

Title:	Air Quality Action Plan
Portfolio Holder:	Cllr Cox - Deputy Leader
Reporting Officer:	John Carter - Environmental Health Manager
Key Decision:	Yes

Purpose

This report informs the Cabinet on the options considered in the Air Quality Action Plan (AQAP), and on its recommendations, and seeks approval of the AQAP prior to its publication. A copy of the AQAP is attached as Appendix 1, and is available to all members in the members' room.

Background

Whilst the production of the Air Quality Action Plan is a District Council responsibility, the responsibility for delivery rests with Wiltshire County Council. As the Highway Authority it has the primary role for the delivery of the required improvements, as the Action Plan relates to traffic generated pollution.

Cabinet approved the draft AQAP covering the Council's two Air Quality Management Areas in Bradford on Avon and Westbury at its meeting on 30 March 2005. The draft plan was then submitted to Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) on 31 March for feedback.

DEFRA commented on the draft and stated that the plan was generally well structured and provided a reasonable level of detail. It suggested further consideration be given to a number of aspects including clearer linkages to the County Council's Local Transport Plan, whether funding has been secured for any proposals, which measures will be taken forward and whether the air quality objectives are likely to be met.

The last round of public consultation ended on 15 July. Considerable work has been carried out to develop the final version of the Action Plan for publication at the end of September, and the consultation feedback has been helpful in developing the Action Plan.

Main Issues

The AQAP assesses potential solutions to the traffic related air pollution in the towns of Bradford on Avon and Westbury.

Bradford on Avon

Since the publication of the draft plan more detailed computer modelling work was carried out by Capita Symonds, the consultants engaged by Wiltshire County Council. A technical meeting was also held between Capita Symonds and a local air pollution expert to agree some common ground.

Further detailed public consultation was carried out during July. A public information leaflet and questionnaire were produced and delivered to local

residents and businesses, and an exhibition was held in Bradford on Avon library, with staff available on specific days to discuss local concerns. This was supported by a press release, an article in West Wilts Matters and posters in the area. 274 questionnaires were returned representing 603 individuals, and a further 54 letters from interested parties were also received.

Modelling and validation work confirmed that the UK target for air quality would be exceeded at 4 residential properties in Masons Lane in 2010. We have looked at targeted amelioration measures at these four premises but these have been rejected by DEFRA. DEFRA has also confirmed that doing nothing and relying solely on improving engine technology is not an acceptable option for the town.

Ten possible options were identified by the consultants and these were assessed as listed below.

Option	Description	Would it fully meet objectives	Would it partially meet * objectives	Could it be delivered by 2010?	Is it a realistic technical solution?
1	Do Nothing	No	No	N/A	Not Acceptable
2	Soft Options (i.e. car sharing and improved public transport)	No	Yes	Yes	Partial
3	Congestion Charging	Yes		No	N/A
4	Low Emission Zone	No	Yes	Yes	Insufficient benefit
5	Sign Alternative Routes	No	Yes	Yes	Partial
6	BOA Relief Road	Yes		No	N/A
7	A46/A36 Link	No	Yes	No	N/A
8	Traffic Management	Yes		Yes	Yes
9	Enforce On Street Parking	No	Yes	Yes	Insufficient benefit
10	Demand Management / Town Centre Enhancement	No	Yes	Yes	Partial

* The above estimates of impact are based on currently available data.

Traffic management involves the introduction of a one way system in the town, but does not reduce the numbers of vehicles using the town.

Demand management is a system to actively manage the traffic capacity going through the town. This involves restricting through flow of vehicles and diverting

some through traffic away from the town centre. It can be achieved using traffic signals and intelligent traffic monitoring to ensure that there is no unacceptable queuing taking place in the susceptible air quality areas, and re-routing traffic away from the town centre in busy periods. It also includes introducing pedestrian improvements. A demand management system would need to be carefully considered and designed, and requires detailed analysis and consultation.

Based on this analysis only three of the options can be delivered by 2010 and would significantly reduce air pollution. These are:

- i) A combination of soft measures (2) together with the demand management/town centre enhancement option (10). This scenario would fully meet the air quality objectives.
- ii) A combination of soft measures (2), parking enforcement (9) and signing of alternative routes (5) would go nearly half way towards meeting the objectives
- iii) The Traffic Management option (8) put forward in principle to the recent consultation. This would fully meet the air quality objectives.

The pros and cons of these are summarised below and are appraised fully in the final action plan.

'Solutions'	Will it meet the target?	Can its delivery and success be guaranteed?
i) Demand Management + Town Centre Enhancement	Yes in combination with soft measures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Should present a credible way forward with real community benefits and support • May cause adverse reactions from those adversely affected (residents living along other routes)
ii) Combination of Measures	Approx. 50%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concrete evidence of significant success of soft measures at a town wide level is difficult to find. • More analysis needed of possible effects of signing and parking enforcement • Success uncertain
iii) Traffic management	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Significant community opposition exists • Preliminary appraisal of issues, including road safety, noise, vibration accessibility etc., concludes that doing nothing is the better option • Promoting a less than optimum option goes contrary to the authorities' 'duty of care' • May prove impossible to deliver

The demand management and town centre enhancement option (i) for Bradford on Avon is recommended in the AQAP. The delivery of this option is dependant on Local Transport Plan funding and other considerations. The options are listed in priority order in the AQAP. It also recommends investigation into decriminalised parking enforcement in the town.

Westbury

The situation in Westbury is more straightforward due to the established proposal for a relief road. Following public consultation in the town three options were identified. These are:

- i) A relief road
- ii) Soft measures (such as improved public transport and car share schemes)
- iii) Leave the existing road network (do nothing). The air pollution levels in Westbury will fall below the targets by 2010 with improvements in engine technology.

The preferred option for Westbury is the relief road scheme, the planning application for which was submitted in April this year.

The way forward

There was considerable interest and some criticism, particularly from Bradford on Avon residents, following the publication of the draft action plan earlier this year. As a result a joint communications plan with Wiltshire County Council will be developed to include information sheets, briefings for all local members, town, district and county, timescales and contact points.

Following consideration by Cabinet the Action Plan will then be submitted to DEFRA by the end of September.

Further lobbying of Government is planned to put the case for funding the road transport improvements highlighted in the Action Plan.

Wiltshire County Council will be required to produce detailed workplans from the priorities identified in the Action Plan to assist in bidding for funding via the Local Transport Plan (LTP) process.

Further detailed work is required once the Action Plan has been published to move the projects forward, and to monitor implementation and enforcement. This work will largely be down to the County Council as the highway authority, and also more consultation work will be needed to ensure any solutions are deliverable. The council is required to continue monitoring air quality to assess improvements being made.

Financial Implications

The majority of the solutions are the responsibility of Wiltshire County Council as Highways Authority. The funding of these will be through the County Council's LTP2 submission, which will receive detailed capital bids for funding next year.

Legal Implications

There are no legal implications.

Summary of options

Bradford on Avon – The preferred option is a demand management system and town centre enhancement. Detailed work will need to be carried out to take this option forward. The relief road option cannot deliver the required improvements by 2010 and has therefore been rejected.

Westbury – The preferred option is the relief road. Whilst the planning application has been submitted, no decision has been made. Current improvements in engine technology will deliver the air quality standards in the town by 2010.

Recommendation

Cabinet is recommended to:

- Note this report
- Approve the Air Quality Action Plan

Human Rights

There are no human rights implications.

Background Papers

Air quality management area files in Room GC1.

Information is also available on the Council website at the following address
http://www.westwiltshire.gov.uk/Environmental_Health/Environmental_Protection/Air_Quality/index.php

Plain English

Statement of reason for key decision	This is a key decision as it implements part of the Council's Air Quality Strategy and because of the potential impact on Bradford on Avon and Westbury.
Options considered and rejected	Detailed options for both towns are detailed in the Air Quality Action Plan, and these have been the subject of public consultation.
Date of implementation (not less than five days after date of decision)	5 October 2005