

**Report of:** Communities and Partnership Scrutiny Committee

**To:** City Executive Board

**Date:** 26<sup>th</sup> November 2008

**Item No:**

**Title of Report:** LEZ Feasibility Study Update

### **Summary and Recommendations**

**Purpose of report:** To report to the City Executive Board the recommendations of the Communities and Partnership Scrutiny Committee as part of their discussions on the LEZ feasibility study update.

**Board Member:** Cllr John Tanner

**Report Approved by:**

**Legal:** Lindsay Cane

**Finance :** Paul Shepherd

#### **Recommendation(s)**

1. City Executive Board investigate the introduction of a Low Emission Strategy across the City, encompassing all Air Quality Management (AQM) issues;
2. Express disappointment that the changing policy of Oxfordshire County Council has led to the delay in completing the feasibility study, but to welcome the appreciation by the County Council of the Committee's concerns.
3. Invite the City Executive Board to reaffirm its commitment to the LEZ, despite the changing situation arising from Oxfordshire County Council's "Transform Oxford" proposals, and to stress the urgency of introducing the LEZ.

## **1. Background**

- 1.1 The Committee at its meeting on 12<sup>th</sup> November requested an update in respect of the progress of the LEZ feasibility study, prior to the submission of the final report to the City Executive Board and County Cabinet. (The report update by the Head of Environmental Development is attached as appendix 1)
- 1.2 The Committee noted that the focus of the final assessment would be around emissions from coaches and buses and expressed concern around the lack of focus around cars and the air quality impacts of stationary traffic. The Scientific Officer (Environmental Team) stated that the final assessment would include a complete breakdown by class of vehicle and by stationary and moving traffic.
- 1.3 The final report findings with attached recommendations would be delayed due to the 'Transform Oxford' proposals. The proposals could extend the original report submission from January to April. The County's Cabinet Member for Transport Cllr Ian Hudspeth (attending the Committee for the 'Transform Oxford' item) could not guarantee that an LEZ would be a definite outcome from the proposals, but hoped a final report could be submitted in April. A new timetable was due to be submitted to the LEZ Steering Group on 26<sup>th</sup> November.
- 1.4 The Scientific Officer informed the Committee that as a Highways Authority the LEZ implementation was a County prerogative, requiring detailed consultation with the bus companies and a process involving application to the Traffic Commissioner. However this did not prevent the City Council from recommending an LEZ standard.
- 1.5 The need for a City- wide Low Emission Strategy was a recommendation in the Air Quality Progress report that was submitted to Environment Scrutiny in April 2008 and City Executive Board in June 2008. The Committee wanted to alert the City Executive Board to its interest in seeing this move forward and thought that the 'Transform Oxford' proposals should not preclude this.

## **2. Minutes of Communities and Partnership Meeting – 12<sup>th</sup> November 2008**

### **35. LEZ FEASIBILITY STUDY - UPDATE**

The Head of Environmental Development submitted a report (previously circulated, now appended). Roger Pitman (Scientific Officer – Environmental Protection Team) and Councillor John Tanner (Board Member for a Cleaner, Greener Oxford) presented this report and answered questions from members of the Committee.

The Committee was informed that this issue had been delayed owing to Oxfordshire County Council's recent "Transform Oxford" strategy, and as a result the timetable for the Low Emission Zone (LEZ) had been extended until April. It was anticipated that a final report would be presented then. Councillor Tanner stressed that there was a need to convince the Traffic Commissioner that all research and consultation had been properly completed. Roger Pitman would circulate the revised timetable to members of the Committee once it had been agreed. It was explained that Oxfordshire County Council was the highways authority, and as such the introduction of the LEZ was their prerogative. Councillor Hudspeth added that the LEZ had not been completely abandoned (although the relocation of buses under the "Transform Oxford" proposals might make it obsolete), however, he would do his utmost to meet the April 2009 deadline.

Key issues highlighted by the Committee included concern at the delay to the progress of the LEZ, observations about the emissions from cars and vans as well as buses in the City centre and the need to factor in the impact on local residents and the city generally of the Westgate Development.

Recommendations:

1. City Executive Board investigate the introduction of a Low Emission Strategy across the City, encompassing all Air Quality Management (AQM) issues;
2. Express disappointment that the changing policy of Oxfordshire County Council has led to the delay in completing the feasibility study, but to welcome the appreciation by the County Council of the Committee's concerns.
3. Invite the City Executive Board to reaffirm its commitment to the LEZ, despite the changing situation arising from Oxfordshire County Council's "Transform Oxford" proposals, and to stress the urgency of introducing the LEZ.

### **3. Comments from Head of Environmental Development**

3.1. The process of Local Air Quality Management is a statutory requirement for all Local Authorities under Part IV of the Environment Act 1990, issued by the Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA)

3.2. This process has resulted in developing a wider understanding of the nature and extent of the air quality problems in Oxford through a series of reports over a 10 year period from 1999

3.3. These reports have highlighted that the major source of emissions contributing to poor air quality are from road traffic sources, similar to most urban areas in the country

3.4 The early assessments focussed on central Oxford defining a central Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) and provided a broad assessment of the problem areas in the city, including Green Road Roundabout

3.5 The required response by Local Authorities to the declaration of AQMA's is to produce an Air Quality Action Plan (AQAP), to highlight effective measures to improve air quality

3.6. Guidance issued by DEFRA also highlights that for two-tier authorities, the AQAP should be integrated into the Local Transport Plan (LTP) so that a common approach is taken to air quality and the other key shared priority areas within the LTP

3.7 To date the current LTP has considered the AQMA in central Oxford and the measures currently under consideration relate to improving air quality in central Oxford

3.8 The most recent air quality assessment report submitted to DEFRA, the Detailed Assessment 2008, has noted that the two existing AQMA's need to be re-defined and a further five AQMA's are required outside the City centre. The outcomes from this report are programmed to be presented to the February CEB.

3.9 This assessment highlights that air quality issues in Oxford are not confined to central Oxford, and include local district centres, busy junctions and roundabouts

3.10 In order to develop city wide solutions, it is considered that the development of a Low Emission Strategy, integrated within the next LTP (2011-2016), is required in addition to the options for a Low Emission Zone, currently under consideration for central Oxford

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