

DRAFT

To: City Executive Board

Date: 11th December 2013

Report of: Head of Environmental Development

Title of Report: AIR QUALITY ACTION PLAN

Summary and Recommendations

Purpose of report: To agree the adoption of the Air Quality Action Plan following public consultation

Key decision? Yes

Executive lead member: Councillor John Tanner

Policy Framework: Cleaner Greener Oxford

Recommendation(s): To approve the Air Quality Action Plan for adoption

Appendices to report

Appendix 1: Air Quality Action Plan

Appendix 2A: Public Consultation Questionnaire Responses

Appendix 2B: Public Consultation Open Responses

Appendix 3: Risk Assessment

Appendix 4: Equalities Impact Assessment

Introduction

1. Oxford, in common with many urban areas throughout the United Kingdom, is subject to poor air quality, particularly close to areas with high levels of road traffic.
2. Pollution hot spots are typically found in canyon streets, busy roads and junctions with periods of congested traffic. Pollution concentrations reduce significantly away from the roadside. Most healthy adults are unlikely to be significantly affected by the levels of air pollution normally found in Oxford.

3. A significant amount of work has been undertaken to improve air quality in Oxford. To date, this has focussed on initiatives developed in partnership with the County Council including:
 - The development of the Quality Bus Partnership delivering integrated ticketing and leading to reductions in bus numbers;
 - The Transform Oxford initiative which has increased pedestrianisation and re-located bus stops;
 - A bus based low emission zone in central Oxford from 2014; and
 - Investment in cleaner greener vehicles by bus operators.
4. Local transport measures are prioritised under the Oxford Area Strategy of the Local Transport Plan. These include promotion of public transport and alternatives to use of private vehicles, walking & cycling, 20mph zones and reducing congestion. These initiatives have and continue to contribute to reducing vehicle emissions city-wide, but we recognise more needs to be done.
5. A city-wide Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) was declared in September 2010, due to levels of nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) which exceed the 40 µg/m³ mean annual objective set by the UK National Air Quality Strategy, under the Environment Act 1995.
6. The declaration of an AQMA means Oxford City Council has a duty to “prepare a written plan in pursuit of the achievement of the air quality standards and objectives in the designated AQMA¹”. The AQAP is developed in response to this requirement.

The Draft Air Quality Action Plan

7. In July 2013 the City Executive Board (CEB) approved a Draft Air Quality Action Plan (AQAP) for public consultation. This report summarises the public consultation responses and presents the final Air Quality Action Plan for adoption.
8. There is a direct relationship between this updated AQAP and several other Council Strategies.
9. The City Council approved a Sustainability Strategy in December 2011 and CEB approved a Low Emission Strategy (LES) in July 2013. These strategies set out an integrated approach to developing measures to address climate change and air quality issues at the local level. The City's Low Emission Strategy recognises there is significant added value in integrating actions to reduce air quality related emissions with those for reducing carbon emissions in order to mitigate climate change.
10. The AQAP addresses sustainable road transport and air quality.

¹DEFRA Local Air Quality Management. Policy Guidance (PG09)

11. AQAP measures are presented within six key themes:-
- Support for development of sustainable transport measures
 - Support for the uptake of low and zero emission vehicles
 - Reducing freight emissions
 - Planning for sustainable transport
 - Managing the Council's transport emissions
 - Developing partnerships and public education
12. The measures within the AQAP are necessarily shared between measures that the City Council can deliver by:-
- Implementing programmes within our own estate for example:
 - Procurement of low emission vehicles;
 - Staff workplace travel plan; and
 - Developing electric vehicle (EV) charging infrastructure.
 - Using direct influence:
 - Promoting sustainable travel through the planning process (sustainable low emission transport and low emission strategies promoted in new developments);
 - Regulations to promote cleaner greener transport (adoption of the Low Emission Zone and taxi licensing); and
 - Partnerships with the County Council, district councils and community groups to pursue initiatives such as reducing emissions from freight
 - Through wider influence:
 - Co-ordination for developing EV and low emission fuel infrastructure county-wide,
 - Low emission car-clubs;
 - Workplace travel plans; and
 - Raising public awareness through education and media.
13. The AQAP covers the period from 2013 to 2020, in line with the Sustainability Strategy and Low Emission Strategy. The AQAP provides a focus for the delivery of air quality related transport measures in the city. The AQAP links to the Local Transport Plan (LTP), which is managed and delivered by the County Council as the Transport Authority, as the key delivery mechanism for wider transport measures.
14. The City Council will liaise with the County Council to ensure measures within the forthcoming Oxford Area Strategy, forming part of the LTP, (due for revision during 2014) help achieve the objectives of the AQAP.
15. The draft 2013 AQAP is presented in Appendix 1.

Objectives and Targets

16. The overall objective of the integrated air quality and low carbon AQAP for the whole of the Oxford City area is to:

"Pursue the achievement of air quality standards and objectives across the city, and reduce carbon emission from transport activity"
17. A top level target for carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions, along with emissions of oxides of nitrogen (NO_x) and particulate matter (PM) has already been set within the LES and reflects the City Council's Sustainability Strategy and the need to meet air quality objectives.
18. These top level targets are based on emissions from surface transport across the City and are as follows:
 1. a 35% reduction in transport CO₂ emission from 2005 to 2020;
 2. a 50% reduction in transport NO_x and PM emissions from 2005 to 2020.
19. In addition to these emission-based targets we have also set a concentration based air quality target for the AQAP in relation to the national air quality standards and objectives as follows:
 - Achieve mean NO₂ concentrations levels of at least 45 µg/m³ by 2020 and 40 µg/m³ by 2025 at the latest.

Public Consultation

20. A Statutory Public Consultation was carried out on the draft AQAP between 17th July and 17th September 2013. In total, approximately 2000 organisations and individuals were contacted and invited to submit representations on the content of the AQAP. Over 200 comments were received during the consultation period.
21. Further consultation has taken place with the County Council, as a key stakeholder. As the Transport Authority the County Council are key partners in implementing measures through the LTP.
22. The key issues raised were:
 - Respondents noted the major issues that require attention to promote good air quality include:
 - a co-ordinated sustainable transport strategy;
 - measures to address impacts of delivery and freight vehicles;
 - reducing traffic congestion;
 - improving public transport;
 - promoting alternative means of travel; and
 - safe cycling & walking.

- Respondents state that they do not feel well informed or do not have enough information on air quality or climate change issues. The draft AQAP proposes measure to address this.
 - Respondents would limit the use of private vehicles in Oxford, and seek less polluting alternatives.
 - Safe cycling routes, cycle lanes, and improved security for cyclists were raised as important.
 - There is clear support for separate targets for Air Quality and Carbon, with the establishment of clear baselines, and measures that can be assessed in relation to cost-effective emissions reductions.
 - The Low Emission Zone is acknowledged as a significant development. Options to extend the scheme to other vehicles were raised along with promotion of anti-idling policy and eco-driving.
 - Clear support for freight consolidation and anti-idling for freight and delivery vehicles.
 - Comments also acknowledged the significance of new developments and potential impacts on known air quality hotspots.
23. Representations made during the consultation period were carefully considered and a number of revisions have been made to the AQAP as a result.
24. The County Council has made an initial response to relevant comments, highlighting that many local issues will be addressed through the Oxford Area Plan (during 2014), as a development of the Local Transport Plan.
25. A full summary of the Public Consultation responses is in Appendix 2A/2B

Delivery

26. The AQAP proposes measures that requiredevelopment through the Local Transport Plan (Oxford Area Strategy), in conjunction with the County Council. It highlights the significance of contributions to emissions reductions from a wide range of stakeholders and hence much of the work will continue to be completed through partnership.
27. Progress on the AQAP will be reported annually.

Risk

28. The LES and AQAPare subordinate to the Council's Sustainability Strategy which has already been risk assessed. The risk assessment for

the Sustainability Strategy has been updated within Appendix 3 to reflect the links to the LES and AQAP.

Climate Change / Environmental Impact

29. The AQAP contains stretching objectives and targets to reduce emissions from a range of the Council's transport related programmes, and areas the Council is able to influence in order to reduce impacts on climate and air pollution.
30. The AQAP is significant in taking an integrated approach to addressing carbon and air pollution emissions from road transport impacting on health and the environment.
31. This emphasises the need for a continuation of the programmes linked to the last Local Transport Plan, highlighting continued effort to achieve the air quality objectives in Oxford.
32. The AQAP acknowledges the importance of working with a wide range of stakeholders in partnerships to influence transport choices made in the wider community, where the greatest opportunities for emissions reductions exist.

Equalities Impact

33. The draft AQAP will not introduce likely equality impacts and an equalities impact assessment is attached as Appendix 4.

Financial Implications

34. The AQAP includes aspirations to work with the County Council to develop sustainable transport proposals, including development of infrastructure to promote low emission vehicles, and development of strategies for reducing freight emissions. All these initiatives require a partnership approach with other Local Authorities and local businesses, and will be the subject of further consideration.
35. The City Executive approved in a report presented to CEB, 4th July 2012 to: (1) Approve the use of more electrically driven vehicles in the council's vehicle fleet, where viable and cost effective. The Council fleet currently includes 14 electrically drive vehicles and 5 electric bikes.
36. The City Council and the County Council are currently investigating options to fund a study to investigate the feasibility of developing measures to reduce the impact of freight emissions in Oxford. Full funding for this has yet to be identified.

Legal Implications

37. All Local Authorities have a statutory duty to review and assess local air quality, within the programme of Local Air Quality Management established under requirements within Part IV of the Environment Act 1995. There is a statutory requirement upon the Council to develop an Air Quality Action Plan and conduct a Public Consultation, following declaration of the City-wide Air Quality Management Area.

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