



Residents' & Environmental Services Policy Overview & Scrutiny Committee Review Scoping Report

Revision of the Air Quality Action Plan for the London Borough of Hillingdon

1. REVIEW OBJECTIVES

Aim and Background to review

The review seeks to make Members aware of the extent of air pollution in Hillingdon, the way that the Council has managed air quality since 2004 and to assist in the development of a revised Air Quality Action Plan (AQAP), as required by the Mayor of London.

In Hillingdon, as in the majority of London Boroughs, the national air quality standard for the pollutant, nitrogen dioxide, is exceeded across areas of the Borough, most notably in the south around Heathrow Airport and also in association with the major road networks such as the M4, the A312, the A40 and the A4 and on busy parts of the Borough road network which pass through the Borough's towns.

Poor air quality has been described as the largest environmental risk to public health in the UK, known to have more severe effects on vulnerable groups, for example the

PART I – MEMBERS, PUBLIC AND PRESS

DRAFT

elderly, children and people already suffering from poor health such as respiratory disease. (para 3, page, DEFRA Air Quality Plan, 2017).

In Hillingdon, the public health team has undertaken an assessment which highlights that respiratory diseases are the third highest cause of death in Hillingdon and that air pollution is a risk factor which has been linked to 1,100 life years lost due to aspects such as exacerbations of asthma and Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD) leading to emergency admissions to hospital. The health effects of air pollution are distributed unequally across the population with the heaviest burden borne by those with the greatest vulnerability and/or exposure. The elderly, children and those with cardiovascular and/or respiratory disease are at greater risk from the health effects of air pollution.

The development of the AQAP will ensure that improvements to health form an important objective in terms of the outcomes of the actions to be included. It is hoped that Members will develop suitable recommendations to Cabinet around the development of the revised Air Quality Action Plan for the Borough.

Terms of Reference

1. To understand the Council's responsibilities on air quality, examine how air quality in Hillingdon has been managed by the Council since 2004, why expected improvements are not as large as predicted and what is now required with the new Mayor of London air quality regime in terms of reviewing the AQAP;
2. To consider the options available for reducing pollution, including actions that can be taken directly by the Council, and identify the best means by which the Council can influence other organisations whose activities detrimentally impact on the air quality in Hillingdon.
3. In terms of the Council, examine the interactions that will be necessary between departments in order to bring about improvements in pollution levels and make a positive contribution to securing improvements to health.
4. To consider how the Council should prioritise air quality improvements, for example, Air Quality Focus Areas, on Borough-wide initiatives, directed towards at-risk/vulnerable groups.
5. To look at measures to best inform residents and local businesses in the Borough of the actions required to reduce air pollution.

PART I – MEMBERS, PUBLIC AND PRESS

DRAFT

6. To advise on the development of the Air Quality Action Plan before its submission to Cabinet for approval.

2. INFORMATION AND ANALYSIS

Key Information

Background

In 2003, following assessments of pollution as required in the legislation set by the Environment Act, the Council declared an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) for the pollutant nitrogen dioxide. The AQMA boundary was chosen to ensure it covered all the areas that had been predicted to have levels of pollution above the recognised health limit for nitrogen dioxide when measured as a yearly average. The AQMA covers approx the bottom two thirds of the Borough (**see Appendix 1**)

Following on from this declaration, in 2004, an Air Quality Action Plan (AQAP) was developed which looked at measures that could be taken to improve air quality. The Plan recognised that this would require input and actions from a range of sources including the Council itself, the residents, businesses and employees in the Borough plus action from other organisations and businesses whose operations influence the levels of pollution, but over which the Council has no direct control.

The Plan was divided into seven packages which reflected the sources of pollution which needed to be tackled in order to bring about reductions in pollution

- Switching to cleaner transport modes;
- Tackling through traffic
- Promotion of cleaner vehicle technology
- Measures specific to Heathrow
- Measures concerning local businesses and industry
- Improvements through the planning system
- Working with regional and central government

In accordance with the legislative requirements, the Borough has continued to produce annual air quality progress reports for submission to DEFRA. These include an update of the air quality monitoring carried out in the Borough and an update on the actions taken to address air quality. All of this information is publicly available.

Progress to date

Many inroads have been made in terms of measures that have been put in place to improve air quality. The Mayor of London was one of the first regional powers to

PART I – MEMBERS, PUBLIC AND PRESS

DRAFT

declare a Low Emission Zone across the whole of London which has restricted access to polluting lorries, buses and coaches; there is published best practice guidance for reducing emissions from large construction sites; technical guidance for assessing potential pollution impacts from new developments and improvements have been made in terms of promoting the use of cleaner technologies in buses, lorries, taxis and cars, including the installation of plug in electric charging points across London.

In Hillingdon, the implementation of measures, via the Air Quality Action Plan, has influenced actions across the Council. For example, all schools in the Borough now have travel plans; there are more dedicated cycle and walking paths; new developments are required to produce air quality assessments and include mitigation to reduce their impact on pollution; residents and people working in the borough are able to sign up to a free service, AirText, which alerts users to when a pollution episode is predicted to allow them to take appropriate action; pilot projects have been undertaken in regards to the use of green infrastructure to protect vulnerable receptors from pollution, and there is now Borough-wide enforcement against idling vehicles.

However, despite continued actions by regional and local government over the years, the air quality levels in certain areas still remain above the recommended limits.

The current situation

An assumption of a dramatic reduction in emissions from road vehicles is something the Government has relied upon for a number of years in terms of being the solution to the pollution problem. In reality this has not happened. Data from air quality monitoring stations, confirmed by those within Hillingdon, show that over the more recent years the pollution levels have remained more or less static and indicate little signs of a dramatic reduction. **See Appendix 2.**

Evidence from the increased use of diesel vehicles, along with the "Dieselgate Scandal" in regard to falsification of the actual emissions being emitted by diesel vehicles, has been given as one of the major causes for the lack of improvement of air pollution in urban areas.

New pollution information

The Mayor of London has provided updated pollution information for each London Borough. This information includes a breakdown of the sources of pollution. For Hillingdon this demonstrates that road transport, airport-related emissions, industrial emissions and domestic and commercial heating all contribute to the pollution levels found in the borough. **See Appendix 3 for breakdown**

PART I – MEMBERS, PUBLIC AND PRESS

DRAFT

In addition to this information the Borough has been provided with pollution maps. These updated maps indicate the same distribution of pollution as that for the original Action Plan in 2004 in that the higher levels are found to the south of the borough, with Heathrow airport an easily identifiable pollution hotspot. The operation of the road network through the Borough such as the A40, the A312, M4, A4, Uxbridge Road, also contribute to the pollution levels and congested high streets and road junctions add to the local levels of pollution.

In addition the GLA has introduced a number of Air Quality Focus Areas where action should be prioritised. A Focus Area is defined as being where there are higher levels of pollution alongside a greater number of people exposed. **(see Appendix 4 for map of nitrogen dioxide and Focus Areas)**

Review of the Air Quality Action Plan

Using the updated pollution information, the GLA expects each borough to take the opportunity to review their AQAPs. The Boroughs are required to consider the following six areas for taking action:

- Emissions from developments and buildings
- Public health and awareness raising
- Delivery servicing and freight
- Borough fleet actions
- Localised solutions
- Cleaner transport

Whilst these areas are similar to the packages outlined in the Borough's original action plan, the Borough is impacted by a number of sources outside its direct control, which detrimentally impact on the air quality in the Borough. This will require the consideration of additional areas for inclusion, such as specific liaison with Heathrow Airport and with the Mayor of London, to ensure measures to improve air quality within Hillingdon are a priority for these organisations. In addition the Borough is impacted by a number of decisions taken by national Government such as hard shoulder running on the M4, expansion of Heathrow Airport, the construction of High Speed 2. The Action Plan will need to include a mechanism by which the Council's concerns can be brought to the attention of national Government.

PART I – MEMBERS, PUBLIC AND PRESS

DRAFT

Responsibilities

In line with the new London local air quality management guidance the action plan is required to be signed off by the Directors' responsible in each Borough for Public Health and for Transport before it is submitted for Cabinet approval. In recognition of the importance the Council attaches to the issue, the review of the AQAP is also being scrutinised via the Health and Wellbeing Board to ensure air quality and health improvements are integrated in terms of their approach to bring about reductions in pollution.

Achieving air quality improvements will require commitment across the Council, across businesses and residents in the Borough and from the major stakeholders whose actions influence the pollution levels experienced in the Borough. Some of these actions can be achieved via the provision of information and guidance to allow an informed change in behaviour, others will require the enforcement of legislation to bring about reductions, others will need a co-ordinated approach with other stakeholders to bring about improvements.

3. EVIDENCE & ENQUIRY

Information on pollution levels, air quality monitoring and actions currently taken by the Council will be presented along with more detail on what the Mayor of London expects Boroughs to consider plus an overview of the challenges for the Borough such as Heathrow expansion, M4 widening and HS2 construction.

Witness testimony

Witnesses may be invited from:

Public health - to give an overview of the health issues within Hillingdon and what actions could be taken to bring about improvements to health, where/which groups should be prioritised;

AQ experts - to give detail on air pollution levels and what is predicted to happen, information on the sources of pollution, up to date information on measures that can reduce pollution;

Representative from Greater London Authority

Representatives from Council departments on actions, for example:

- **Planning** - overview of Council policy, what the planning system can achieve, what it can't achieve;

PART I – MEMBERS, PUBLIC AND PRESS

DRAFT

- **Transport** - overview of LIP priorities, Healthy Streets Initiative, working with schools, idling vehicles initiative, what issues the boroughs can't control;
- **Procurement** - reductions in energy use through council buildings and assets, improvements in emissions from council fleet, are there financial constraints;

Residents groups or individuals affected by poor air quality? - what are their concerns, what do they perceive as the problem, what do they perceive as the solution?

Lines of enquiry

What are the roles of different departments in the Council for improving air quality, and are there actions to be taken to ensure they work more closely together?

What actions could the Council itself undertake that would make a significant difference to air quality, recognising funding constraints.

How should the council work with other organisations (Heathrow, Transport for London, Highways England, Department for Transport etc.) to improve air quality? What should the council do if these bodies do not provide plans that sufficiently address the problem?

The GLA considers that actions should be initially prioritised in the Focus Areas, is there sufficient evidence to support this view? Is there sufficient evidence to support actions are taken borough-wide? Are there specific at risk groups that should be prioritised?

How should the Council engage with businesses and residents to raise the profile of air quality and provide sufficient information to allow them to bring about changes in behaviour which could aid reductions in pollution?

Emerging conclusions or themes for development

To be developed as the review progresses.

PART I – MEMBERS, PUBLIC AND PRESS

DRAFT

5. REVIEW PLANNING & ASSESSMENT

Proposed timeframe & milestones for the review up to Cabinet and beyond in terms of monitoring:

Meeting Date	Action	Purpose / Outcome
20 September 2017	Draft Scoping Report and introduction from officers	Information and analysis plus witness evidence from internal sources.
17 October 2017	1st Witness session	Evidence & enquiry - witness evidence from internal sources and others
21 November 2017	Witness Session	Evidence & enquiry - witness evidence
24 January 2017	Witness Session	Evidence & enquiry - witness evidence
28 February	Draft Final Report and suggested recommendations	Proposals – agree recommendations and final draft report

* Specific meetings can be shortened or extended to suit the review topic and needs of the Committee

Resource requirements

None.

Equalities impact

The review could examine whether there are specific areas of deprivation within the Borough where there are problems with air quality.

Appendices

1 AQMA

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DRAFT

- 2 Air quality monitoring graph
- 3 Breakdown of pollution sources
- 4 Pollution map and Focus Areas

PART I – MEMBERS, PUBLIC AND PRESS

Residents' and Environmental Services Policy Overview Committee – 20 September
2017