

WAVERLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL

ENVIRONMENT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

29 SEPTEMBER 2021

Title:

2021 AIR QUALITY ANNUAL STATUS REPORT (ASR)

Portfolio Holder: Cllr. Steve Williams Portfolio Holder for Environment and Sustainability

Head of Service: Richard Homewood, Head of Environmental & Regulatory Services

Key decision: No

Access: Public

1.0 Purpose and summary

1.1 To present the 2021 Air Quality Annual Status Report (ASR), and seek comments from the Committee.

2.0 Recommendation

2.1 It is recommended that:

2.1.1 Members receive the report, and make comments and recommendations to the Executive as appropriate;

2.1.2 Members support the development of a new Air Quality Strategy and Action Plan that aligns with the Climate Change and Sustainability Strategy (CCSS), the Carbon Neutrality Action Plan (CNAP) and the work underway on the Farnham Optimised Infrastructure Plan (FOIP)

2.1.3 Members views on the suggested ways forward in paragraphs 4.13 and 4.14 below for overseeing how we monitor, review, and take action on improving air quality, are invited.

3.0 Reasons for the recommendations

3.1 To afford Overview and Scrutiny Committee the opportunity to comment on the 2021 Air Quality Annual Status Report.

3.2 To seek the Committee's support for the proposed way forward to ensure that the future monitoring, reviewing and development of an action plan aligns with the objectives on the CCSS, CNAP and FOIP .

4.0 **Background**

- 4.1 Air pollution is associated with a number of adverse health impacts. It is recognised as a contributing factor in the onset of heart disease and cancer. Additionally, air pollution particularly affects the most vulnerable in society: children and older people, and those with heart and lung conditions. There is also often a strong correlation with equalities issues, because areas with poor air quality are also often the less affluent areas.
- 4.2 The annual health cost to society of the impacts of particulate matter alone in the UK is estimated to be around £16 billion.
- 4.3 The Local Air Quality Management regime (LAQM) is set out in Part IV of the Environment Act 1995 and relevant Policy and Technical Guidance documents. The LAQM process places an obligation on all local authorities (borough and district councils and unitary councils) to regularly review and assess air quality in their areas, and to determine whether or not the air quality objectives are likely to be achieved. Where an exceedance is considered likely the local authority must declare an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) and prepare an Air Quality Action Plan (AQAP) setting out the measures it intends to put in place in pursuit of the objectives. This Annual Status Report (ASR) is an annual requirement showing the current position regarding air quality, strategies employed by WBC to improve air quality and any progress that has been made.
- 4.4 Historical modelling work has shown that the major sources of air pollution in Waverley are from vehicle emissions. Surrey County has the highest car usage in the UK, and in some of the more rural areas within Waverley the infrastructure for public transport is limited, encouraging vehicular usage further. There are no significant point sources of air pollution from industry or manufacturing.
- 4.5 We know from the modelling work that small measures such as reducing congestion on the worst roads will have some benefit to NO₂ concentrations, and it is also considered that the complex issues surrounding poor air quality, and its effective resolution, cannot be achieved simply through local initiatives, but requires robust strategies nationally as well as locally.
- 4.6 The attached report provides an overview of air quality in Waverley Borough Council during 2020. It fulfils the requirements of Local Air Quality Management (LAQM) as set out in Part IV of the Environment Act (1995) and the relevant Policy and Technical Guidance documents.
- 4.7 The LAQM process places an obligation on all local authorities to regularly review and assess air quality in their areas, and to determine whether or not the air quality objectives are likely to be achieved. Where an exceedance is considered likely the local authority must declare an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) and prepare an Air Quality Action Plan (AQAP) setting out the measures it intends to put in place in pursuit of the objectives.
- 4.8 The Annual Status Report (ASR), attached at Annexe A, is an annual requirement showing the strategies employed by Waverley Borough Council to improve air quality and any progress that has been made.
- 4.9 In previous years the monitoring and reviewing of air quality and the development

of revisions to the Air Quality Action Plan were overseen by an Air Quality Steering Group and, in view of the particular issue with Air Quality in Farnham, a Farnham Air Quality Working Group which fed into the Steering Group. These groups have not met since the start of the Covid-19 Pandemic. Since then Waverley has declared a Climate Emergency, adopted a Climate Change and Sustainability Strategy and approved a Carbon Neutrality Action Plan.

4.10 In addition in recognition of the root causes of air quality issues in Farnham, a multi-agency Farnham Infrastructure Board has been established to develop a Farnham Optimised Infrastructure Programme aiming to tackle traffic related issues, including air quality, in order to improve the local environment, reduce carbon emissions and improve the quality of place, whilst maintaining and supporting the economic vitality of the town.

4.11 Given these more recent initiatives now is the time to;

- develop a new Air Quality Action Plan that aligns with the Climate Change and Sustainability Strategy, the Carbon Neutrality Action Plan and the Farnham Optimised Infrastructure Programme.
- review how we monitor, review and take action on air quality in the borough under this new framework both at a borough wide and Farnham level.

4.12 There is funding available to buy in resources to assist with the development of a new Air Quality Strategy and Action Plan and officers will work with the Portfolio Holder to develop proposals on how to take this forward.

4.13 A Climate Emergency Board is being created to oversee the delivery of the CNAP and it might be considered appropriate for this to take the place of the Air Quality Steering Group going forward in terms of the borough wide approach to monitoring, reviewing and acting on air quality issues as part of the CNAP?

4.14 Alongside this the more focussed work on air quality in Farnham would seem to fit within the work of the Farnham Infrastructure Board?

4.15 Members views on these suggested ways forward are requested.

5.0 Key Findings.

5.1 2020 was an unusual year for air quality because nitrogen dioxide concentrations were significantly impacted by Covid-19 – there were no exceedances of the annual objective concentration for NO₂ at locations relevant for human exposure anywhere in Waverley Borough Council. The average reduction of NO₂ concentrations at the automatic monitoring locations in 2020 compared to previous years was about 20 % (the decreases ranged across the diffusion tube network from 10 % to 32 %). Similar reductions were observed by the Air Quality Expert Group (AQEG)¹ which has estimated that during the initial lockdown period in 2020, within urbanised areas of the UK reductions in NO₂ annual mean concentrations were between 20 and 30% relative to pre-pandemic levels, which represents an absolute reduction of between 10 to 20 µg m⁻³ if expressed relative to annual mean averages.

¹ Air Quality Expert Group, Estimation of changes in air pollution emissions, concentrations and exposure during the COVID-19 outbreak in the UK, June 2020

5.2 Monitoring will continue to ensure the ongoing measures in the AQAP are achieving success.

5.3 Key completed measures are:

- Adoption of a [new taxi licensing policy](#) to promote the update of ultra low emission vehicles.
- The Surrey Air Alliance (including WBC) produced a short animation video giving advice about wood burning stoves which was promoted on our [web site](#) and in social media.
- The Schools Air Quality Programme for the school year 2019/20 was completed in 2020/21, including theatre in education, virtual workshops, bikeability training and the golden boot challenge.
- The Surrey Air Alliance (including WBC) successfully bid for a Defra air quality grant for £256k to fund an EV taxi project promoting the uptake of EV taxis.
- [Installation of further EVCPs in Waverley](#) and progressing the [on street EVCP pilot project](#) that was part funded by Waverley Borough Council. By November 2021 10 twin on street EVCPs should be installed in Waverley.
- Surrey County Council (SCC) formally submitted an expression of interest to DfT on 4 June 2020 for funding to support making Farnham an All-Electric Bus Town. Unfortunately, the bid was unsuccessful.
- The [Farnham Board](#) is now well established and meets regularly to discuss, identify, and take forward actions to promote health and wellbeing in Farnham. Some of the actions will inevitably improve air quality in Farnham, including the AQMA.
- Waverley's [Carbon Neutral Action Plan](#) and Strategy were adopted by full Council on 15 December 2020. Many of the actions will reduce emissions of air pollution in addition to supporting the council's commitment to become carbon neutral by 2030.
- Preparations well advanced for the relocation of the Farnham AQ automatic monitoring station in 2021 to secure a long-term monitoring location in the Farnham AQMA. Also, WBC retendered the management of our non-automatic monitoring sites and production of reports.

5.4 WBC priorities for 2021/2022 are:

- Relocation of the Farnham AQ automatic monitoring station. Also, the retender of the management of our automatic monitoring stations.
- The [Farnham Board](#) will continue its work to identify and take actions forward to improve the health and wellbeing of people in Farnham.
- Take forward the Defra funded EV taxi project.
- Installation of more EVCPs in Waverley, including completion of phase 1 of the on street EVCP pilot project.
- Take forward a revised schools programme from September 2021, to be available to all schools across Waverley.
- Review and implement a suitable option to provide information to residents in Waverley on air quality alerts.
- To work with stakeholders to review actions to improve air quality and develop a Clean Air Strategy for Waverley incorporating an updated Air Quality Action Plan.
- To reduce business associated mileage by providing 2 more electric pool

cars within 6 to 12 months for officers to undertake site visits, putting in place a policy and support around promoting homeworking (long term WBC's offices will reduce in size); and the removal of essential car user allowance at WBC to help reduce emissions.

7.0 Relationship to the Corporate Strategy and Service Plan

7.1 The recommendations of this report will help support the Corporate Strategy's aims to 'improve the health and well-being of our residents and communities' and 'taking action to protect the environment.'

8.0 Implications of decision

8.1 Resource (Finance, procurement, staffing, IT)

8.1.1 The development of an Air Quality Action Plan in response to the findings of the report forms an integral element of the overall Carbon Neutrality Action Plan which will be reviewed annually. Actions identified can have significant financial implications for the borough and county councils and for other agencies, but cannot be quantified at this stage.

8.2 Risk management

8.2.1 The report has been submitted to DEFRA in accordance with the required timetable. Whilst there is a risk that they will require further work on the report, this is felt unlikely and their response is awaited.

8.3 Legal

8.3.1 The Local Air Quality Management regime (LAQM) is set out in Part IV of the Environment Act 1995 and relevant Policy and Technical Guidance documents. The LAQM process places an obligation on all local authorities (borough and district councils and unitary councils) to regularly review and assess air quality in their areas.

8.4 Equality, diversity and inclusion

8.4.1 Poor air quality can have an adverse effect on vulnerable groups in the community and the results of this work will help inform the response required to support those groups and the community at large.

8.5 Climate emergency declaration

8.5.1 Waverley has in place climate change and sustainability strategies, which bring together work in relation to air quality, green spaces and waste. This report and the work carried out to produce it forms an integral part of that strategy and contributes to the delivery of the carbon neutrality action plan.

9.0 Consultation and engagement

- 9.1 Actions to improve air quality form an integral part of the Council's Climate Change and Sustainability Strategy and Carbon Neutrality Action Plan and were subject to wide consultation as part of the process of developing those.
- 9.2 There will be ongoing consultation and engagement with Members through the Climate Emergency Board, Farnham Infrastructure Board and through regular reports to Overview and Scrutiny Committees.

10.0 Other options considered

- 10.1 The production of the Annual Air Quality Status Report is a statutory requirement.

11.0 Governance journey

- 11.1 Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee 29 September 2021

Attachments

Annexe A Annual Air Quality Status Report 2021

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