

AIR QUALITY ACTION PLAN FOR WYCOMBE DISTRICT

Cabinet Member: Councillor Mrs Julia Adey

Wards Affected: Abbey, Bowerdean, Chiltern Rise, Disraeli, Downley & Plomer Hill, Flackwell Heath & Little Marlow, Marlow North & West, Marlow South East, Micklefield, Oakridge & Castlefields, Ryemead, Sands, Stokenchurch & Radnage, Terriers & Amersham Hill, The Wooburns, Totteridge, Tylers Green & Loudwater.

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RECOMMENDATION TO COUNCIL

That the Air Quality Action Plan as set out in Appendix A be approved and the existing action plan published in 2002 be replaced.

Reason for Decision

To ensure that Wycombe District Council complies with its obligations to produce an Air Quality Action Plan within 12 months of declaring new Air Quality Management Areas as required by Part IV of the Environment Act 1995.

Corporate Implications

1. Wycombe District Council has an obligation, under Part IV of the Environment Act 1995, to produce an Air Quality Action Plan. This seeks to reduce pollutant levels below National Air Quality objectives, within 12 months of declaring new Air Quality Management Areas. This must be produced with the input of various local and national government agencies as well as other local key stakeholders.
2. The published Air Quality Action Plans preparation has followed the Local Air Quality Management Policy Guidance (PG16) 2016 with a view to minimising the risk of challenge.
3. There are no direct financial implications from this decision. Any impacts can be met from existing budgets.

Executive Summary

4. Once Air Quality Management Areas have been declared, Wycombe District Council is required, by Section 84 of Part IV of the Environment Act 1995, to produce an Air Quality Action Plan designed to bring pollutants below national air quality objectives. This requires the input of multiple departments within the Council, as well as the input of external agencies. The Action Plan must be in place within 12 months of declaring the Air Quality Management Areas. The new Air Quality Management Areas for High Wycombe and Marlow, and the amended M40 Air Quality Management Area, were declared on 22nd December 2017, Wycombe District Council and therefore the requirement is to publish an Air Quality Action Plan by 22nd December 2018.

5. In order to produce the Air Quality Action Plan a steering group was set up, made up of statutory consultees and key stakeholders. The first meeting of the steering group was held on the 20th February 2018 with subsequent meetings being conducted on a one-to-one basis between Council officers and individual steering group members.
6. A draft Air Quality Action Plan was produced which was reviewed and amended by steering group members prior to it proceeding to public consultation. The public consultation ran for six weeks between 31st July and 11th September 2018.
7. The results of the public consultation, were broadly supportive of all the proposed action points within the action plan. Given the comprehensive negotiations with steering group partners, it is therefore considered that the Action Plan should be published in its current form.

Sustainable Community Strategy/Council Priorities - Implications

8. Air Quality is a material consideration for development control. The publication of an Air Quality Action Plan will give extra weight to any decisions regarding air quality in those areas. Furthermore the publication of an Air Quality Action Plan will ensure the Council considers the adoption or amendment of policies to reflect the need to reduce Nitrogen Dioxide in those areas. It is expected that various departmental policies will require review.

Background and Issues

Local Authority Duties

9. Part IV of the Environment Act 1995 states that district councils should carry out a periodic review and assessment of air quality within their area. The results of this review and assessment should be set out in an Annual Status Report (ASR).
10. When as a result of the review and assessment that it has carried out, it appears that any of the Government's air quality objectives as set out below are not being achieved the Council is required to declare an AQMA. The District Council may amend or revoke an area as appropriate in the light of subsequent reviews.
11. Once an AQMA has been designated the District Council should prepare an Action Plan that sets out how it will achieve the air quality standards or objectives for the area that it covers. The District Council should provide information on the timescales for the achievement of measures. The Action Plan should be in place within 12 months of the District Council identifying the need for one.
12. The District Council should consult on its Action Plan, and is expected to make a copy of the Plan and ASR freely available for public inspection – e.g. on their website.

Air Quality Monitoring within Wycombe District

13. In accordance with its duties under Section 82 of Part IV of the Environment Act 1995, Wycombe District Council assesses the air quality at 60 sites (54 in 2017) using diffusion tubes. Most tubes are located in areas of concern, such as Wycombe and Marlow town centres and arterial roads servicing those areas. These are installed and collected on a monthly basis and are sent for analysis at an accredited laboratory. This enables the Council to obtain monthly and annual mean concentrations of Nitrogen Dioxide (NO₂) at these sites. In addition, Wycombe District Council has two continuous monitoring stations which give us hourly mean concentrations which can be viewed remotely on the Air Quality England website. These stations are located adjacent to Marlow Hill within the grounds of Abbey School and adjacent to the M40 in Stokenchurch.

National Air Quality objectives for NO₂

Monitoring enables the Council to understand its performance against national objectives set out in relation to air quality

- a. 200 µg/m³ Hourly mean – Not to be exceeded more than 18 times in a year
 - b. 40 µg/m³ Annual mean
14. Wycombe District Council concentrates on identifying exceedances of the 40 µg/m³ Annual mean objective as previous monitoring has found the 200 µg/m³ Hourly mean is unlikely to be exceeded within the district.

Current position of Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs) in Wycombe District

15. Wycombe District has three AQMAs. These are located along the whole M40 corridor within Wycombe District, the arterial roads within High Wycombe and along the town centre roads of Marlow. The area incorporates a significant number of residential properties and crosses numerous residential gardens. These areas were based upon an air quality modelling exercise, utilising traffic counts and 3-D street mapping alongside our annual mean NO₂ concentration data, to identify areas that exceed national air quality objectives for Nitrogen Dioxide.

Consultation

16. The public consultation resulted in 49 responses. The respondents can be broken down into the following; 42 local residents, 1 local business, 2 parish/town councillors, 1 environmental organisation, 2 community groups and 1 other category. All 25 proposed actions received more positive reaction than negative. In addition to an agreement or disagreement with the effectiveness of the actions, 41 respondents added more in depth comments. These comments ranged from suggested additional and amended actions through to an elaboration on their support or disapproval for specific actions.

Options

17. a) Publish the Air Quality Action Plan (Appendix A) as proposed.
18. b) Request that the steering group consider some of the comments resulting from the public consultation before presenting the Air Quality Action Plan to a later cabinet meeting for approval.
19. This process will need to be concluded by 22nd December 2018.

Conclusions

20. The preferred option is option a);
Publish the Air Quality Action Plan as proposed.
21. The results of the public consultation, were broadly supportive of all the proposed action points within the action plan. Given the comprehensive negotiations with steering group partners, it is therefore considered that the Action Plan should be published in its current form.
22. By requesting that the steering group examines the feasibility of amending the proposed Air Quality Actions to reflect the comments and suggestions made during the public consultation will result in the requirement for Wycombe District Council to publish an action plan within 12 months of the declaration of Air Quality Management Areas being breached.

Next Steps

23. The publication of the Air Quality Action Plan will result in the need to amend or produce new policies for various departments of the Council. The Control of Pollution team will be involved in discussions with the affected departments to assist with facilitating the relevant changes. Agreement in principle for cooperation in this process has been reached with the affected departments.

Background Papers

2018 Air Quality Annual Status Report (ASR): Wycombe District Council (July 2017)

Environment Act 1995 (Part IV)

Local Air Quality Management Policy Guidance (PG16) 2016 – DEFRA

Local Air Quality Management Technical Guidance (TG16) 2016 – DEFRA