

MEMBER QUESTIONS TO PORTFOLIO HOLDER at Place Scrutiny Committee – 8 November 2018 - Questions from Councillor Musgrave

Response to be made by Councillor Luke Sills, Chairman of Place Scrutiny Committee, responding on behalf of Councillor Rachel Sutton, Portfolio Holder for Economy and Culture/Labour Group Deputy Leader

Question 1

Why is it that ECC and DCC are pulling in different directions on Exeter's air quality problem?

Response

Exeter City Council and Devon County Council were not pulling in different directions. Communication between officers at the two authorities was excellent and had taken place throughout the development of the Action Plan. Further discussions were taking place at a strategic level through the Exeter and Devon Transport Steering Group.

Supplementary Question

Councillor Musgrave asked a supplementary question requesting an explanation about the differing opinion of Devon County Council on parking levy, to that of Exeter City Council.

Supplementary Response

Councillor Rachel Sutton, Portfolio Holder for Economy and Culture/Labour Group Deputy Leader would provide a written response to Councillor Musgrave and Members.

Question 2

Why is this report not recommending implementation a workplace parking levy given that Cllr Foggin recommend the same on behalf of a recent cross party task and finish group?

Response

The introduction of a Workplace Parking Levy would have to be done by Devon County Council rather than by Exeter City Council as the legislation had been devolved to tier 1 authorities (i.e. county council not district council).

The Action Plan did not, at this time, contain a request to Devon County Council to undertake a feasibility study for a Work Place Parking Levy. This was because many respondents to the consultation said that businesses should not face additional financial burdens. There was a feeling that alternative modes of transport should be provided first. This has been reflected in the final Action Plan.

However there was a mechanism through the annual review process of the of air quality action plan where additional measures could be introduced. The scrutiny committee report included a recommendation that '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.'

Supplementary Question

Councillor Musgrave asked a supplementary question on why the report figures had been presented in a misleading way.

Supplementary Response

Councillor Rachel Sutton, Portfolio Holder for Economy and Culture/Labour Group Deputy Leader would provide a written response to Councillor Musgrave and Members.

Question 3

Isn't it true that the proposed focus on the Heavitree corridor condemns the rest of the city including thousands of residents, children and workers to many more years of exposure and health risks?

Response

The legal duty of the Air Quality Action Plan as set out under the Environment Act 1995, was for a local authority to reduce concentrations of nitrogen dioxide below the objective. This plan aimed to reduce concentrations of nitrogen dioxide below the objective. However the Council recognised that this may not be the complete extent of the health impacts of air pollution, because the objective level may not be the lower limit of health impacts for nitrogen dioxide, and because particulate matter could also have health impacts below the relevant objectives. The Council therefore aspired to reduce harm to health from air pollution further than this in the future

It should be made clear that levels of air pollution were reducing in Exeter. In 2011 there were 20 monitoring locations in the city where nitrogen dioxide levels were above the objective. In 2017 there were eight. According to data from the Centre for Cities Exeter was the top performing city in the UK for reductions in CO2 emissions down by over 4% between 2005 and 2015. This was really good news for public health and showed that we had achieved over this period, although we recognise there was still much to do.

The number of people living in the locations where concentrations of nitrogen dioxide were above the objective may be small, but the pollution levels to which they were exposed to were far higher than in the majority of the city. For example nitrogen dioxide levels at East Wonford Hill were 59 micrograms per cubic meter, which compared to between 13 and 25 micrograms per cubic meter in a typical suburban Exeter street. A change in priority to focus on other areas instead would leave this small number of most significantly affected people with no benefit.

As Cllr Denham stated at the Scrutiny committee in September 2018, we had been working with partners in the public and private sector to cut congestion and the resulting air pollution as part of the city-wide transformation programme, Exeter City Futures. It focused on addressing some of the big challenges facing the city, in particular traffic congestion and energy efficiency. It was establishing a clear delivery plan, objectives and deliverables to create sustainable change, and to help address the problems of congestion within the city.

Supplementary Question

Councillor Musgrave asked a supplementary question, stating that there was requirement for focus and action for the parts of the city that had exceeded the legal limits. What actions are planned for bad areas such as East Wonford Hill?

Supplementary Response

Councillor Rachel Sutton, Portfolio Holder for Economy and Culture/Labour Group Deputy Leader would provide a written response to Councillor Musgrave and Members.

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