



SCRUTINY COMMISSION - 2nd SEPTEMBER 2020

AIR QUALITY AND HEALTH JOINT ACTION PLAN

REPORT OF DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC HEALTH

Purpose of report

1. The purpose of this report is to provide the Scrutiny Commission with an update on work being undertaken with partners to develop the Leicestershire Air Quality and Health Action Plan, a draft of which is attached as an Appendix to this report.

Policy Framework and Previous Decisions

2. The Health and Wellbeing Board, which is made up of local councillors, GPs, health and social care officials and representatives of patients and the public, approved Leicestershire's Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy for 2017 – 2026 at its meeting on 11 November 2016. This document sets out the vision to “improve health outcomes for the local population, manage future demand on services and create a strong and sustainable health and care system by making the best use of the available resources”. Improving health outcomes is reliant on understanding and tackling the causes of ill-health of which poor air quality is one.
3. On 15 May 2019 the County Council declared a climate emergency, resolving to work with partners and other public bodies across the County and region to deliver ambitious goals such as reducing the Council's carbon emissions by 38% by 2030.
4. In December 2017 the County Council agreed its Strategic Plan for 2018 – 22. In response to the Council's resolution to declare a climate emergency, the Strategic Plan was revised (and approved by the County Council on 8 July 2020) to incorporate new environmental commitments to ensure future growth is considered within a robust environmental framework.
5. The Council's revised Environment Strategy 2018-2030, which was approved by the County Council on 8 July 2020, includes aims to reduce pollution and the environmental impacts of travel and transport. There is also an aim to protect people from harm caused by the deteriorating condition of the environment and a target of net zero carbon emissions by 2030.

6. The Director of Public Health has a statutory duty under the Health and Social Care Act to ensure that plans are in place to protect the health of the local population.

Background

7. Air pollution has a significant impact on public health and wellbeing, and poor air quality is the largest environmental risk to public health in the UK.
8. Air pollution is a complex mix of particles and gases; both natural and of human origin. Particulate matter (PM) and nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) are major components of urban air pollution. Other pollutants include Sulphur dioxide, Ammonia, Ozone and Non-methane volatile organic compounds (NMVOCs).
9. Health effects from air pollution occur across the life course - from conception to older age. Conditions caused by air pollution not only cause deaths but also significantly reduce quality of life. They also mean people are less able to work and need more medical and social care support, resulting in higher social costs and greater burden on the Health and Care System.
10. Prevalence of asthma across Leicestershire was 6.3% in 2018/19, this is significantly higher than the England average of 6%.
11. Road vehicles are the main pollution source that people are exposed to in the most populated urban environments and the pollutants they cause and emit have the greatest health impacts. Combustion for heating, farming activities and certain industrial processes also contribute to air pollutant emissions, but these tend to be more diluted, contributing to background levels of air pollution.
12. There are considerable differences in emissions between different vehicles and fuels. In general, diesel exhausts contain up to 30 times more PM than petrol or liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) / compressed natural gas (CNG), but all vehicles generate additional PM from friction of brakes and tyres and through re-suspension of dust from road surfaces.
13. Background levels of PM are found to be higher in North West Leicestershire, Loughborough and Kegworth with quarries and the airport considered as the main cause. The quarry at Croft in Blaby District is also a potential source of PM.
14. There are also higher levels of Nitrogen Oxide 2 – found in car exhaust fumes and when coal and oil is burnt. Particle Matter 2.5 and Particle Matter 10 – dust, soot and smoke. The numbers 2.5 and 10 refer to the size of the particles. The higher levels of both pollutants are found around the main road routes in the County; namely the M69, A42, A46, A6 and the M1.

National and local context

15. The UK Government and the devolved administrations have policy responsibility for air quality in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland

respectively.

16. The Government published a Clean Air Strategy in January 2019 which sets out the Government's main plan to curb emissions of nitrogen oxides (NO_x), sulphur dioxide, volatile oxide compounds, ammonia and particulate matter (PM_{2.5}) emissions as required by the National Emissions Ceilings Directive and the Gothenburg Protocol underpinning it.
17. Local authorities in Great Britain have powers to address local air pollution via the Clean Air Act 1993, the Road Traffic (Vehicle Emissions) (Fixed Penalty) (England) Regulations 2002 and equivalent legislation in Scotland and Wales. The latter includes enforcement powers for stationary idling offences.
18. Local authorities are required to review and assess local air quality, in accordance with the statutory Local Air Quality Management (LAQM) guidance. Where a local authority identifies areas exceeding statutory limits and there is relevant public exposure, it is required to declare the geographic extent of exceedance as an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA). It must then draw up an action plan detailing remedial measures to address the problem.
19. In two-tier authority areas, the duties placed on local government associated with air quality management are the responsibility of district authorities. This includes identification of AQMAs, monitoring and reporting on air quality, producing and delivering action plans, and assessing the impact of development on air quality through the planning process.
20. There are 14 Air Quality Management Areas (AQMA) in Leicestershire spread across 4 districts (North West Leicestershire, Blaby, Harborough and Charnwood:
 - a. 12 of these monitor Nitrogen Dioxide (NO₂).
 - b. One AQMA monitors Sulphur Dioxide (SO₂) and covers the Great Central Railway area and one AQMA monitors particulate matter (PM₁₀) and covers the Mountsorrel Quarry area.
21. There are obligations on both the county and district councils within Part IV of the Environment Act 1995 in relation to air quality. The Secretary of State expects lower and upper-tier councils to work together to develop their approach and, with respect to action plans, ensure that all necessary measures to address air pollution in their local area are included.

Proposal

22. In light of the above, it is proposed that an Air Quality and Health Joint Action Plan 2020 – 2024 be introduced which aims to improve air quality across Leicestershire through joint working across organisational boundaries, involving both professionals in the County Council and the District Councils and the public, and reduce the impact of air pollution on human health and the environment.

23. The key aims of the Action Plan are to:
- Bring about a significant and measurable improvement to air quality in Leicestershire through joined-up working to implement cost-effective measures.
 - Reduce the impact of poor air quality on the health of residents, workers and visitors, and the environment.
 - Raise public awareness of air quality, its impact on health and personal protection measures to promote sustainable behaviour change.
 - Increase our understanding of the state of air quality in Leicestershire and the impact of measures to improve air quality.
 - Meet and exceed statutory obligations and national targets on air quality.
24. In addition, the following three priorities were determined by partners as the focus of collaborative action over the next 3 years:
- (i) Active and sustainable travel: This work should act as a catalyst for behaviour change and modal shift to green travel. Each authority with support from the Counties active and sustainable travel team will be expected to promote active travel to their residents and workforce.
 - (ii) Planning and development strategies and proposals: Guidance and frameworks should be developed with and for planners to support measures to improve air quality and identify and address developments which may worsen air quality. Each authority will be expected to contribute to the healthy design guide programme of work.
 - (iii) Information sharing and campaigns: It is important that steps are taken to understand the public's views, knowledge, attitudes and motivations, in order that they can be engaged in developing actions which are aligned with their priorities. Each authority will be expected to promote county-wide campaigns.
25. The overall measurement of success will be reducing mortality attributable to air pollution. However, the detail outputs to achieve this will be developed with partners through the Air Quality and Health Action Plan Partnership.

Engagement with key Stakeholders

26. A workshop was conducted in October 2019 to engage with partners and develop an initial draft of the proposed Air Quality and Health Action Plan. Partners included County and District Council representatives, East and West Leicestershire Clinical Commissioning Groups, health colleagues in acute care and community providers such as the Leicestershire Partnership Trust.
27. Progress towards the actions in the Air Quality and Health Action Plan will be reported to the Unified Prevention Board biannually with oversight from the Health and Wellbeing Board.

Resource Implications

28. There are no direct financial implications arising from this report. Partners are asked to support the delivery of the action plan using existing resources.

Timetable for Decisions

29. Following consideration by the Scrutiny Commission, the draft Plan will be presented to the Cabinet for approval at its meeting on 18th September. The comments of the Commission will be reported to the Cabinet at that meeting.
30. Actions included within this Plan have also been incorporated within District Council air quality strategies and plans where they exist. These will be approved through their governance processes. For example, Blaby Council Air Quality and Strategy will be presented to its Cabinet on 15th September 2020 whilst North West Leicestershire will present their plan to address Air Quality to their Scrutiny Committee in October and Cabinet in December 2020. It is expected that the Action Plan will begin to be implemented by the end of the year.

Circulation under the Local Issues Alert Procedure

31. The Air Quality and Health Action Plan will be presented to all members for information at an informal briefing on 1st September 2020.

Equality and Human Rights Implications

32. A screening assessment of the Action Plan has been completed and concluded that a full impact assessment is not required

Recommendation

33. The Scrutiny Commission is asked to comment on the vision, aims and priorities set out within the draft Air Quality and Health Joint Action Plan.

Appendix

Draft Air Quality and Health Action Plan

Background Papers

Meeting of the County Council – 8 July 2020 – Revised Strategic Plan 2020-2023
<http://politics.leics.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=134&MId=6040&Ver=4>

Meeting of the County Council – 8 July 2020 - Revised Environment Strategy 2018-2030
<http://politics.leics.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=134&MId=6040&Ver=48>

Meeting of the County Council – 15 May 2019 – Notice of Motion – Climate Emergency
<http://politics.leics.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=134&MId=5112&Ver=4>

Meeting of the Health and Wellbeing Board – 11 November 2016 – Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy

<http://politics.leics.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=1038&MID=4635#A14953>

Officers to Contact

Mike Sandys, Director of Public Health

Tel. (0116) 305 4239

Email: mike.sandys@leics.gov.uk

Kelly Evans, Consultant in Public Health

Tel. (0116) 305 1995

Email: Kelly-Marie.Evans@leics.gov.uk