

WAVERLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL

EXECUTIVE - 4 APRIL 2017

Title:

DEVELOPING AN AIR QUALITY IMPROVEMENT FRAMEWORK FOR WAVERLEY

[Portfolio Holder: Cllr Jim Edwards]

[Wards Affected: All]

Summary and purpose:

This report puts forward recommendations from the Community Overview & Scrutiny Committee to reinvigorate Waverley's work to progress the measures in the Air Quality Action Plan. The recommendations were developed in response to the Committee's discussion of air quality issues in Waverley, and frustration at the lack of real engagement with partners to develop solutions and improve air quality.

The recommendations propose the establishment of a multi-agency stakeholder Air Quality Steering Group and development of an Air Quality Strategy for Waverley, in line with the latest DEFRA Local Air Quality Management Policy and Technical Guidance.

How this report relates to the Council's Corporate Priorities:

Community Wellbeing – providing community leadership to champion local issues that affect our residents; providing high quality public protection services through the air quality monitoring work undertaken by Environmental Health.

Environment – air quality is key to the health of humans and ecosystems. Road traffic is one of the major contributors to air pollution in Surrey. Air pollution is the presence of contaminant or pollutant substances in the air at a concentration that interferes with human health or welfare, or produces other harmful environmental effects.

Financial Implications:

There are no financial implications to this report but should the Council's local Air Quality Management responsibilities identify a financial impact budgetary provision will be requested at the appropriate time.

Legal Implications:

There are no direct legal implications arising from this report.

Background

1. The Community Overview & Scrutiny Committee raised concerns about the lack of progress on improving air quality in Waverley. Farnham Councillors were primarily concerned about the designated Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) in central Farnham, but the Committee recognised that there is also a Godalming AQMA; and there was also concern in some local communities about the adverse impact on air quality and health during short-term peaks of traffic congestion, and the potential

impact on air quality as a result of increased traffic arising from new housing developments.

2. On 17 January 2017, Community Overview & Scrutiny Committee received an update on air quality issues in Waverley, and agreed in principle that this was an issue that it wished to take forward, with the aim of making progress on the measures contained in Waverley's Air Quality Action Plan (AQAP 2008) to alleviate air pollution in the AQMAs. A sub-group of Councillors was identified to meet with officers to discuss the scope of this work, and to bring proposals back to the Community Overview & Scrutiny Committee (or the new Environment Overview & Scrutiny Committee) for consideration.

Scoping Review

3. Councillors (Cllrs Andy MacLeod, John Fraser, Jerry Hyman, Wyatt Ramsdale, Richard Seaborne, and Nick Williams) met with the Head of Environmental Services and the Environmental Health Manager on Tuesday 21 February 2017. Councillors were satisfied that Waverley was carrying out its air quality monitoring and reporting responsibilities, and had been taken advantage of the availability of DEFRA grants to obtain funding for feasibility studies. However, there had been a lack of engagement with Surrey County Council in relation to the potential to develop solutions through traffic engineering.
4. It was clear from the discussion that there is not one single piece of work to be undertaken to achieve the aims of the Community Overview & Scrutiny Committee. It was also clear that the long-term nature of the work did not fit within the generally time-limited scope of an Overview and Scrutiny review. Instead,
 - for the two AQMAs, the problem of poor air quality (NO₂) has been identified, the health risks are well known, and there is an AQAP in place. The issue is how Waverley can engage better with partners to move forward the identified actions with the aim of improving air quality.
 - other than in the two AQMAs, air quality monitoring does not provide evidence to indicate that there is a potential health risk from air pollution. However, there are concerns about the level of understanding around short-term peaks of pollutions in particular locations, and the public health impact that these may pose. Work is needed to understand if peak measures do exceed thresholds, and if so whether there is a health risk arising from short-term exposure.
5. Cllr Ramsdale emphasised the importance of taking a partnership approach in seeking solutions, and suggested that a similar approach could be followed for air quality as was taken following the floods in Waverley in 2013: a multi-stakeholder group (Waverley Infrastructure Resilience Group) was established to bring to the same table all the organisations who needed to contribute to the actions that would reduce the risk of similar flooding in future.
6. Officers agreed to explore this option, and to consider how the concerns in relation to air quality at locations outside of the AQMAs could be investigated.

Revised Policy Guidance (2016)

7. In April 2016, DEFRA published new Local Air Quality Management (LAQM) Policy Guidance (PG16) and Technical Guidance (TG16). LAQM.PG16 has been designed to maximise the public health benefits of local authority action on air quality, and is statutory for both district and county councils. LAQM.TG16 is designed to support local authorities in carrying out their duties under the Environment Act 1995.
8. In addition to setting out revised, more stream-lined, reporting requirements for Local Authorities, LAQM.PG16 encourages Local Authorities to
 - draw up an Air Quality Strategy (paragraph 2.12 and 2.13); and
 - establish a multi-agency/stakeholder Air Quality Steering Group (paragraphs 2.14 – 2.15)
9. It is particularly recommended that the Air Quality Strategy takes account of areas at risk of exceedance of Air Quality thresholds in the future, as well as designated AQMAs; and highlights the need for Local Authorities to consider how they will address PM_{2.5} pollution.
10. LAQM.PG16 makes clear recommendations relating to the make-up of the Steering Group in terms of the stakeholders and level of seniority of representatives required for the outputs of the group to be taken forward:

2.14 As soon as an air quality issue has been identified it is recommended that a steering group is formed to include all the main parties involved in developing either Action Plans or Air Quality Strategies. It is recommended that the Chair is of sufficient seniority to ensure that the outputs from the group are being taken forward. Where significant action is required from a county council to resolve the air quality issues, it would be beneficial to have a senior county council representative as co-chair. Membership of the group could include the Environment Agency, Highways England and local businesses and interest groups. Once the strategies and Plans have been published, the steering group can be retained to monitor progress and troubleshoot if necessary should difficulties in implementation arise.

2.15 The public health impacts of poor air quality are well documented. We would expect the highest level of support from local authorities (e.g. Chief Executive and Council level) to ensure that all parts of a local authority are working effectively together. The public can be given further confidence that the work being taken forward to tackle air quality is supported at the highest level through engagement in and sign-off of Action Plans and annual reports by both the Chief Executive and also the heads of the main departments involved e.g. environmental health, planning, transport and public health.

LAQM.PG16

11. The LAQM.PG16 provides a new framework for the existing AQMAs designated for Farnham and Godalming. The LAQM.TG16 sets out a new structure for Air Quality Action Plans. Waverley's AQAP was published in 2008. Progress against the measures set out in the AQAP 2008 has been reported periodically to DEFRA in accordance with the reporting regime in place at the time, and does not match the layout of the original AQAP2008. The latest published update was contained in the 2014 Air Quality Progress Report.

12. The Council is currently awaiting clearance from DEFRA that the draft 2016 Annual Status Report may be published following validation of monitoring results. This report contains the latest progress report against the Action Plan, in the latest report format required by LAQM.PG16.
13. Given the recommendation in the Guidance to develop an Air Quality Strategy and to establish an Air Quality Steering Group, it would be timely to undertake a comprehensive review of the Action Plan, to refresh the actions, and re-engage with key stakeholders with the objective of implementing the Action Plan. The Air Quality Steering Group has an explicit role in developing the new Action Plan, as set out in LAQM.TG16, paragraph 2.30:

The Steering Group should collaborate to identify:

- If there are existing programmes in other areas that will contribute to emissions reductions (or increases) that should be accounted for within the AQAP.
- What may influence the local pollution situation in the near future (i.e. 5 to 10 years);
- The future trends that are likely to contribute (regional emissions trends as well as local factors);
- If there is sufficient information to clearly define effective measures;
- If an assessment may be required, before proceeding to developing the AQAP;
- If emissions will reduce sufficiently to achieve air quality objectives in the next 5 years, as a result of measures already in place;
- Whether it is appropriate to develop a generic set of measures, or whether locally derived measures targeting local hotspots is a preferred emissions management option – or a combination of both; and
- If traffic management interventions are required.

LAQM.TG16, paragraph 2.30

Conclusions

14. Taking account of Councillors' views and interest in progressing solutions in their local areas, and the 2016 LAQM Policy and Technical Guidance, officers proposed an approach that offered a constructive way of re-engaging with Surrey County Council and other stakeholders with the objective of progressing the Air Quality Action Plan.
15. Community Overview & Scrutiny Committee discussed the suggested approach, and recognised that this was a long-term problem that would not be solved through a short-term scrutiny intervention, although there would be a role for Overview & Scrutiny to monitor progress. The proposed approach benefited from being in accordance with the latest DEFRA guidance, which would add weight to establishment of the Steering Group.

Recommendation

The Community Overview and Scrutiny Committee therefore recommends to the Portfolio Holder for Environment and the Executive that in order for the Council to proactively and constructively take forward its local Air Quality Management responsibilities:

1. Waverley Borough Council establishes a multi-agency/stakeholder Air Quality Steering Group to contribute to the development of an Air Quality Strategy for Waverley and a refreshed Air Quality Action Plan, and to progress the measures in the Air Quality Action Plan thereafter.
2. Membership of the Waverley Air Quality Steering Group to follow the recommendations of LAQM.PG16 in terms of seniority of representation, as set out in paragraph 10, above; and to seek to involve Waverley's local Members of Parliament.
3. The Waverley Air Quality Steering Group should include scope to establish working groups that can engage with local stakeholders to monitor progress locally and develop practical solutions to address air quality issues.
4. The new Environment Overview & Scrutiny Committee to critically review the development of a new Waverley Air Quality Strategy and Air Quality Action Plan, informed by the contribution of the Air Quality Steering Group, and in line with the requirements of LAQM.TG16.
5. Waverley's Air Quality webpages to be updated and simplified, so that interested parties are able to find relevant information.
6. The new Environment Overview & Scrutiny Committee to include in its rolling work programme the scrutiny of the Council's annual report to DEFRA (in accordance with whatever reporting regime is in place at the time).

Background Papers

There are no background papers (as defined by Section 100D(5) of the Local Government Act 1972) relating to this report.

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