



Bromsgrove
District Council

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SCRUTINY REPORT

AIR QUALITY — SCRUTINY REPORT

Task Group Report –
Scrutiny Steering Board
December 2007

Committee Services Officer: Della McCarthy

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BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL
REPORT OF THE AIR QUALITY TASK GROUP

NOVEMBER 2007

MEMBERS

Councillors P. M. McDonald (Chairman), E. J. Murray, D. L. Pardoe, C. R. Scurrall and S. P. Shannon.

SUMMARY

The role of the Air Quality Task Group was to carry out a scrutiny exercise to examine air quality issues in Bromsgrove District and identify actions which could be taken to address the issues.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Low Emission Zones

This Council considers applying to Worcestershire County Council for certain roads to be made low emission zone roads therefore limiting access to certain types of vehicles which reduce air quality. Specifically, the Task Group believe the following roads/areas should be low emission due to high NO₂ levels:

- Approximately a 2 mile radius around Bromsgrove town centre
- A38 Bypass in Rubery
- All roads in Rubery with a weight restriction
- A456 in Hagley
- A491 in Hagley

Please refer to page 10 for more detail

(Cost: There are no financial implications relating to carrying out a detailed investigation around the idea of introducing a Low Emission Zone (LEZ) and it is possible that if such a scheme was implemented, it could be self-funding as registration and penalty charges might cover any costs including the cost of carrying out spot checks for enforcement purposes.)

2. Bromsgrove Railway Station Improvements

The Council remain committed to improving Bromsgrove Railway Station including the Park and Ride facility as this will encourage the public to use public transport and therefore reduce the numbers of cars on the roads which are having a negative impact on air quality.

(Cost: Nil)

3. Public Transport – Buses Scrutiny Task Group
Support be given to any recommendations relating to the work of the Public Transport – Buses Scrutiny Task Group which relate to improving local bus services as this will (similar to improving Bromsgrove Railway Station) encourage the public to use public transport, therefore reduce traffic congestion and improve air quality.
(Cost: Dependent on the recommendations from the Public Transport - Buses Task Group which is due to complete its work by the end of the 2007. Financial implications will be detailed in their Scrutiny Report.)
4. Traffic Signals near the Air Quality Management Area (AQMA)
 - (a) Request that Worcestershire County Council's Highways alter the traffic signals on the A38 North into Bromsgrove so to reduce exit blocking and improve traffic flow near the AQMA; and
 - (b) Request that both Worcestershire County Council's Highways and this Council's Environmental Health Team monitor the area before and after the alterations in order to obtain evidence to prove whether or not the alteration have been successful.*(Cost: Nil)*
5. Yellow Box Markings at Junction 1 M42
Request that Environmental Health monitor the AQMA before and after the Highways Agency have added and amended yellow box markings on the roundabout at M42 Junction 1 at gridlock (which is hoped will improve the flow of traffic) to investigate whether or not there has been a reduction in air pollution.
(Cost: Nil)
6. M42 Westbound to M5 Scheme
Request that the Highways Agency monitor the area of the M42 Westbound to M5 to find out if this scheme has been successful in reducing the number of incidents (which has often led to traffic congestion and therefore impacted on the AQMA) and communicate their findings to the Environmental Health Team.
(Cost: Nil)
7. Town Centre Redevelopment
The Town Centre Redevelopment Steering Group (LSP Theme Group) be requested to consider air pollution caused by traffic congestion when looking at redeveloping the town. This would include the Group looking at the possibilities of having vehicle access to The Strand from Birmingham Road (by Davenal House) and investigate, in partnership with Worcestershire County Council Highway's, whether or not it might help decrease traffic congestion and therefore lower the air pollution at this location which has high NO₂ levels.
(Cost: Nil)

8. High Street and The Strand
- (a) Request that Worcestershire County Council review the timing of the traffic signals located at the top end of the High Street by The Strand with a view to reducing the build up of standing traffic;
 - (b) If (a) is agreed and County Council decide to amend the timing of the traffic signals, request that they monitor the traffic congestion before and after making the alteration to measure whether the action has had a positive impact; and
 - (c) If (a) is agreed, request Environmental Health monitor air quality around Davenal House, Birmingham Road before and after the alteration to measure whether it has helped improve air quality (which is known to be poor at this location).
- (Cost: Nil)*
9. Property Development
- (a) The Head of Planning and Environmental Health Services be requested to consider the best ways to discourage development within an AQMA; and
 - (b) An air quality guidance note for developers be drafted by the Planning and Environmental Health Officers to try and control and mitigate the impact property development has on air quality.
- (Cost: There are no financial implications in relation to (a). There are minimal financial implications to (b) such as printing and copying leaflets as required. This could be met within the existing budget.)*
10. Communication with local residents
- (a) There is ongoing communication with local residents who own and/or reside in a property located in the AQMA to ensure they are fully aware of the situation. (The Task Group will be ensuring the households affected receive a copy of this report for their information.); and
 - (b) A sign be erected (by the County Council) in the AQMA to inform the public that it is an AQMA and that the District Council is working with other agencies to reduce air pollution in the vicinity. The sign should also pose the question "Is your journey necessary?" to encourage the public to think about their travel habits and the impact it has on air pollution.
- (Cost: There are minimal financial implications in relation to (a). With regard to (b), the total cost of erecting a sign would be approximately £1000 maximum. However, the County Council and the Highways Agency may be prepared to share the total cost therefore reducing the cost for the District Council to approximately £335.)*
11. Web site
- Environmental Health be requested to update information on the Council's website as soon as possible and ensure it is regularly updated.
- (Cost: Nil)*

12. Health of Local Residents

- (a) The Environmental Health Team be requested to work in partnership with Worcestershire PCT (and local GP surgeries) and ensure they are kept up to date in regards to which areas are known poor air quality areas to help investigate further the correlations between poor air quality areas and respiratory illnesses such as asthma; and
- (b) Request that Worcestershire PCT work closely with GPs to ensure the criteria used for diagnosing and recording data relating to asthma is standardised wherever possible to enable the analysis of data to be more meaningful.

(Cost: Nil)

13. Bonfires

- (a) The Environmental Health Team be requested to actively discourage bonfires (with the exception of social events on and around 5th November) through promotion, similar to Birmingham City Council; and
- (b) Ensure that members of the public are aware how to report bonfires if they are a nuisance.

(Cost: There are minimal financial implications as the Environmental Health Team is already doing similar work. The Task Group wish to strengthen this and ask that there is more frequent promotion through press releases, articles in Together Bromsgrove Magazine, letters to Parish Councils and information on the Council's website on this particular issue.)

14. Street Scene and Waste Management Vehicles

The Head of Street Scene and Waste Management be requested to further investigate and assess options available (such as using bio fuel in refuse and recycling vehicles) which could assist the Council in contributing to improving air quality.

(Cost: Nil - However, there are potentially significant savings in vehicle running costs which is another reason why this recommendation should be approved.)

15. Staff Travel Plan

It is requested that the newly established Energy Efficiency Project Group progress the Council's Staff Travel Plan as a matter of urgency and work together with the LSP Better Environment Theme Group.

(Cost: Nil)

16. Training/Briefing

- (a) To help the Council lead by example to other agencies, training be offered to all Members and staff (including those based at the Depot) on air quality (and other green issues) to improve their awareness of the impact their behaviour at home and at work can have on air quality;
- (b) As part of that training, it is suggested that the film “An Inconvenient Truth” relating to the work of the 2007 Nobel Peace Prize winner Al Gore be shown at the Council House; and
- (c) The Head of Street Scene and Waste Management ensure specific training is provided to refuse and recycling crews relating to where refuse vehicles should be parked (to avoid causing traffic congestion) with engines turned off during breaks.

(Cost: Minimal financial implications for (a) and (c) which could be met within the existing budget. There is no cost in relation to (b).)

17. Taxi Drivers

The Licensing Section be requested to remind taxi drivers not to leave their engines running whilst waiting for the next fare at a taxi rank. As an incentive to change their behaviour, it should be pointed out that (a) it will save fuel; and (b) it is an offence to leave a vehicle running when not in the vehicle and any person doing so is at risk of receiving a fixed penalty notice. This information could be included in a newsletter for example.

(Cost: Minimal financial implications which could be met within existing budget)

18. Car Sharing Scheme

- (a) To ensure car parking spaces are reserved for those who join the car sharing scheme (which could act as an incentive);
- (b) Through various forms of publicity, the Communication Team ensure that staff are frequently reminded and encouraged to join the Car Sharing Scheme and encouraged to use other alternatives to travel to work such as walking, cycling or public transport; and
- (c) The numbers of staff from Bromsgrove District Council joining the car sharing scheme be monitored.

(Cost: Minimal financial implications which could be met within existing budget)

19. Essential and Casual Car Users

Further investigations be carried out by the Human Resources Section into the possibility of having: (a) a pool of Council owned environmentally friendly cars for essential and casual car users; or (b) a loan/lease scheme to assist and encourage staff to convert their own car to alternative fuel.

(Cost: Nil – only further investigation into the possibilities of having a pool of cars or loan/lease scheme is being requested.)

20. Car Allowance Pay Scales

The Council consider revising the current car allowance pay scales and not pay more to those who are potentially the worst polluters. Instead, base the car allowance pay scales on the Vehicle Exercise Duty (VED) Rates (attached as Appendix 5) to ensure payment is based on CO₂ emissions. (Alternatively, the Council could as a minimum follow the example of other local authorities who have introduced a flat rate for all users (regardless of engine size) as this method would indirectly benefit those employees with smaller engine sized cars as these use less fuel per mile.)

(Cost: Nil. After further investigations, it could be found that implementing different pay scales could lead to savings, particularly a flat rate for all users.)

21. Home Working Policy

Support be given to a Home Working Policy as reducing the number of times staff need to travel to and from the office will help reduce the number of cars on the road and this will help towards improving air quality. Therefore, a report from the Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development should be submitted to the Corporate Management Team without delay.

(Cost: Nil)

TERMS OF REFERENCE

At the meeting of the Scrutiny Steering Board held on 12th June 2007, it was decided a Task Group would be established to scrutinise issues relating to air quality.

The Task Group's terms of reference, which were compiled by the appointed Chairman, Councillor McDonald, were approved by the Board at its meeting held on 3rd July 2007. The full terms of reference are attached as Appendix 1. The Membership of the Task Group was also agreed at the same meeting.

The Task Group was given 4 months (from the date of its first meeting) to complete its work. The first meeting was held on 13th July 2007.

BACKGROUND AND METHODOLOGY

A press release was issued informing the public the Air Quality Task Group had been set up and members of the public were encouraged to submit any comments and suggestions relating to air quality in the District. Information about the Task Group was also uploaded on to the website where again the public were encouraged to voice their opinions and suggestions for improvement. A handful of responses were received and all members of the public who had submitted their views were invited to attend a meeting to expand on their comments and hear more on what the Task Group were investigating.

There were a total of seven task group meetings and at the first meeting a schedule of work was devised.

The following is a list of some of the areas the Task Group covered (in no particular order):

- The Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) at Lickey End, Junction 1 M42
- Partnership working between this Council, Worcestershire County Council's Highways and the Highways Agency in relation to the AQMA at Lickey End, Junction 1 M42
- Traffic congestion
- Motorway traffic and speeds
- Active Traffic Management (ATM) and Ramp Metering
- Impact on the AQMA and surrounding roads following the improvement of the Bromsgrove Railway Station, including the Park and Ride facility
- The Council's Local Air Quality Management – Updating and Screening Assessment document and Action Plan
- Worst locations within the District known to have poor air quality
- Policies in relation to purchasing new vehicles for Street Scene and Waste Management
- Petrol Stations, LPG (Liquid Petroleum Gas) and Biodiesel

- Air pollution caused by buses, trains using the Lickey incline and Heavy Goods Vehicles (HGVs)
- Worcestershire County Council's Local Transport Plan (LTP2)
- Correlations between air quality and respiratory illnesses such as asthma
- Involving the Public in monitoring local nitrogen dioxide levels (NO₂)
- Planning Policy and Building Regulations
- Staff Car Usage and Mileage Allowances
- Staff Travel Plan and School Travel Plans
- Home Working Policy
- Smoke Control Areas and bonfires
- Low Emission Roads

The Air Quality Task Group decided to invite a number of witnesses including representatives from Worcestershire County Council, Highways Agency, Worcestershire Primary Care Trust, members of the public as well as officers from a variety of departments within Bromsgrove District Council. A representative from Diamond Buses was also invited but unfortunately they declined the invitation. A letter was also sent to the Minister of the West Midlands, Mr. Liam Byrne MP. A full list of all those contacted are set out in Appendix 2.

A wealth of background information was considered by Members in between meetings which included: information on other local authorities who had adopted ways of working which were classed as good practice; information from the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders Ltd (SMMT); Department of Health; National Society for Clean Air and Environmental Protection (NSCA); and information from the UK National Air Quality website.

The detailed minutes of Air Quality Task Group meetings gives further information on the Task Group's investigations. If any Member would like a copy of any of the minutes, please contact the relevant committee services officer (see final page of this report for contact details).

GENERAL FINDINGS

Air Quality Management Area

There is one Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) in Bromsgrove District which is located at Lickey End, M42 Junction 1 (see Appendix 3). It was necessary to declare an AQMA at this location due to the exceedences of the annual mean objective for nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) and the AQMA came into force in July 2001.

Following the declaration of the AQMA, Bromsgrove District Council was tasked by Defra (Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs) to liaise with the Highways Agency as the main organisation responsible for this particular area. We therefore felt it vital that we as a Task Group ensured representatives from the Highways Agency in particular were invited to attend.

Initially, we were disappointed with the lack of response from the Highways Agency. However, a representative did attend a meeting and provided the Task Group with very useful information as well as answering all our queries including providing details on Ramp Metering and ATM (Active Traffic Management).

Other Parts of the District with Poor Air Quality

Other locations which also appear to have air quality issues include: New Road in Rubery; Kidderminster Road and Birmingham Road (A456/A491) in Hagley; Davenal House, Birmingham Road, Bromsgrove; Black Cross Public House, Worcester Road, Bromsgrove; and Redditch Road/Buntsford Hill, Bromsgrove.

With regard to Redditch Road/Buntsford Hill, we were pleased to learn that the Council has been awarded a £12,000 grant to enable officers to continuously monitor the area for 6 months to obtain accurate evidence which could be later used to improve air quality in the area.

Health Issues

We obtained some useful information from Worcestershire Primary Care Trust (PCT) and although we understand the PCT could not categorically state that poor air quality caused respiratory illnesses such as asthma, it was agreed that poor air quality was a trigger and certainly exacerbated such illnesses. Asthma is increasing throughout the country and there is more evidence coming to light supporting a link between asthma and living in close proximity to traffic.

It is understood that diagnosing skills and recording methods of GPs in relation to asthma do vary in different parts of the District and we have tried to address this issue in our recommendations. However, there is still some concern about the asthma prevalence for the three GP practices in Rubery which appeared higher than other areas of the District.

SPECIFIC FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

➤ Low Emission Zones (LEZ)

Members of the Task Group discussed the plans of the Mayor of London to introduce a Low Emission Zone (LEZ) across London using a phased approach commencing in February 2008. It is the view of the Task Group that this Council should consider introducing a similar scheme by applying to Worcestershire County Council for certain roads to be within a LEZ. This particular measure is also referred to in Volume 1 of the Government's Air Quality Strategy for England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland as a possible solution.

The Task Group consulted Worcestershire County Council on this suggestion and we were informed that it was possible to introduce such a scheme. There would be certain steps the Council would need to take such as identifying which roads and vehicles would be covered in the scheme as well as carrying out extensive consultation with the public and stakeholders. However, we believe such a scheme would make a huge difference to people's health as it will help deter the most polluting vehicles and encourage businesses to upgrade their vehicles.

Similar to London, a road user charging order would need to be in operation but it would not apply to cars, only to certain vehicles such as lorries, buses, coaches, large vans and mini-buses that do not meet a particular standard i.e. Euro III (see Appendix 4). The purpose of the scheme would be to deter the use of high polluting vehicles and provide an incentive to businesses to upgrade their vehicles to avoid charges. The scheme could be enforced via spot checks.

Consultation in London showed there was support particularly from residents but also (and perhaps surprisingly to some) a large proportion of businesses. It is believed that studies have shown that an LEZ can significantly improve air quality which can only be of benefit to all those who work and live in the District, particularly in relation to our health such as reducing the risk of respiratory illnesses including asthma. It should be pointed out that health issues caused by air pollution were one of the main concerns voiced by local residents who attended one of our meetings.

We understand that implementing such a scheme could not happen overnight and further investigation would be required as well as extensive consultation. However, the Task Group strongly believe that this Council has a duty to at least consider introducing LEZ by agreeing to investigate it fully, particularly as it could be possible that this scheme might be self-funding.

We should take a bold step and move forward and be the first Council in the Midlands to consider and implement such a scheme which links to the Council Objective relating to Environment.

Recommendation 1	<p>This Council considers applying to Worcestershire County Council for certain roads to be made low emission zone roads therefore limiting access to certain types of vehicles which reduce air quality. Specifically, the Task Group believe the following roads/areas should be low emission due to high NO₂ levels:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Approximately a 2 mile radius around Bromsgrove town centre ▪ A38 Bypass in Rubery ▪ All roads in Rubery with a weight restriction ▪ A456 in Hagley ▪ A491 in Hagley
Financial Implications	<p>There are no financial implications relating to carrying out a detailed investigation around the idea of introducing a Low Emission Zone (LEZ) and it is possible that if such a scheme was implemented, it could be self-funding as registration and penalty charges might cover any costs including the cost of carrying out spot checks for enforcement purposes.</p>

➤ Bromsgrove Railway Station Improvements

We consulted Worcestershire County Council on whether it was possible that the improvements to Bromsgrove Railway Station and the provision of a park and ride service could have adverse effects on the A38 and the Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) at Lickey End, M42 Junction 1 due to commuters driving to use the park and ride service. However, officers from County were confident that the total impact would be a reduction in traffic.

To encourage more people to use public transport and therefore reduce traffic on the roads which would lead to improved air quality, the Task Group would like to show its support to the work being carried out to improve Bromsgrove Railway Station. Therefore, the second recommendation is:

Recommendation 2	<p>The Council remain committed to improving Bromsgrove Railway Station including the Park and Ride facility as this will encourage the public to use public transport and therefore reduce the numbers of cars on the roads which are having a negative impact on air quality.</p>
Financial Implications	<p>There are no financial implications relating to this recommendation.</p>

➤ Public Transport – Buses Scrutiny Task Group

Similar to the reasons for recommendation 2, this Task Group would like to show its support to any recommendations which the Buses Task Group put forward which relate to improving bus services and therefore encouraging more people to use public transport, for example, improving the links between Bromsgrove Railway Station and Bromsgrove town centre. This would again, take more cars off the roads and help reduce air pollution.

The Air Quality Task Group have also suggested to the Public Transport – Buses Task Group the possibility of considering the feasibility of a bus service being provided to and from the cluster of Trading Estates located in Stoke Prior which would help reduce traffic congestion and therefore improve air quality in that area.

Recommendation 3	Support be given to any recommendations relating to the work of the Public Transport – Buses Scrutiny Task Group which relate to improving local bus services as this will (similar to improving Bromsgrove Railway Station) encourage the public to use public transport, therefore reduce traffic congestion and improve air quality.
Financial Implications	The financial implications are dependent on the recommendations from the Public Transport - Buses Task Group. It is due to complete its work by the end of the 2007 and all financial implications will be detailed in their Scrutiny Report.

➤ Traffic Signals near the Air Quality Management Area (AQMA)

At one particular meeting, representatives from the Highways Agency and Worcestershire County Council were both present and it was suggested by the Highways Agency that the County Council should alter the traffic signals on the A38 North into Bromsgrove as it was believed that this would reduce exit blocking and improve traffic flow near the AQMA (Lickey End, Junction 1 M42). As the traffic flow has a direct impact on air quality, the Task Group would like to push this suggestion forward.

To obtain evidence to show whether or not altering the traffic signals has been beneficial, we would also like to ask that both Worcestershire County Council and the Environmental Team monitor the area before and after the alterations.

Recommendation 4	(a) Request that Worcestershire County Council's Highways alter the traffic signals on the A38 North into Bromsgrove so to reduce the exit blocking and improve traffic flow near the AQMA; and
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	(b) Request that both Worcestershire County Council's Highways and this Council's Environmental Health Team monitor the area before and after the alterations in order to obtain evidence to prove whether or not the alteration have been successful.
Financial Implications	There are no financial implications for this Council for either (a) or (b).

➤ Yellow Box Markings at Junction 1 M42

The Task Group learnt from a Highways Agency representative that there was a proposal relating to the yellow box markings at Junction 1 M42 due to it being an AQMA. According to the Highways Agency, the exact date when this scheme will be implemented is dependent on costings but it is anticipated it will be in place by the end of 2008 if not before.

Recommendation 5	Request that Environmental Health monitor the AQMA before and after the Highways Agency have added and amended yellow box markings on the roundabout at M42 Junction 1 at gridlock (which is hoped will improve the flow of traffic) to investigate whether or not there has been a reduction in air pollution.
Financial Implications	There are no financial implications.

➤ M42 Westbound to M5 Scheme

We were informed that the Highways Agency completed another scheme earlier this year relating to changing signs and markings on M42 Westbound to the M5 to give drivers advanced warning and ensure they were in the correct lane. The Highways Agency hopes this will reduce the number of incidents which have often led to traffic congestion and therefore have a negative impact on the AQMA. We understand that as the scheme was only completed in May 2007, it is too soon to fully assess what impact it has made but we would like to make sure that the Highways Agency communicate their findings to the Environmental Health Team and therefore recommend the following:

Recommendation 6	Request that the Highways Agency monitor the area of the M42 Westbound to M5 to find out if this scheme has been successful in reducing the number of incidents (which has often led to traffic congestion and therefore impacted on the AQMA) and communicate their findings to the Environmental Health Team.
Financial Implications	There are no financial implications.

➤ Town Centre Re-Development

We feel very strongly that this Council should always consider air quality issues in what ever project or investigation it undertakes, for example, the redevelopment of the town centre, which is one of the priorities of the Council. Therefore, the next recommendation is as follows:

Recommendation 7	The Town Centre Redevelopment Steering Group (LSP Theme Group) be requested to consider air pollution caused by traffic congestion when looking at redeveloping the town. This would include the Group looking at the possibilities of having vehicle access to The Strand from Birmingham Road (by Davenal House) and investigate, in partnership with Worcestershire County Council Highway's, whether or not it might help decrease traffic congestion and therefore lower the air pollution at this location which has high NO ₂ levels.
Financial Implications	There are no financial implications.

➤ High Street and The Strand Traffic Signals

Leading on from discussions we had in relation to the air pollution near Davenal House by The Strand, we briefly discussed the traffic build up at the lights at the top end of the High Street by The Strand. It was questioned whether the timings of these particular signals could be reviewed to ensure it did not cause unnecessary waiting time and traffic congestion in this area as this would have a negative impact on air quality in an area where there are a number of pedestrians. Therefore, similar to what the Highways Agency suggested in relation to recommendation 4, we would like to recommend the following:

Recommendation 8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) Request that Worcestershire County Council review the timing of the traffic signals located at the top end of the High Street by The Strand with a view to reducing the build up of standing traffic; (b) If (a) is agreed and County Council decide to amend the timing of the traffic signals, request that they monitor the traffic congestion before and after making the alteration to measure whether the action has had a positive impact; and (c) If (a) is agreed, request Environmental Health monitor air quality around Davenal House, Birmingham Road before and after the alteration to measure whether it has helped improve air quality (which is known to be poor at this location).
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Financial Implications	There are no financial implications in relation to (a), (b) or (c).
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➤ Property Development

During the scrutiny investigation, we found out that with regard to Planning Policy, there was no specific policy in place to deal with air quality issues but we accept that there are other policies which are used as a mechanism to help reduce air pollution. We realise that although officers may recommend refusal for planning permission for certain builds in relation to environmental health issues such as the impact on air quality, it is understood this may not always be enough to withstand an appeal. However, to try and encourage developers to think about air quality issues, we feel that a guidance note could be produced.

The Task Group would prefer the Council to work towards reducing air pollution, particularly in relation to the AQMA. However, in the meantime, we would like to ensure that no one else suffers. We realise it is unlikely that there would be any significant builds in the AQMA at Lickey End, Junction 1 M42; nonetheless, we would like to recommend the following:

Recommendation 9	(a) The Head of Planning and Environmental Health Services be requested to consider the best ways to discourage development within an AQMA; and (b) An air quality guidance note for developers be drafted by the Planning and Environmental Health Officers to try and control and mitigate the impact property development has on air quality.
Financial Implications	There are no financial implications in relation to (a). There are minimal financial implications to (b) such as printing and copying leaflets as required. This could be met within the existing budget.

➤ Communication with local residents

Many Members of the Council are likely to be aware of the AQMA, however, we feel it is unlikely that many members of the public know about it. We understand that those individuals with properties living within the AQMA were informed around the time when it came into force, however, we feel that it is important that there is ongoing communication with those residents who have a property in the AQMA.

We also want to inform all those travelling through the vicinity and encourage them to think about their travelling behaviour. We realise that we are not going to change people's travelling habits overnight but that does not mean we should sit back and do nothing hoping things will change. We need to at least provide the

public with the facts to enable them to make informed decisions when it comes to their travelling choices and the impact it has on air quality for everyone.

Recommendation 10	<p>(a) There is ongoing communication with local residents who own and/or reside in a property located in the AQMA to ensure they are fully aware of the situation. (The Task Group will be ensuring the households affected receive a copy of this report for their information.); and</p> <p>(b) A sign is erected (by the County Council) in the AQMA to inform the public that it is an AQMA and that the District Council is working with other agencies to reduce air pollution in the vicinity. The sign should also pose the question “Is your journey necessary?” to encourage the public to think about their travel habits and the impact it has on air pollution.</p>
Financial Implications	<p>There are minimal financial implications in relation to (a). With regard to (b), the total cost of erecting a sign would be approximately £1000 maximum. However, the County Council and the Highways Agency may be prepared to share the total cost therefore reducing the cost for the District Council to approximately £335.</p>

➤ Website

One of the easiest and cheapest ways we can communicate to the public is via the internet but this is not worthwhile if the information on a website is not updated regularly. The information on the web pages relating to Air Quality on the pages for Environmental Health is years out of date and we would like this rectified as soon as possible. We are confident officers will support the following recommendation:

Recommendation 11	<p>Environmental Health be requested to update information on the Council’s website as soon as possible and ensure it is regularly updated.</p>
Financial Implications	<p>There are no financial implications.</p>

➤ Health of local residents

It is the view of the Task Group that poor air quality can have serious effects on people’s health as it can trigger and exacerbate respiratory illnesses such as asthma. This view is shared by local residents who attended one of our meetings and representatives from Worcestershire Primary Care Trust (PCT).

Asthma is increasing throughout the country and there is more evidence coming to light supporting a link between asthma and living in close proximity to traffic. This Council needs to ensure that it works with Worcestershire PCT and shares relevant information.

We heard from representatives of the PCT that some GPs are better than others at diagnosing asthma and recording data for the PCT to analyse. We would like to suggest that the PCT together with GPs work towards a more standardised approach to ensure consistency.

Recommendation 12	<p>(a) The Environmental Health Team be requested to work in partnership with Worcestershire PCT (and local GP surgeries) and ensure they are kept up to date in regards to which areas are known poor air quality areas to help investigate further the correlations between poor air quality areas and respiratory illnesses such as asthma; and</p> <p>(b) Request that Worcestershire PCT work closely with GPs to make certain the criteria used for diagnosing and recording data relating to asthma is standardised wherever possible to enable the analysis of data to be more meaningful.</p>
Financial Implications	There are no financial implications.

➤ Bonfires

The Task Group questioned whether there was a need for the District to be a smoke control area. Under the Clean Air Act, local authorities can declare the whole or part of the District as a smoke control area. This would mean that it would be an offence to emit smoke from a chimney of a building, from a furnace or from a fixed boiler, if located in a designated smoke control area. As there are an extremely small number of complaints from residents about nearby domestic solid fuel fires, we agreed that a smoke control area was not necessary.

However, the Council does frequently receive complaints from residents in relation to bonfires and this was also one of the concerns raised at one of our meetings by the public. We are confident Environmental Officers deal with individual cases using appropriate legislation when incidents are reported and we as a Task Group support this approach. Although there is no legislation to ban bonfires, similar to our neighbour Birmingham City Council, we would like to recommend the following which will help show the public that we want to address their concerns:

Recommendation 13	(a) The Environmental Health Team be requested to actively discourage bonfires (with the exception of social events on and around 5th November)
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	through promotion, similar to Birmingham City Council; and (b) Ensure that members of the public are aware how to report bonfires if they are a nuisance.
Financial Implications	There are minimal financial implications as the Environmental Health Team is already doing similar work. The Task Group wish to strengthen this and ask that there is more frequent promotion through press releases, articles in Together Bromsgrove Magazine, letters to Parish Councils and information on the Council's website on this particular issue.

➤ Street Scene and Waste Management Vehicles

We understand that all vehicles must comply with legislation current at the time of purchase and that new vehicles recently purchased by Street Scene and Waste Management comply with Euro IV regulations as required by legislation. We were pleased to be informed that the current fleet of Refuse Collection Vehicles employ a Continuously Regenerating Trap (CRT) technology which scrubs the exhaust gases before releasing them to the atmosphere. This ensures that the fleet is achieving exhaust emissions better than that required (Euro V) even though there is no requirement to achieve Euro V until October 2009.

Bio fuel has been considered previously but we were informed that at the time, a supplier could not be found within an appropriate distance. However, officers will agree that the situation is changing all the time and alternative fuels such as bio fuel is becoming far more accessible than in the past.

This Council needs to make sure it is continually reviewing these types of issues as not only could they be of benefit in terms of reducing air pollution but there are potential savings to be made. Although, changing fuels can be an issue in terms of invalidating warranties, the Council's fleet are 3 years old and therefore are no longer under warranty. This makes it an ideal time to approve the following:

Recommendation 14	The Head of Street Scene and Waste Management be requested to further investigate and assess options available (such as using bio fuel in refuse and recycling vehicles) which could assist the Council in contributing to improving air quality.
Financial Implications	There are no financial implications, however, there are potentially significant savings in vehicle running costs which is another reason why this recommendation should be approved.

➤ Staff Travel Plan

There has been quite a lot of work which has taken place in the past in relation to a Staff Travel Plan and we were disappointed to learn that nothing has been implemented. However, we were pleased to find out from Worcestershire County Council that many schools in the District have a travel plan or were at least working towards one. We should be leading by example on this and therefore we would like to recommend:

Recommendation 15	It is requested that the newly established Energy Efficiency Project Group progress the Council's Staff Travel Plan as a matter of urgency and work together with the LSP Better Environment Theme Group.
Financial Implications	There are no financial implications.

➤ Training/Briefing

The Task Group feels that it is important that this Council leads by example when it comes to air quality issues and to do this it needs to ensure that all officers and Members are fully informed. Therefore we propose training or briefing sessions for both officers and Members sometime in the near future.

Refuse and Recycling crews need specific training in relation to what rules they should follow when they take a break on their rounds such as parking in an area where the vehicle does not become an obstruction and ensuring their engines are turned off (which will also help save fuel).

Recommendation 16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) To help the Council lead by example to other agencies, training be offered to all Members and staff (including those based at the Depot) on air quality (and other green issues) to improve their awareness of the impact their behaviour at home and at work can have on air quality; (b) As part of that training, it is suggested that the film "An Inconvenient Truth" relating to the work of the 2007 Nobel Peace Prize winner Al Gore be shown at the Council House; (c) The Head of Street Scene and Waste Management ensure specific training is provided to refuse and recycling crews relating to where refuse vehicles should be parked (to avoid causing traffic congestion) with engines turned off during breaks; and
Financial Implications	Minimal financial implications for (a) and (c) which could be met within the existing budget. There is no cost in relation to (b)

➤ Taxi Drivers

We would like taxi drivers to think about their behaviour as it has been witnessed that occasionally, taxi drivers have left their vehicles running unattended (i.e. not sat in their vehicle). It is understood that this is an offence to leave the engine of a vehicle running when the person licensed to drive it is not sitting in the vehicle and the Task Group would like to gently remind taxi drivers that it is in their interests not to commit this offence.

We would like to encourage taxi drivers to change their behaviour in this way as it will help towards improving air quality and therefore we would like to recommend the following:

Recommendation 17	The Licensing Section be requested to remind taxi drivers not to leave their engines running whilst waiting for the next fare at a taxi rank. As an incentive to change their behaviour, it should be pointed out that (a) it will save fuel; and (b) it is an offence to leave a vehicle running when not in the vehicle and any person doing so is at risk of receiving a fixed penalty notice. This information could be included in a newsletter for example.
Financial Implications	There are minimal financial implications which can be met within the existing budget.
Legal Implications	Road Vehicles (Construction and Use) Regulations 1986 Section 107. The Council would not necessarily have the authority to issue fixed penalty notices, however, the Police would have such powers.

➤ Car Sharing Scheme

We are aware that this Council joined the County Council Car Sharing Scheme in July 2007 which enables any member of staff to register and find a potential car share partner. We understand a review will be carried out in January 2008 by this Council's Communication Team and reserved car parking spaces for those in the scheme is likely to be considered which we fully support. We would also like to ask officers to increase the publicity of the scheme to ensure all staff are aware of it and help encourage them to at least consider joining the scheme.

Recommendation 18	(a) To ensure car parking spaces are reserved for those who join the car sharing scheme (which could act as an incentive); (b) Through various forms of publicity, the Communication Team ensure that staff are frequently reminded and encouraged to join the
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	Car Sharing Scheme and encouraged to use other alternatives to travel to work such as walking, cycling or public transport; and (c) The numbers of staff from Bromsgrove District Council joining the car sharing scheme be monitored.
Financial Implications	There are minimal financial implications which can be met within the existing budget.

➤ Essential and Casual Car Users

This Council needs to lead by example and encourage staff to be conscious of important issues as air quality. Therefore, we would like to request that the options contained within recommendation 19 are at least investigated further.

Recommendation 19	Further investigations be carried out by the Human Resources Section into the possibility of having: (a) a pool of Council owned environmentally friendly cars for essential and casual car users; or (b) a loan/lease scheme to assist and encourage staff to convert their own car to alternative fuel.
Financial Implications	There are no financial implications in carrying out further investigations.

➤ Car Allowance Pay Scales

Car allowances are nationally agreed rates but the Council is paying more to those who own larger engines and they are likely to be the worst polluters. The Task Group feel this is the wrong message to give out to staff and the Council should look to revise the rates similar to other local authorities.

Recommendation 20	The Council consider revising the current car allowance pay scales and not pay more to those who are potentially the worst polluters. Instead, base the car allowance pay scales on the Vehicle Exercise Duty (VED) Rates (attached as Appendix 5) to ensure payment is based on CO ₂ emissions. (Alternatively, the Council could as a minimum follow the example of other local authorities who have introduced a flat rate for all users (regardless of engine size) as this method would indirectly benefit those employees with smaller engine sized cars as these use less fuel per mile.)
Financial Implications	There are no financial implications in carrying out further investigations. It is possible that implementing different pay scales could lead to savings, particularly having a flat rate for all users for example.

➤ Home Working Policy

Although there is a facility to enable home working on an informal ad-hoc basis, which the Task Group supports, it is understood that the Corporate Management Team considered a Home Working Policy in July 2007 where it was agreed that a less detailed set of procedures was required. We are also aware of the pilot scheme currently taking place in Revenues and Benefits.

The Task Group would like to encourage home working where possible as this will mean that officers do not need to travel to the office unnecessarily and we would like the Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development to ensure that she submits a report to the Corporate Management Team as soon as possible.

Recommendation 21	Support be given to a Home Working Policy as reducing the number of times staff need to travel to and from the office will help reduce the number of cars on the road and this will help towards improving air quality. Therefore, a report from the Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development should be submitted to the Corporate Management Team without delay.
Financial Implications	There are no financial implications as it is simply supporting a policy which officers will be implementing.

CONCLUSION

Members of the Task Group believe there is a lot this Council could do towards improving air quality. In many cases, they are simple actions that would be of little or no cost financially, however, it would be a step towards reducing air pollution which impacts on us all, particularly on our health.

No one agency can improve air quality. Partnership working is vital and this Council has to work closely with the Highways Agency, Worcestershire County Council as well as Worcestershire Primary Care Trust to ensure air quality issues are addressed. It is also important that the public is not forgotten. If the Council ensures it communicates better with the members of the public then they will be in a much better position to make more informed choices in relation to their travelling habits for example.

Looking into introducing low emission zones is a recommendation we are particularly keen to be approved as this will show the public how serious this Council is taking the health and wellbeing of its residents. We believe air quality issues should not be ignored and instead this Council should lead by example by taking action now to start addressing the issues.

It should also be pointed out that recommendations outlined in this report do relate to the Council objectives Environment and Improvement.

We have found this scrutiny exercise very valuable and hope the Cabinet will see the benefits of the recommendations put forward for consideration. We would also like to take this opportunity to once again thank all those who contributed to our scrutiny investigation.

REVIEW

The Air Quality Task Group will reconvene in 12 months time to carry out a review of the outcome of this report including whether or not recommendations were approved and implemented and the impact of these actions.

Councillor P. M. McDonald
Chairman of the Air Quality Task Group

Contact Officer

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Email: d.mccarthy@bromsgrove.gov.uk

Tel: 01527 881407

APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – Task Group’s Terms of Reference

Appendix 2 – A List of Individuals and Agencies the Task Group Consulted

Appendix 3 – Map of the Air Quality Management Area (AQMA)

Appendix 4 – Classification of Vehicles - Low Emission Zone (LEZ)

Appendix 5 – Vehicle Exercise Duty (VED) Rates 2007/08

AIR QUALITY TASK GROUP

TERMS OF REFERENCE

The attached scrutiny exercise scoping checklist (which acts as the Air Quality Task Group's terms of reference) was approved by the Scrutiny Steering Board on 3rd July 2007 subject to the following being included:

“To carry out a scrutiny exercise to examine air quality issues in Bromsgrove District and to identify actions which can be taken to address the issues.”

The terms of reference was also agreed by the Task Group at its first meeting on 13th July 2007.

Councillor Hollingworth, Leader of the Council, asked if the Task Group could look at what impact the proposals to improve Bromsgrove Railway Station might have on the Air Quality Management Area (J1 M42) and on the A38. This was due to a concern that if more people are travelling to Bromsgrove Train Station in order to use the trains, it might lead to further traffic congestion on the A38. The Scrutiny Steering Board discussed this at the meeting held on 4th September 2007 and it was agreed that this was already covered within the Task Group's terms of reference. It should be pointed out that this specific point was covered by the Task Group and Worcestershire County Council was consulted, as mentioned within the body Scrutiny Report.

SCRUTINY EXERCISE SCOPING CHECKLIST

This form is to assist members to scope the scrutiny exercise in a focused way and to identify the key issues it wishes to investigate.

When the Board decides to set up a Task Group to scrutinise a particular subject, the appointed Chairman of the Task Group should complete this checklist. Completed forms will be considered by the Board and by the Task Group as a whole at the Task Group's first meeting.

- General Subject Area to be Scrutinised: AIR QUALITY
- Specific Subject to be Scrutinised: TRAFFIC CONGESTION / FLOWS / ROUTES / LOCAL AREAS AT RISK / B D C VEHICLES /

Should the relevant Portfolio Holder(s) be invited to give evidence? **YES/NO**

Should any Officers be invited to give evidence? **YES/NO**

If yes, state name and/or post title: M. BELL / P. STREET

Should any external witnesses be invited to give evidence? **YES/NO**

If so, who and from which organisations? FRIENDS OF EARTH / HIGHWAY AGENCY / COUNTY COUNCIL / P.C.T. / A.A(RAC) LOCAL PETROL STATIONS

Should the Task Group receive evidence from other sources other than witnesses? **YES/NO**

If so, what information should the Task Group wish to see and from which sources should it be gathered? MANAGEMENT ACTION PLAN

Should a period of public consultation form part of the Scrutiny exercise? **YES/NO**

If so, on what should the public be consulted? FORWARD THWISES RELATED TO AIR POLLUTION / TRAFFIC PROBLEMS

Have other authorities carried out similar scrutiny exercises? **YES/NO**

If so, which authorities?.....

.....

What were their conclusions and what can we learn from them?.....

.....

.....

Will the Scrutiny exercise cross the District boundary? **YES/NO**

If so, should any other authorities be invited to participate?.....

.....

.....

- Would it be appropriate to co-opt anyone on to the Task Group whilst the Scrutiny exercise is being carried out? **YES/NO**

If so, who and from which organisations?.....

.....

.....

What do you anticipate the timetable will be for the scrutiny exercise?

SIX WEEKS.....

.....

.....

.....

- Approximate number of Task Group Meetings?.....

Signed: 

Chairman of behalf of the:.....Task Group

Date:.....

Please return completed forms to:
Della McCarthy
Committee Services Officer
Legal and Democratic Services
Bromsgrove District Council

A List of those the Task Group Consulted

External Witnesses:

Highways Agency:

- Mr. R. Jackson, Route Performance Manager
- Ms. M. Hackman, Air Quality Officer
- Mr. P. Siddall, Officer from Area 9 Team

Worcestershire County Council:

- Mr. D. Balme, Transport Planning Officer
- Ms. S. Gilmore, Transport Planning Manager
- Mr. J. Howell-Thomas, Waste Management Services
- Mr. M. Walton, Senior Traffic and Development Coordination Engineer

Worcestershire Primary Care Trust:

- Ms L. Altay, Consultant in Public Health
- Ms E. Davis, Epidemiologist
- Ms. S. Fessey, Information Governance Officer
- Ms. H. Mossop, Speciality Registrar in Public Health

Network Rail

- Ms. K. Stokes, Community Relations Advisor

Minister of State and Minister for the West Midlands, Mr. L. Byrne – contacted by letter in relation to the work of the Highways Agency and specifically the AQMA.

Members of the Public via press releases and the Council's website. Four members of the public were invited to attend and speak to the Task Group at a meeting held on 20th September 2007.

Go West Midlands Limited (Diamond Buses) – they declined the invitation to attend a meeting of the Task Group at a date and time to suit because they were “extremely busy implementing its commercial strategy”.

Internal Witnesses:

Planning and Environmental Health:

- Mr. D. Hammond, Head of Planning and Environmental Health Services
- Mr. R. Goundry, Team Leader – Pollution and General
- Mr. M. Dunphy, Strategic Planning Manager
- Mr. A. Wyre, Principal Building Control Surveyor

Street Scene and Waste Management:

- Mr. M. Bell, Head of Street Scene and Waste Management
- Ms. A. Wardell, Waste Policy and Promotions Manager

Human Resources and Organisational Development:

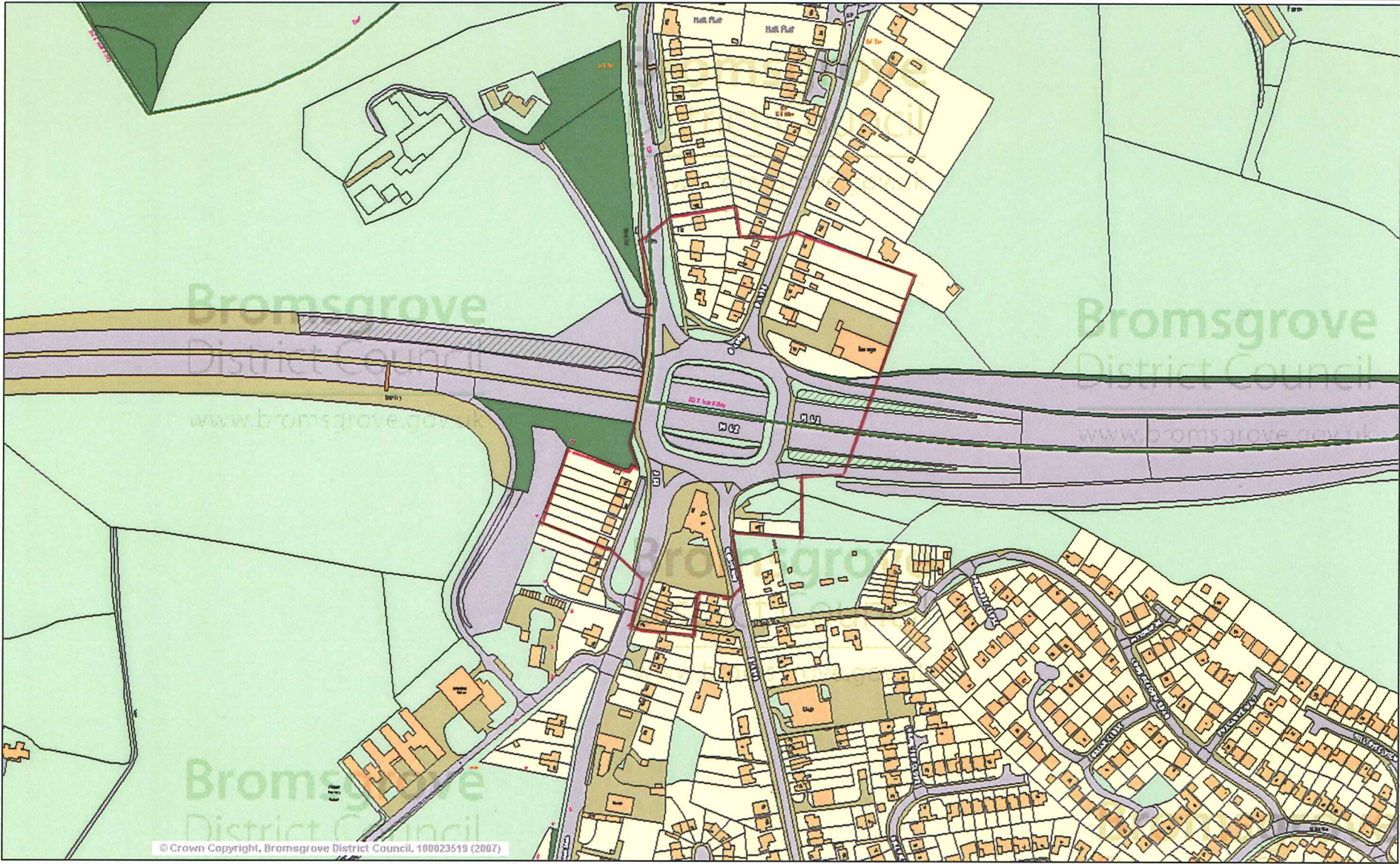
- Ms. J. Pitman, Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development
- Mrs. L. Stefan, Principal HR Advisor
- Mr. K. Day, Payroll Manager

The majority of individuals listed attended at least one meeting of the Task Group. The rest provided written information for the Task Group to consider.

All relevant officers were made aware of the recommendations which would impact on their department and were given an opportunity to comment.

As with all scrutiny reports, all financial implications were checked by the Head of Financial Services and all legal implications were checked by a Senior Solicitor.

The Area outlined in red shows the Air Quality Management Area (AQMA)








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Scale 1/3846

Date 10/12/2007

Centre = 396967 E 273045 N

Appendix 4: An example of types of vehicles which could be included in the proposed LEZs & minimum emissions standards

Vehicle type and definitions		Date affected	Required emissions standards
<p>Heavier lorries. Heavy diesel-engined vehicles exceeding 12 tonnes Gross Vehicle Weight, including goods vehicles, motor caravans, motorised horseboxes and other specialist vehicles.</p>		<p>February 2008 - Euro III</p> <p>January 2012 – Euro IV</p>	<p>All Euro III vehicles meet the LEZ standard Vehicles first registered as new on or after 1 October 2001 are assumed to be Euro III, so will meet the LEZ emissions standards. Vehicles not meeting the emissions standards could be made to do so by modifying them to meet the Euro III standard for particulate matter.</p> <p>Vehicles not meeting the emissions standards would need to pay a daily charge if used within the LEZ.</p>
<p>Lighter lorries. Heavy diesel-engined vehicles between 3.5 and 12 tonnes Gross Vehicle Weight, including goods vehicles, motor caravans, motorised horseboxes and other specialist vehicles.</p>		<p>July 2008 Euro III</p>	<p>From January 2012 the required emissions standards are raised to Euro IV. All Euro IV vehicles will meet the LEZ standard.</p> <p>Vehicles first registered as new on or after 1 October 2006 are assumed to be Euro IV and so will meet the emissions standards.</p> <p>Vehicles not meeting the emissions standards could be made to do so by modifying them to meet the Euro IV standard for particulate matter.</p>
<p>Buses and coaches. Diesel-engined passenger vehicles with more than eight seats plus the driver's seat exceeding 5 tonnes Gross Vehicle Weight.</p>		<p>January 2012 – Euro IV</p>	<p>Vehicles not meeting the emissions standards would need to pay a daily charge if used within the LEZ.</p>
<p>Large vans. Diesel-engined vehicles between 1.205 tonnes unladen and 3.5 tonnes Gross Vehicle Weight and motor caravans and ambulances between 2.5 tonnes and 3.5 tonnes Gross Vehicles Weight.</p>		<p>October 2010 Euro III</p>	<p>All Euro III vehicles will meet the LEZ standard. Vehicles registered as new on or after 1 January 2002 are assumed to be Euro III, so will meet the LEZ emissions standards.</p> <p>Vehicles not meeting the emissions standards could be made to do so by modifying them to meet the Euro III standard for particulate matter.</p> <p>Vehicles not meeting the emissions standards would need to pay a daily charge if used within the LEZ.</p>
<p>Minibuses. Diesel-engined passenger vehicles with more than eight seats plus the driver's seat below 5 tonnes Gross Vehicle Weight.</p>			

- Taken from the Statement of the Mayor of London on Low Emission Zones (LEZ) -

Vehicle Excise Duty (VED) Rates 2007/8**Pre-graduated VED (registered before March 2001)**

£ per year	Change	New rate
1549cc and below	+£5	£115
above 1549cc	+£5	£180

Graduated VED for Private Vehicles (registered from March 2001)

£ per year VED band	CO ₂ (g/km)	Alternative Fuel Cars	Petrol cars	Diesel cars
A	100 and below	£0	£0	£0
B	101 to 120	£15	£35	£35
C	121 to 150	£95	£115	£115
D	151 to 165	£120	£140	£140
E	166 to 185	£145	£165	£165
F	186 to 225	£190	£205	£205
G*	226 and above	£285	£300	£300

*for new cars registered after 23 March 2006

It is worth noting that the Chancellor also announced that the VED rate for Band G vehicles will rise to a substantial £400 in 2008!

Posted March 21, 2007
