

CABINET
26 January 2023

AIR QUALITY ACTION PLAN 2023 - 2028

1. Summary

- 1.1 To report recent air quality findings within the Borough and to adopt the Air Quality Action Plan.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That the air quality findings, both historic and recent monitoring data available for NO₂ and PM₁₀, at Appendix A to the report, be noted.
- 2.2 That Air Quality Action Plan at Appendix A to the report, be adopted.

3. Background and Discussion

- 3.1. Air pollution is now widely recognised as a life limiting environmental factor. It is estimated that between 28,000 and 36,000 early deaths are attributable to air pollution each year in the UK. Public Health England estimates that by 2035 the health and social care costs of air pollution in England could reach £5.3 billion.

- 3.2. A local authority (LA) is required to assess its area for exceedances of specific pollutants as defined in law. Where air quality is found (through monitoring or modelling) to exceed the required legal levels, a LA is then is required to “declare” an Air Quality Management Area (“AQMA”) for the geographical area affected by a specific pollutant or pollutants.

- 3.3. The Council currently has three AQMAs within the Borough:

- AQMA 1: A282 Tunnel Approach, declared for annual mean NO₂ and 24-hour PM₁₀ mean – covering the approach road to the Dartford Crossing which is flanked at several points by residential properties;
- AQMA 2: London Road AQMA, declared for annual mean NO₂ – covering the length of London Road (A226) which runs from Swanscombe at the borough boundary to where London Road crosses the A282; and
- AQMA 3: Dartford Town Centre and Approach Roads, declared for annual mean NO₂ – covering the arterial road links leading into, and surrounding Dartford Town Centre.

- 3.4. In 2021, the Council monitored air quality using 2 Automatic Monitoring Stations (Town Centre and St Clements Roundabout) and a network of passive diffusion tubes sited at 52 locations throughout the borough.

- 3.5. The automatic air quality monitoring station at Bean was closed in December 2020 and will be reinstalled to the south of the A2. The particulate monitor will be replaced with a unit capable of monitoring both PM₁₀ and PM_{2.5}.

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- 3.6. DEFRA requires the Council to analyse and publish its air quality monitoring data on an annual basis. Each published report details the monitoring results from the preceding year (i.e. the 2022 report contains data up to 2021).
- 3.7. Before data can be published, it must be validated and then bias adjusted (corrected in accordance with real time monitoring data). Data for 2022 is not yet available.
- 3.8. Monitored levels of NO₂ have decreased at the majority of sites across the borough. Only 2 out of the 52 monitoring sites breached the annual objective level, all of these are already within the declared AQMAs.
- 3.9. The diffusion tube monitoring location with the highest recorded value in 2021 was DA43 Overy Liberty which recorded a value of 48.1 µg/m³.
- 3.10. Monitored levels of PM₁₀ remained below the objective levels at all monitoring sites within the borough.
- 3.11. Whilst improvement in levels of air pollution have been seen across the borough in the last ten years, the administration has identified pollution levels and air quality as priorities for the Council and an essential component of its intention to create cleaner and greener places to live and work. A new air quality action plan is therefore required to set out new measures to seek further improvements.
- 3.12. AQAPs are intended to provide a basis for medium to long-term interventions. Whilst the current plans produced in 2001 and 2009 have served the borough well, many of the measures highlighted in the plans have now been carried out. It would be sensible to revisit and update the plans so that local air quality issues continue to be challenged and addressed.
- 3.13. The Council has engaged the services of a specialist Environmental Consultant, Bureau Veritas, to produce a new AQAP.
- 3.14. The developed actions within the AQAP fall under five broad topics:
 - Priority 1: Public Health and Wellbeing;
 - Priority 2: Transport;
 - Priority 3: Air Quality Partnerships;
 - Priority 4: Planning and Infrastructure;
 - Priority 5: Policy
- 3.15. A Draft of this action plan was presented to Cabinet in May 2022 where it was agreed that a consultation could be carried out.
- 3.16. In developing/updating this AQAP, the Council has worked with other LAs, agencies and the local community to improve local air quality with a public consultation on the draft AQAP was completed in summer 2022 via an online questionnaire. The questionnaire consisted of a number of questions relating to air quality within Dartford across a number of topics.

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- 3.17. There were 27 responses received to the public consultation of the draft AQAP. A key output from the consultation was the lack of awareness of the current AQMAs within Dartford, and therefore potentially the wider impacts of air quality across the borough. This is an important identification as it shows that as a LA, the Council must develop a number of measures based around sharing information and education.
- 3.18. A common theme in the responses received was the identification of the Dartford Crossing, the A282, as the principal source of vehicle emissions within Dartford. The health and well-being of residents living close to the A282 was continually challenged when suggestions were made with regard to measures. The Council is committed to working with NH, KCC and surrounding LAs to ensure that any including the Lower Thames Crossing, are assessed in terms of air quality and all other environmental aspects.
- 3.19. An additional recurring theme was relating to cycle; lack of promotion, limited infrastructure and unsafe routes. Active travel, including both walking and cycling, is at the core of this AQAP being present in Priority 1 and Priority 2. A number of measures relating to active travel are to be implemented to enhance the availability of walking and cycling routes within Dartford. Not only will this have benefits in terms of air quality, but it will also have a number of additional benefits such as increased fitness and well-being.
- 3.20. The questions contained within the consultation, and an analysis of the consultation responses are presented in Appendix C of the Action Plan.

4. Relationship to the Corporate Plan

5.

The report links into:

- Economic prosperity ED4
- Environment and Sustainability ET 1
- A Council performing Strongly PS 1 and PS 2

6. Financial, legal, staffing and other implications and risk assessments*

Financial Implications	None
Legal Implications	<p>The Council has a legal obligation to develop and deliver an Air Quality Action Plan, which identifies appropriate measures to improve Air Quality within an AQMA.</p> <p>Where a proposed development is likely to impact upon air quality within an AQMA, there may be enhanced grounds to require mitigation or health protection measures from the developer.</p> <p>The Council also has a legal duty to report air quality monitoring data on an annual basis to DEFRA within an Air Quality Status Report.</p>

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Climate Impact Assessment	There is an intrinsic link between measures which seek to improve local air quality and those which can help to mitigate climate change. Environmental benefits that are achieved through schemes to reduce use of private vehicles and which encourage the use of public transport or active travel help reduce both NO ₂ and CO ₂ emissions and can therefore have a significant influence on the Council's commitment to tackling climate change.
Staffing Implications	None
Administrative Implications	None
Risk Assessment	<p>Air Quality Action Plans ultimately provide the mechanism by which local authorities, in collaboration with national agencies and others, will state their intentions for working towards the air quality objectives in order to protect and improve the health of our residents and environment.</p> <p>The Environment Act 1995 places an obligation on a local authority to produce an Air Quality Action Plan where exceedance of National Air Quality standards are not met.</p> <p>Section 85 of the Act contains reserve powers of the Secretary of State to issue a direction compelling the Local Authority to fulfil its duties under the Act.</p>

6. Details of Exempt Information Category

Not applicable

7. Appendices

Appendix A – Air Quality Action Plan
Appendix B – Annual Status Report 2022

BACKGROUND PAPERS

<u>Documents consulted</u>	<u>Date / File Ref</u>	<u>Report Author</u>	<u>Section and Directorate</u>	<u>Exempt Information Category</u>
Air Quality Action Plan		Bureau Veritas		N/A
Annual Status Report 2022		James Fox (01322) 343250	Environmental Health	