



**ENVIRONMENT, FLOODING AND CLIMATE CHANGE
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE: 8 JUNE 2026**

AIR QUALITY AND HEALTH PARTNERSHIP ACTION PLAN UPDATE

**REPORT OF THE DIRECTORS OF PUBLIC HEALTH, COMMUNITIES
LAW AND GOVERNANCE (PHCLG) AND GROWTH, ENVIRONMENT AND
TRANSPORT (GET)**

Purpose of report

1. The purpose of this report is to update the Committee on the progress to date made against actions within the Air Quality and Health Partnership Action Plan 2024-28.

Policy Framework and Previous Decisions

2. This work on air quality supports the 'Clean and Green' and 'Safe and Well' strategic outcomes within the refreshed Leicestershire County Council Strategic Plan (2024-26), focusing on environmental determinants of health such as clean air and supporting people to enjoy long lives in good health. The work also delivers against priorities within the Leicestershire Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy (2022-32) specifically in relation to reducing air pollution and its impact on health.
3. The draft Air Quality and Health Partnership Action Plan 2024-28 was presented to the Committee for comment and feedback on 11 November 2024. Following consideration by the Committee, the Action Plan was presented to the Cabinet for approval at its meeting on 17 December 2024.

Background

Context

4. The Director of Public Health has a statutory duty under the Health and Social Care Act (2012) to ensure that plans are in place to protect the health of the local population on behalf of the Local Authority.
5. Within Leicestershire, lower tier local authorities (district councils) have the statutory responsibility to manage local air quality. This includes a requirement to regularly conduct air quality monitoring to ensure that it meets the required air quality standards and legal thresholds for certain pollutants through a Local Air Quality Management (LAQM) system.

6. Air quality is a concern for Public Health due to the risk of harm to health and potential impact on health inequalities. The UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) states that breathing polluted air affects health, reduces life expectancy and costs our society billions of pounds each year, due to ill health and loss of productivity. Air pollutants with the greatest effect on the health of the UK population are particulate matter and nitrogen dioxide. The greatest harms are attributable to particulate matter, measured in the UK's atmosphere as PM2.5 and PM10. The Royal College of Physicians estimate that around 30,000 deaths per year in the UK are attributed to air pollution. When assessing inequalities, evidence indicates that any gains that have been made to reduce numbers of deaths have not been the same everywhere, or for everyone. Alongside monitoring the data around potential health impacts and inequalities, the role of local Public Health teams is seen as providing advice, guidance and influence to help shape appropriate action in this area on inequalities, as well as influencing local policy and raising awareness with colleagues and the public. Building on our shared objectives, Growth, Environment and Transport teams are actively seeking opportunities to improve health outcomes and reduce inequalities in relevant areas of work as set out in the recently adopted Local Transport Plan 4. This is particularly relevant to aspects of air quality linked to travel and transport.
7. The Air Quality and Health Partnership was established in 2020, creating a multi-agency group and action plan to respond to the findings and recommendations from a Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) chapter on outdoor air quality (2019). This action plan ran from 2020-24 and outcomes were shared with this Committee in September 2023 and November 2024. A Health Needs Assessment (HNA) on outdoor air quality refreshed the JSNA chapter in 2024 and informed the approved 2024-28 action plan.
8. The Partnership aims to contribute to a vision for air quality and health across Leicestershire: *"To improve air pollution in the county and reduce the impact of air pollution on the environment and human health, contributing to the reduction in health inequalities"*. It is jointly chaired by officers from the Public Health, Communities, Law and Governance and the Growth, Environment and Transport Departments and meets bi-yearly. It has two focused sub-groups, that also meet on a bi-yearly basis between Partnership meetings.
9. The Air Quality and Health Action Plan aims to promote and facilitate joint working across organisational boundaries with key stakeholders. The plan is informed by the 2024 HNA led by the Public Health team and produced by the Partnership. This included a number of recommendations for action. Each recommendation forms a section of the Action Plan and has a number of actions assigned to it.
10. The recommendations include areas such as providing leadership through the Partnership, influencing urban design and planning to improve air quality, aligning air quality and health work across the county, increasing access to active travel choices and options, improving communications and information on risks and impacts on local air quality and understanding the impact of industry and agriculture on our air.

Initial work

11. Following the approval of the Action Plan at the Cabinet, as per the agreed process the final Action Plan was presented back to the Air Quality and Health Partnership for

approval and adoption in early 2025. The Partnership consists of representatives from the Leicestershire County Council departments of PHCLG, GET and Corporate Resources; District and Borough Councils (with a statutory duty to monitor air quality) Blaby District Council, Charnwood Borough Council, Harborough District Council, Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council, Melton Borough Council and North West Leicestershire District Council and Oadby and Wigston Borough Council.

12. Following approval of the Plan, the Partnership reflected on the number of actions and need for focus and accountability. The Partnership agreed that as of summer 2025, two subgroups would be formed sitting under the main Air Quality and Health Partnership, each meeting bi-yearly. It was also agreed that actions would be split into short, medium and longer term actions spanning the full term of the Action Plan, assigned to years 1, 2 or 3 (or all) of the Plan. The first few months of the Plan period was therefore focused on setting up the new Subgroups with Chairs, vice-chairs, new processes and creating and adopting Terms of Reference. Years 1, 2 and 3 will run June-June annually. For the last few months of the Action Plan period, the Partnership will be dedicated to updating the Health Needs Assessment for a future action plan from 2028, if required.
13. The two subgroups focus on two large areas within the work of the Partnership and are chaired by District Council leads:
 - i) Data, mapping, industry and agriculture:
This group looks at the monitored and modelled data available for Leicestershire, how we display and use this data and links to industrial and agricultural activity within the county, with the aim of developing long term partnerships with key stakeholders in this area.
 - ii) Transport and Communities:
This group focuses on work with communities, businesses and schools around active travel choices, personal contributions to local air quality and multi-stakeholder communications and engagement in these areas to reduce inequalities.

Year One Summary

14. Appendix A gives a full update on actions assigned to year one of delivery for the Partnership. A summary of key successes is given below:
 - i) Public Health and Transport leads have worked together with District colleagues on the development of specific local strategies, including the Blaby Air Quality Action Plan and the Charnwood Air Quality Strategy and Delivery Plan. Both clearly included health considerations within their finalised documents.
 - ii) Multi-agency work focusing on improving air quality in Oadby and Wigston was delivered, based on work with healthcare partners and district Officer observations around traffic volume and congestion in the Blaby Road area, linked to potential increased health risk from pollutants. The work included school interventions, supporting pupils and families with active travel choices, education on air quality with pupils and increased monitoring within the area. Successful work with Parkland School led to a further school requesting the same approach, which will be delivered over year two of the action plan.

- iii) "Enabling Health and Wellbeing" is one of the five core themes within the Local Transport Plan 4, adopted by Leicestershire County Council on 22 November 2025. The foreword of the document was jointly signed by Lead Members for Health, Environment, Highways and Transport and document taken to Health and Wellbeing Board for comment in 2024, from which the teams received high praise for its embedded health considerations.
- iv) PHCLG conducted five strategic Health Impact Assessments on emerging Local Plans within the county. Active Together worked in partnership on this work to embed requirements and considerations relating to active travel and creating supportive environments for physical activity through formal and informal spaces to live, work, travel and play, alongside improved connectivity and access to high-quality green and blue spaces. There were also requirements embedded within each plan for Health Impact Assessment (HIA) which requires consideration of air quality impacts potentially arising from a proposal.
- v) PHCLG have developed and submitted a proposal via the LLR Strategic Planning Group to add health data to a mapping tool to look at potential hot spots and potential cumulative impacts of growth on health.
- vi) Key messages on air quality and health have been actively included within ongoing training opportunities, including Health in All Policies (HiAP) and Making Every Contact Count training. North West Leicestershire District Council are due to launch HiAP training for staff in June 2026, with Blaby District Council having agreed to start this journey at a Senior Leadership meeting in April 2026.
- vii) Through Health in All Policies processes at the County Council, air quality and health considerations have been reflected within Cabinet and Scrutiny report 'health implications' sections on key policy and strategy papers such as the Rights of Way Improvement Plan, the Rural Strategy, and the Market Harborough cycling and walking facilities and junction improvements.
- viii) Joint work between two districts and Public Health colleagues emerged from the data and mapping subgroup, working to bring together various air quality monitoring mapping tools into one portal for public access and information on local air quality data from monitoring sources.

Local Data

15. As identified in the report to Committee in March 2026 (agenda item 11), air quality performance in Leicestershire improved slightly as PM2.5 (Population weighted annual mean PM2.5 data) declined from 7.7 micrograms per cubic metre ($\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$) in 2023 to 7.1 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ in 2024 for Leicestershire.
16. When compared to other English comparator Councils on particulate matter levels, Leicestershire remained in the fourth quartile in 2024 (low comparative performance) but with an improvement in ranking from the bottom of this band to the top of the band between 2023 and 2024. A fuller picture of local air quality monitoring data has been developed and included for reference as Appendix B, in addition to being shared with Committee Members prior to the meeting.
17. Latest Public Health Outcomes Framework data from the Office of Health Improvement and Disparities shows that the fraction of mortality attributable to particulate air pollution (the mortality burden associated with long term exposure to particulates at current levels, expressed as the percentage of annual deaths from all causes in those aged 30 and above) declined between 2023 and 2024 from 5.73% to 5.29% for Leicestershire.

Resource Implications

18. There are no additional resource implications for the Council arising from this update.

Timetable for Decisions

19. The report is an update on progress of year one of the action plan only.

Conclusions

20. The Air Quality and Health Partnership and its subgroups are well attended and valued by key stakeholders working within the area of air quality and health, who engage well within and between meetings. The Action Plan and the new way of working within the Partnership structure has allowed for increased focus on evidence-based action, reporting and accountability in this work area. Year one actions have made good progress and momentum is now building for year two.
21. The Committee is asked to note progress against actions for year one of the Air Quality Action Plan 2024-28 summarised in paragraph 13 above, with more detail appended to this report in Appendix A.

Background papers

Leicestershire Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy (2022-2032)

<https://www.leicestershire.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2024-04/Joint-Health-and-Wellbeing-Strategy-2022-2032.pdf>

Leicestershire County Council's Strategic Outcomes Framework and Strategic Plan 2024-2026

<https://www.leicestershire.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2025-01/LCC-Strategic-Plan.pdf>

Leicestershire Air Quality and Health partnership report & Action Plan 2024-2028 – 17 December 2024

<https://democracy.leics.gov.uk/documents/s187233/Air%20Quality%20FINAL.pdf>

Environment, Flooding and Climate Change Overview and Scrutiny Committee- 9 March 2026. Performance Report to December 2025

<https://democracy.leics.gov.uk/documents/s195058/Final%20Performance%20Report%20Q3%202025-26%20EFCC%20Scrutiny%20090326.pdf>

Circulation under the Local Issues Alert Procedure

22. None.

Equality Implications

23. There are no equality implications arising from the recommendations in this report.

Human Rights Implications

24. There are no human rights implications arising from the recommendations in this report.

Other Relevant Impact Assessments

25. Health implications of this programme are outlined in paragraphs 3-9 of this report.

Health Impact Assessment

26. The Air Quality and Health Partnership, subgroups and Action Plan provide a unique opportunity for Partnership members to come together to consider air quality within the context of potential health impacts and health inequality and capture action and progress in addition to monitoring and reporting pollutant levels and exceedances. Air quality is a key environmental impact on health and poses associated risks to the health of our population.
27. Some groups within the population are disproportionately at risk from poor air quality due to determinants such as age, other health conditions and socioeconomic gradient. These inequalities exist due to different levels of exposure (i.e. living in a more deprived area is linked in evidence to increased exposure) and by vulnerability (due to existing health conditions). The Action Plan steers work to address these inequalities, particularly using work from the data and mapping subgroup, which has focused on joint efforts to create hotspot mapping for this work area.
28. Action on improving air quality, such as offering active travel choice, can also have wider health impacts on physical and mental health through economic impacts on health. Evidence shows that a healthier population is also more productive, contributing to economic prosperity within the county. Improved active and sustainable travel within the county may also allow for improved access to local services and employment opportunities and impact on social impacts on health.

Appendices

- Appendix A: Air Quality and Health Partnership Action Plan, Year 1 Summary.
Appendix B: Air Quality Monitoring for Leicestershire, May 2026

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