

## **BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL**

### **OVERVIEW BOARD**

**3RD FEBRUARY 2009**

#### **AIR QUALITY - REVIEW**

##### **Background**

The former Scrutiny Steering Board established the Air Quality Task Group in June 2007 and Councillor P. M. McDonald was appointed Chairman.

The Task Group's terms of reference, which were compiled by the Task Group Chairman, were approved at the subsequent Board meeting held in July 2007. In brief the Task Group was expected to do the following:

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

Membership of the Task Group was agreed at the same Board Meeting which included the following Members: Councillors P. M. McDonald (Chairman), E. J. Murray, D. L. Pardoe, C. R. Scurrall and S. P. Shannon.

The first Air Quality Task Group Meeting was held in July 2007 and the scrutiny report with recommendations was approved by the Task Group in November 2007. The Scrutiny Steering Board approved the Scrutiny Report in December 2007 and it was then considered by Cabinet at its meeting in January 2008.

At the Cabinet Meeting it was recorded in the minutes that: *“The Leader acknowledged the detailed work undertaken by the Task Group together with the excellent quality of the final report. He thanked the Chairman of the Task Group for its efforts in undertaking the exercise...”*

At the Scrutiny Steering Board Meeting held in February 2008, the relevant Portfolio Holder (which at that time was Councillor Mrs. J. Dyer M.B.E.) presented the Cabinet's response to each recommendation contained within the Air Quality Scrutiny Report. It was noted that the majority of recommendations put forward had been approved, however, there was some discussion in relation to the Cabinet's response to recommendation 1 (further details on this are outlined in page 2 of this report).

Since that time, the former Scrutiny Steering Board, until October 2008, and Overview Board thereafter have been responsible for monitoring the implementation of the Cabinet approved recommendations relating to Air Quality.

## Review

One year on from when the Cabinet considered the findings of the Air Quality Task Group, it is now time for a Review to be undertaken. The reason for a Review is to provide Overview and Scrutiny Members the opportunity to find out what progress has been made over the past 12 months in relation to the recommendations that were approved.

The Chairman of the Board (who was also the Chairman of the Air Quality Task Group) agreed that, due to the interest shown by the Overview Board in this topic, it would be appropriate for both the Board and Task Group Members to undertake this Review at the next Board Meeting.

To assist, on the following pages is a summary of each recommendation, the Cabinet's response in **green** and a current update.

For some recommendations "further background information" has been supplied to help put the recommendation into context. However, it is strongly advisable that all Members of the Overview Board read the original Air Quality Scrutiny Report in conjunction with this document, particularly those Members who were not involved in the investigation. This can be found on the Council's website: [www.bromsgrove.gov.uk/scrutiny](http://www.bromsgrove.gov.uk/scrutiny) under "Overview and Scrutiny Investigations".

Please note that all those consulted (including Worcestershire County Council's Highways, Primary Care Trust (PCT) and the Highways Agency) were sent a copy of the final report with recommendations over 12 months ago, as a matter of course.

## **Recommendation 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 NO<sub>2</sub> 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

Initially, the Cabinet resolved that this recommendation be deferred until further information was available regarding the results of the scheme which is shortly to be introduced in London. The Cabinet felt they did not have enough information regarding how such a scheme would operate in practice and how the results would be monitored. In addition it was felt that the impact on the surrounding road network as a result of motorists attempting to avoid the Low Emission Zones could make the situation worse.

However, Members of the former Scrutiny Steering Board questioned how the Cabinet could come to that conclusion with no supporting evidence and therefore requested the Cabinet to reconsider its response.

The Cabinet did reconsider its response in March 2008 and agreed:  
“that the relevant Portfolio Holder, in conjunction with the Chairman of the Air Quality Task Group (should the Task Group Chairman so wish), take this matter forward with the appropriate officers of the County Council...”

### UPDATE

On behalf of Members, the Executive Director – Partnerships and Projects, sent a letter to Worcestershire County Council’s Highways Unit in April 2008 asking them to explore designation of roads as low emission zones. Since that time, officers have contacted the Highways Unit again requesting a response. A further follow-up letter was sent early 2009 and the Worcestershire County Council’s Highways Unit has been requested to respond as soon as possible.

*Action taken in relation to Recommendation 1 but response from County awaited*

## **Recommendation 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.

The Cabinet approved this recommendation.

### UPDATE

A letter was sent to the Railway Station Working Group in March 2008 to ensure they were aware of the approved scrutiny recommendations, highlighting the issue of adequate car parking and traffic management in the Aston Fields area with regard to access and egress from the car park.

*Recommendation 2 implemented*

## **Recommendation 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.

The Cabinet resolved that whilst they were minded to support the future recommendations of the Public Transport – Buses Scrutiny Task Group which relate to the improvement of local bus services, they would need to give full consideration to the recommendations when they were received and in particular would have to consider the recommendations in the light of any financial implications. The Cabinet felt they would need to be fully aware of the recommendations before giving a commitment to acceptance.

### UPDATE

No update required as recommendation not approved by Cabinet.

*Recommendation 3 rejected by the Cabinet*

#### **Recommendation 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.

The Cabinet approved this recommendation subject to the request in (a) being considered by the appropriate authority as there was some doubt as to whether it would be the responsibility of the County Council or of the Highways Agency. The Cabinet also wished the appropriate authority to consider making the operation of the traffic signals part time as for example during the night, the traffic was much lighter and this would reduce the amount of stationary traffic and therefore improve air quality.

#### Further Background Information

As indicated above, there is one Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) in Bromsgrove District which is located at Lickey End, M42 Junction 1. It was necessary to declare an AQMA at this location due to the exceedences of the annual mean objective for nitrogen dioxide (NO<sub>2</sub>) and the AQMA came into force in July 2001.

#### UPDATE

It was reported to the relevant Portfolio Holder in February 2008 that, as stated within the Scrutiny Report, the appropriate authority was Worcestershire County Council (as the Highways Authority) and therefore, it was the County Council which was responsible for the particular set of traffic signals referred to in the recommendation.

The Executive Director – Partnerships and Projects sent a letter to Worcestershire County Council in March 2008 requesting the traffic lights be altered as requested and also asked the County Council to indicate when they would undertake the work to enable Environmental Health to monitor before and after the alteration.

Furthermore, Environmental Health had discussions in November 2008 with a representative the AmeyMouchel (the contractors for the Highways Agency). AmeyMouchel are equally keen to progress this issue and therefore, they have also contacted the County Council's Highways in the hope this matter can move forward.

It is possible that there could be some road safety issues in relation to traffic signals being operated on a part time basis which relates to what the Cabinet

suggested. However, as agreed, Worcestershire County Council's Highways have also been asked to take this proposal into consideration.

Further officer investigation has revealed the critical nature of air quality around junction 1 of the M42 and in order to explore this, the Executive Director – Partnerships and Projects has proposed a high level technical meeting between key interested parties (including representatives from the County Council's Highways and Environmental Health, Highways Agency, Primary Care Trust and West Mercia Police)

*Action taken in relation to Recommendation 4 but response from County awaited  
(High level officer meeting has been proposed to progress matters)*

### **Recommendation 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.

The Cabinet approved this recommendation and it was also resolved that the Police be requested to monitor the misuse of the yellow boxes as it was felt some motorists were not complying with the markings.

#### UPDATE

The yellow boxes were repainted and monitoring of the air quality is continuous by Environmental Health. However, no significant differences in air quality have been noted.

West Mercia Police were contacted in March 2008 requesting the yellow boxes were monitored and any misuse addressed. A response was received by the Chief Inspector in June 2008 stating that the local policing team would monitor the situation for the next 3 months on an informal basis. A further letter has been written to discover the outcome of the monitoring.

Please also note the proposed high level officer meeting with key interested parties to discuss the AQMA, as mentioned in the update to recommendation 4.

*Recommendation 5 implemented*

## **Recommendation 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.

The Cabinet approved this recommendation.

### UPDATE

The Highways Agency was contacted in March 2008 requesting this information. A response was received and the Highways Agency confirmed that it will be reviewing the scheme as requested. It was explained that collision data would need to be taken from a 12 month period after the scheme is completed. Also, as data will come from a variety of sources, it will need to be validated before it is made available to the Highways Agency. Therefore, it is anticipated that the review will be complete by Spring 2009 and the results will then be communicated to the Environmental Health Team.

*Recommendation 6 implemented and results due later in 2009*

## **Recommendation 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 NO<sub>2</sub> levels.

The Cabinet approved this recommendation.

### Further Background Information

Air quality at this location is specifically mentioned as the Task Group were informed that although it has not been declared as an AQMA, there are air quality issues in the vicinity of Davenal House, Birmingham Road, Bromsgrove.

### UPDATE

Previous updates given in tracker reports to Members stated that the road management arrangements around The Strand, Stourbridge Road and Birmingham Road junction are a significant consideration for the Town Centre Steering Group. The County Council and District Council commissioned

Halcrow, Transport Engineers, to submit proposals for improvements to the road junction. The issue of air quality will form part of the criteria for determining the most appropriate road junction arrangements.

Members were also informed last year that plans were drawn up August 2008 for changes to the road junction at Birmingham Road and Stourbridge Road. The plans propose changes to the filtering arrangements and fundamental changes to the traffic management around the Strand and Queens Head public house. A meeting was held in October 2008 with interested parties to discuss plans for road changes and improvements.

It is anticipated that there will be a retail development that will affect the volume of usage at the Birmingham Road / Stourbridge Road junction and as a consequence, proposals are being prepared for improvements to the junction that will, in part, be funded by the retailer.

*Recommendation 7 implemented and work continuing*

### **Recommendation 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).

The Cabinet approved this recommendation.

#### UPDATE

Please refer to the update under recommendation 7.

*Recommendation 8 implemented and work continuing*



## **Recommendation 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.

The Cabinet approved this recommendation.

### UPDATE

With regards to recommendation 9 (a), the Planning and Environment Services Department test all development proposals against local policies and government guidance as such policies and guidance constitute material considerations in the determination of planning applications. With a proposal within an AQMA Officers would apply Government Guidance as set out within Planning Policy Statement 23 (PPS23) - Planning and Pollution Control, in addition to other policies and documents relevant to the proposed development. The only AQMA in Bromsgrove at present is at Junction 1 of the M42 at Lickey End and involves some 30 odd residential properties all of which are in the urban area where a presumption exists in favour of development unless material considerations indicate otherwise. In dealing with any proposed development it would have to be demonstrated that the proposal would not be making the air quality situation worse than it is already.

In relation to 9 (b), the local authorities of Worcestershire and Herefordshire Council, whilst fulfilling their statutory responsibilities and obligations under the Local Air Quality Management regime within the Environment Act 1995, have also recognised a need to develop a more holistic and unified approach to managing local air quality across the two Counties. The Herefordshire and Worcestershire Pollution Group have therefore initiated the preparation of a cross-County Herefordshire and Worcestershire Air Quality Strategy (AQS). The improvement of air quality requires input from a wide range of planning and other professions. Therefore this AQS identifies commitments, particularly for communication and co-operation within and between local authorities, external organisations and the community. It is to be considered by Cabinet in February 2009 and if adopted it will be placed on the Council's website to ensure developers have access to this information.

*Recommendation 9 – work ongoing*

## **Recommendation 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.

The Cabinet approved this recommendation.

### UPDATE

As a first step, officers concentrated on ensuring the website provided adequate information as it was recognised that improvements were needed.

Environmental Health has been enhancing the information on the website over the past 12 months and officers have been using this as the basis for providing further information to households in the AQMA.

During 2008, the latest Defra Reports were added to the website and further background information uploaded to ensure that comprehensive information was available to the public by the end of last year. It should be noted that these particular web pages are receiving a high number of hits. (A link to the web pages on air quality and air pollution can be found under Environmental Health if you click on the ‘Living’ tab on the homepage.)

The next step is for Environmental Health to send a letter to local residents living in the immediate vicinity of the AQMA directing them (in the first instance) to the website for further information. Now that the quality of information on the website has been improved, it is planned that this letter will be sent out by the end of January 2009.

In relation to recommendation 10 (b), a Meeting with Worcestershire County Council has not yet convened, however, initial discussions about arrangements has commenced. No response has been received regarding the signage, however, this item will be discussed at the proposed high level officer meeting mentioned within the update for recommendation 4.

*Recommendation 10 – work ongoing*

## **Recommendation 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.

The Cabinet approved this recommendation.

### UPDATE

See first part of response to recommendation 10 which states:

'Environmental Health has been enhancing the information on the website over the past 12 months and officers have been using this as the basis for providing further information to households in the AQMA.

During 2008, the latest Defra Reports were added to the website and further background information uploaded to ensure that comprehensive information was available to the public by the end of last year. It should be noted that these particular web pages are receiving a high number of hits. (A link to the web pages on air quality and air pollution can be found under Environmental Health if you click on the 'Living' tab on the homepage.)'

As a minimum, the web pages relating to air quality are reviewed and updated (as necessary) on an annual basis, in line with Defra requirements. However, if legislative requirements demands, the website will be updated more frequently.

*Recommendation 11 implemented*

## **Recommendation 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.

The Cabinet approved this recommendation.

### Further Information

The Task Group heard from two representatives from the Primary Care Trust: Ms. L. Altay, Consultant in Public Health and Ms. H. Mossop, Speciality Registrar in Public Health.

To assist Board Members who were not involved in the investigation itself, here is an extract from the approved minutes which relates to discussions with the PCT:

“...It was explained (by PCT representatives) that there had been a number of systematic reviews carried out on the effect of transport related air pollution and asthma...It was explained that there was some evidence for a causal association between asthma and living in close proximity to traffic and there appeared to be more evidence coming forward to support this link, however, the evidence was not conclusive, with inconsistent results from different studies.”

The Task Group was supplied with data relating to numbers of asthma cases by GP practice in Bromsgrove District (rather than postcode as requested due to the timescales involved). Members questioned the asthma prevalence for GP practices in certain areas that appeared significantly higher than other parts of the District, however, Ms. Altay stated that it was her professional opinion that they were not “statistically significant” as there were other factors that would need to be taken into consideration such as other characteristics of those particular individuals, including age and whether they smoked. There was also a concern that the figures were reliant on GPs diagnosing and recording the data which led to recommendation 12 (b).

As stated within the final report, although the PCT could not categorically state that poor air quality caused respiratory illnesses such as asthma, it was agreed that poor air quality could exacerbate such illnesses.

#### UPDATE

There is an Air Quality Steering Group that includes the PCT. However, this only meets once a year so the issue was also raised at both the LSP Better Environment Theme Group and the Health and Well Being Theme Group in March and April 2008.

In addition, the Executive Director – Partnerships and Projects sent letters and an email earlier in 2008 to the Public Health Officer at PCT regarding outcomes of Air Quality Scrutiny.

At the LSP Theme Group Meetings, these issues were discussed and it was understood that differences in diagnosing and recording asthma data was a national issue. The PCT did not feel there was anything the LSP Theme Groups could do except to keep a watchful eye on asthma admissions and levels. However, in relation to recommendation 12(b), the PCT confirmed that work is being undertaken with GPs to ensure that their registers are accurate and up to date.

Communication between this Council and the PCT has been poor in the past. However, due to the proposal of a Countywide Air Quality Strategy, communication is improving and it is expected that this will continue. Please also note the proposed high level officer meeting with key interested parties mentioned in the update for recommendation 4. This will involve the PCT.

*Recommendation 12 implemented and continuing*

### **Recommendation 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.

The Cabinet approved this recommendation.

#### UPDATE

A press release regarding bonfires was published on 31st July 2008 and reference was made to the District Council and County Council websites regarding discouragement to bonfires. Information on how to report nuisance bonfires was included. An article was also published in the Together Bromsgrove magazine with the same information later in 2008.

In 2009 and future years, officers will continue to issue press releases and publish articles in Together Bromsgrove to actively discourage bonfires and remind the public how to report bonfires if they are a nuisance. In addition, the Council is also working towards amending conditions attached to allotment holders to include bonfire control measures.

*Recommendation 13 implemented and work continuing*

### **Recommendation 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.

The Cabinet approved this recommendation.

#### UPDATE

The current cost of bio fuel is currently more expensive than the traditional fuel that we purchase and we have been advised by our supplier that the quality of the fuel cannot be guaranteed. There are also environmental concerns about the current availability of such fuels and whether they have a beneficial affect on the environment. This is still under investigation and we are awaiting further reports about its long term viability.

It was reported in a Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders Limited (SMMT) newsletter during 2008 that a debate in Westminster Hall in June 2008 concluded

that the potential effect of supporting bio fuels was not properly thought out before the Government introduced its Renewable Transport Fuels Obligation (RTFO). The debate followed publication of the House of Commons Environmental Audit Committee's Report: 'Are bio fuels sustainable?' Jim Fitzpatrick MP, Transport Minister defended the RTFO but suggested the Government's 'policy of caution'. As yet, there is no firm conclusion from the Government report.

At recent discussions with vehicle manufacturers, we are still being advised caution with bio-fuels. Manufacturers are now trialing gas engines as an alternative but only demonstration vehicles will be available this year.

At present, it is not considered appropriate for the Council to enter into a long term commitment to use bio fuels. However, Street Scene and Community officers are continually monitoring options for alternative fuel usage and environmental impact of current services.

*Recommendation 14 implemented and situation continually being monitored*

### **Recommendation 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.

The Cabinet approved this recommendation.

#### UPDATE

The demand for a meaningful Travel Plan is supported by the Corporate Management Team (CMT). The travel plan proposal went to CMT late May and Cabinet in July 2008. It was agreed that with the assistance of the County Council the existing travel plan prepared in 2005 will be refreshed.

A travel survey was carried out at the end of 2008 to enable officers to investigate CO<sub>2</sub> emission reduction incentives such as home working, car sharing and alternative travel options. It is anticipated that a revised travel plan will be submitted to the Cabinet mid 2009. This is also being linked to the Council's performance as required by national indicators.

*Recommendation 15 – work ongoing*

## **Recommendation 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.

The Cabinet approved this recommendation.

### UPDATE

Showings of the film ‘An Inconvenient Truth’ by Al Gore were held during September 2008 in the Spadesbourne Suite for both Councillors and staff. The purpose was to raise awareness on the issues of sustainability. The film is a polemic and there was other information available to present alternative views at each of the sessions. The sessions were facilitated by one of the Executive Directors.

Refuse and recycling crews are instructed as part of their induction training to avoid causing unnecessary obstruction when operating service vehicles. This instruction will be reiterated on a regular basis as a reminder and in July 2008 Street Scene and Waste Management developed a weekly briefing for crews which includes this instruction along with other service specific issues.

*Recommendation 16 implemented*

## **Recommendation 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.

The Cabinet approved this recommendation.

### UPDATE

As agreed, a Newsletter incorporating this information was sent to all taxi drivers and taxi operators in February 2008.

*Recommendation 17 implemented*

## **Recommendation 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.

The Cabinet approved this recommendation.

### UPDATE

Car sharing is one of the actions contained in the travel plan. Therefore, please refer to the update under recommendation 15 for more information on the travel plan and the associated survey.

Presently, the car sharing scheme has not been actively pursued. However, as part of the analysis of the current travel plan, postcode areas will be identified and information will be disseminated detailing concentrations of employees by postcode area. It is anticipated that three spaces will be designated for car sharing by May 2009 and use of spaces will be monitored.

*Recommendation 18 – work ongoing*

## **Recommendation 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.

The Cabinet approved this recommendation.

### UPDATE

The review of car allowances is being addressed through Single Status and it is proposed that a new set of criteria is developed for determining which posts attract the allowance going forward.

It was agreed in principle that this review will take place during 2008/09, and that any individual members of staff who were found to no longer undertake sufficient business miles to receive the allowance should be protected for 2 years, in accordance with the same principle for Job Evaluation protection. This is to minimise the potential effect upon individual members of staff who may be



financial losers through both Job Evaluation and the review of car allowances. The possibility of having environmentally friendly pool cars and loan/leasing scheme will be included in this process.

The delays in implementing Job Evaluation has had a knock on effect on the overall timetable, including the review of car allowances. However it is still planned to review car allowances in the current year. Members are asked to note that the principle of reviewing the Essential and Casual Car User Scheme will now also form part of the pursuit of the national indicator which requires this Council to reduce its carbon emissions within its own estate (i.e. buildings, vehicles and employees). This will cover both recommendation 19 (a) and 19 (b) as well as recommendation 20.

*Recommendation 19 – work ongoing*

### **Recommendation 20 – Car Allowance Pay Scales**

The Council considers 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<sub>2</sub> 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.)

The Cabinet resolved that investigations be undertaken into the revision of the current car allowance pay scales to include the possibility of paying a flat rate for all users regardless of engine size. It was felt that the payment of a flat rate may discourage the use of vehicles with larger engines.

#### UPDATE

Members are asked to note that in accordance with current contractual arrangements the Council currently applies the nationally negotiated car allowances which are based upon engine c.c. and actual car miles undertaken. The allowance is reviewed annually.

We are aware that discussions are taking place amongst the NJC (National Joint Council) at national level in connection with the potential review of nationally negotiated terms and conditions of employment, and that this may include a review of car allowances. We are keeping a watching on how these discussions are developing as it may be more beneficial the Council to rely on changes that are negotiated nationally than to introduce changes at local level.

*Recommendation 20 – work ongoing*

## **Recommendation 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.

The Cabinet approved this recommendation.

### UPDATE

It has already been reported to Members that a report was submitted to Corporate Management Team (CMT) in January 2008 and CMT is generally supportive of the principle of a Home Working Policy. However, CMT is mindful of the wider context, such as: office accommodation; asset management; technological capabilities; resources; health and safety; insurance; and financial implications of working from home. Consequently, CMT do not feel able to implement the policy at present. Currently, there is a pilot within Revenues and Benefits to ensure that the technology to allow for home working is correct. Although a formal Home Working Policy has not yet been adopted corporately, Heads of Services can allow ad hoc/infrequent home working when appropriate, providing that it does not extend to become a contractual arrangement.

The matter of home working was considered by CMT again in January 2009. It was noted that whilst the technological capabilities to enable home working have advanced since CMT considered the proposed home working policy in January 2008, the other areas of concern listed above remain unchanged. Consequently, a formal home working policy is not likely to be adopted in the immediate future. However, it was agreed that colleagues within Financial Services would issue a template to all Heads of Service with a view to calculating the potential costs to each service if a corporate home working policy were to be accelerated.

*Recommendation 21 – work ongoing*

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### Abbreviations:

AQMA = Air Quality Management Area  
AQS = Air Quality Strategy  
CMT = Corporate Management Team  
CC = Cubic Capacity  
CO<sub>2</sub> = Carbon dioxide  
JE = Job Evaluation  
LSP= Local Strategic Partnership  
NJC = National Joint Council  
NO<sub>2</sub> = Nitrogen dioxide  
PCT = Primary Care Trust

PPS = Planning Policy Statement  
RTFO = Renewable Transport Fuels  
Obligation  
SMMT = Society of Motor Manufacturers  
and Traders Limited  
VED = Vehicle Exercise Duty