

Local Members Interest
Cllr Trevor Johnson Cllr Stephen Sweeney

Prosperous Staffordshire Select Committee – Thursday 12 November 2020

North Staffordshire Local Air Quality Plan (NSLAQP) – Outline Business Case

Recommendations

I recommend that Members note the contents of the attached Cabinet report and,

- a. Satisfy themselves that the Outline Business Case supporting the preferred option has been properly prepared and due process has been followed.
- b. Recommend any amendments to be made to the report so that they it can be considered by Cabinet on 16th December.
- c. Provide any comments which will be reported to the Cabinet for Members to take into account in their consideration of this matter.

Report of Cllr David Williams, Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport

Summary

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

1. The report to be considered by Cabinet on 16th December sets out the work undertaken to develop the NSLAQP, including the consideration and assessment of options and the transport and air quality modelling work undertaken to determine a preferred option, to deliver the primary aim of achieving compliance with the standard for safe NO₂ concentrations limit of 40µg/m³ (annual average) in the shortest possible time.
2. Cabinet will be asked for their approval to formally submit an Outline Business Case (OBC) to Government to fund a package of interventions on the highway designed to address illegal exceedances of Nitrogen Dioxide by 2023. Of the three exceedance locations identified in North Staffordshire, only one is along the A53 in Newcastle for which Staffordshire County Council (the County Council) is the responsible Highway Authority. In approving the OBC Cabinet will endorse a preferred option solution consisting largely of traffic management interventions and cleaner buses, rather than the alternative of introducing a Charging Clean Air Zone to tackle the problem.
3. Members are being asked to note the contents of the attached Cabinet report and,
 - a. Satisfy themselves that the Outline Business Case supporting the preferred option has been properly prepared and due process has been followed

- b. Recommend any amendments to be made to the report so that it can be updated for consideration by Cabinet on 16th December.
- c. Provide any comments which will be reported to Cabinet for Members to take into account in their consideration of this matter

Report

Background

4. In February this year Members received a background report via the Chair to update them on the work being undertaken by the County Council in partnership with Stoke on Trent and Newcastle Under Lyme Borough Councils to address air quality exceedances in North Staffordshire, specifically the exceedance on A53 Basford Bank within Newcastle Borough. Members were made aware that a report presented to Newcastle Economy Environment and Place Scrutiny Committee on 5th February 2020 put this matter in the public domain and formed key background to this project.
5. Members will recall that in October 2018, Ministers for the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) and Department for Transport (DfT) respectively, served two ministerial directions on Newcastle under Lyme Borough Council (NULBC) under the provisions of The Environment Act 1995 (Feasibility study for nitrogen dioxide compliance) (No 2) and (Implementation of measures for nitrogen dioxide compliance) Air Quality Direction 2018. This work is being co-ordinated by the Governments Joint Air Quality Unit (JAQU).
6. The two directions and associated JAQU guidance required:
 - a. NULBC and Stoke on Trent City Council (SOTC) to jointly further investigate EU exceedances of nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) on roads within the Borough and City and identify measures that could bring forward compliance with NO₂ limits as soon as possible **or** review the implementation of a chargeable clean air zone. (referred to as the NSLAQP)

And

 - b. NULBC to implement a bus engine retrofit programme to busses that operate on the A53 to be implemented as soon as possible in order to bring forward compliance of NO₂ levels. This does not directly involve the County Council
7. The County Council as Highway Authority for Newcastle is supporting this project although is not included within any Ministerial Direction to date.
8. The report to be considered by Cabinet sets out the work undertaken to develop the NSLAQP, including the consideration and assessment of options and the transport and air quality modelling work undertaken to determine a preferred option, to deliver the primary aim of achieving compliance with the standard for safe NO₂ concentrations limit of 40µg/m³ (annual average) in the shortest time.

9. Cabinet will be asked for their approval to formally submit an OBC to Government to fund a package of interventions on the highway designed to address illegal exceedances of Nitrogen Dioxide by 2023. Of the three exceedance locations identified in North Staffordshire, only one is along the A53 in Newcastle for which the County Council is the responsible Highway Authority. In approving the OBC Cabinet will endorse a preferred option solution consisting largely of traffic management interventions and cleaner buses, rather than the alternative of introducing a Charging Clean Air Zone to tackle the problem.
10. A Full Business Case (FBC) submission for the Preferred Option will be required by July 2021 and after approval by Cabinet, it will then be implemented by the end of 2022 to deliver compliance with legal requirements for controlling nitrogen dioxide concentrations by the year 2023.
11. A further Ministerial Direction is expected to be issued directing implementation of the preferred option and this will necessarily include the County Council.
12. All costs associated with the project should be met by Central Government including officer time to date.

Link to Strategic Plan

13. Implementation of this project will help achieve the County Council's vision, outcomes and priorities and principles as listed below:

Vision

A county where big ambitions, great connections and greener living give everyone the opportunity to prosper, be healthy and happy

Outcomes

Have access to more good jobs and share the benefits of economic growth — Be healthier and independent for longer — Feel safer, happier and more supported in their community

Priorities

Help Staffordshire's economy to grow and generate more good jobs

Invest in infrastructure for growing communities

Principles

Think climate change in all we do to limit our impact on the planet

14. By reducing roadside nitrogen dioxide concentrations at specific locations where they are predicted to exceed statutory limits, we will improve air quality and help reduce exposure to harmful pollutants, which can contribute to health problems, especially for some vulnerable people. The proposed traffic management measures

will support active travel options such as cycling and walking and will encourage healthier lifestyles, which will support businesses in maintaining a healthy workforce and contribute to climate change priorities.

15. By avoiding the introduction of a charging clean air zone, by investing in traffic management infrastructure, business and communities will benefit economically.
16. However, any option that is implemented to tackle nitrogen dioxide exceedances may have indirect sustainability and climate change benefits or impacts.
17. The OBC (Appendix C) assesses climate change implications through the assessment of the carbon dioxide (CO₂) change throughout a 10-year operation period. This utilises data obtained through the TUBA assessment. The preferred option is calculated to have 13,324 tonne CO₂ **increase**. The benchmark CAZ D is calculated to have a 194,854 tonne CO₂ **decrease**.
18. The increase in CO₂ for the preferred option reflects the increase in travel distance as some vehicle reroute to avoid the bus gates. The improvement under the CAZ scenario mostly reflects vehicle upgrades to avoid the CAZ charge.

Community Impact

19. A comprehensive community impact assessment (CIA) was prepared as part of the OBC for the project. Information from this document has been used to prepare a full CIA to SCC guidance and a summary CIA is attached to this report.

List of Background Documents/Appendices:

Cabinet Report 16th December 2020 including the following appendices

- a. Summary of the feasibility study
- b. The preferred option
- c. NSLAQP Outline Business Case
- d. NSLAQP Covid sensitivity test results

Community Impact Assessment – Summary Document (Preferred Option)

Community Impact Assessment – Summary Document (Clean Air Zone)

Contact Details

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