

Report to the Cabinet

Report reference: C-045-2022/23

Date of meeting: 13 March 2023

Portfolio: Technical Services (Cllr K Williamson)

Subject: Air Quality Action Plan

Responsible Officer: Mandy Thompson (01992 564 076).

Democratic Services: Adrian Hendry (01992 564246).



**Epping Forest
District Council**

Recommendations/Decisions Required:

That cabinet members endorse the adoption of the Air Quality Action Plan 2023-2028

Reasons for Proposed Decision:

The Air Quality Action Plan is required as part of the Council's statutory duty within the Local Air Quality Management framework.

Other Options for Action:

To not endorse the adoption of the Air Quality Action Plan. This would result in a delay in meeting our statutory duties.

Executive Summary:

This report provides cabinet members with a final Air Quality Action Plan (*AQAP, published as a background paper*), which has gone through a four-week public consultation between the 20th of January and 17th of February 2023 and updated according to consultation feedback.

For context, air pollution has major health impacts on human health and any authority who has a declared Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) for pollution exceedances, has a statutory duty to produce an AQAP with a list of measures aimed at addressing the AQMA. Our District currently has one AQMA declared near the B1393/ Theydon Road junction at Epping, Bell Common for nitrogen dioxide (NO₂). Additionally, whilst we currently do not have any AQMA's declared for particulates (PM₁₀ and PM_{2.5}), the Public Health Outcomes Framework (PHOF) indicator that looks at the fraction of mortality attributable to long-term exposure to PM_{2.5} calculates that our District is above the England average.

This AQAP has been developed to not only address our statutory obligations relating to our AQMA, but also improve air quality in our District as well as support the aims of our Climate Change Action Plan and our work around improving air quality for the Epping Forest Special Area of Conservation.

The AQAP supports our Council corporate objectives:

- Reduce our carbon footprint across the District and within our council by working to reduce emissions, offsetting pollution by increasing tree planting including through new housing developments and community initiatives.
- Ensure all residents have the opportunity to lead healthy and fulfilling lives by delivering the objectives of the joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy and working with our colleagues in the NHS.

The AQAP also links to the environmental and sustainable travel Policies T1 and DM 20-22 contained within the emerging Local Plan.

Report:

1. Exposure to nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) and particulates (PM₁₀, PM_{2.5}) can cause significant harm to human health and cost the economy billions. The annual mortality of human-made air pollution in the UK is roughly equivalent to between 28,000 and 36,000 deaths every year. It is estimated that between 2017 and 2025 the total cost to the NHS and social care system from exposure to these pollutants will be £1.6 billion. Air pollution can cause and worsen health effects in all individuals, particularly society's most vulnerable populations. Long-term exposure to air pollution can cause chronic conditions such as cardiovascular and respiratory diseases as well as lung cancer, leading to reduced life expectancy. Short-term increases in levels of air pollution can also cause a range of health impacts, including effects on lung function, exacerbation of asthma, increases in respiratory and cardiovascular hospital admissions and mortality.
2. The local air quality management (LAQM) regime is the statutory process by which local authorities monitor, assess and act to improve local air quality. The LAQM framework requires local authorities to regularly review and assess air quality in their areas and to determine whether the air quality objectives (expressed as concentration limits) set out in the Air Quality (England) Regulations 2000 (2002 as amended) are likely to be achieved. Where exceedances are considered likely, the local authority must then declare an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) and prepare an Air Quality Action Plan (AQAP) setting out the measures it intends to put in place to bring air pollution to within limits by addressing the issues identified. The Environment Act 2021 includes provision for additional air quality objectives related to particulate matter which have not been previously included in the Local Air Quality Management regime.
3. Air quality in the District in relation to human health is generally good with nitrogen NO₂ and PM₁₀ levels below the UK legal limit value for these pollutants. The District does have one AQMA declared for exceedances of the 1 hour mean and annual mean for NO₂ near the B1393/ Theydon Road junction at Epping, Bell Common attributed to vehicle emissions.
4. Whilst air quality is generally good in the District, the Public Health Outcomes Framework (PHOF) indicator that looks at the fraction of mortality attributable to long-term exposure to PM_{2.5} calculates that our District is above the England average of 5.6% at 6.1%. It also calculates that the District has a higher fraction of mortality as compared to some of our neighbouring Essex Authorities. This PHOF indicator is used by our public health colleagues when producing the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment.
5. In response to the Bell Common AQMA and the PHOF indicator, this AQAP has been

produced outlining the measures we will take to improve air quality not only within our AQMA but throughout the District between 2023 to 2028. Its measures will also have an added benefit of helping to improve air quality around the Epping Forest Special Area of Conservation and support the measures within our Climate Change Action Plan.

6. Along with its measures, the AQAP also includes air quality focus areas (AQFA) with respect to PM_{2.5} exposure. By using a pilot tool developed by the UK Health Security Agency, the AQAP has identified wards within the District with a high air pollution vulnerability score with respect to PM_{2.5}. The AQFA's will help us further target the measures within the AQAP and assist in lowering our PHOF score.
7. The format of the AQAP is constrained by Defra guidance which has a set list of measures/themes that authorities must consider within their plan. As the primary sources of pollution in our District are from vehicles and building emissions, the measures within the AQAP look at reducing these emissions via 6 priority themes:
 - Alternatives to private vehicle use/ promoting low/zero emission transport
Key measures include:
 - Continue providing a demand responsive transport service
 - Work with ECC and developers to ensure the provision of infrastructure to support walking, cycling and public transport use
 - Work with ECC to ensure schools have travel plans and encourage the use of Modeshift STARS programme
 - Environmental Permitting and other regulatory measures
Key measures include:
 - Continuing environmental permitting activities throughout the District
 - Continue to promote and enforce anti idling
 - Ensure Smoke Control areas are promoted within the District and enforced when necessary
 - Freight and Delivery Management
Key measures include:
 - Introduce a Local Plan policy requiring submission and implementation of Routing Management Plans (for construction and operational phases) to manage the sustainable delivery of goods and materials
 - Work with ECC to lower bus emissions
 - Policy Guidance and Development Management
Key measures include:
 - Ensure air quality is taken into account as a material consideration in planning decision making
 - Assess the feasibility of introducing air quality neutral planning guidance for developments
 - Ensure large developments have and follow a construction management plan
 - Promoting Low Emission Plant
Key measures include:
 - Increase the amount of EV charge points in the District
 - Assess the suitability of installing cleaner energy and heating technology on council owned sites
 - Installation of energy efficiency measures in low income, low efficiency homes using grant funding

- Public health, awareness raising and monitoring
Key measures include:
 - Work with our Public Health colleagues to increase awareness of air quality around our District
 - Conduct air quality audits at schools around our District
 - Continue to monitor air quality throughout the District for both human health and the EFSAC

8. The AQAP is supported by the Council's corporate objectives:

- Reduce our carbon footprint across the District and within our council by working to reduce emissions, offsetting pollution by increasing tree planting including through new housing developments and community initiatives.
- Ensure all residents have the opportunity to lead healthy and fulfilling lives by delivering the objectives of the joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy and working with our colleagues in the NHS

Consultation

9. The measures within the AQAP will require a whole organisation approach and teams within our organisation have been consulted on the measures within the AQAP to ensure they are appropriate and deliverable. External parties such as Essex County Council and Qualis Group have also been approached as some measures cross over to their remit and require partnership working.

10. The draft AQAP had a four-week public consultation between the 20th of January until the 17th of February 2023. It was promoted via social media platforms, direct email, our council website and local news outlets were also notified. A hard copy of the draft Air Quality Action Plan was also made available to those who requested it by either contacting Environmental Health directly or at the Civic Offices Welcome Area.

11. From Facebook engagement alone, 1,569 people engaged with the posts. This included liking, sharing, selecting to read more of the post, etc. 1,564 people clicked on the link to the consultation webpage which provided a summary of the consultation and a link to a survey monkey questionnaire.

12. Participants were asked via survey monkey about the measures proposed within each theme by selecting: Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Unsure, Agree, Strongly Agree. They were also given an option to provide further feedback for each theme in a text box.

13. A total of 112 responses were made via the survey monkey platform and 10 were submitted via email. The results of the survey monkey are as follows:

Theme 1: Alternatives to private vehicle use/ promoting low/zero emission transport

With regards to the nine actions proposed within this theme, a total of 108 people responded to this theme, 34.25% either strongly disagreed or disagreed with the proposed actions, whilst 50.87% either agreed or strongly agreed with the proposed actions and 14.88% were unsure.

Theme 2: Environmental Permitting and other regulatory measures

With regards to the five actions proposed within this theme, a total of 104 people responded to this theme, 26.29% either strongly disagreed or disagreed with the proposed actions, whilst 52.38% either agreed or strongly agreed with the proposed actions and 21.33% were unsure.

Theme 3: Freight and Delivery Management

With regards to the four actions proposed within this theme, a total of 100 people responded to this theme, 23.82% either strongly disagreed or disagreed with the proposed actions, whilst 54.34% either strongly agreed or agreed with the proposed actions and 4% were unsure.

Theme 4: Policy Guidance and Development Management

With regards to the nine proposed actions within this theme, a total of 96 people responded to this theme, 29.36% either strongly disagreed or disagreed with the proposed actions, whilst 50.98% either strongly agreed or agreed with the proposed actions and 19.65% were unsure.

Theme 5: Promoting Low Emission Plant

With regards to the six actions proposed within this theme, a total of 95 people responded to this theme, 22.24% either strongly disagreed or disagreed with the proposed actions, whilst 65.32% either strongly agreed or agreed and 12.43% were unsure.

Theme 6: Public health, awareness raising and monitoring

With regards to the five actions proposed within this theme, a total of 93 people responded to this theme, 21.08% either strongly disagreed or disagreed with the proposed measures, whilst 61.08% either strongly agreed or agreed and 17.85% were unsure.

14. Written feedback included within the survey monkey varied, however, many participants were concerned with the lack of public transport within the District, especially in rural areas. Because of this, there was concern with regards to measures that influenced limiting car use. There was also concern with regards to limiting parking spaces in new developments resulting in increased parking on neighbouring residential roads. Many were against staff being offered annual car checks and thought these were MOT's. Whilst the measure is not an annual MOT but rather a car safety check that can result in a more efficient vehicle, this measure has been removed from the action plan. There was also concern with regards to cycling provision, citing that roads are not safe enough for cyclists at the moment and infrastructure is needed first in order to support a transition to cycling.
15. In addition to the survey monkey, we also received 10 written responses to the consultation. Their feedback has been incorporated into the final Air Quality Action Plan document where feasible.

16. Changes to the Air Quality Action Plan as a result of the consultation include:

- Removal of proposed measure C03: '*Offer free annual car checks to Council members*'. The removal was in response to consultation feedback.
- Removal of the foreword as that was specific to the consultation phase.
- Addition of a section briefly discussing the Environment Act 2021. It was highlighted that the AQAP was lacking information on the new Act.
- Update of section 4, now 5 '*Development and Implementation of Epping Forest District Council's Air Quality Action Plan*' to reflect the consultation results.
- Addition of Appendix D to reflect the consultation responses.
- Addition of Appendix E which provides a summary of pollutants of concern and monitoring data for the District. Whilst the AQAP document makes reference to our annual status reports (ASR) where our monitoring data is kept, some respondents felt that the AQAP needed to include information regarding the pollutants of concern, what the air quality objectives are and what pollution levels in the District are.
- Amendment to wording of measure E02 **from** '*assess the suitability of heat pumps, solar PV and solar thermal on council owned sites*' **to** '*assess the suitability of installing cleaner energy and heating technology on council owned sites*'. This amendment was made as respondents were concerned about air source heat pumps. This measure is not specific to just air source heat pumps but rather a variety of low emission technology.
- Amendment of KPI for measure A07 **from** '*ICT customer surveys having a 90% satisfaction response*' **to** '*Increase in the number of officers able to fully access council systems whilst out in the District*'. This change was made following further feedback from the ICT manager and also to reflect that the proposed measure was not solely about supporting home working but also agile working throughout the District without the need to travel to a home base in order to access/update files.
- Table 3.1(c), now 4.1(c) was updated to include neighbouring London borough's upon feedback that they should be included.
- Other minor changes relating to spelling and grammar.

17. Demographics

At the end of the survey, participants were asked to provide some details about themselves to help us assess the reach of our consultation. Below is a summary of the results:

Gender:

41.05% female

41.05% male

1.05% transgender

1.05% stated other

15.79% preferred not to say

Age:

Under 18 0.0%

18-24 1.16%

25-34 4.65%

35-44 19.77%

45-54 19.77%

55-64 32.56%

65-74 15.12%

75-84 5.81%

85+ 1.16%

Which district do you live, study and or work in:

Abridge: 2

Buckhurst Hill: 5

Chigwell: 9

Chipping Ongar: 2

Epping: 23

Epping Upland: 1

Essex: 3

Grange Hill: 1

Harlow: 1

Loughton: 13

Matching Green: 1

Nazeing: 1

North Weald: 3

Ongar: 2

Passingford: 1

Roydon: 1

Rye Hill Road: 2

Sewardstone: 1

Stapleford Abbotts: 1

Theydon Bois: 7

Waltham Abbey: 13

Appendices: Appendix 1, Air Quality Action Plan (*published online as background paper*)

Resource Implications:

The work to support the Air Quality Action Plan is covered by the Environmental Health Team.

Legal and Governance Implications:

The legal background to the Air Quality Action Plan is discussed in the body of this report,

there are no specific legal implications to draw to the Committees attention.

Safer, Cleaner and Greener Implications:

The Air Quality Action Plan aims to improve air quality in the District whilst also supporting our Climate Change Action Plan and help support our commitment to improve air quality around the Epping Forest Special Area of Conservation.

Consultation Undertaken:

The draft AQAP document has been reviewed by the Overview & Scrutiny Committee on the 16th Jan 2023. It also underwent a four week public consultation between 20th Jan to 17th Feb. A summary of the consultation results is provided within sections 9-17 of this report.

Background Papers:

None

Risk Management:

If the Council does not produce a new Air Quality Action Plan, we will not be meeting our statutory requirements and further action can be considered by Defra. There will also be a reputational damage to consider should the Council not move forward with producing a new AQAP.

Equality Impact Assessment

1. Under s.149 of the Equality Act 2010, when making decisions, Epping District Council must have regard to the Public Sector Equality Duty, ie have due regard to:
 - eliminating unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation, and other conduct prohibited by the Act,
 - advancing equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not,
 - fostering good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not, including tackling prejudice and promoting understanding.

Section 1: Identifying details
Your function, service area and team: Regulatory Services - Environmental Health Team
If you are submitting this EqIA on behalf of another function, service area or team, specify the originating function, service area or team: N/A
Title of policy or decision: Air Quality Action Plan
Officer completing the EqIA: Tel: 01992 564063 Email: bstalabrass@eppingforestdc.gov.uk
Date of completing the assessment: 23 December 2023

Section 2: Policy to be analysed	
2.1	<p>Is this a new policy (or decision) or a change to an existing policy, practice or project?</p> <p>No</p>
2.2	<p>Describe the main aims, objectives and purpose of the policy (or decision):</p> <p>To update the executive briefing members on why an Air Quality Action Plan is required and update them on the ongoing public consultation.</p> <p>What outcome(s) are you hoping to achieve (ie decommissioning or commissioning a service)?</p> <p>Members to endorse the adoption of the AQAP.</p>
2.3	<p>Does or will the policy or decision affect:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • service users • employees

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the wider community or groups of people, particularly where there are areas of known inequalities? <p>No</p> <p>Will the policy or decision influence how organisations operate?</p> <p>No</p>
2.4	<p>Will the policy or decision involve substantial changes in resources?</p> <p>No</p>
2.5	<p>Is this policy or decision associated with any of the Council's other policies and how, if applicable, does the proposed policy support corporate outcomes?</p> <p>The AQAP provides a direct positive contribution to the stated Council Objectives.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduce our Carbon Footprint across the district and within our council. Ensure the residents have the opportunity to lead healthy and fulfilling lives.

Section 3: Evidence/data about the user population and consultation¹

As a minimum you must consider what is known about the population likely to be affected which will support your understanding of the impact of the policy, eg service uptake/usage, customer satisfaction surveys, staffing data, performance data, research information (national, regional and local data sources).

3.1	<p>What does the information tell you about those groups identified?</p> <p>The current position affects the District as a whole.</p>
3.2	<p>Have you consulted or involved those groups that are likely to be affected by the policy or decision you want to implement? If so, what were their views and how have their views influenced your decision?</p> <p>The consultation was District wide. A summary of the consultation responses is provided in section 9 through 17 of this document.</p>
3.3	<p>If you have not consulted or engaged with communities that are likely to be affected by the policy or decision, give details about when you intend to carry out consultation or provide reasons for why you feel this is not necessary:</p>

	N/A
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Section 4: Impact of policy or decision

Use this section to assess any potential impact on equality groups based on what you now know.

Description of impact	Nature of impact Positive, neutral, adverse (explain why)	Extent of impact Low, medium, high (use L, M or H)
Age	Positive, will contribute to improved health outcomes across the district and within known areas of deprivation. Especially the young and elderly who are most impacted by poor air quality.	M
Disability	Positive, will contribute to improved health outcomes across the district and within known areas of deprivation, specifically those with respiratory conditions but not exhaustively.	M
Gender	Neutral	L
Gender reassignment	Neutral	L
Marriage/civil partnership	Neutral	L
Pregnancy/maternity	Positive, will contribute to improved health outcomes.	L
Race	Neutral	L
Religion/belief	Neutral	L
Sexual orientation	Neutral	L

Section 5: Conclusion

		Tick Yes/No as appropriate	
5.1	Does the EqIA in	No X	

	Section 4 indicate that the policy or decision would have a medium or high adverse impact on one or more equality groups?	No	If 'YES' , use the action plan at Section 6 to describe the adverse impacts and what mitigating actions you could put in place.
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Section 6: Action plan to address and monitor adverse impacts

What are the potential adverse impacts?	What are the mitigating actions?	Date they will be achieved.
N/A	N/A	N/A

Section 7: Sign off

**I confirm that this initial analysis has been completed appropriately.
(A typed signature is sufficient.)**

Signature of Head of Service:

Date:

Signature of person completing the EqIA:

Date:

Advice

Keep your director informed of all equality & diversity issues. We recommend that you forward a copy of every EqIA you undertake to the director responsible for the service area. Retain a copy of this EqIA for your records. If this EqIA relates to a continuing project, ensure this document is kept under review and updated, eg after a consultation has been undertaken.