

**Committee:** Cabinet

**Agenda Item**

**Date:** 15 September 2016

**16**

**Title:** Air Quality Action Plan

**Portfolio holder:** Cllr Susan Barker, Cabinet member of Environmental Services

Key decision

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## Summary

1. There is a requirement for the Council to produce an Air Quality Action Plan further to declaration of the Saffron Walden Air Quality Management Area in 2012. In November 2015 the Scrutiny Committee reviewed the draft document to provide feedback on the contents to the cabinet member for Environmental Services. In early 2016 the plan went through consultation with the public and key stakeholders including Essex County Council.

## Recommendations

2. The Action Plan be adopted

## Financial Implications

3. The Action Plan has been produced using existing resources. In most cases further work is needed to determine the feasibility and likely impact of the suggested actions. The ability to implement particular actions will depend on the scope for including funding in the council's annual budget proposals, the availability of external funding from S106 obligations and other sources.

## Background Papers

4. The following papers were referred to by the author in the preparation of this report and are available for inspection from the author of the report.

None

## Impact

- 5.

Communication/Consultation	Measures were subject to consultation with public and key stakeholders
Community Safety	
Equalities	
Health and Safety	
Human Rights/Legal	Having designated an Air Quality

Implications	Management Area the council is required to prepare an Action Plan in accordance with the Environment Act 1985
Sustainability	Addressed in the report
Ward-specific impacts	Saffron Walden wards: Audley, Castle and Shire.
Workforce/Workplace	Existing resources

## Situation

1. Air quality monitoring and modelling carried out by the Council has shown that air quality is generally good in the district but at some junctions within Saffron Walden, the national objective for nitrogen dioxide (NO<sub>2</sub>) has not been met in recent years, or has been very slightly below the objective.
2. The junctions of concern are:
  - Thaxted Road/East St /Radwinter Road/Chaters Hill
  - High Street/ George St/Abbey Lane
  - Debden Road/London Road
  - Bridge Street/Castle St
3. The draft action plan contains information on trends since 2003 for emissions of NO<sub>2</sub> and fine particulates, as monitored at the automatic station in Hill Street.
4. Since 2011 the trend has been flat at this location and at other sites across the town where diffusion tubes are used for monitoring levels of NO<sub>2</sub>. Between 2014 and 2015 there was a small increase in NO<sub>2</sub> at all four of the above junctions.
5. Where objectives are not likely to be achieved, the Council is obliged under the Environment Act 1995 to designate the affected area as an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA). The Act then requires an Action Plan to be produced for these designated areas, setting out the actions that the Council intends to take to meet the objectives and to maintain levels below the objective for the life of the plan. The Council last produced an Air Quality Action Plan in 2009 following declaration of three small Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs) centred on the most congested road junctions in the centre of Saffron Walden. Further monitoring of air quality was subsequently undertaken which revealed a wider area of concern where air quality objectives were not being met, and in 2012 a larger AQMA was declared by the Council covering the central area of the town.
6. The measures proposed in the latest plan are broader than the previous measures. In all 22 measures are proposed, and can be grouped into the following areas :

- Planning policies to support infrastructure for cycle/pedestrian use and electric vehicle charging
  - Working in partnership with Essex County Council, to identify improvements to congested junctions, and to promote procurement of improved bus services
  - Fleet procurement of low emission vehicles
7. The measures have been set out set out in Table 3 of the plan and expanded upon in the text of the plan. The anticipated outcome of each has been included, how it will be measured, and who is responsible. Broad assessments of the cost, the timescale for implementation and the likely contribution towards reduction of nitrogen dioxide levels if implemented fully have been made.
8. A programme of monitoring to assess the effectiveness of the measures will be undertaken once the action plan has been adopted.
9. The second part of the plan provides information on the health impacts of air pollutants, and the legislative framework driven by health and environmental impacts.
10. The full draft report is attached as Appendix One.

## **Consultation**

11. The consultation period ran from 19 January 2016 to 8 April 2016. In total, 288 responses were received. Respondents were asked to indicate their agreement or disagreement with the 22 proposed measures in the plan and to comment on the coverage of the report in general.
12. The following consultative methods were employed, in all cases the same questions were asked:
- Targeted invitation to the consultation sent out to statutory consultees and local interest groups.
  - Open public consultation. The survey was promoted on the council's website from 19 January to 8 April via an interactive form using the Snap 11 consultation platform. Paper copies were also distributed to the council's main contact points at the Great Dunmow Library, Thaxted CIC and the CSC in Saffron Walden.
  - The Air Quality Action Plan questions were also included as part of Uttlesford Voices 12, the half yearly consultation questionnaire sent out to members of the Uttlesford Citizens Panel.
13. General promotion was carried out with direct mailings to the members of the Citizens Panel, a press release, exposure via the council's social media channels and prominent home feature promotion on the council's website.

14. In summary the respondents supported the measures, although for some there were also relatively high levels of disapproval registered. The most popular measures were :
- Working with ECC to facilitate the procurement of bus services with integrated timetables, high quality facilities, providing information on public transport through available media and securing improvements to emissions from the bus fleet (measures 13 and 18 combined)
  - Working with operators of fleet vehicles within the town, including UDC, to facilitate the introduction of low emission vehicles (measures 12 and 19)
  - To assist ECC in working with local schools and businesses in the review and upgrading of existing travel plans or to assist individual schools or businesses develop plans and to promote those plans (measure 5)
15. The least popular were measures 7-9 which relate to identifying measures to improve capacity at congested junctions and targeting parking enforcement where identified to be an contributing to congestion. Comments reflected concern at the nature of specific measures.
16. Clear differences exist between the public responses and that of the Citizens Panel for measures 7 - 9. The Citizen Panel endorsed these measures whilst the opposite was the case for the public responses.
17. The consultation full report is attached as Appendix 4 to the draft action plan.

## Risk Analysis

6.

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigating actions
Air pollution levels are not reduced within the 5 year life of the action plan	2 Some risk from availability of budget over the 5 year term	2 Impact will be subject to on going monitoring	The action plan will be kept under review as a working document

1 = Little or no risk or impact

2 = Some risk or impact – action may be necessary.

3 = Significant risk or impact – action required

4 = Near certainty of risk occurring, catastrophic effect or failure of project.