

WAVERLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL

EXECUTIVE - 4 NOVEMBER 2014

Title:

PROGRESS OF THE FARNHAM LOW EMISSION FEASIBILITY STUDIES

[Portfolio Holder: Cllr Donal O'Neill]

[Wards Affected: All]

Summary and purpose:

This report updates the Executive on the work undertaken relating to Farnham's air quality issues and seeks endorsement of the next steps identified as necessary to revoke the Air Quality Management Area.

In 2013 the Council published the results of a feasibility study which assessed and ranked the statutory Air Quality Action Plan's (AQAP) actions most likely to resolve Farnham's high levels of NO₂. The study identified diesel vehicles, particularly private diesel-engined cars, as being the biggest contributor and two options were identified as having serious merit and being worthy of further, detailed study: a diesel car-parking strategy and a traffic management scheme. The resultant, non-technical summary report is attached at [Annexe 1](#).

The report concludes that the car-parking strategy will not achieve all of its goals but that the traffic management scheme will be effective if external funding is found (approx. £8.9m). Nonetheless, during the last 12-18 months there have been significant technological advances relating to Air Quality, and a growing acceptance nationally that in future Low Emission Zones (LEZs) could provide an effective tool in reducing traffic-related air pollution. For example, advances in Automated Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) software that picks up higher polluting vehicles could result in traffic management control systems that are cost-effective and not reliant on major engineering works. This report therefore also sets out to progress this work through a scoping project to look at such options in more detail.

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

Value for money – progress on specific actions identified in the statutory Air Quality Action Plan have now been achieved through grant funding from Defra and the assistance of Surrey County Council

Leisure and Lives – reductions in air pollution / improvements in air quality promote health and well-being for all

Environment – Measures designed to improve air quality often result in reduced carbon emissions; contributing towards carbon reduction in Waverley

Financial Implications:

The studies were undertaken using a Defra grant of £60,000 and existing officer resources from both Waverley Borough Council and Surrey County Council.

Funding bids to Defra and LEP M3, for the further scoping works looking at options for an LEZ, are based on the existing model – covering specialist contractor's fees with local authorities' officers being engaged from within existing resources.

It is estimated at this early stage that a successful ANPR-LEZ would have initial costs of around £300-500,000 and annual costs of £60,000. Offsetting from income generated has not been included in these estimates.

Legal Implications:

Submission of an Annual Progress Report to Defra is a legal requirement under Part IV of the Environment Act 1995. Legal responsibilities and requirements are detailed in the body of the report.

Introduction

1. Under its statutory functions of the Local Air Quality Management regime, the Council must monitor and report on specified pollutants. Should trigger levels of a pollutant be exceeded, a Detailed Assessment is made regarding the declaration of an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA). Waverley has declared three AQMAs, including the one in Farnham Town centre, due to exceedences of NO₂. Declarations of AQMAs must be followed by an Air Quality Action Plan (AQAP) identifying measures that could reduce pollutant levels. There are a number of statutory agencies that have a role to play in implementing these types of measures.
2. In 2013 the Council published the results of a feasibility study which assessed and ranked the AQAP's actions most likely to resolve Farnham's high levels of NO₂. The study identified diesel vehicles, particularly private diesel-engined cars, as being the biggest contributor and two options were identified as having serious merit and worthy of further, detailed study. These were:
 - a) a diesel car-parking strategy, and;
 - b) a traffic management scheme
3. In order to better evaluate these options Defra funding was successfully bid for and a group of Waverley officers, Surrey County Council officers and specialist contractors (Ricardo-AEA) undertook a modelling study of possible traffic solutions, a study of the cost-benefits of any resultant scheme and a health impact assessment of the changes.
4. The project resulted in 3 main reports (covering the traffic modelling findings, the economic assessment and the health impact assessment) together with a short, non-technical report summarising the findings.

5. The reports are available on the website and conclude that:
 - The car-parking strategy is unlikely to have a positive effect on pollution levels and may even lead to increased NO₂ in the AQMA.
 - The traffic management option would reduce pollution levels sufficient to seek revocation of the AQMA.
 - The health cost benefits of the traffic management scheme would be small.
 - The cost-benefit of the traffic management scheme, comparing only health costs against engineering costs, will leave a gap of around £5m.
 - That doing nothing will see NO₂ levels reduce sufficiently from the year 2020, due to continued improvements in vehicle emission technologies and standards.

6. It is not proposed to pursue the car-parking strategy any further at this time. The traffic management option is technically feasible; however, it would require significant funding from the County Council and / or central government, is unlikely to demonstrate a strong business case compared with other traffic management options being considered for funding elsewhere in Surrey and the South East, and will not be achievable in the short-term. There are also concerns that such a solution would simply move the problem into other areas, such as Farnborough Road and Hale Road. However, the Council will continue to work closely with Surrey County Council to explore these issues, and to promote the already-recognised pollution and congestion benefits of this option.

7. During the last 12-18 months there has been growing interest nationally in technological advances relating to Air Quality and a growing acceptance that in the future, Low Emission Zones (LEZs) could provide an effective tool in reducing traffic-related air pollution by charging higher polluting vehicles to discourage their use in those zones. Advances in Automated Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) software could result in traffic management control systems that are cost-effective and not reliant on major engineering works.

8. External funding is therefore being sought for a scoping project to look at the feasibilities of an ANPR based LEZ for Farnham – bids have been submitted to both Defra and LEP M3 for £50k to cover specialist contractor costs.

9. The scoping project would be intended to identify whether a charging strategy could be identified that would reduce Farnham's pollution levels sufficiently- and what additional steps (modal shift, behaviour-change, etc.) might be taken in tandem. Any LEZ strategy identified would be flexible in application such that it could respond to gross changes in pollution as well as having co-benefits in congestion reduction and the provision of sustainable transport.

10. If the bid is successful the scoping project should commence in January and report in June 2015.

Conclusion

11. The traffic management scheme identified in the modelling studies could reduce pollution levels sufficiently to revoke the Farnham AQMA although at significant financial cost. However, the study area modelled has not been extended sufficiently to assess the possibility of further pollution hotspots being created by shifting traffic patterns on Farnham's roads away from the town centre.
12. The cost-benefits of the above engineered traffic management scheme, when assessed for health benefits against pollution-related costs alone, leave a wide gap of some £5m. However, should the highways authorities be considering such a scheme, or similar, for other reasons, e.g. congestion relief, then the benefits of up to £2.3m should be taken into account in any economic assessment.
13. Advances in technology mean a cost-effective ANPR-LEZ strategy for the town centre should be considered. This would need to be in place for a period sufficient to revoke the AQMA. Such a strategy may also have co-benefits for congestion management in and around the wider Farnham area. This should be properly scoped.

Recommendation

It is recommended that

1. the final reports are published and relevant recommendations passed to the highways authorities for consideration in future road management schemes along with the current revision of the Local Transport Plan (due in November 2014); and
2. the Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) Low Emission Zone (LEZ) scoping report funding bids be endorsed.

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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