

## Wiltshire Council

### Cabinet

7 October 2014

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**Subject:** Wiltshire Air Quality Action Plan

**Cabinet member:** Councillor Keith Humphries, Public Health, Protection Services, Adult Care and Housing (exc strategic housing)

**Key Decision:** No

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#### **Executive Summary**

The profile of air quality and health has been rising, both nationally and locally. Consequently, Wiltshire has come a long way in recent years in working towards ways of improving and maintaining good air quality in the County. We have achieved a significant amount of progress under the auspices of the Air Quality Strategy and now need to carry forward this work in an Air Quality Action Plan.

The primary source of pollutants in the Wiltshire Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs) is produced by vehicle emissions. It is recognised that improving air quality in these specific locations is difficult due to the increased use and reliance on private motor vehicles. Finding solutions is, therefore, a challenge for us all to rise to. For action planning to realise its full potential it is important to work with local communities to generate and implement or influence local solutions.

Many different agencies, services and communities have contributed to the production of this Action Plan, as improvements to air quality can only be achieved by taking an integrated, collaborative approach.

The plan details 17 strategic actions which have been developed in conjunction with service areas such as spatial planning, transport and highways, green economy and public health. The implementation of this plan will work towards achieving the objective for nitrogen dioxide and small particulates. These actions share synergies with many other council policies and strategies notably the Local Transport plan and the emerging Core Strategy.

'Local' actions which are town specific to Bradford on Avon, Calne, Devizes, Marlborough, Salisbury and Westbury have been developed through community engagement. Through this new approach 'community air quality action plans' have been developed for each area with an AQMA. These are integral to the Action Plan but will remain as standalone documents to the Wiltshire AQAP in the appendices to enable them to be 'living' documents that can be amended and updated according to the Area Board's priorities.

## **Proposals**

Cabinet is asked:-

- a) to consider and approve the draft the Wiltshire Air Quality Action Plan (WAQAP) as attached prior to wider public consultation and
- b) to delegate authority to Maggie Rae, Corporate Director following consultation with Cllr Keith Humphries, Cabinet member for Public Health, Protection Services, Adult Care and Housing to approve the final version of the Action Plan for subsequent submission to Defra, in the event that no significant comments are received during the consultation process.

## **Reason for Proposal**

Under the Environment Act 1995 it is a legal requirement to prepare and consult on the Air Quality Action Plan. Cabinet is therefore asked to consider and approve the draft Plan for public consultation. To ensure the consultation is undertaken as wide as possible we would like Cabinet to be fully informed of the Wiltshire Air Quality Action Plan prior to it going out to public consultation and the statutory consultees. In the event that there are no significant comments received during the consultation process, Cabinet is also asked to delegate authority to the Consultant in Public Health to approve the final version of the Plan, for submission to Defra

**Maggie Rae**  
**Corporate Director**

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### **Purpose of Report**

1. To seek Cabinet's approval of the Wiltshire Air Quality Action Plan (WAQAP), prior to wider public consultation and subsequent submission to Defra. The WAQAP is attached as Appendix 1 to this report.

### **Relevance to the Council's Business Plan**

- 2.0 Wiltshire Council has recognised the importance of environmental factors on the health of its residents. The commitment to improving the environment for all residents is encapsulated within common strategic outcomes in the Council's Business Plan 2013 – 2017, the emerging Core Strategy, Health and Wellbeing Strategy, The Local Transport Plan and The Energy Change and Opportunity Strategy and the emerging Green Infrastructure Strategy.
- 2.1 The vision of Wiltshire Council; to create stronger and resilient communities underpins the WAQAP. The local Area Boards with AQMAs have provided the ideal platform for creating local community groups with an interest in improving air quality within their area.

### **Main Considerations for the Council**

3. The adoption of this WAQAP is a key to the Council working towards improving air quality in Wiltshire. This plan sets out the specific measures that Wiltshire Council intends to introduce in pursuit of the air quality objectives. The plan has been developed with local member and community involvement and contains timescales to indicate when the measures will be implemented. The plan contains 17 strategic, Wiltshire wide actions. The plan will also contain 6 individual community air quality action plans which are being developed by the community action plan groups. These will contain town/city specific actions. The progress on implementation of the WAQAP will be reported to Defra on an annual basis.

## Background

### 4.0 Air quality in Wiltshire

Wiltshire enjoys very good air quality in the vast majority of its town and villages. This is perhaps unsurprising given the rural nature of much of county. The areas of concern are very localised and only involve a handful of streets.

4.1 Monitoring of air pollution in Wiltshire has been ongoing for over ten years. The majority of monitoring sites meet the air quality standards and therefore can be considered to pose no risk to health.

4.2 A small number of specific locations have been identified where air quality falls below the required standards and further investigation or remediation is needed.

### 4.3 Health effects of air pollution

For someone who enjoys good health the levels of air pollution experienced in Wiltshire are unlikely to have any serious effects. However on the rare occasions when air pollution levels are high in some specific locations, some people (with existing health problems) may feel effects such as eye irritation and coughing.

4.4 In Wiltshire road transport is the main source of nitrogen dioxide and fine particulates. Table 1 shows the source of pollution and the health effects from these two pollutants.

Table 1

Pollutant	Source of pollution	Health effects
Nitrogen Dioxide (NO <sub>2</sub> )	Nitric oxides derived predominantly from motor vehicles but also from other combustion and power generation processes.	This gas irritates the airways of the lungs, increasing the symptoms of those suffering from lung disease.
Particles (PM <sub>10</sub> )	Wide range of natural and manmade sources such as: road traffic, combustion, brakes and tyres.  Agriculture and excavation.	Fine particles can be carried deep into the lungs where they can cause inflammation and worsening of heart and lung disease.

#### 4.5 **Exposure to air pollution**

Air pollution levels vary from area to area and from day to day. Levels of pollution are influenced by a number of factors such as: topography, local pollution sources and weather conditions.

Examples include:

<b>Higher pollution</b>	<b>Lower pollution</b>
Towns in valleys	Towns on hills
In summer, during sunny, still weather and in the winter, cold, still foggy weather	Windy or wet weather at any time of year
Busy roads with heavy traffic next to high buildings.	Rural areas away from major roads and factories

### **Safeguarding Implications**

5. There are no safeguarding implications associated with the WAQAP

### **Public Health Implications**

6. Air Quality has clear health implications and as such small particulates (PM<sub>10</sub>) is one of the indicators in the Public Health Outcomes Framework. Public Health and Public Protection are working together to improve air quality in Wiltshire through extensive work with the communities and joint projects such as the air quality website and 'Know and Respond' service to warn registered users of poor air quality and to provide health advice. Public Health are members of the community air quality action plan groups and have contributed towards the development of this WAQAP.

### **Environmental and Climate Change Considerations**

7. The WAQAP is a significant piece of work which will help protect the local environment in Wiltshire and have positive impacts environmentally and on climate change. Effective measures to mitigate and adapt to climate change provide clear opportunities to deliver benefits in other areas, for example environmental protection, public health, economic development, transport and resilient communities. The WAQAP impacts on a number of issues shared with the Green Economy Team such as reducing transport related emissions and links to spatial planning
- 7.1 Road traffic is one of the major sources of both greenhouse gas emissions and air pollution. Many of the solutions, including improving sustainable transport networks and green infrastructure, encouraging cycling and walking, and using low-emission vehicles, can help to reduce carbon emissions and to improve air quality. Therefore there are clear benefits to ensuring consistency between strategies and action plans on air quality and on climate change.

- 7.2 Although Carbon Dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) is not highlighted as one of the pollutants managed by the WAQAP, work to reduce CO<sub>2</sub> by reducing energy consumption will ultimately contribute towards improving air quality. The Green Economy Team are working with the community to reduce the county's carbon footprint. Identifying and developing linkages between the work of the Public Protection, Public Health, Sustainable Transport and Spatial Planning Teams will help to progress projects that can satisfy a number of different environmental objectives.

### **Equalities Impact of the Proposal**

8. Regard has been had to Wiltshire Council's policies on diversity and equality. The WAQAP is classed as being "low relevance" within the Corporate Equality Impact Assessment Framework. However the WAQAP will be applied having regard to legislative duties, council policy and other relevant officer Codes of Conduct.

### **Risk Assessment**

9. Wiltshire Council has a statutory duty under the Environment Act 1995 to produce an Air Quality Action Plan which is to be submitted to Defra. Failure to deliver an action plan and demonstrate the Council's actions in working towards improving air quality may result in intervention by Defra. There is also currently some discussion on the potential impact of the localism agenda on the European Union's ability to impose fines on national governments for ongoing breaches of air quality standards.

### **Risks that may arise if the proposed decision and related work is not taken**

10. A considerable amount of time has been spent working with local communities in generating local air quality action plans specific to their town and city. If the WAQAP is not approved the Council's reputation will be at risk and improvements to local air quality may not be realised.

### **Risks that may arise if the proposed decision is taken and actions that will be taken to manage these risks**

11. Local communities may not engage with the process and work of producing community generated air quality action plans in a focused way. To help reduce this risk the Area Boards have been made responsible for reporting annually on the progress of the community air quality action plan groups to Public Health and Public Protection Services which will then be reported on in the annual action plan progress report to Defra.

### **Financial Implications**

12. There are no direct additional budget requirements associated with the adoption of the WAQAP. Whilst some improvements to traffic related air quality can be delivered at little cost other infrastructure schemes may require significant capital investment. Funding and the delivery mechanism will be part of the Local Transport Plan 3 and will also include the

Highways Agency and the Emerging Core Strategy. Other funding will be sought through the planning regime including Section 106 agreements and CIL money.

### **Legal Implications**

13. It is a legal requirement for the Council to prepare and consult on an Air Quality Action Plan where AQMAs are in place. Adoption of the WAQAP will contribute to council achieving compliance with its duties under the Environment Act 1995 Part IV. There is a risk of legal challenge if the Action Plan is not adopted.

### **Options Considered**

14. As the duties under the Environment Act 1995 Part IV requires local authorities to produce an Air Quality Action Plan where AQMAs have been declared the council has no option but to write an Air Quality Action Plan and submit it to Defra.

### **Conclusions**

15. Wiltshire enjoys good air quality in most of its area. The few areas of poor air quality are all traffic related and it is recognised that tackling these areas is neither easy nor simple. It is only by working collaboratively and with local communities that progress be made.
- 15.1 The WAQAP identifies thematic links within the council, suggests improvements in the way air quality is addressed and includes a high level action plan to deliver these improvements.

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8<sup>th</sup> September 2014

### **Background Papers**

The following unpublished documents have been relied on in the preparation of this report:

None

### **Appendices**

Draft Air Quality Action Plan