

EXETER CITY COUNCIL

SCRUTINY COMMITTEE COMMUNITY 10 MARCH 2009

EXECUTIVE
24 MARCH 2009

EXETER AIR QUALITY STRATEGY 2009-2014

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 This report seeks approval of the Exeter Air Quality Strategy 2009-2014, and informs Members of the air quality monitoring and management undertaken by the Council. A copy of the strategy has been placed in the Members' Room and is available on the internet.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Council's first five-year air quality strategy was approved by Members in June 2003. The strategy drew together the existing air quality work undertaken by Environmental Health Services. This work is primarily driven by statutory obligations and the strategy provides a means of organising and coordinating it to best effect. This strategy sits beneath and supplements the Council's Community Strategy – Exeter Vision, Environmental Strategy 2007-2012 and Climate Change Strategy 2008-2018.
- 2.2 Few things are as fundamental as the air we breathe. Modern medical statistics now allow us to begin to see the real impact that the air we breathe has on our health. People with pre-existing respiratory and cardio-vascular disease are particularly at risk from air pollution. Indeed the statistics can be shocking with the Government stating that up to 24,000 people die prematurely every year in the UK because of the effects of air pollution.
- 2.3 Clean air that is fit to breathe is one of the key factors required to deliver a safe environment for both current and future generations. The Department of the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs' (DEFRA) UK Sustainable Development Strategy "A Better Quality of Life" sets out a national vision for delivering a sustainable environment. A National Air Quality Strategy has also been produced, which sets out the Government's plans to improve and protect ambient air quality, as part of the creation of a sustainable environment.
- 2.4 The Government has challenged local authorities under Part IV of the Environment Act 1995 to assess and manage their air quality. National health-based standards and objectives have been published to allow air quality to be assessed and to drive forward management policies.
- 2.5 The Council uses a comprehensive network of 61 air pollution monitors, along with computer models, to assess air quality in Exeter. These show that air quality is generally very good; there is, however, a need to tackle emissions of nitrogen dioxide associated with motor vehicles along the busiest roads into the city. This resulted in the legal designation of an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) for areas in very close proximity to some of the main routes into Exeter in April 2007.

- 2.6 The creation of this area enables the Council to develop and focus policies designed to protect and improve Exeter's air quality. These have been formalised within a detailed Air Quality Action Plan for Exeter, which aims to reduce pollution by cutting congestion on the main routes into the city. Exeter City Council has worked closely with Devon County Council (the Highways Authority) to produce the action plan.
- 2.7 In addition to local air quality management, the Council has numerous other statutory duties with regard to air quality such as the management of specified 'prescribed processes'. In Exeter there are 38 permitted processes and Council staff inspect these to ensure compliance with the conditions within their permit.
- 2.8 Other areas of work which are related to air quality issues include responding to air quality complaints and advice requests; there were more than 346 received in 2008. Officers also provide advice on air quality to Planning Services, in relation to forward planning and development control.
- 2.9 The Exeter Air Quality Strategy 2009-14 provides details of all of these activities. It also gives a number of specific air quality objectives and summarises the approaches to these and the suggested methods of monitoring and reviewing the Council's progress in meeting them.

3. PROPOSAL

- 3.1 The Exeter Air Quality Strategy 2009-14 provides details of all of the existing air quality work undertaken by Environmental Health Services. It is proposed to adopt the strategy which identifies a number of specific air quality objectives and summarises the approaches to be taken to meet these objectives and suggests methods of monitoring and reviewing progress.

4. RECOMMENDED

That Scrutiny Committee - Community supports and Executive approves that the Exeter Air Quality Strategy 2009-14 be adopted by the Council.

HEAD OF ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

S:PA/LP/ Committee/309SCC7 v2
24.2.09

COMMUNITY & ENVIRONMENT DIRECTORATE

Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 (as amended)
Background papers used in compiling this report:

Air Quality Strategy for England - DEFRA