

Environmental Scrutiny Committee – 18th March 2013

Report of the Director of The Urban Environment

An update on Air Quality within Dudley Metropolitan Borough

Purpose of Report

- 1.1 This report is to provide members with an update on the current situation with respect to air quality within Dudley Metropolitan Borough. It addresses the following areas of work;
- a. Air Quality monitoring undertaken within Dudley Borough.
 - b. Air quality issues in specific areas of the Borough.
 - c. Air Quality Action Plan progress & monitoring.
 - d. Defra funded projects
 - e. Statutory Requirements for 2013.

Background

- 2.1 Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council has a statutory duty under the provisions of the Environment Act 1995 to review and assess air quality in its area. The latest edition of the UK National Air Quality Strategy (NAQS) published in 2007 identifies nine key pollutants which can adversely affect human health.
- 2.2 Since 1997, Dudley MBC has either monitored or modelled concentrations of all NAQS pollutants across the Borough. This work indicates that levels of nitrogen dioxide at certain locations within the Borough do not meet the government objectives but concentrations of all other pollutants covered by the NAQS are currently compliant. The Council continues to monitor concentrations of nitrogen dioxide and fine particulates to comply with its obligations under Local Air Quality Management (LAQM) requirements. Although compliant, fine particulate matter is still monitored for trend purposes as high concentrations of this pollutant have been scientifically linked to increased mortality rate.
- 2.3 Dudley MBC is legally required to declare one or more Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs) for those parts of the Borough in which the air quality objective is likely to be exceeded. Declaration of The Dudley Borough AQMA was completed in December 2007, amalgamating the former AQMAs of Brierley Hill and Sedgley.
- 2.4 Dudley MBC is legally required to produce an Air Quality Action Plan (AQAP). The Borough AQAP has an associated work programme to control air quality and where practicable reduce concentrations of pollutants. The Work programme is reviewed every year & updated accordingly. Progress with the Air Quality Action Plan is closely monitored and reported on a quarterly basis.

2.5 The AQAP examines all of the major issues which can influence air quality, including the highway network, land use planning, industrial & commercial emissions, and how DMBC can “lead by example”. The annual work programme utilised to implement the practical applications required by the AQAP to control air quality has 40 separate actions planned for 2012 / 13, 100% of the targets for the first 6 months of 2012 / 13 have been achieved by the end of September, they include;

- (i) A revised road marking layout has been introduced at the Dudley St / Vicar St junction in Sedgley to reduce the blocking effect caused by vehicles waiting to turn right into Vicar Street
- (ii) Increased provision of travel plans in private companies operating within Dudley Borough to exceed the 18% target
- (iii) The introduction of a Parking Supplementary Planning Document which requires the provision of electric vehicle charging points at new developments within the Borough
- (iv) An independent review of the waste collection fleet operated by the Council to identify fuel cost optimisation and to minimise emissions to air.

2.6 The Borough wide air quality monitoring programme will continue during 2013/ 14. The monitoring programme provides essential data to inform the ongoing review and assessment process. In particular monitoring continues at the following locations:

- (i) The air quality station at Burnt Tree Island will monitor air quality impacts of the retail development expansion at Town Gate Retail Park. This project is being funded via a Section 106 agreement with the developer (Tesco) to validate the results of their air quality assessment. The monitoring project is due for completion in 2013 / 14.
- (ii) Air quality monitoring continues at the road side site in High Street, Wordsley.
- (iii) The urban background air quality monitoring station located in the Members car park, off St James’s Road, Dudley, continues to provide essential background information. The unit is due to be re-located to the rear of 4 Ednam Road.
- (iv) The roadside station at Colley Gate, Cradley, continues to provide essential information on air quality in Windmill Hill
- (v) In addition, there are approximately 80 nitrogen dioxide diffusion tubes located at strategic locations throughout the Borough. These locations have been chosen to reflect new areas for consideration or to measure the effectiveness of actions being carried out as part of the Air Quality Action Plan.

2.7 Dudley MBC’s 2012 annual Air Quality Report was submitted to Defra in April 2012 and has been accepted. Ongoing exceedences of the annual mean objective for nitrogen dioxide were confirmed at a number of roadside locations throughout the Borough. The major source of pollution in these areas has been identified as road traffic.

- 2.8 It should be noted that the third year's air quality monitoring in Brierley Hill following the implementation of the Sustainable Access Network scheme has confirmed a significant reduction in nitrogen dioxide levels in the High Street. It is proposed to retain a small number of monitoring tubes in this area for evaluation of future pollution trends.
- 2.9 In 2010 Dudley and the 6 other West Midlands Metropolitan Authorities received a grant of £100,000 to initiate a Low Emission Strategy (LES) pilot programme. In 2011 Defra provided a further £120,000 to extend the boundaries of the LES programme and incorporate a West Midlands Low Emission Zone (LEZ) feasibility study. In 2012 Defra provided a further £150,000 to extend the LEZ study to examine The LES programme specifically examines the issues of common "planning for air quality" guidance, stimulating the uptake of low emissions technologies and strategies and establishing a sustainable procurement process. Dudley has taken a lead in the planning guidance project which is due for completion in the spring of 2013.
- 2.10 In addition to the Defra grants for the West Midlands, Dudley Council continues to utilise the £9,900 provided to fund a joint project to be undertaken by the Environmental Protection and Traffic and Road Safety Teams. The project will raise awareness of air quality issues in school with particular emphasis in reducing emissions associated with idling vehicles.
- 2.11 The Air Quality Action Plan is scheduled for review by 31st March 2014 it is also our ambition to produce a Dudley Air Quality Strategy to compliment the revised AQAP which clearly states the Council's position on air quality and climate change issues.
- 2.12 Air quality monitoring and the declaration of a whole Borough Air Quality Management Area and the subsequent Air Quality Action Plan are designed to help reduce concentrations of specific pollutants in air to within National Objectives. This will have a positive impact on the environment and the health of all people residing and working within the Borough.

Dudley's Air Quality action plan can be viewed on the Council's web pages via the link below.

<http://www.dudley.gov.uk/environment-planning/pollution-control/air-quality/air-quality-action-plan-consultation/>

Finance

- 3.1 Air Quality Monitoring work has to be funded from within existing budgets and from external grants as they become available. The financial implications of activities identified within Air Quality Action Plan will need to be funded on a case by case basis.

Law

- 4.1 Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council has a statutory duty under the provisions of Part IV of the Environment Act 1995 to review and assess air quality in its area.

Equality Impact

- 5.1 The proposals in this report do not impact on relevant groups or conflict with the Council's commitment to equality.

Recommendation

- 6.1 It is recommended that members,
- a) Note the progress made with air quality monitoring and compliance with the Air Quality Action Plan
 - b) Support continued monitoring in 2013 / 2014 together with continued work to reduce air pollution in accordance with the aims of the Air Quality Action Plan and in partnership with the other 6 West Midlands Metropolitan Authorities.



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List of Background Papers

Dudley's Air Quality Action Plan
The Environment Act 1995, Part iv
Air Quality Limit Values Regulations (as amended) 2001
Local Air Quality Management Guidance
Local Air Quality Management Policy Guidance
The United Kingdom National Air Quality Strategy
2012 Upgrading & Screening report to Defra