

Local Members' Interest
N/A

Prosperous Staffordshire Select Committee – 20th June 2019

Staffordshire Air Quality Projects

Recommendations

- a. For the committee to note the AQMA's in Staffordshire that are managed and monitored by the Borough and District Councils and the County Council's involvement in them.
- b. For the committee to note the progress being made with the current Air Quality Project that is funded by Defra and comment on progress to date and the planned actions in the coming 12 months.
- c. For the committee to note the Air Quality Ministerial Directive that has been served on NBC and SOTCC in relation to a number of roads in North Staffordshire and consider whether and how they wish to be kept informed of the emerging action plan.

Report of Cllr Helen Fisher, Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport

Summary

What is the Select Committee being asked to do and why?

1. Air Quality Management activities in Staffordshire have been taking place for several years but recently there has been an increased focus, by central government, on the potential harm caused by air borne pollution, particularly from motorised traffic.
2. It is therefore timely for the Prosperous Staffordshire Scrutiny Committee to review current activities and be made aware of the developing agenda.
3. The Prosperous Staffordshire Select Committee is asked to contribute to the debate by reviewing current activities and suggesting where the authority's limited resources should be focused on in the future.
4. The authority's current Climate Change Strategy, Green Shoots, will be refreshed over the next 12 months and will be expanded to take wider account of the wider sustainability agenda, including Clean Air. This strategy will be considered by scrutiny prior to being signed off.

Report

Background

5. "Air pollution can damage lives with harmful effects on human health, the economy and the environment. It is the largest environmental risk to the public's health, contributing to cardiovascular disease, lung cancer and respiratory diseases. It increases the chances of hospital admissions, visits to Emergency Departments and respiratory and cardiovascular symptoms which interfere with everyday life, especially for people who

are already vulnerable. Bad air quality affects everyone and has a disproportionate impact on the young and old, the sick and the poor”¹.

6. Traffic types and volumes on the road network in Staffordshire have a major impact on air quality immediately adjacent to the highway. This is a particular issue where traffic volumes are high such as the Motorway trunk road network together with some A roads in Urban areas. In addition, there will be significant agricultural emissions from farms located in Staffordshire.
7. Through the Local Air Quality Management (LAQM) system local authorities are required to regularly review and assess air quality in their areas, and to determine whether or not air quality objectives are likely to be achieved. Where exceedances are considered likely, the local authority must then declare an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) and prepare an Air Quality Action Plan (AQAP) setting out the measures it intends to put in place in pursuit of the objectives. Details on the LAQM process can be found in Defra's 2016 [LAQM Policy Guidance](#).
8. The vast majority of Staffordshire does not have a recognised Air Quality problem, however there are a number of locations that have been identified by the District and Borough Environmental Teams that have air quality concerns.
9. There are Air Quality Management Areas (AQMA) in 7 of our 8 Districts. For further information on AQMAs can be found here <https://uk-air.defra.gov.uk/aqma/>
10. Air pollution particularly affects the most vulnerable in society, children and older people, and those with existing heart and lung conditions. There is also often a strong correlation with equalities issues, because areas with poor air quality are also often the less affluent areas. In Staffordshire there were around 390 deaths attributable to exposure to poor air quality in 2015. Air pollution is estimated to reduce life expectancy of people by 6 months.
11. The annual health cost to society of the impacts of particulate matter alone in the UK is estimated to be around £16bn and based on this it equated to £215 million in Staffordshire. Air quality is an important consideration for our communities when people choose where to live, study and work. Good air quality is linked to the choices for schooling, training, the workplace environment and housing.

Air Quality Management Areas

12. AQMAs designated in Staffordshire are generally associated with traffic levels on the local highway network managed by the County Council and the trunk road network managed by Highways England. The AQMAs that are most significantly affected by traffic on the local highway network are located in Burton upon Trent, Newcastle-under-Lyme and Cannock. The other AQMA designations are generally related to traffic levels on the trunk road network, in particular the A5 and A38.
13. In these instances, the environmental protection officers at the District / Borough Councils work closely with both Highways England and the County Council to help resolve the exceedances. In order to share best practice and develop common solutions to reducing air pollution all key stakeholders regularly attend the Staffordshire Air Quality Forum (SAQF).

14. The SAQF delivers air quality services at the local level by exchanging local knowledge and advice and dealing with day to day issues. It feeds back on issues to the Environmental Protection Management Board (EMPB) and receives information and guidance from the EPMB. The EMPB's role is to provide strategic overview and direction for the delivery of Environmental Protection Services across the area of Central England covered by participating authorities. It consists of Chairs/secretaries of Local Environmental Protection/Air Quality Delivery Groups, Contaminated Land Groups, Midlands Joint Advisory Council (MJAC) and representatives from the Environment Agency and Public Health England. This collaborative approach is important, due to the cross-boundary nature of air quality exceedances. Whilst exceedances often occur at congested locations, the traffic can be generated by employment or educational facilities in neighbouring districts.
15. In addition to attending the Forum, transport officers at the County Council identify the appropriate transport schemes for inclusion in the Air Quality Action Plans that are prepared by the District / Borough Councils. These transport schemes are included in the relevant Integrated Transport Strategies and are recommended for inclusion in the Action Plans if they are considered to have local air quality benefits, for example traffic management measures and sustainable transport improvements that encourage reduced car use in the transport corridors within AQMAs.
16. County Council officers also feed into the District / Borough Annual Status Reports by reporting on transport schemes that have been delivered through the County Council's Capital Programme, funded predominantly through the County Council integrated transport capital block and S106 developer funds.

Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) funded Air Quality Project

17. In late 2017, as part of the Government's £220m Clean Air Fund, all local authorities were invited to bid for monies from DEFRA to deliver projects aimed at improving air quality.
18. Working with our 8 Districts and Stoke City Council, Staffordshire County Council led a partnership programme to develop and submit our Air Quality Project (AQP) bid. All partners are members of the SAQF, within which collectively there are now 12 declared localised AQMA's, 3 proposed localised AQMA's and one regional AQMA for the City of Stoke on Trent and are committed to improving air quality across the whole of Staffordshire. A map of the AQMA locations are contained in appendix 1.
19. Staffordshire was one of 16 successful authorities in England to receive a DEFRA grant in April 2018 and were awarded £208k (£58k more than requested) of the total £2.4million pot.
20. The AQP is a 2-year project, which commenced in July 2018. The project aims for 10% reduction in local contributions of air pollutant emissions / concentrations during this period. All exceedances relate to nitrogen dioxide with values ranging up to 80 ug/m³. Reductions required to meet the annual mean objective will vary between AQMA's.
21. It is planned that this will be achieved through the delivery of a range of initiatives to raise awareness of air quality matters across Staffordshire, drive behavioural change

and scope innovative future technologies that if embraced early could have a massive impact on pollutant levels in the medium to long term.

22. Delivery is split in to 4 key elements, business engagement, school engagement, communications campaign and feasibility study to consider our role in future technology. Achievements to date are outlined in brief below. For more information on programme delivery please refer to the AQP bid contained in appendix 2.

a. Element 1 - Business Engagement – Actively work with businesses to develop travel plans to reduce single occupancy travel on journey to work. Within the AQMAs 1246 businesses were identified and 18 targeted as a priority. To date 600+ contacted, 6 are engaged (combined workforce of approx. 1200) and developing travel plans. Evaluation is through staff surveys, pre and post engagement. **Forward Plan – increase levels of engagement, monitor impact of travel plans**

b. Element 2 - School Engagement – Actively work with schools to develop travel plans and deliver calendar of campaigns to increase active travel and reduce car trips on journey to school and improve air quality outside schools. Within the AQMAs 29 schools were identified and 14 targeted as a priority. To date 15 schools, 6500 pupils and 1000 parents are actively engaged. 27 diffusion tube sites monitored, 5 months of data collected. 2 schools are installing green infrastructure and all schools have active or eco councils leading this project. **Forward Plan – increase number of schools engaged, monitor air quality outside schools, monitor modal shift.**

c. Element 3 – Air Quality Project Communication Strategy “Air Aware” – A communication strategy has been developed to support the project outcomes through the delivery of a 12-month air quality awareness campaign. A copy of the Air Aware Campaign Members Brief can be found in appendix 3. The purpose of the campaign is to inspire long- term behaviour change to reduce single person, daily travel and driving habits that are leading to harmful rises in air pollution in some areas of the county, create and grow a new audience of people taking personal responsibility for sustainable travel and create a sustainable community-led campaign to maintain awareness into the future. The campaign will be launched to coincide with Clean Air Day on 20th June, and focus on 3 key audiences (1) Wider public across Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent, (2) Parents in the identified areas where idling during the rush hour is considered to be the main cause of poor air pollution and (3) Commuters and businesses in identified areas where commuting is considered to be the main cause of poor air pollution. The behaviour change campaigns will be set in the context of the corporate #Doing Our Bit campaign, designed to bring forward new audiences taking more personal responsibility for taking care of themselves, their family and community. **Forward Plan – deliver campaign and evaluate success**

d. Element 4 - Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure Feasibility Study Aecom have been commissioned to conduct a feasibility study on behalf of the programme to inform whether there is a need for, and if so the development of, an Electric Vehicle Strategy for Staffordshire. The report will also consider alternative technologies. The final report is due shortly and will include recommendations on when and how local authorities should be involved, prioritisation of locations for infrastructure and funding and income generation opportunities. Feedback from public perception and stakeholder engagement surveys and workshops will be used to inform the report. **Forward Plan – report to inform direction and level of involvement of the**

authority in the roll out of electric vehicle charging infrastructure and the development of an E-mobility strategy.

North Staffordshire Ministerial Directive

23. Officers from Newcastle Borough Council (NBC), Stoke on Trent City Council (SOTCC) and Staffordshire County Council are jointly working under a ministerial direction² which has been issued to NBC and SOTCC to improve transport related air pollution in North Staffordshire.
24. DEFRA have advised NBC and SOTCC that nitrogen dioxide emissions must be brought within EU levels of compliance³ in the shortest possible time. Until recently the main focus of the joint team's activity was to reduce exceedances along the A53, which carries traffic between Newcastle and Hanley town centres and the A500. However, DEFRA have now advised that any interventions introduced must not increase pollution levels in the other locations identified across North Staffordshire.
25. It would appear that DEFRA officials consider that a charging Clean Air Zone (CAZ) would achieve compliance in the shortest time and this must be modelled as the default position. However, the geographical boundaries for the CAZ and the specific charging regime are a matter for the local project team to model
26. In Staffordshire the project is being led by Newcastle BC and overseen by the government's Joint Air Quality Unit (JAQU) which is composed of Civil Servants from Defra and the Department for Transport.
27. A business case comparing the benefits of a charging CAZ with any alternative scheme that achieves compliance at least as fast using the treasury's Green Book principles needs to be submitted to JAQU by 31st October 2019. All three local authorities will need to endorse the process leading to the production of the business case and also authorise the implementation of the preferred solution. Funding for implementation and mitigation will be provided by JAQU.
28. It is likely that a detailed report will need to be considered by Cabinet later in the year once the project has developed further.

Link to Strategic Plan – The Air Quality Project supports our strategic vision and the outcome that the people of Staffordshire will be healthier and more independent.

Link to Other Overview and Scrutiny Activity – Air Quality Project Team presenting to the Health and Wellbeing Board in June

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List of Appendices:

Appendix 1 - Map of the AQMA locations
Appendix 2 - Air Quality Project Bid

Appendix 3 - Air Aware Campaign - Members Brief

Notes

1. Quote from Dr Theresa Coffey (Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Defra) and Professor Paul Cosford (Director for Health Protection and Medical Director, Public Health England)
2. In 2018 Ministerial Directions were issued to 33 local authorities, requiring them to submit studies on the steps they can take to comply with roadside NO₂ limits in the shortest amount of time. Eight 'third wave' local authorities identified by the Government are required to carry out a more detailed study outlining in detail how they will tackle the more persistent air quality problems they have identified. These studies will be presented to government by 31 October 2019 at the latest.
3. Compliance means bringing levels below the threshold legal limits for NO₂ concentration in ambient air; annual and hourly. The annual mean limit is 40 micrograms per cubic meter (40µg/m³) and the hourly mean limit is 200µg/m³.