

Overview and Scrutiny Committee Report

Ward(s) affected: all

Report of Strategic Director - Place

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Date: 17 January 2023

Air Quality Strategy – Workplan 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 other air quality activity during the last 12 months.

Recommendation to Committee

That the Committee notes the report 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 Council meets its statutory duties in relation to air quality and the Air Quality Strategy 2017-2022 action plan is 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 other statutory 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 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 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 in 2018, 2019, 2020 and 2021.
- 3.3 The report reviews progress with the existing air quality action plan and also provides an update on other activities which primarily focus on statutory air quality duties.

4. Update on action plan and Air Quality Strategy review

- 4.1 Resources have been targeted on statutory air quality duties, where there are breaches of air quality limits, so unfortunately non-statutory activities within the action plan have not been progressed.
- 4.2 A status summary of all measures in the action plan is shown in Appendix 1. 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. The four incomplete measures may be taken forward in the forthcoming review.
- 4.3 The collaboration between Guildford and Waverley Borough Councils provides a positive opportunity to explore where both Air Quality Strategies and accompanying action plans and common objectives can be aligned. There is also the opportunity to include new activities such as car free day which has commenced since the strategy was originally drafted.
- 4.4 The review of the Air Quality Strategy and action plan will be conducted in 2023.

5. Air Quality activity

Proposed Air Quality Management Area - Guildford Town Centre

- 5.1 Following the declaration of an Air Quality Management Area in Guildford Town Centre the Air Quality Action Plan (AQAP) consultation, containing draft measures that could bring the area into compliance with air quality limit values, received over 400 responses from the public.
- 5.2 Following the public consultation in the October 2022 the draft AQAP was approved by the Guildford Joint Committee and has since been approved by Defra.
- 5.3 A feasibility study is currently being commissioned to understand the impact and viability of the draft measures in the action plan. The finalised plan will be brought forward in 2023.

Shalford Air Quality Action Plan

- 5.4 A review of the Shalford AQAP has been commissioned with the updated report due in the first quarter of 2023. Producing a refreshed action plan is the aim of the review as the air quality limits are in exceedance and implementing the existing action plan has been challenging. Reducing the impact of domestic diesel vehicles will be the focus of any measures as this is the reason for the exceedance.
- 5.5 Officers have met with representatives from Shalford Parish Council and Ward Councillors throughout the year to discuss their concerns and keep them updated. A further meeting is scheduled for early 2023.

Compton Air Quality Action Plan

- 5.7 Monitoring results show a continued exceedance in air quality limits values so a review of the AQAP may be needed in future years. Currently the effectiveness of the ban of the right-hand turn into Down Lane, Compton to reduce nitrogen dioxide limits cannot be full assessed due to the change in travel patterns since the coronavirus pandemic.
- 5.8 There are challenges with identifying further effective measures in Compton in any review process and an extension list of measures was considered initially. The exceedance is primarily due to domestic diesel vehicle so this group must be the focus of any future measures. Reducing the number of domestic diesel vehicle journeys or converting to more sustainable forms of transport is the key.
- 5.9 When there is no longer an exceedance of the air quality standard for nitrogen dioxide the Council can revoke an AQMA.

A3 – through Guildford

- 5.10 The Council is continuing to work with National Highways and Surrey County Council to develop deliverable measures to improve air quality along the A3 as it passes through Guildford.
- 5.11 The study, completed with grant funding from National Highways, to assist with the development of measures to improve air quality in specified locations along the A3 has been central to understanding the issues for the exceedances of the annual mean limits values for nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) and developing solutions. The background report is available at: <https://www.guildford.gov.uk/article/26606/Working-to-improve-air-quality-on-the-A3-in-Guildford>

6. Consultations

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

7. Key Risks

- 7.1 Insufficient human and financial resource to fully implement the Air Quality Strategy action plan and statutory duties including three Air Quality Action Plans to achieve compliance with air quality standards within existing resource remains a risk. Additional funding opportunities such as grants from central government departments can be sought to help mitigate this risk. To help mitigate the risk in this financial year, additional funding has been obtained to provide extra officer time and to fund the AQMA reports and feasibility study.
- 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 source of funding such as grants, other organisations or an internal growth bid/supplementary estimate needs to be attached to any future action plan to ensure they are achievable.

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 Consideration must be given to ensure that adequate resources are allocated to deliver all air quality activities with statutory duties given primacy.

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 Improving air quality for residents, visitors and workers in the Borough is a Council priority with available resources focused on areas where there are breaches of legal limits to meet our statutory duties. Over the life of the strategy the majority of the actions have been completed or embedded with the majority of the measures implemented during the early life of the plan.
- 13.2 A planned review of the Air Quality Strategy and accompanying action plan is scheduled will now take place in 2023.

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