

Wiltshire Council

Cabinet

8 October 2019

Subject: Wiltshire Air Quality Strategy

Cabinet Member: Cllr Laura Mayes Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care, Public Health and Public Protection

Key Decision: Key

Executive Summary

- I. Local authorities have a duty to monitor air quality within their areas having regard to national air quality objectives and standards and report this information to Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) annually.
- II. As part of the development of the revised Wiltshire Air Quality Strategy views and comments have previously been sought from the Environment Select Committee and the Health and Wellbeing Board.

Proposal(s)

It is recommended that the Cabinet:

- I. Notes the draft strategy, and
- II. Approves the strategy and refer to Council for final approval.

Reason for Proposal(s)

- I. The Environment Act 1995 Part IV places a duty on Wiltshire Council to monitor and achieve the Air Quality Objectives contained in the National Air Quality Strategy and regulations. The strategy contributes to discharging this duty and improving air quality in Wiltshire.
- II. To refresh the original Wiltshire strategy on how the council will work with other parties to improve air quality.

Executive Director: Alistair Cunningham OBE

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Purpose of Report

1. To seek the approval of Cabinet for the Air Quality Strategy prior to final approval by Council.

Relevance to the Council's Business Plan

2. The Wiltshire Council Business Plan 2017- 2027 sets out the vision to create strong communities, with priorities for growing the economy, strong communities and protecting the vulnerable. As part of strong communities the council recognises the need to work with community groups to build engagement and to work together to support a healthier population.

Background

3. The draft Air Quality Strategy was considered by Environment Select Committee at its meeting on 23 April 2019. Comments made by the Committee have been incorporated in to the attached draft. The Health and Wellbeing Board also reviewed the strategy on 23 May 2019.
4. Despite some limited improvements in national air quality the targets imposed by EU legislation have been missed and as a result the UK Government has been taken to the High Court on several occasions. In response to these legal challenges the Government published the Air Quality plan for nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) in UK (2017) in July. The plan was designed to reduce the impact of diesel vehicles and accelerate the move to cleaner transport, and resulted in additional funding being made available to a small number of local authorities to support their plans to tackle poor air quality. No financial support was given Wiltshire Council.
5. The existing Wiltshire Air Quality Strategy needs to be refreshed as it was originally published in 2011. In the first three months of 2019 a number of significant national publications relating to air quality were issued and these have been referred to in the revised strategy. These documents include a national Clean Air Strategy issued by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra), Outdoor air quality and health issued by the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE), and a Review of interventions

to improve outdoor air quality and public health published by Public Health England.

Main Considerations for the Council

6. 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 involve a small number of specific streets affected by road traffic.
7. Local authorities are required to review and assess local air quality in accordance with the statutory Local Air Quality Management guidance under Part IV of the Environment Act 1995. Specifically, local councils have a duty to review and assess the air quality in their area against specific pollutants focusing on locations where members of the public are likely to be exposed over the averaging period for the pollutant objectives. There are currently eight Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs) in Wiltshire where traffic related pollution levels exceed national standards. One in Bradford on Avon for NO₂ and PM₁₀ and solely for NO₂ in Calne, Devizes, Marlborough, Salisbury (3) and Westbury. Work has been ongoing with local air quality groups in the affected towns and reporting through the Area Boards to start to address the issues in these areas.
8. The Air Quality Strategy provides high level guidance to inform policy and direction across a range of council services with the aim of improving air quality and reducing NO₂ and PM₁₀ levels below the national trigger levels. Improvements in air quality are generally difficult to achieve as they rely on individuals, businesses and communities changing their travel behaviour. Given this, the strategy recognises that improving areas of poor air quality can only be achieved by working collaboratively across the council, and with local communities and other relevant organisations and agencies.
9. The Air Quality Strategy does not contain details of specific local actions, but these are included in the more detailed Air Quality Action Plan (AQAP) which provides further information and includes local community area action plans in relation to the eight Air Quality Management Areas within Wiltshire. The AQAP has been developed with local members and community involvement.
10. Cabinet is asked to approve the strategy and refer it to Council for final approval.

Overview and Scrutiny Engagement

11. The Environment Select Committee considered the draft Air Quality Strategy on 23 April 2019. The Committee supported the Strategy and discussed the challenge of improving air quality across Wiltshire. In order to be successful, the Committee felt that a holistic response is required where all sectors are committed and engaged in the process.

Safeguarding Implications

12. None

Public Health Implications

13. The issue of air pollution is a major public health concern, and poor air quality is recognised as the largest environmental risk to public health in the UK and results in an estimated 40,000 premature deaths a year. Work to improve traffic related air pollution would contribute to improving the health of the local population.

Procurement Implications

14. The procurement implications over the life of this strategy (i.e. up to 2024) include the replacement of the current contract for the supply and associated analysis of NO₂ diffusion tubes, and the contract for the maintenance of the air quality real-time monitors. Beyond 2024 developing technology may negate the requirement for such contracts but that is yet to be determined.

Equalities Impact of the Proposal

15. Improvements to local air quality will benefit all Wiltshire residents and visitors to the county including all segments of the public.

Environmental and Climate Change Considerations

16. The Air Quality Strategy forms part of the council's wider response to climate change and supports reductions in local air pollution levels.

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

17. If the strategy is not revised it will become more out of date and risks not delivering the desired improvements to air quality in the county.

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

18. Approving the new strategy will provide an up to date basis on which to tackle air quality issues on the county.

Financial Implications

19. The costs associated with production and publication of the Air Quality Strategy are met within the service budget. There may be an opportunity to lobby Defra for additional funding to deliver local improvements. Any future costs associated with the implementation of this strategy will be assessed by the relevant departments as and when necessary and form part of their budget proposals.

Legal Implications

20. Part IV of the Environment Act 1995 places a duty on the local authority to monitor air quality in its areas and report to Defra on an annual basis.
21. The Development of this up to date Strategy provides for a framework for future action to improve air quality within Wiltshire which permits flexible implementation within broad outlines.
22. It is consistent with national guidelines and will assist the Council to achieve its objective of improving the air quality within Wiltshire to help to better the environment and the health and well-being of all residents and visitors to its area.

Workforce Implications

23. Implementing the strategy will have staffing implications across a range of services including public protection, transport planning, community engagement and planning for delivering the relevant outcomes.

Options Considered

24. The Environment Act 1995 places a duty on the local authority to monitor air quality in its areas. Whilst producing an air quality strategy, on its own does not fulfil this statutory duty, it provides a focus to this work. The option not to update the existing strategy was considered, however this would have both reputational and service delivery consequences and would result in criticism of the council by Defra.

Conclusions

25. Approval of Cabinet is sought before the final strategy is placed before Council for adoption as a formal strategy of the Council to form part of the Budget and Policy framework.

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Appendices

Appendix 1 Air Quality Strategy for Wiltshire.

Background Papers

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

None