

To: Cabinet
Date: 16 October 2024
Report of: Climate and Environment Panel
Title of Report: Annual Air Quality Status Report

| Summary and recommendations | |
|--|---|
| Purpose of report: | To present Panel of the Scrutiny Committee recommendations for Cabinet consideration and decision |
| Key decision: | No |
| Scrutiny Lead Member: | Councillor Emily Kerr, Panel Chair |
| Cabinet Member: | Councillor Anna Railton, Deputy Leader (Non-Statutory) and Cabinet Member for Zero Carbon Oxford |
| Corporate Priority: | Zero Carbon Oxford |
| Policy Framework: | Council Strategy 2024-28 |
| Recommendation(s): That the Cabinet states whether it agrees or disagrees with the recommendations in the body of this report | |

| Appendices | |
|-------------------|--|
| Appendix A | Draft Cabinet response to Scrutiny recommendations |

Introduction and overview

1. The Climate and Environment Panel met on 10 September 2024 to consider the Annual Air Quality Status Report. The report fulfilled the Council's statutory obligation to review and assess air quality in the city to report on whether the legal air quality limit values had been met.
2. The Panel would like to thank Councillor Anna Railton (Deputy Leader (Non-Statutory) and Cabinet Member for Zero Carbon Oxford) and Pedro Abreu (Principal Air Quality Officer) for attending the meeting to answer questions.

Summary and recommendations

3. Pedro Abreu, Principal Air Quality Officer introduced the report. The report provided an update on air quality in Oxford in the past year.

4. The Panel asked a range of questions, including questions relating to the anticipated impact on air quality of the reopening of Botley Road; site-specific air quality action plans; future plans for communications campaigns; monitoring and reporting on air quality; Central Government funding; and emissions breakdowns.
5. In particular, the Panel considered that funding from Central Government in relation to air quality had previously not been adequate. Noting the recent change in Government, the Panel agreed that the Council should ensure it made representations to the new Government in relation to the need to ensure future additional funding to adequately resource measures related to air quality.

Recommendation 1: That the Council writes to Central Government to make representations in relation to securing future additional local government funding to adequately resource the Council's statutory air quality obligations.

6. The Panel also noted that Botley Road had seen improvements in air quality (in relation to NO₂ emissions) as a result of the road closure. The road was due to reopen in the not too distant future and the Panel was keen that improvements in air quality during the closure should not be reversed when Botley Road reopened. The Panel agreed that the Council should develop a plan so that it could take a proactive approach in retaining the air quality improvements achieved during the closure.

Recommendation 2: That the Council develops a clear plan to mitigate against reversing the improvements in air quality achieved as a result of the Botley Road closure, when the road is reopened.

7. There was a suggestion that the Council should seek to invest in air quality display boards to be installed across the city setting out information such as current air quality, travel route management and number of local deaths per year as a result of poor air quality. The Panel was of the view that measures such as this would help effect the behavioural change required at the personal level to support efforts across Oxford to improve air quality.

Recommendation 3: That the Council explores investment in air quality display boards to disseminate key messages to the public related to air quality.

8. In discussion, the Panel also suggested that the Council could explore other tools to improve air quality locally which it had direct control over. For example, the Panel suggested that the Council should consider capping the number of licensed vehicles in the city, which would reduce the emissions from Hackney Carriages and Private Hire Vehicles.

Recommendation 4: That the Council considers setting a limit for the number of vehicles it licenses in the city (i.e. Hackney Carriages and Private Hire Vehicles).

| | |
|----------------------------|--|
| Report author | Alice Courtney |
| Job title | Scrutiny Officer |
| Service area or department | Law and Governance |
| Telephone | 07483 010160 |
| e-mail | acourtney@oxford.gov.uk |

This page is intentionally left blank