

REPORT TO: Place Scrutiny Committee
Date of Meeting: 8 November 2018

REPORT TO: Executive
Date of Meeting: 13 November 2018

REPORT TO: Council
Date of Meeting: 18 December 2018

Report of: Environmental Health and Licensing Manager
Title: Revision of the Air Quality Action Plan

Is this a Key Decision?

No

Is this an Executive or Council Function?

Council

1. What is the report about?

1.1 To seek approval for a new Air Quality Action Plan following public consultation.

2. Recommendations:

2.1 That Place Scrutiny Committee recommends adoption of the Air Quality Action Plan.

2.2 That Executive recommends adoption of the Air Quality Action Plan.

2.3 That Council adopts the Air Quality Action Plan.

2.4 That the feasibility of a work place parking levy be kept under review and an update be brought back to Scrutiny Place as part of the annual review of the Air Quality Action Plan.

3. Reasons for the recommendation:

3.1 Exeter City Council has produced and submitted for public consultation an Air Quality Action Plan as part of its duty to the Local Air Quality Management statutory process, and in recognition of the legal requirement placed on the local authority to work towards air quality objectives under Part IV of the Environment Act 1995.

3.2 Following the closure of the extensive public consultation, the draft plan has been reviewed, taking into account the responses received from statutory consultees and the public. The full action plan can be found at Appendix 2, with a summary provided as Appendix 1.

3.3 The final plan outlines the action we will take to improve air quality in Exeter between 2019 & 2024. It is aligned with the Council's Corporate Strategy 2018 – 2021 and the emerging Exeter Vision.

3.4 The introduction of a workplace parking levy was proposed in the draft Air Quality Action Plan. Only 41% of respondents agreed with the implementation of a workplace parking levy, with 59% either disagreeing or undecided. Therefore at this stage the measure has not been taken forward in the action plan, but it will be kept under review with Devon County Council who are the statutory authority for implementing such a scheme. An update will be brought back to Scrutiny Place as part of the annual review of the Air Quality Action Plan.

4. What are the resource implications including non financial resources.

4.1 The majority of costs relating to measures outside of Exeter City Council's control would be paid by other organisations such as Devon County Council as the Transportation Authority.

4.2 For other measures it may be possible to consider grant applications..

4.3 Budget is already allocated for the existing air quality monitoring work, however any proposals to change the monitoring network will need to seek further capital expenditure approval or grant funding from central government.

5. Section 151 Officer comments:

5.1 There are no financial commitments arising from this report. Any further requests for funding, such as for replacement monitoring equipment, will require an additional report to Council.

6. What are the legal aspects?

6.1 Part IV of the Environment Act 1995 sets out statutory provisions on air quality. Section 82 provides that local authorities shall review the air quality within their area. Section 83 requires local authorities to designate Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs) where air quality objectives are not being achieved, or are not likely to be achieved (i.e. where pollution levels exceed the air quality objectives) as set out in the Air Quality (England) Regulations 2000.

6.2 Where an area has been designated as an AQMA, section 84 requires local authorities to develop an Air Quality Action Plan (AQAP) setting out the remedial measures required to achieve the air quality standards for the area covered within the AQMA. Where air quality issues have been identified, it is recommended that a steering group is formed to include the main parties involved in developing either Action Plans or Air Quality Strategies.

6.3 The Department for Environment and Rural Affairs has recently provided new statutory guidance in the form of the Local Air Quality Management Policy Guidance (PG16). The guidance gives particular focus to so-called 'priority pollutants' such as Nitrogen Dioxide (NO₂) and so-called 'Particulate Matter' (PM₁₀ and PM_{2.5}) and is relevant to both district and county councils.

7. Monitoring Officer's comments:

7.1 This report raises no issues of concern to the Monitoring Officer.

8. Report details:

8.1 In February, Exeter City Council launched a three month public consultation on a draft air quality action plan. The consultation was part of the statutory process for the implementation of an AQAP and it comprised a number of strands, namely:

- The targeted engagement of partners and statutory bodies with an interest in air quality
- A city wide 12 week online publication of the draft plan and accompanying online survey
- The targeting of some community groups that had engaged us on the subject of air quality.
- A public consultation event held in the Guildhall
- The targeted engagement of those using the city centre

8.2 Nearly 3,000 people took part in the consultation and provided hugely valuable feedback. The following points summarise the results of the Air Quality Action Plan survey, which are contained in more detail in Appendix A of the Air Quality Action Plan (found at Appendix 2 of this report).

- 66 per cent agreed that the impact of private cars needs to be reduced by reducing numbers of journeys
- The vast majority (88 per cent) agreed air quality should be treated as a public health priority
- More than half (55 per cent) back a switch to electric cars
- 58 per cent support measures to reduce the attractiveness of driving into the city centre
- Measures to increase the attractiveness of travel by means other than private car is strongly supported - by 90 per cent
- A majority (52 per cent) disagree with increasing the cost of driving into the city centre - a third (33 per cent) agree with measure
- More than half (55 per cent) would support closure of roads to through traffic if their neighbourhood if there are improvements to public transport
- A similar number would back the same measure if there were improvements to walking routes (53 per cent) and improvements to cycle routes (53 per cent)
- A big majority (80 per cent) support an increase in park and ride sites. Almost three quarters (73 per cent) believe the move would cut private car journeys from those living outside the city
- More than half (53 per cent) supported the aim of reducing the impact of travel for business purposes. Only 26 per cent disagreed
- 61 per cent support restrictions on accessing certain parts of the city for certain types or ages of vehicles. Only 27 per cent disagreed
- 41 per cent agreed that businesses within a defined area should pay a fee for private vehicle parking, 34 per cent opposed the measure
- 76 per cent thought developers should be held to account if developments create more traffic than predicted in planning applications
- 82 per cent agree that making public space more attractive will encourage people to be more active. Nearly three quarters (72 per cent) agree that active and healthy people will use active and healthy travel options

8.2 Exeter City Council is committed to reducing the exposure of people in Exeter to poor air quality in order to improve health. This Air Quality Action Plan (AQAP) outlines the Council's vision for air quality in the city.

- 8.3 In this Air Quality Action Plan, we outline how Exeter City Council plans to tackle air quality issues within our control and with local partners. However, we recognise that there are a large number of air quality policy areas that are outside of the Council's direct influence (such as vehicle emissions standards agreed in Europe). We will continue to seek opportunities to lobby regional and central government on policies and issues beyond Exeter City Council's direct influence.
- 8.5 For any action to reduce emissions to be effective, it needs not only the support of the local population, but also their action. Individual behaviour will have to change, starting in small ways. For example turning off engines when idling, or using alternative travel modes where these are practical for the journey in question should become the social norm. Leadership and assistance from businesses and community groups will be needed to make this happen. Exeter City Council and Devon County Council can support people to make these changes, and provide them with the infrastructure to do so, but ultimately the community needs to shift its attitudes and expectations. Positive action by informed and engaged community groups will receive the full support of the Council to achieve this. There are now many examples of such action available online, as well as packs for community organisers to help them facilitate particular campaigns.

9. How does the decision contribute to the Council's Corporate Plan?

9.1 The Air Quality Action Plan seek to contribute to the following Corporate Plan objectives:

- Tackling congestion and accessibility
- Promoting active and healthy lifestyles
- Building great neighbourhoods

9.2 In achieving these Corporate Priorities, it is necessary to proactively engage with other key partners in improving air quality. These include working with developers through the planning system to deliver good development including infrastructure, working with health partners and working with business to run a successful business to ensure that any emissions to air that they may produce are kept within legal limits.

10. What risks are there and how can they be reduced?

10.1 Various risks have been identified to the successful implementation of the Air Quality Action Plan. These include failure to engage with partners and, the impact of development in the greater Exeter area on traffic levels. These risks will be monitored as the plan develops, and steps taken to mitigate and risks as appropriate.

11. What is the impact of the decision on equality and diversity; health and wellbeing; safeguarding children, young people and vulnerable adults, community safety and the environment?

11.1 Areas with high levels of air pollution also tend to be relatively deprived. This means that more deprived populations are disproportionately affected. There is also a higher incidence amongst deprived populations of the types of diseases that are exacerbated by poor air quality. Thus the most vulnerable members of society are often worst affected by air pollution. The actions described in this report work to reduce the health impacts of poor local air quality.

12. Are there any other options?

12.1 Action to reduce local air pollution where levels exceed the government objectives and produce and air quality action plan are legal duties.

Environmental Health and Licensing Manager

Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1972 (as amended)

Background papers used in compiling this report:-

- Environment Act 1995
- Annual Status Report 2018
- Draft Air Quality Action Plan 2019 - 2024

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