

**PUBLIC QUESTION RECEIVED for Place Scrutiny Committee – 11 January 2018
from Ms Lynn Wetenhall with reference to the Air Quality Action Plan.**

To Councillor Denham Portfolio City Transformation, Energy and Transport

Air pollution from traffic is, and has been for ten years or more, a serious issue in the city. No *significant* actions to reduce the illegal and close to illegal levels of NO₂, or other pollutants arising from cars, have been taken by the City or County Councils in that time, as evidenced by the lack of progress in securing cleaner air through named measures. Yet residents continue to suffer significant health impacts.

It therefore seems reasonable and important that any AQAP measures will be prioritised based on *evidence of which measures will give the quickest air quality improvements*. Yet the draft Action Plan does not provide any evidence on which measures are likely to provide the most impact, instead presenting an unprioritised list. Moreover, the introduction of a Clean Air Zone, generally agreed to be the single quickest way to clean up traffic-related pollution, is simply dismissed, (p95 of agenda pack) along with a possible congestion charge, with no clear rationale/evidence as to why these decisions were taken.

Another aspect of the list of the measures that makes them hard to respond to in a meaningful way, is that they are not clearly divided into those with Exeter City Council can pursue alone, (and soon) and those which depend on other agencies, notably Devon County Council. This makes the consultation process opaque and confusing – we are being asked to comment on actions that not in the power of the city council to deliver. This would be fine if it was a joint consultation with County Council for example, but it is not.

Will Scrutiny Committee therefore ask officers, as a matter of urgency before the draft Plan goes to consultation, to improve the Draft Air Quality Action Plan by amending it to include:-

- 1. Outline workings to show the relative air quality impacts of at least some of the more substantial measures**
- 2. A short list of which measures the council believes should be prioritised and why**
- 3. A fuller explanation of why key potential measures like a clean air zone have been rejected**
- 4. Clear explanation of which measures lie solely in the power of Exeter City Council to action**
- 5. Clear explanation of which measures lie solely in the power of Devon County Council to action**
- 6. Indication of any measures that can definitely be actioned during 2018, ie short term actions.**

The Portfolio City Transformation, Energy and Transport, Councillor Rosie Denham responded that the draft air quality action plan was at the start of a three month engagement process where the Council was looking to work with the community, businesses, voluntary groups and other statutory partners in order to finalise an action plan where partnerships commit to substantial measures to make a difference to the city.

She explained that a branded Clean Air Zone had not been included in the draft plan but many measures from the Clean Air Zone Framework had been included such as charging for or restricting access to certain classes of vehicle in certain areas. A

congestion charge which would charge all vehicles entering a certain zone, was thought to be less effective than a restriction based on vehicle class and type. She emphasised that this was a draft for public consultation and engagement and alternative views were welcomed by the Council.

There were areas of work which could be taken forward by the City Council alone and the comments on actions would need to be implemented by Devon County Council despite the consultation is being hosted by the City Council.

She referred to the report which detailed the air quality impact of measures and stated that a more detailed analysis of the air quality impact of measures would be developed as part of the evidence base for specific measures. Currently the Council expected to pursue all the measures in the draft plan, but the final plan would likely contain more detail on priorities, which the Council welcomed suggestions from all interested parties on what those priorities should be. Measures would be implemented from 2018 onwards.

She commented that Exeter City Council could not achieve substantial measures to improve air quality on its own and welcomed receiving proposals during the three month engagement process and any received from Ms Wetenhall achieved in partnership.

Debate

Members discussed critical aspects of the report and the need for officers to make improvements where they are needed but acknowledged that revisions to the consultation would cause a delay. The Portfolio Holder City Transformation, Energy and Transport was happy for suggestions to make improvements as recommendations to the consultation.

Supplementary Response from Ms Wetenhall

Ms Wetenhall commented that it would be disingenuous to not have public engagement and that it was a priority for technical information be written in a clearer manner for the public to understand. She thanked Councillor Denham for the response

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