



Borough of Telford and Wrekin

Cabinet

15 February 2024

Building Safer, Stronger & Healthier Communities through better Air Quality

Cabinet Member:	Cllr Richard Overton, Deputy Leader, and Cabinet Member for Homes & Enforcement	
Lead Director:	Dean Sargeant – Director: Neighbourhood & Enforcement Services	
Service Area:	Neighbourhood Enforcement	
Report Author:	Paul Fenn – Neighbourhood Enforcement Manager	
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Wards Affected:	All Wards	
Key Decision:	Key Decision	
Forward Plan:	Yes - 12 July 2023	
Report considered by:	SMT – 16 January 2024 Business Briefing – 25 January 2024 Cabinet – 15 February 2024	

1.0 Recommendations for decision/noting:

It is recommended that Cabinet:

- 1.1 Approves the Air Quality Strategy, at Appendix 1;
- 1.2 Delegates authority to the Director Neighbourhood & Enforcement Services, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Housing & Enforcement to make ongoing changes to the strategy as required;
- 1.3 Endorses and support the development of an Action Plan which will provide the framework for monitoring and managing air quality within the Borough;

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- 1.4 Approves an update being provided to the Health and Wellbeing board;
- 1.5 Note the success of external funding bid and actions that have been completed in respect of air quality management and monitoring to date.

2.0 Purpose of Report

- 2.1 The purpose of the report is to provide an update on how the council will continue to build safer, stronger & healthier communities through better air quality and seek approval of the new Air Quality Strategy as contained within Appendix 1.
- 2.2 If approved, the overall aim of the Air Quality Strategy is to set out the framework for managing and improving air quality across the borough. The Strategy ensures sustainable links between air quality and the Councils' carbon neutral action plan.

3.0 Background

- 3.1 Telford & Wrekin Council is committed to building safer, stronger & healthier communities while protecting and enhancing our environment.
- 3.2 According to UK Health Agency, poor air quality is the largest environmental risk to public health in the UK. Air pollution can cause chronic conditions such as cardiovascular and respiratory diseases as well as lung cancer, leading to reduced life expectancy.
- 3.3 Air quality in the Borough is overall very good with monitoring undertaken demonstrating that it is compliant with national thresholds. Unlike many other areas across the country, there is no Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) in place as these are typically designated to areas where concentrated levels of emissions are higher than permitted levels.
- 3.4 In 2023, Government announced new air quality monitoring targets to tackle the health impacts resulting from poor air quality. The World Health Organisation published Air Quality Guidelines in 2021 with more stringent level for Nitrogen Dioxide (NO₂) and Particulate Matter (PM).
- 3.5 The Air Quality Strategy sets out measures that the Council will undertake to further enhance air quality in the borough to ensure that Governments new targets will be achieved. The Strategy has three priority aims:
 - Maintain and improve air quality in the context of area wide growth;
 - Tackle air quality inequalities by reducing the impact that poor air quality has on vulnerable groups and communities;
 - Link air quality to the climate agenda with a focus on emission reduction for carbon as well as air pollutants.

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3.6 The priority aims will be supported by the following objectives:

- Reduce annual Nitrogen Dioxide concentrations across the borough;
- Work with regional and national partners to reduce emissions of Particulate Matter (PM_{2.5});
- Reduce air quality impacts on vulnerable groups and communities.
- Work with internal and external partners to prioritise carbon reduction measures that improve local air quality;

3.7 The aims and objectives of the Strategy are underpinned by the following key actions:

- Planning and new development initiatives;
- Focus on reducing emissions from transport;
- Reducing emissions from industrial, commercial agricultural and domestic sectors;
- Tackling health inequalities linked to air quality;
- Prioritising carbon reduction measures that improve air quality;

3.8 The council continually monitors Nitrogen Dioxide across 27 locations across the Borough to ensure the air we breathe is compliant with national thresholds. Each year, the council is required to submit an annual air quality report to Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (Defra) detailing air pollution levels while identifying local initiatives that have a positive impact on air quality.

3.9 Although the Borough satisfies national air quality thresholds and does not have an AQMA in force, Defra expects local authorities to prepare and publish an Air Quality Strategy to both manage and improve air quality locally that will support public health outcomes.

3.10 The Air Quality Strategy is intended to facilitate collaboration across key stakeholders both locally and across the region through providing ways of managing relationships, actions and information to deliver air quality enhancements; this will include active engagement with the Climate Change Partnership.

3.11 The Council continues to bring forward interventions that not only support informed travel choices but improve air quality. The Electric Vehicle (EV) Strategy, as approved by Cabinet in July 2022, seeks to support electric vehicle users with accessible charge points across the Borough to ensure electric vehicles are a viable option for residents, visitors, and businesses. This will be supported through the delivery of electric vehicle charge points (EVCP) in council owned car parks taking the total of publicly available EVCP's to in council owned car parks to approximately 150 through 2024.

3.12 In addition, the Local Cycling & Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) as approved by Cabinet in July 2022, seeks to increase levels of cycling and walking in the Borough. Building on the £800,000 investment into the Silkin Way, delivery of the

LCWIP will provide residents and businesses with greater sustainable travel choices while decarbonising transport and connecting communities.

- 3.13 In September 2022, the Council submitted a funding bid to Defra to secure the delivery of a pilot project focussed on promoting positive behaviour change at schools, including promotion of active travel and road safety initiatives. This bid was successful in securing over £147,000 of funding.
- 3.14 The project is currently underway and through engagement with schools the content will include education and engagement to increase awareness of anti-idling, develop co-designed graphics and promote sustainable travel options. The project will make use of air quality monitoring to show the impact of reducing car use to travel to school with behaviour change captured prior and post project delivery.
- 3.15 In September 2023, the Council submitted a further bid to Defra for £159,840 to support a project to reduce emissions of particulate matter from solid fuel burning. If successful, this funding will seek to engage residents and solid fuel providers to improve knowledge and encourage behaviour change. It is envisaged that the pilot will ensure no deterioration in current levels of particulate matter.

4.0 Summary of main proposals

- 4.1 The Air Quality Strategy sets out aims, objectives and actions that seek to manage and improve air quality in the Borough.
- 4.2 If approved, the Council will work with partners to track progress on actions contained within the Action Plan to ensure the Borough's air quality remains compliant while seeking continued improvement.

5.0 Alternative Options

- 5.1 The Council has a duty to assess the quality of the local air and where there is non-compliance ensure action plans are developed to remedy the problem.
- 5.2 Air quality in the borough is very good which means that targeted interventions are not routinely required. However, while the Council could decide to take no action, adoption of the Strategy will provide a strategic approach to enhancing air quality and provide the basis for future funding opportunities aimed at delivering focused initiatives.

6.0 Key Risks

- 6.1 While air quality overall is very good in the Borough, if the Council does not satisfy new national government targets for air quality, the Government could consider introducing measures to reduce these emissions. Adoption of the Strategy will mitigate this risk and ensure the borough remains focused and compliant with air quality targets.

7.0 Council Priorities

7.1 The adoption and implementation of the Air Quality Strategy will support the following priorities:

- Every child, young person, and adult lives well in their community.
- All neighbourhoods are a great place to live; and
- Our natural environment is protected – we take a leading role in addressing the climate emergency.

8.0 Financial Implications

8.1 The actions and measures outlined in the Air Quality Strategy will be funded from a combination of existing budgets and external grant funding. Specific financial decisions based on the availability of internal and external funding will need to be made as any schemes or actions are brought forward.

8.2 Funding totalling £147,615 was secured through Defra's Air Quality Grant 2022/23

8.3 A further bid for Air Quality grant funding (2023/24) was submitted to Defra for £159,840 at the end of September 2023.

9.0 Legal and HR Implications

9.1 Adoption of the Air Quality Strategy satisfies part of the Council's legal obligations with regards to Local Authority Air Quality Management Framework underpinned by the Environment Act 1995 which sets local limits put into place through the Air Quality (England) Regulations 2000 (as amended in 2002).

9.2 The Strategy identifies actions that could be explored to support the council in meeting legally binding targets for PM_{2.5} as set out in the Environment Act 2021.

10.0 Ward Implications

10.1 The Strategy and Action Plan is Borough wide and will involve working with partners including Parish/Town Councils and education settings.

11.0 Health, Social and Economic Implications

11.1 According to UK Health Agency, poor air quality is the largest environmental risk to public health in the UK. Air pollution can cause chronic conditions such as cardiovascular and respiratory diseases as well as lung cancer, leading to reduced life expectancy.

11.2 Road transport is the biggest source of nitrogen oxides (NO_x) in the UK, and is the main source of exposure at the roadside. Road transport in the Borough accounts for 42% of the total emissions and up to 15% of particulate matter emissions.

11.3 The Electric Vehicle Strategy supports the switch from petrol/diesel vehicles to electric vehicles; in-turn this complements the Air Quality Strategy through a reduction in nitrogen oxide emissions but also reduces the amount of other harmful air pollutants. The Local Cycling & Walking Improvement Plan also

support the Air Quality Strategy through promoting active travel options and delivering infrastructure to further enhance this travel choice.

12.0 Equality and Diversity Implications

12.1 The Strategy focuses on groups that are more vulnerable to air quality and those with pre-existing cardio-respiratory illnesses. Effective intervention around air quality and delivery of strategy aims will be of benefit to all residents but with a particular benefit to vulnerable groups and communities.

13.0 Climate Change and Environmental Implications

13.1 If left unmanaged, air pollution poses a serious risk to human health and the environment. There are clear benefits between carbon reduction and other air pollution reducing techniques.

13.2 In June 2019, the Government passed legislation requiring a reduction of the UK's net emissions of greenhouse gases by 100% related to 1990 levels by 2050. Transport is the single largest contributor to the UK air quality, representing around 35% of the total emissions and 42% locally.

13.3 In January 2019, the Government published a Clean Air Strategy which sets out actions to improve air quality by reducing pollution from a wide range of sources.

13.4 In January 2023, the government passed legislation (The Environmental Targets (Fine Particulate Matter) (England) Regulations 2023) requiring the annual mean concentration target of Particulate matter (PM_{2.5}) in ambient air must not exceed 10 µg/m³ and there must be a 35% reduction in population exposure to the same pollutant compared with levels in 2018, both to be achieved by end of 2040.

13.5 Alongside delivery of EV infrastructure, enabling and promoting the increased use of active modes, residents and visitors can be encouraged to use more sustainable modes of travel than the private motor car.

13.6 Complimentary to addressing emission sources from transport, supporting residents and businesses to make informed decisions around solid fuel burning, emissions of pollutants and personal exposure to air pollution are methods that will be explored as part of the strategy.

14.0 Background Papers

N/A

15.0 Appendices

1 Air Quality Strategy

16.0 Report Sign Off

Signed off by	Date sent	Date signed off	Initials
Legal	10/01/2024	11/01/2024	RP
Finance	10/01/2024	11/01/2024	PT

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Director

10/01/2024

15/01/2024

DRS