



Leicester
City Council

WARDS AFFECTED
All

FORWARD TIMETABLE OF CONSULTATION AND MEETINGS:

Full Council

26th November 2015

Healthier Air for Leicester: Leicester's Air Quality Action Plan 2015-2026

Report of the Assistant City Mayor – Energy and Sustainability

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

To seek approval to adopt the 'Healthier Air for Leicester: Leicester's Air Quality Action Plan, (2015-2026) (See Appendix 1).

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

To adopt the 'Healthier Air for Leicester: Leicester's Air Quality Action Plan (2015-2026)'.

3. REPORT

3.1 Background

Poor air quality affects people's health and damages the environment. European and national guidelines set out the levels of pollutants in air that are considered acceptable. In Leicester the main pollutant of concern is nitrogen dioxide. The main source of the pollutant is road traffic, in particular diesel engines.

Like most other UK cities, Leicester currently exceeds the EU threshold level of $40\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ for nitrogen dioxide in a number of areas. These are predominantly areas where there are large volumes of traffic particularly along main roads into the city and in the city centre. Monitoring shows that levels of pollutants have decreased in the past few years but not all monitoring stations meet EU thresholds.

Defra projections have indicated that air quality in Leicester may reach the EU threshold level by 2020. Those projections are based on the improvement in lower emission vehicle technology and local schemes designed to improve air quality, including actions in the Air Quality Action Plan. The proposed ambitious air quality action plan ensures that we do not remain complacent in our efforts to improve the health of people in Leicester and reduce inequalities. It contains far reaching actions over the period to 2026 intended to significantly reduce air pollution to a level lower than we are required to achieve by law.

3.2 Development of the Air Quality Action Plan

The plan has been developed as a result of consultation with key stakeholders, full public consultation in compliance with statutory guidance, a review of the available evidence and the DEFRA funded LESTAir project. The LESTAir project analysed a range of potential transport related options that are likely to have the most beneficial impact on air quality, building upon what we have already been doing in Leicester. As a result we believe this action plan has been informed by the best available evidence and that is feasible and appropriate to Leicester.

The final plan sets out our ambitions and 16 actions under four themes. The themes are:

- Theme 1: Reducing Transport Emissions
- Theme 2: Promoting Sustainable Transport
- Theme 3: Improving Traffic Management
- Theme 4: Enhancing Planning and the Environment

Some of the actions will have a greater impact than others and we have indicated in the Plan the level of impact expected against each action. It is clear that any one action alone will not be enough to address air pollution. The Plan is also clear on the need to work with Government and our partners in order to achieve our overall aim.

3.3 Consultation

A twelve week statutory public consultation was undertaken between March and June this year. Extensive consultation took place through social media, local press, business and stakeholder focus groups, email and letters to business. Over 170 written responses, and notes of engagement meetings, have been received and reviewed. Details of the consultation can be found on the Leicester City Council website. The Plan was very well received with a great deal of support and suggestions for further actions to be included. A summary of the main consultation responses is available on the Leicester City Council website <http://www.leicester.gov.uk/your-council/policies-plans-and-strategies/environment-and-waste/air-quality>. Suggestions included the need to:

- Improve the public transport network and operation
- Improve our cycling infrastructure
- Improve the management of the highway network
- Ensure land use planning decisions encourage active travel / restricts the use of cars
- Active encouragement for businesses and residents to replace their vehicles with ultra-low emission vehicles
- Use of trees and plants to actively reduce air pollution levels
- Implement an Air Quality Awareness campaign
- Taxis to be included in the proposed Bus Low Emission Zone

DEFRA have advised that they find the proposed Plan clear, concise and generally follows guidance and concur that measures to reduce car diesel emissions should be prioritised. In addition DEFRA believe that overall partnership working in tackling air pollution in Leicester is excellent.

Details of the plan were presented to the September meeting of the Economic Development Transport and Tourism Scrutiny Committee with Public Health Scrutiny invited. The committee was supportive of the plan with a number of their recommendations incorporated into the final report.

4. FINANCIAL, LEGAL AND OTHER IMPLICATIONS

4.1. Financial Implications

No significant financial implications are expected to arise directly from this report and plan. Where specific actions do require funding (e.g. Connecting Leicester works or retrofitting busses), such funding is identified and approved in the usual manner.

Colin Sharpe, Head of Finance ext. 37 4081

4.2 Legal Implications

4.2.1 It is a legal requirement, under the 1995 Environment Act, for the City Council to produce an Air Quality Action Plan to address poor air quality and to improve health. The interventions proposed offer the best prospect of compliance with EU targets for NO₂ by 2020.

4.2.2 Failure to achieve the air quality targets nationally is a breach of EU law legislation which puts the UK government at risk of being fined if EU limit values are exceeded. There are discretionary powers in the Localism Act 2011 to require local authorities and public bodies to pay some or all of an EU financial sanction where the authority or body has caused or contributed to that sanction. The risk of a fine can be reduced by Leicester City Council by having in place an updated Air Quality Action Plan.

Katherine Jamieson

5. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

OTHER IMPLICATIONS	YES/NO	Paragraph References Within the Report
Equal Opportunities	YES	A large proportion of the city's deprived neighbourhoods are in poor air quality areas. The proposed action plan will enable the council to improve air quality for these areas, thereby improving equality of opportunity of local residents to cleaner air and its resulting benefits to their health and wellbeing - in keeping with one of the aims of the Public Sector Equality Duty. <i>Irene Kszyk, Corporate Equalities Lead, ext. 374147</i>
Policy	Yes	The Plan supports and is supported by Connecting Leicester, Leicester's Climate Change Action Plan and the Council's Local Transport Plan.
Sustainable and Environmental	Yes	As 18% of Leicester's city wide carbon footprint is attributable to road

		<p>traffic emissions there is an obvious overlap in the actions set out in the AQAP and those in Leicester's Sustainability Action Plan that is currently in development, as encouraging sustainable transport is a key issue on both agendas.</p> <p>Leicester City Council has the target of reducing both the city council carbon footprint and the citywide carbon footprint by 50% by 2025. The actions detailed in the report working on tackling air pollution in the city will have the co-benefit of reducing carbon emissions, therefore helping Leicester City Council achieve these targets.</p> <p><i>Louise Buckley, Senior Environmental Consultant, 37 2293</i></p>
Crime and Disorder	No	
Human Rights Act	No	
Elderly/People on Low Income	YES	<p>Older people are more likely to be affected by air pollution, perhaps due to generally weaker immune systems, or undiagnosed respiratory or cardiovascular health conditions. As people age, their bodies are less able to compensate for the effects of environmental hazards. Air pollution can aggravate heart disease and stroke, lung diseases such as chronic bronchitis (also called chronic obstructive pulmonary disease or COPD) and asthma. This report outlines plans and actions which seek to improve people's health and reduce premature deaths in Line with the Health and Wellbeing Strategy.</p> <p><i>Denise Steadman, Commissioning Manager, 37 2325</i></p> <p>Low income families and those from ethnic minority backgrounds are over-represented in housing situated close to the city centre. These families will be more likely to be affected by poor air quality as they do not have the</p>

		resources to seek housing outside of the area. The health outcomes for low income families, in Leicester, are already lower than in other areas of the country, particularly in relation to asthma and other respiratory conditions and long-term exposure to poor air quality will only exacerbate this. The action plan recognises this in the first aim to substantially improve people's health and reduce premature deaths by improving air quality. <i>Marie Galton, Project Manager (Anti-Poverty Initiative), 37 6341</i>
Corporate Parenting	No	

6. BACKGROUND PAPERS – LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

- <http://uk-air.defra.gov.uk/aqma/>

7. REPORT AUTHOR

Mark Wills, Head of Transport Strategy and Programmes