

**Select Committee on the Environment – 16<sup>th</sup> June 2011**

**Report of the Director of the Urban Environment**

**Progress with the Dudley MBC Air Quality Action plan.**

**Purpose of Report**

- 1.1 This report is to provide Select Committee Members with an update on progress with the Dudley MBC Air Quality Action Plan (AQAP) and to seek approval to take the Plan to Cabinet.

**Background**

- 2.1 The air quality in Dudley is generally good however there are some roadside locations across the borough where breaches of the annual mean nitrogen dioxide objective have been confirmed. The purpose of the Action Plan is to set out the actions the Council intend to take to help prevent further increases in air pollution and where practicable reduce concentrations of nitrogen dioxide to below National Objectives.
- 2.2 The draft Air Quality Action Plan was presented to Select Committee for the Environment in March 2010. Following the full internal and external consultation process approved by Select Committee the final draft AQAP was submitted to Defra for comments in April of this year. The action plan has been approved by Defra, the recently received reply is very supportive and includes the following statement;
- “Overall, it is clear that much work has gone into the production of this Action Plan. The Council should be commended for their robust approach in producing this report and are encouraged to provide similar detail in future progress reports and action plans”.***
- 2.3 **The full version of the Air Quality Action Plan approved by Defra and Action Plan Summary can be accessed via the hyper link below and a hard copy will be available in the Members room.**

**[www.dudley.gov.uk/airqualityconsultation](http://www.dudley.gov.uk/airqualityconsultation)**

- 2.4 The AQAP lists the actions which can be undertaken under the following headings;
- Road Network Improvements
  - Information & Education
  - Leading by Example

- Reducing Vehicle Emissions
- Improving Public Transport
- Land Use Planning Initiatives
- Industrial, Commercial & Domestic actions
- Encouraging changes in travel behaviour

2.5 Whilst compiling the AQAP and during the full consultation process officers have already been able to progress some of the actions contained within the plan. Examples of some of the actions currently being progressed are as follows;

- a) The air quality team has continued to identify and assist in prioritising road network improvements to reduce nitrogen dioxide concentrations at critical locations. Typical examples include the revised road layout in Netherton and the Burnt Tree scheme which is now nearing completion. Air quality monitoring is continuing in these locations to measure the associated air quality impacts and inform future revisions of the action plan.
- b) The publicity currently being funded by the Healthy Towns initiative is being used to promote good air quality, in particular the “alternative green corridors” aspect to the Healthy Towns Initiative which provides for additional footways, cycle paths and associated facilities for users.
- c) Collaborative work is being undertaken with Dudley Borough Schools on air quality issues. An educational resource has been designed in conjunction with teachers to disseminate results from the testing programme and the council website has been significantly developed to reinforce this area.
- d) Further development of the council website has also been undertaken to facilitate reporting of smoky vehicles and provide information on wood burning appliances or biomass boilers. Up to date air quality information is now directly available to the public via the online mapping system and links to the West Midlands regional air quality website
- e) The air quality team have been working with the Primary Care Trust to ensure that funding opportunities are maximised via the regional Local Transport Plan and Local Sustainable Transport funding. Many of the transport corridors identified in these initiatives include areas of poor air quality including Sedgley, Brierley Hill, Burnt Tree and Quarry Bank.
- f) The Environmental Protection Team provides ongoing support to the Development Control Process to ensure that air quality impacts of new development are minimised. A number of modifications to the Council’s Planning Obligations Supplementary Planning Document have been proposed to provide additional funding for air quality improvement actions including provision of charging points for electric vehicles.
- g) A feasibility study to address the use of a roadside emission testing concluded that it would not represent efficient use of resource at the present time and no further action is planned for this matter in the

foreseeable future.

- h) A feasibility study to examine the best ways of discouraging vehicles from idling has been undertaken. Typical examples include vehicles outside schools, taxi ranks and bus stops. The study concluded that legal enforcement would not provide a cost effective use of council resources. A number of alternative options including an awareness raising campaign, working closely with schools and bus/taxi service providers and developing the council's eco driving training course are now being progressed.
- i) Involvement in voluntary partnerships with key stakeholders to deliver enhanced bus and passenger services thereby reducing vehicle emissions and improving the public transport offering is continuing.
- j) A programme for seeking out new unidentified industrial installations has been initiated and this will enable more effective control of emissions from industry.
- k) A Defra grant has been utilised to relocate existing monitoring equipment to Wordsley High Street where it will be used to investigate exceedences of the short term nitrogen dioxide objective and the impact of installing urban transport control cameras at the junction with Lawnswood Road

2.6 There are still many further challenges to safeguarding good air quality which need to be addressed by the invoking the provisions of the Dudley AQAP in 2011 / 12 and beyond. Some of the more significant actions are listed below;

- a. Working to secure financial support for future actions and road schemes via central government, regional funding schemes and the planning system
- b. Identifying incentives to encourage the use of alternatively fuelled vehicles in areas of poor air quality, such as parking priority and the development of a public electric vehicle charging network
- c. Providing air quality information to support regional bids to improve rail freight capabilities and extend the WM metro
- d. Building relationships with partners to reduce emissions from HGVs, buses and coaches
- e. Supporting other council led initiatives including the Safer Routes to School programme, travel planning and further development of the cycling and walking infrastructure

2.7 The AQAP progress report to Committee in 2010 included the success of the Brierley Hill Sustainable Access Network (SAN) project and the funding for air quality improvements through the Tesco section 106 agreement. Further success has been the securing of a £100,000 grant from Defra by Dudley on behalf of the West Midlands to fund a Low Emissions Strategy Partnership project with other West Midlands Metropolitan Borough Councils

This will enable several specific aspects of the Air Quality Action Plan to be investigated and progressed. Dudley MBC is leading on the issue of a Supplementary Planning Document on air quality for the West Midlands group and work is already progressing well with this project. Further initiatives to be investigated include participation in discussions with Defra and the Freight Transport Association to reduce emissions from HGVs and using the procurement process to accelerate the uptake of cleaner delivery vehicles.

- 2.8 The work carried out on air quality monitoring and the declaration of a whole Borough Air Quality Management Area and a subsequent Air Quality Action Plan is designed to reduce concentrations of specific pollutants to within National Objectives. This will have a positive impact on the environment, the health of all people residing, working and visiting the Dudley Borough and assist with the long term regeneration of the Borough.

### **Finance**

- 3.1 Air Quality Monitoring work is funded from within existing budgets. There is no direct funding for the implementation of any part of the Air Quality Action Plan. The financial implications of activities identified within the Air Quality Action Plan will need to be confirmed and funding sources needed to deliver the plan explored as each action plan activity is developed, as was the case with the Defra Low Emissions Strategy grant for the West Midlands.

## **Law**

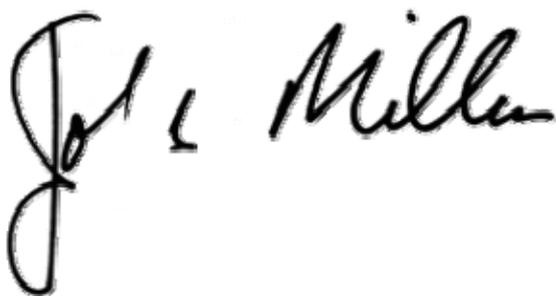
- 4.1 Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council has a statutory duty under the provisions of Part IV of the Environment Act 1995 to review and assess air quality in its area.
- 4.2 Dudley MBC is legally required to declare one or more Air Quality Management Areas (AQMA) for those parts of the Borough in which the national air quality objective is likely to be exceeded. Declaration of the whole borough AQMA was completed in 2007..
- 4.3 In response to the declaration of the Borough as an Air Quality Management Area an Air Quality Action Plan is legally required to be prepared which identifies the areas within the Borough where known air quality objectives are being or likely to be exceeded and proposes measures to address the exceedences. The proposed adoption of the AQAP in 2011 will address this duty.

## **Equality Impact**

- 5.1 The content of this report complies with the Council's Equal Opportunities Policy. There is no specific effect on children and young people.

## **Recommendation**

- 6.1 It is recommended that members note the progress made with developing the Air Quality Action Plan and the approval received from Defra.
- 6.2 Members are asked to support the proposal that the final version of the AQAP is now reported to Cabinet for adoption by Dudley MBC.



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### **List of Background Papers**

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