

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 report on the air quality actions completed in the last 12 months and endorses the proposed review of 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, 15 January 2019, 15 September 2020.
- 3.3 The report focuses on reviewing progress with the existing air quality action plan and provides an update on emerging issues which primarily focus on statutory air quality activities.

4. Update on action plan

- 4.1 Since the last update there has been limited progress with measures in the action plan as we have had to target resources on activities where there are breaches of air quality limits which are detailed below. An update on all the measures in the action plan is in Appendix 1.
- 4.2 Whilst we have been focused on other matters this year, over the life of the action plan 21 of the actions are either completed, in progress or ongoing.
- 4.3 The Air Quality Strategy and accompanying action plan are due for review in 2022 during which a new action plan will be produced. It may include the 4 incomplete measures if these are considered a priority and appropriate resources are allocated.

5. Emerging priorities

A3 – through Guildford

- 5.1 Where the A3 passes through Guildford there is a higher level of congestion due to the volumes of strategic and local traffic. Defra's Pollution Climate Mapping (PCM) model shows exceedances of the annual mean limit value for nitrogen dioxide (NO₂). The Council are working in partnership with National Highways (formerly Highways England) and Surrey County Council to address the breaches by implementing measures to achieve compliance with air quality limit values.

- 5.2 The Council completed a study, with grant funding from of £30,000 from National Highways, to assist with the development of measures to improve air quality in specified locations along the A3 as it passes through Guildford.
- 5.3 The study explored the nature of the traffic on the A3, this understanding then allowed us to evaluate the long list of measures and produce a list short list of measures that could achieve compliance on this stretch of road. The partnership are currently preparing grant funding bids for resources to implement these measures.

Proposed Air Quality Management Area - Guildford Town Centre

- 5.4 On the 21 October 2021 the Guildford Joint Committee (GJC) will receive a report recommending the declaration of an Air Quality Management Area in Guildford Town Centre. The Council conducted a detailed air quality assessment which showed that the annual air quality objective for nitrogen dioxide is being exceeded at a number of sensitive locations on a number of main roads leading into the Guildford town centre gyratory system where residential or locations of public exposure in close proximity to the road.
- 5.5 If approved by The Guildford Joint Committee, the Council have one year to submit an Air Quality Action Plan (AQAP) to Defra of measures to bring the area into compliance with air quality limit values.
- 5.6 A technical officer working group will draft the AQAP with the input of key stakeholders. The draft AQAP will be presented to the GJC in March 2022 seeking approval for consultation and then return to the GJC after consultation seeking approval to submit to Defra. Officers are engaging with officers across the Council to ensure that linkages with other policies and projects is considered.

Implementing Compton and Shalford Air Quality Action Plans

- 5.7 Implementing the Air Quality Action Plan for Shalford has been delayed during 2021 as we have had to target resource in other areas. Steps will be taken to progress implementation of the measures during 2022 particularly as we understand the communities desires for improvements in the air quality.
- 5.8 The effectiveness of the ban of the right hand turn into Down Lane, Compton to reduce nitrogen dioxide limits in the Compton AQMA cannot be full assessed due to the change in travel patterns during the coronavirus pandemic. We will continue to monitor the air quality during 2022 to determine if levels of nitrogen dioxide no longer exceed limits.
- 5.9 When there is no longer an exceedance of the air quality standard for nitrogen dioxide the Council can revoke an AQMA.

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.
- 7.2 Significant challenges in coordinating the measures required in Guildford Town Centre and the A3 to ensure they do not have a negative impact on each other.

8. Financial Implications

- 8.1 The current action plan can be delivered within existing resources but additional funding via grants, other organisations or an internal growth bid/supplementary estimate would be required to complete actions in action plans linked to the AQMA or Air Quality Strategy.

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. Consideration must be given to the resources available to deliver the action plan within any new air quality strategy.

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 Resources have been focused on areas of air quality where there are breaches of legal limits, meeting our statutory duties and responding to the pandemic. There has been limited progress implementing the air quality strategy action plan this year but over the life of the strategy the majority of the actions have been completed or embedded.

- 13.2 A review of the Air Quality Strategy and accompanying action plan is scheduled for 2022, however the primary focus must remain on meeting our statutory duties and areas where there are exceedances of air quality limit values.

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

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.