11

- 4.7 Following analysis of the Surrey air quality modelling report, 12 diffusion tube monitoring locations have been installed where modelling predicted potential exceedance of NO₂ at the relevant receptor locations and further air quality management areas need to be designated.

easitGUILDFORD – Measure 10 and 19

- 4.8 easitGUILDFORD, launched in March 2019, gives businesses and organisations across Guildford the opportunity to secure travel discounts for their staff. Working with the easitNETWORK – easitGUILDFORD offers discounts on train and bus travel, as well as reductions on other initiatives. The aim is to make public transport and cycling realistic alternatives for commuters – and the discounts can be used for leisure as well as work trips, making the offers even more attractive. Businesses across the borough are invited to sign up, so as many people as possible can benefit by getting cars off the road and reducing air pollution.
- 4.9 As Guildford Borough Council is a member of easitGUILDFORD all Council Officers have access to the discounts available which has been promoted by Human Resources and Communications.

5. Emerging priorities

Shalford Air Quality Management Area and Action Plan

- 5.1 On the 3 July 2019, Guildford Borough Council designated an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) in an area of Shalford due to a breach of the national annual mean level of nitrogen dioxide air quality standard (National Air Quality Objectives and European Directive limit and target value for the protection of Human Health).
- 5.2 On the 11 December 2019, following consultation the Guildford Joint Committee adopted an Action Plan to reduce nitrogen dioxide concentrations making the area compliant with the air quality standard. The measures include: school intervention programme, promoting easitGUILDFORD (green travel network) and increasing electric vehicles in the fleet locally.
- 5.3 The impact of the measures in reducing nitrogen dioxide levels will be monitored throughout the year by the diffusion tube data followed by a formal review in 2021 and each subsequent year which will be reported in Guildford Borough Council's

Annual Status Report to DEFRA. The effectiveness of the measures will be reviewed if nitrogen dioxide levels are not reducing sufficiently and an update report will be presented to Guildford Joint Committee to allow them to monitor progress.

- 5.4 When there is no longer an exceedance of the air quality standard for nitrogen dioxide the Council can revoke the AQMA.

A3 – through Guildford

- 5.5 Where the A3 passes through Guildford there is a higher level of congestion due to the merging of strategic and local traffic. Defra's Pollution Climate Mapping (PCM) model shows exceedances of the annual mean EU limit value for nitrogen dioxide (NO₂). Highways England are required to address the breaches by implementing measures to achieve compliance by 2021 of EU air quality targets.
- 5.6 The Council have been awarded a grant of £30,000 by Highways England to assist with the development of measures to improve air quality in specified locations along the A3 as it passes through Guildford. The grant will offset expenditure incurred by the Council which will include commissioning Air Quality consultants to help analyse the options available.
- 5.7 The project will consider options to improve air quality around the A3 as it passes through Guildford that can be delivered by March 2021. The initial work will be high level options analysis to understand what could be delivered by 2021/22.

Guildford Town Centre and approach roads

- 5.8 The Council is currently in the process of conducting a detailed air quality assessment as the monitoring results of nitrogen dioxide have shown that the annual air quality objective is at risk of being exceeded at a number of sensitive locations on a number of main roads leading into the Guildford town centre gyratory system.
- 5.9 Whilst assumptions cannot be made without the completion of a detailed assessment, the Council's air quality monitoring results indicate that air quality standards are not being achieved in a number of locations on the approach roads into Guildford town centre. Therefore, it is likely that an AQMA will be declared for the whole or part of the study area resulting in a requirement to produce an Air Quality Action Plan (AQAP).
- 5.10 The assessment has required particular attention to be paid to any street canyons with residential or locations of public exposure in close proximity.

6. Consultations

- 6.1 The Lead Councillor has approved the report and will continue to monitor progress with implementation throughout the year.

7. Key Risks

- 7.1 Insufficient human and financial resource to fully implement the Air Quality Strategy action plan, emerging priorities and Air Quality Action Plans to achieve compliance with air quality standards within existing and future Air Quality Management Areas.

8. Financial Implications

- 8.1 The current action plan can be delivered within existing resources but any additional funding required would have to come from grants, other organisations or we would need to put in a growth bid/supplementary estimate.

9. Legal Implications

- 9.1 The provisions of Part IV of the Environment Act 1995 established a national framework for air quality management, which requires all local authorities in England, Scotland and Wales to conduct local air quality reviews. Whilst an Air Quality Strategy is not a legal requirement, it is good practice and helps provide a clear pathway for improving air quality.

10. Human Resource Implications

- 10.1 There are no human resource implications arising from the report.

11. Equality and Diversity Implications

- 11.1 There are no equality and diversity implications arising from the report.

12. Climate Change/Sustainability Implications

- 12.1 Implementing actions within the action plan will improve air quality and reduce carbon emissions across the Borough and the wider area as residents, workers and visitors to the Borough change their behaviours.

13. Conclusion

- 13.1 Progress continues to be made implementing the air quality strategy action plan contributing towards improved air quality across the Borough. In addition, further measures are being adopted as new issues arise.

14. Background Papers

Guildford Joint Committee – 12 December 2018

<https://mycouncil.surreycc.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=751&MId=6884&Ver=4>

Guildford Joint Committee – 19 September 2018

<https://mycouncil.surreycc.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=751&MId=6883&Ver=4>

Overview and Scrutiny Committee – 15 January 2019

<https://www2.guildford.gov.uk/councilmeetings/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=262&MId=772&Ver=4>

Overview and Scrutiny Committee – 10 July 2018

<http://www2.guildford.gov.uk/councilmeetings/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=262&MId=769&Ver=4m>

Overview and Scrutiny Committee – 9 January 2018

<http://www2.guildford.gov.uk/councilmeetings/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=262&MId=634&Ver=4>

Executive – 28 November 2017

<http://www2.guildford.gov.uk/councilmeetings/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=132&MId=608&Ver=4>

Local Air Quality Management, Policy Guidance (PG 16) Defra

https://consult.defra.gov.uk/communications/laqm_changes/supporting_documents/LAQM%20Policy%20Guidance%202016.pdf

Local Air Quality Management, Technical Guidance (TG 16) Defra

<https://laqm.defra.gov.uk/documents/LAQM-TG16-April-16-v1.pdf>

15. Appendices

Appendix 1 – Update on Air Quality Action Plan measures