

CABINET – 5th February 2014

AIR QUALITY TASK GROUP – FINAL REPORT

Further Comments for Consideration by Cabinet

1. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The Air Quality Task Group Report was presented by the Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Board (in the absence of the Task Group Chairman) at the Cabinet meeting held on 2nd October for its consideration.

A response from Cabinet was considered at the Overview and Scrutiny Board meeting held on 18th November 2013. The Chairman of the Task Group and Members who were present at that meeting expressed disappointment that a number of recommendations had not been approved. Following discussion it was agreed that due to the significance of air quality to public health in particular, that the feedback from Cabinet should be considered in further detail and that the Air Quality Task Group should reconvene, as its Members had the expertise required, to assess the response in detail.

2. RECOMMENDATION

This report is the result of the meeting of the Air Quality Task Group held on 20th December 2013 and the Overview and Scrutiny Board asks Cabinet to consider these responses and

That Cabinet, following consideration of the additional information, agrees the recommendations in conjunction with those comments.

3. COMMENTS

For ease of reference, the responses from Cabinet are highlighted in **green** and the further comments and responses from the Air Quality Task Group are highlighted in **blue**.

Recommendation 1

(Arising from the 2007 report)

It should be noted that these recommendations, from the 2007 Task Group Report, had been agreed by Cabinet at that time, but upon investigation by the current Task Group, appeared to not have been implemented.

Recommendation 1 – Low Emission Zones

Further consideration be given for LEZs to be included within the Air Quality Action Plan.

This was not supported in view of the likely finance implications.

The Task Group request that, should funding be available (for example as part of project bid under recommendation 5 of this report) then Low Emission Zones be considered.

Recommendation 7 – Town Centre Redevelopment

That a representative from Worcestershire Regulatory Services to be included within the membership of the Town Centre Redevelopment Group.

It was reported that the Town Centre Redevelopment Group was no longer in existence.

The Task Group notes that the Town Centre Redevelopment Group is no longer in existence and would request that a representative of WRS be included within the membership of the Town Centre Steering Group, or which ever such group is responsible for the Town Centre development.

Recommendation 8 – High Street and The Strand

Although not declared as an Air Quality Management Area the continued monitoring of the air quality at Davenal House should take place and consideration be given to alterations to the traffic lights.

It was noted that monitoring was on going but it was felt that changes to the traffic lights would be costly at this stage.

It is acknowledged that the changes to the traffic lights in this area would be costly, however the Task Group request that consideration should be given to including this within any changes which take place following the commencement of the highways work in relation to the Sainsbury's project.

Recommendation 17 – Taxi Ranks

Regular reminders are given to taxi drivers in respect of leaving their engines running whilst waiting for the next fare at a taxi rank.

This was approved.

The Task Group request that following approval of this recommendation, WRS regularly report back to the O&S Board to ensure that this is implemented.

Recommendation 2

- (a) that separate Air Quality Action Plans be produced for the four AQMAs in Bromsgrove district in order to address the particular circumstances in each location
- (b) that the Action plans contain specific targets and detail projected timeframes and all actions should be implemented within those timescales

This was not agreed as it was felt that the overall a County Air Quality Action Plan would be sufficient.

The Task Group noted the response and although disappointed, acknowledged that it was unlikely that separate Action Plans would be implemented. However it wished to make the following comments:

1. Would a single Action Plan be sufficient as each area was very different and had its own specific needs?
2. One of the advantages of having individual Action Plans was that it gave residents and Parish Councils more opportunity to be involved and to take “ownership” of the problems within their area together with raising awareness of air quality.

The Task Group therefore request that Cabinet reconsider this recommendation taking into account the comments above.

Recommendation 3

That a separate Air Quality Steering Group should be established in respect of the AQMAs in Bromsgrove district.

It was not agreed that a separate Group was required as it was felt that the single Steering Group would be sufficient.

Although acknowledging that it was unlikely that there would be separate Air Quality Action Plans, the Members wished to recommend that there was a separate Air Quality Action Plan Steering Group for Bromsgrove District as it has the largest number of AQMAs in the County and as previously mentioned each area is very different with its own specific needs. This would allow for more local involvement from both residents and Parish Councils and as detailed at Recommendation 2, raise local awareness and give “ownership” to the local communities.

The Task Group therefore request that Cabinet reconsider this recommendation.

Recommendation 4

That the Overview and Scrutiny Board be provided with regular progress reports from the Air Quality Steering Group.

This is not applicable if the separate Steering Group is not set up. It was suggested as an alternative that the Annual report to DEFRA also be submitted to the Overview and Scrutiny Board at no additional cost.

The Task Group recommend that if the Cabinet reconsider recommendation 3 as detailed above, then the Steering Group for the Bromsgrove District provides the Overview and Scrutiny Board with regular updates.

Recommendation 5

Worcestershire Regulatory Services (WRS) applies for funding from the DEFRA Air Quality Grant Programme. If the first application is not successful the WRS should persist in submitting further applications in subsequent years.

It was agreed that WRS should apply for DEFRA funding as appropriate and in accordance with the Air Quality Action Plan.

The Task Group requests that Cabinet reconsider the wording of its response in order to reiterate the importance of WRS applying for any funding which is available, as follows:

“It strongly supports the recommendation that WRS should apply for Defra (and any other available) funding as appropriate and in accordance with the Air Quality Action Plan.”

The Task Group also request that Cabinet note the following:

Whilst the Task Group acknowledges that the Defra funding programme for 2013/14 has closed it would also draw Cabinet’s attention to the attached document, Annex A: Eligibility and Criteria for Assessment of Applications for Defra local Authority air quality grant programme and in particular page 2 point 5. *“Priority will be given to those authorities applying for the grant to support the development or implementation of their air quality Action Plans or on other projects to improve local air quality.”* From the information in Annex A the Task Group strongly believe that Bromsgrove District Council would be eligible should funding be available in future years.

The Task Group suggests that, if the Council's application is successful, this grant funding could be used to implement the actions detailed in recommendations 1 (LEZs) and 9 (monitoring air pollutants).

Recommendation 6

That Worcestershire County Council applies for funding from the Worcestershire Local Transport Body in order to fund traffic management measures that will tackle air pollution in the Bromsgrove AQMAs.

Whilst this is a matter for the County Council there is no objection to requesting the County Council to make the application.

The Task Group acknowledges that this is a matter for WCC, however as Cabinet accepted this recommendation it would request that the Portfolio Holder, on behalf of the Council writes to the appropriate WCC Portfolio Holder requesting such an application.

Recommendation 7

That Worcestershire County Council liaises with local bus operators to establish a local bus quality partnership in order to investigate the potential to update the bus fleets operating within the Bromsgrove district.

Whilst this is a matter for the County Council there is no objection to requesting the County Council to liaise with the relevant bus operators.

The Task Group acknowledges that this is a matter for WCC, however as Cabinet accepted this recommendation would request that the Portfolio Holder, on behalf of the Council writes to the appropriate Portfolio Holder at WCC requesting such a partnership be set up.

Recommendation 8

That the health implications of air pollution, be the focus of a detailed review by the Worcestershire Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

It was noted that discussions were on going and that there was no objection to the issue being raised by the District Councillors who were Members of the Worcestershire Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

After further consideration the Task Group would like to ask if it would be acceptable to Cabinet if this recommendation included the following:

“That the HOSC on consideration of the information provided within the Air Quality Task Group Report consider requesting the Health and

Wellbeing Board give consideration to investigating and raise awareness of respiratory problems, as although not currently a priority it could be in the future.”

Recommendation 9

That regular monitoring of particulate air pollutants within the Bromsgrove District’s four AQMAs is carried out by Worcestershire Regulatory Services.

This was not agreed in view of the significant cost implications.

The Task Group request that Cabinet give this recommendation further consideration in light of the following information, as it believes that such a project could be funded from the Defra Grant as detailed at Recommendation 5.

Page 3 point 9 of Annex A: Eligibility and Criteria for Assessment of Applications for Defra Local Authority air quality grant programme highlights “*proposals which include quantification of the proposed action, either emissions or concentrations, evaluation of the economic and health benefits will be considered favourably.*”

Recommendation 10

That Bromsgrove District Council sends a letter to the relevant Government Minister urging him/her to accelerate efforts to address problems with the higher emission levels from HGVs with a copy of the letter also being sent to the local M.P.

This recommendation was agreed.

The Task Group requests that the Portfolio Holder, on behalf of the Council actions this recommendation.

Recommendation 11

That Bromsgrove District Council sends a letter to the relevant Government Minister responsible for DEFRA urging him/her to review the role of those responsible for Air Quality with a copy of the letter also being sent to the local M.P.

This recommendation was agreed.

The Task Group requests that the Portfolio Holder, on behalf of the Council actions this recommendation.

4. APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – Annex A: Eligibility and Criteria for Assessment of Applications for Defra Local Authority air quality grant programme

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