

		AGENDA ITEM 4
		PSEG/05/18
Committee:	Place Services and Economic Growth Scrutiny Committee	
Date:	22 February 2018	
<u>AIR QUALITY</u>		
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Background

At Full Council in December 2017 a review of air quality was proposed and 7 issues set out to be considered.

This paper addresses those issues.

The **Amended motion** was proposed by Councillor Simon Walsh and Seconded by Councillor Terry Cutmore

“This Council notes that the Place Services and Economic Growth Policy and Scrutiny Committee is undertaking a review of air quality issues and asks that Committee to consider the following suggestions and make appropriate recommendations to the Cabinet Member, as part of the review:

1. Adopt an overarching Council Air Quality Improvement Policy.
2. Ensure that services provided or commissioned by the Council are conducted with proper regard to their effects on air quality, and that contractors abide by the provisions of the overarching policy.
3. Phase out the payment of expenses to those driving the most polluting vehicles, and enhance cycle and car-sharing mileage provision
4. Encourage Her Majesty’s Government to institute a scrappage scheme for the most polluting private and commercial vehicles.
5. Ensure that the Council’s comments on any Local Plan require public transport infrastructure, modal shift, and electric vehicle facilities be a central part of that Plan.
6. Enter dialogue with Her Majesty’s Government and Local Planning Authorities to ensure that reduction of air pollution is properly considered in planning determination.
7. Support inter-urban and rural cycling and walking (including PROW) so as to provide safer off-road routes.”

Purpose of Report

To provide a brief overview of the air quality issues set out in the Motion above as a justification for recommending the Place Services and Economic Growth Policy and Scrutiny Committee set up a Task and Finish Group to further explore the air quality review.

Summary of Issues

Overview: Air pollution is the biggest environmental risk to health. Globally, nine out of ten people live in a city that does not comply with WHO air quality standards. Within the UK, poor outdoor air quality is linked to 50,000 deaths each year. The most vulnerable are children, the elderly, or those with pre-existing medical conditions (see Key Facts in Appendix A). The design of our urban and rural infrastructure, particularly road infrastructure, determines where air pollution is produced, and how it is dispersed. This is a multifactorial problem which requires a holistic solution.

Improving the air quality of Essex will meet our strategic aims and priorities as set out in the Organisational Strategy. It will meet the strategic aim of helping to create great places to live and work. In addition, it will also meet our strategic objectives of helping to secure sustainable development and protect the environment and also improving the health of the people in Essex.

Below the 7 issues are set out and each is briefly addressed.

1. [Adopt an overarching Council Air Quality Improvement Policy.](#)

London, Birmingham and other authorities have adopted air quality policies and have begun to review the issue.

An Air Quality policy will need to address many issues, for instance:

- Green Infrastructure and trees.
- County Wide Monitoring, including PM_{2.5}
- Low emission Schemes and Strategies
- Use of clean/alternatively fuelled vehicles
- Review of existing Travel Plans/ development on new Travel Plans
- Schools education programme
- Role of Section 106 funding
- Renewable energy
- Public Engagement

The development of an Air Quality policy will require all Service areas within the Council are engaged: Public Health, Finance, Procurement as well as Infrastructure and Environment. An Air Quality Improvement Policy would add support and complement current and developing Strategies such as Energy & Low Carbon, Sustainable Transport, Green Infrastructure and Public Health Strategies.

2. Ensure that services provided or commissioned by the Council are conducted with proper regard to their effects on air quality, and that contractors abide by the provisions of the overarching policy.

Currently Procurement and users of the Corporate finance system (TCS) ask suppliers (if the purchase is relevant) if they adhere to the industry standard environmental quality standards (ISO14001 etc. or similar), the Council has no specific air quality standards, as these are set by the district functions. Current contracts managed by Category Managers could be evaluated to baseline air quality consideration. A mechanism agreed by Procurement & TCS would need to be implemented to ensure all new contracts conform.

3. Phase out the payment of expenses to those driving the most polluting vehicles, and enhance cycle and car-sharing mileage provision.

ECC currently advise employees to question the need to travel and if it is required, we advise them to do so using public transport if possible. This is set out in “Making Sustainable Travel Decisions”.

We would need to liaise with colleagues in Corporate Operations to investigate whether it would be feasible to phase out expenses for the most polluting vehicles. We would need to define what is a “most polluting vehicle” and whether this is based on size or diesel fuel etc. Our current expenses policy is in line with Treasury guidance, we would need to investigate the opportunity to reduce expenses. We provide expenses for cycle mileage and car sharing and should consider enhancing these expenses to make them more attractive, potentially reducing car use for short journeys.

4. Encourage Her Majesty's Government to institute a scrappage scheme for the most polluting private and commercial vehicles.

Essex County Council supports the Government's plan for a targeted scrappage scheme. The Council has responded to this proposal (ECC formal response to UK Government – Air Quality Consultation June 2017). We are awaiting the Government's response to the consultation.

5. Ensure that the Council's comments on any Local Plan require public transport infrastructure, modal shift, and electric vehicle facilities be a central part of that Plan.

The Environment team and other Authority representatives are consultees on all partner's Local Plans – of which consideration to transport infrastructure, modal shift, and electric vehicle facilities is assessed. We also comment on the need for Green Infrastructure.

6. Enter dialogue with Her Majesty's Government and Local Planning Authorities to ensure that reduction of air pollution is properly considered in planning determination.

Air quality can be a material consideration in the planning process for development proposals, particularly if the application may:

- conflict with proposals in an Air Quality Action Plan;
- lead to a deterioration in air quality as a direct result of the proposal;
- increase human exposure in areas of existing poor air quality.

Local authorities have a legal duty to pursue the air quality objectives at all locations in the County. As a result, they may reject, or require amendments to proposals which are considered likely to result in a significant deterioration in air quality and/or which are likely to increase exposure in existing areas of poor air quality.

Furthermore, we have opportunity to engage with the Essex Planning Officers Association (EPOA) to ensure the Council's stance on Air Quality is robustly considered. As part of the Essex Air Consortium we also work with districts across Wider Essex to promote and co-ordinate improvements to air quality.

7. Support inter-urban and rural cycling and walking (including PROW) so as to provide safer off-road routes.'

The Sustainable Travel team and PROW team are fully engaged in this agenda. We also support cycling through our countywide and district cycling strategies. The emphasis on the strategies relate to health and reducing car use. There are no specific links to improving air quality but this could be considered. However the work we are now progressing with Garden communities is likely to have some major impacts on improving air quality as we strive for 60% sustainability from these developments, which will benefit the wider community and also support the wish to improve health.

Recommendation:

The Place Services Policy and Economic Growth Scrutiny Committee sets up a review looking at the air quality issues set out in the Motion above and this paper.

Appendix A: Key Poor Air Quality facts for the UK

Over 85% proportion of air quality zones in the UK (37 of 43) that did not meet EU nitrogen dioxide limits in 2016

2026 government's estimate of when all 43 zones in the UK will be compliant with EU nitrogen dioxide limits. 2010 original deadline for compliance with EU nitrogen dioxide limits

Under review Estimated mortality impact of nitrogen dioxide pollution 29,000
Estimated equivalent number of deaths caused by fine particulate matter in the UK in 2008

£20 billion Royal College of Physician's estimate of cost of the health impacts of air pollution to the UK in 2016

80% Estimated proportion of nitrogen oxides concentrations at the roadside due to road transport (national average)

13% Proportion of all fine particulate matter emissions in the UK due to road transport

£2.5 billion Potential spend between 2015 and 2020 on schemes with intended air quality benefits of which government's Joint Air Quality Unit directly oversees £0.3 billion

2018 Year in which government plans to publish a wider air quality strategy