

PUBLIC QUESTION RECEIVED for Place Scrutiny Committee – 14 September 2017

From Ms Lynn Wetenhall

Ms Lynn Wetenhall submitted a question and wished to set the context of wanting a number of step change to address the poor levels of air quality. She wished to encourage Councillors to show strong leadership in tackling congestion.

Numerous Government, national and international reports agree on the fact that securing a modal shift from private cars to walking, cycling and public transport, and banning dirty diesels across whole Clean Air Zones, (for example, by using congestion charging) are the only ways to make a serious improvement to air quality. This report does not provide this information, focussing instead mainly on technical fixes and other small scale changes. As we still have illegal levels of pollution after ten years of these small fixes, it is clear that something more is required.

Can the council explain why none of these measures or actions have been mentioned, whether there is to be any kind of exploration of more innovative measures, and if not, why not?

As changes to transport policy are the key route to cleaner air in Exeter, my question relates to why this Local Air Quality Management report does not mention:

- 1) Exeter City Council starting to make systematic use of existing powers, including Section 106 agreements, CIL agreements and planning conditions, to ensure that development “sustains compliance with and contribute towards meeting EU limit values or national objectives for air pollutants, taking into account the presence of AQMAs and the cumulative impacts on air quality from individual sites in local areas”; (Land-Use Planning and Development Control: Planning for Air Quality. Institute of Air Quality Management & Environmental Protection UK, January 2017).**

Councillor Denham responded and stated that Exeter City Council officers followed national guidance to decide when an air quality impact assessment was required as part of a planning application, and expected developers to assess the significance of any air quality impact using the same approved methodology. If this process identified significant adverse impacts then a developer would be asked to mitigate these. This process was not explained in detail in the report because there were no current plans to change it. Members of Planning Committee had remained conscious of air quality issues and referenced the data, as well as having requested more information as appropriate to ensure that they were informed. If officers identify changes to the air quality impact assessment methodology that could be made, whilst still complying with other local and national policy guidance, these would be set out in the draft Air Quality Action Plan for consultation in January 2018.

- 2) Setting up proper investigations into the pros and cons of introducing key measures, used successfully in other local authority areas, including congestion charging, workplace parking levy, redesign of key road space to allow better movement of people on foot and on bikes, (also a goal being campaigned for by Exeter Cycling Campaign) and**

using parking policy and charges in ways that specifically aim to reduce traffic at busy times.

Councillor Denham stated that officers were currently undertaking a process with partner organisations who would help to deliver such measures. The outcomes would be included in the draft Air Quality Action Plan to be published in January 2018 for consultation. It was important to take the time to get right and this area was new to her Portfolio. Officers had many ideas and would be working on this over the next few months to bring back a report for consultation.

- 3) The setting up of a Transport Board that can give the highest level strategic direction and political priority to addressing air quality issues in the city; (as promised, April 2016, by the council's Labour administration. "Creating a "a Transport Board to serve the city, bringing together transport providers, the public sector, cycling groups and others to develop a strategic plan to improve transport and reduce congestion,"; (Exeter Labour Party Manifesto 2016).**

Councillor Denham responded stating that work was ongoing in respect of the terms of reference for the creation of a Transport Board. This would be progressed in consultation with the Council's colleagues at Devon County Council who were the transport authority. They also hoped to explore a number of options through the Greater Exeter Strategic Planning process. The Leader of Exeter City Council had a response from the Leader of Devon County Council over greater joint working to ensure a more positive outcome. Councillor Denham advised that she would also meet with the Senior Environment Technical Officer to discuss further.

Members debated the issue and were aware that the topic was the subject of a report later on the agenda.

Ms Wetenhall thanked Councillor Denham for the response and suggested this was still a grey area and although welcome, the two leaders of the Council meeting was a long way from the formation of Transport Board. She was aware that Members would consider a further report in January and she felt it was important to grasp the nettle and she commented on what could be achieved between now and January.

It was noted that this written response would be attached to the minutes.