

## **Report of the Air Quality Scrutiny Task Group**

### **Purpose**

1. To present the conclusions and recommendations of the Air Quality Joint Scrutiny Task Group for endorsement.

### **Background**

2. The Environment Select Committee has held a longstanding interest in the development of the Council's Air Quality Strategy and considered drafts in the run up to its adoption in July 2010 and 2011 and November 2011. Wiltshire Council adopted its Air Quality Strategy in December 2011.
3. At its meeting on the 17 July 2012, it was agreed by the O&S Management Committee that air quality should be a part of its forward work programme as a legacy issue.
4. A report containing proposals as to how this could be achieved was presented at the meeting on 30 August 2012. This Task Group was established to undertake this work with the following terms of reference:
  - a) To review and scrutinise the implementation of the Air Quality strategic objectives and actions plan;
  - b) To scrutinise the effectiveness of Council Services working together holistically to ensure that respective service contributions are embedded within service delivery plans;
  - c) To jointly report to the Health and Environment Select Committees, from which membership of the Task Group has been sourced.

### **Methodology**

5. Due to some difficulty establishing membership and resourcing issues the Task Group began its work in February 2013. It met formally on two occasions and comprised the following membership:

Cllr Alan Hill (Chairman)  
Cllr Chris Cochrane  
Cllr Rosemary Brown  
Cllr David Jenkins  
Cllr Bill Roberts  
Cllr Nigel Carter

6. The intent of the Task Group was to scope the potential work to be done in order to provide background to any future task group established on the subject if accepted as a recommended legacy item by the new Council after May elections.
7. The Task Group met with Cllr Keith Humphries and Mandy Bradley, Head of Public Protection from Wiltshire Council as part of this scoping exercise.
8. The Task Group wish to express their gratitude to the witnesses who contributed their time to this initial work on the scrutiny review.

### **Air Quality in Wiltshire**

9. Air Quality is covered in the Wiltshire Core Strategy by Core Policy 55, with the aim of:

“Wiltshire Council working collaboratively will seek to maintain the good air quality in the county and strive to deliver improvements in areas where air quality fails national objectives in order to protect public health and the environment.”

This Policy is supported by documentation such as the Air Quality Supplementary Planning Guidance which is currently subject to public consultation.

10. Work has commenced on reviewing existing Air Quality Action Plans, and developing a new format for the Wiltshire-wide Air Quality Action Plan with a stronger community focus. Various areas have formed their own community working groups with a focus on Air Quality, called Air Quality Alliances.
11. DEFRA are looking to see that we are working towards an action plan and improvement in air quality. At this time, there is no delivery milestone requirement. However, DEFRA’s expectation is a detailed assessment undertaken every three years. Local air quality is deemed to be outside the direct control of the local councils, however, Wiltshire Council is required to show steps taken towards improvement. As yet, there is no legal obligation for us to achieve the objectives we set for ourselves.
12. There is a Health and Environment Group established by Frances Chinemana of the Public Health Team. The group is composed of the Health Protection Agency, Public Health, Public Protection Services, Environment Agency and the Local

Commissioning Board. This forum has been consulted on the Supplementary Planning Document for Air Quality.

13. Representatives from Public Protection and Public Health are meeting shortly with the Head of Spatial Planning with regard to Health Impact Assessments which may become a planning requirement, with implications for air quality and noise.
14. The monitoring equipment in Wiltshire is now over 10 years old and there is a need to consider its replacement as it comes towards the end of its operating life. The Task Group felt that an equipment management policy should be drawn up, assessing, inter alia: equipment performance trends, measurement sensitivity requirements and recent technology improvements.
15. The Task Group also received a report on school transport from Ruth Durrant.

### **Recommendations**

16. That the Task Group was impressed by the progress made on implementing the new Air Quality Strategy, and recommends:
  - a. Scrutiny of it remains in the Forward Work Plan for the new Council's Overview and Scrutiny function, subject to any comment from the inspector.
  - b. Oversight of the monitoring regime and the equipment be undertaken to ensure it is fit for purpose
  - c. The Task Group believes that, whilst Wiltshire Council is not legally obliged to improve air quality, even when it exceeds the Government optimum in a particular location, and there are no sanctions available if we do not, it is incumbent upon us as a responsible Authority to attempt to reduce the exceedances to below recommended levels.
  - d. That Air Quality Alliances review all the Council, school and business travel plans in their area.

### **Proposal**

17. The Committee is invited to endorse the recommendations of the Air Quality Task Group.

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### **Cllr Alan Hill – Chairman of the Air Quality Task Group**

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