

<b>SUBJECT:</b>	<i>Air Quality Management Update</i>
<b>REPORT OF:</b>	<i>Cllr Graham Harris (Healthy Communities Portfolio Holder)</i>
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<b>WARD/S AFFECTED</b>	<i>All</i>

## **1. Purpose of Report**

To inform Members on air quality management in the Chiltern District and to obtain opinions on how air quality may be improved to meet EU and UK standards.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

To seek members opinions on how air quality may be improved to meet EU and UK standards

## **2. Content of Report**

Public and political focus on local air quality has increased in recent years, spurred by the publication of epidemiological estimates of the mortality burdens of fine particles nationally. The introduction of increasingly strict vehicle emissions regulations (Euro standards) has not delivered the expected NO<sub>x</sub> emission reductions from diesel vehicles. As a result road transport is still by far the largest contributor to NO<sub>2</sub> pollution in areas where the UK is exceeding NO<sub>2</sub> limit values

Adding to the awareness generated, in 2014, the European Court of Justice ruled that the Supreme Court had authority to ensure that the UK Government complied with EU air quality limit values in respect of NO<sub>2</sub> in certain geographical zones.

Chiltern District Council declared an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) in 2007 within the town of Chesham and has since developed an action plan to improve air quality. The remaining area of Chiltern District has good Air quality. Work has been ongoing for a number of years in order to limit any worsening of existing levels and to try and make improvements where possible. Road traffic forms the principal source of air pollution in the District.

### **Legislative Framework**

Tackling air pollution is vital to improve the health and quality of life of people who live, work or visit the District, especially those who are vulnerable, such as children with asthma and older people with heart and respiratory diseases

## **South Bucks District Council Chiltern District Council**

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In 2015, the Supreme Court ordered the government to make plans for tackling the UK's air pollution problem, which in many locations, has been in breach of EU limits for years and is linked to thousands of premature deaths each year.

DEFRA is currently preparing new air quality plans that set out targeted local, regional and national measures. The impact of these plans will require consideration by the Council, but in general should provide added support to achieve further improvements locally.

Running in parallel and now well established, The Local Air Quality Management (LAQM) process places an obligation on all local authorities to regularly review and assess air quality in their areas, and to determine whether or not the air quality objectives are likely to be achieved. Where exceedances are considered likely, the local authority must then declare an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) and prepare an Air Quality Action Plan (AQAP) setting out the measures it intends to put in place in pursuit of the objectives.

### **Monitoring**

Non-automatic diffusion tubes offer a relatively simple method of screening air quality to give a general indication of average pollution concentrations over a period of weeks or months. They are useful in highlighting 'hotspots' of high concentrations where more detailed studies may be required. There is currently a good spread of monitoring locations which enable robust spatial coverage of the whole district within available resources.

The analysis of air quality monitoring and road traffic data formed the basis of designating an AQMA in 2007 within the town of Chesham. This resulted in the preparation of an air quality action plan. For this reason and following statutory guidance, most effort has been channelled towards taking action in this area.

### **Chesham Air Quality Action Plan**

Actions have taken place over a number of years and have included the introduction of 12 retrofitted low emission buses, tree planting and traffic management, 'walking to school' campaigns, school packs, school competitions, installation of additional bike racks, installation of electric charging points, information for businesses, installation of a green wall, vehicle idling campaigns and the production of the Sustainable Construction (incorporating air quality guidance) SPD for planning.

### **Air Quality Management Area and Results**

Since 2012 there has been a 16-21% reduction in levels of Nitrogen Dioxide within the Chesham AQMA.

Although declining by 16-21%, three out of the eight monitoring points are still indicating that the annual average level of Nitrogen Dioxide is higher than the DEFRA guidance level of 40 µg/m<sup>3</sup> with levels ranging from 40 – 44 µg/m<sup>3</sup>. This means that the AQMA must remain in place at the current time.

## **Partnership Working**

The Councils of Buckinghamshire work collectively with Milton Keynes Council to communicate and develop shared actions that cover the wider Bucks and Milton Keynes area through the Bucks Air Quality Management Group (BAQMG).

For example we are currently working together with Bucks CC to ensure air quality is sufficiently covered in the new Local Transport Plan. As transport is the primary cause of pollution, it is of paramount importance that County Council led transport actions consider the impact upon air quality.

### **The Picture Moving Forward:**

The Council is now working with the CCG and Public Health to redevelop the Regional Air Quality Strategy to ensure that the new (PM2.5 particulate) indicators are linked with the existing and ongoing work of the BAQMG.

There are also clear links between reducing carbon dioxide emissions and those of air quality pollutants. So what is beneficial in terms of climate change reduction would also contribute towards improving local air quality e.g. promotion of electric vehicles.

Concerns have also been expressed by the community and Members in relation to the impact of HS2 on local air quality especially during the construction phase. As a result the HS2 team have worked collectively with Camden Borough Council to raise this with HS2, achieve assurances and ensure that HS2 would be accountable for any new AQMA designations if it they are found necessary.

Government is encouraging authorities to consider a variety of measures appropriate to different localities, from improving perceived safety in urban streets to providing better rural bus services and from building dedicated city cycle routes to supporting village shops, and more, a shift to more than the current 40% of local trips made by walking, cycling and public transport needs to be encouraged, reducing overall levels of traffic, total emissions, and bringing benefits from increased physical activity too.

Even where air quality objectives are being met, consideration should be given to controlling, mitigating and reducing airborne pollutants through the use, for example, of planning powers, 'natural' means such as tree-planting, 'green walls' etc. and energy-efficiency programmes.

To help people reduce their personal exposure and to encourage wider behaviour change, better and more accurate public information on air pollution needs to be provided and given both more general prominence through the mass media and, targeting the most vulnerable, issued through tailored channels such as SMS messaging

## **3. Consultation**

All air quality Review & Assessment reports are required to be submitted to Government and reviewed. DEFRA will consider the information and either reject or

accept. The Government have accepted ALL reports for the Chiltern District to date and these are all published on the website at [www.chiltern.gov.uk/CLAIRE](http://www.chiltern.gov.uk/CLAIRE)

#### **4 Corporate Implications**

##### *Financial*

*No specific financial implications except that failure to work towards tackling air quality could technically result in the imposition of fines for Councils failing to demonstrate they are working towards achieving the air quality objectives.*

##### *Legal*

*There is a statutory requirement for Councils to report to Government via the Review & Assessment process and work towards meeting the air quality objectives.*

##### *Sustainability*

*Good air quality is an important aspect of the environment and protection of human health.*

#### **5 Links to Council Policy Objectives**

*The work to tackle air pollution relates directly to the Joint Business Plan 2015-2020 through working towards safe, healthy and cohesive communities and conserving the environment and promoting sustainability.*

<b>Background Papers:</b>	<a href="http://www.chiltern.gov.uk/CHttpHandler.ashx?id=7610&amp;p=0">http://www.chiltern.gov.uk/CHttpHandler.ashx?id=7610&amp;p=0</a> <a href="http://www.bucksairquality.co.uk">www.bucksairquality.co.uk</a>
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