
**Economic Development & Transport Policy &
Scrutiny Committee**

8 March 2017

Report of the Assistant Director – Legal & Governance

Air Quality

Summary

1. This report presents information on a Motion around Air Quality submitted to Council for consideration in accordance with Standing Order 23.1.

Background

2. At a full Council meeting on 15 December 2016 Cllr D'Agorne submitted a Motion around air quality and Council agreed to refer the issue to Corporate & Scrutiny Management Policy & Scrutiny Committee (CSMC) for further examination.
3. While CSMC has an overarching responsibility to oversee and co-ordinate the work of the four standing Policy & Scrutiny Committees, the Motion as presented does not fall into the remit of CSMC. Specific elements of the Motion – air quality, carbon reduction, Local Plan, environment strategy and transport strategy – all fall within the service plan area of the Economic Development & Transport Policy & Scrutiny Committee (EDAT).
4. As such, at a CSMC meeting on 13 February 2017, the committee agreed to refer the motion to EDAT with the proviso that if the EDAT workload did not allow the Motion to be reviewed in a timely manner it should be referred back to CSMC.
5. The Motion stated:

Council notes:

- that improving air quality is a key objective in the Council Plan and a matter of significant public concern;

- that recent data shows that between 94 and 163 people die prematurely in York each year due to the impacts of poor air quality (Local Air Quality Management Status Report 2016, City of York Council);
- that 50-70% of nitrogen dioxide pollution in York is from vehicle traffic, largely diesel vehicles and the annual average air quality objective for NO₂ is still being breached at numerous locations around the inner ring road (Local Air Quality Management Status Report 2016, City of York Council)
- a report by the Royal College of Physicians and the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health in Feb 2016 estimated that the adverse impact on public health caused by air pollution costs the UK economy more than £20bn per year – around 16% of the current annual NHS budget.
- the publication in December 2016 of draft guidelines by NICE (National Institute for Clinical Excellence) calling on local authorities to take a range of actions to reduce the impact of road traffic related pollution on health including putting air quality at the centre of Local Plans, introducing Clean Air Zones and reducing emissions from public transport.

Council further notes:

- that with the measures listed in York's Third Air Quality Action Plan (AQAP3) **in place**, together with the emission reduction measures through modal shift included in the Third Local Transport Plan (LTP3), the health based national air quality objectives for NO₂ would be met by 2021 in all the current air quality 'technical breach' areas in York.
- However, that while York has successfully secured 'Go Ultra-Low City' status and is making progress on establishing an electric charging network, there are significant actions identified in AQAP3 where a great deal still needs to be done to achieve targets. These include making tangible progress towards establishing a freight transshipment facility to keep delivery vehicles out of the city centre/urban areas, enforcement of anti-idling zones such as Rougier St, implementation of procurement requirements for council contracts, and firm plans for the establishment of a city centre Clean Air Zone by 2018.

- that the AQAP3 plan makes no strategic assessment of the likely growth in traffic by 2021 and beyond arising out of housing growth within the draft Local Plan.
- that the Council has a statutory public health responsibility to 'improve the health of the local population', with the overall management of air quality allocated to the Executive (section 3A, para. 2.1, no. 6 of the constitution).

Council therefore resolves to:

- request an annual joint strategic report to Executive by the Director for Place Services and the Director of Public Health on the progress towards targets and further actions proposed for all the elements of the Third Air Quality Management Plan (AQAP3), including the proposed Clean Air Zone for public transport, the Low Emission Strategy and the elements of the Third Local Transport Plan which relate to improving air quality.
- request a report to the Local Plan Working Group and Executive setting out how the emerging Local Plan will ensure that development does not detract from improvements in air quality in York. The completion of the city-wide transport model should include a cost/benefit analysis of the options for investment in a tram, light rail or guided bus way system to facilitate very low emission/zero carbon development, drawing on the experience of other cities in the UK and abroad.'

Options

6. Having considered the Council Motion, as detailed above, Members can:
 - i. Agree the Motion raises issues that require further and more detailed scrutiny and agree to initiate a scrutiny review or;
 - ii. Agree that a scrutiny review of the issues raised in the Motion would be appropriate but agree to refer the Motion back to CSMC on the basis that there is insufficient capacity within the current work plan to undertake a timely review of this matter.
7. Alternatively, Members may agree that the requested actions contained within the Council Motion are an appropriate response to the air quality issues detailed within the Motion, and therefore choose to recommend that Council reconsider the Motion in full as originally presented.

Analysis

8. The Economic Development & Transport Policy & Scrutiny Committee receives regular detailed update reports on air quality, the Air Quality Action Plan and the council's Low Emissions Strategy. It considered a pre-decision call-in of the Air Quality Action Plan 3 and the views of the committee were fed into the Executive report. Air pollution and Sustainable Travel comparison figures are standing elements of the committee's quarterly performance monitoring reports.
9. There is already a legal requirement for all local authorities to produce an 'annual report on progress towards measures and actions', it's called the Annual Status Report and the first one went to the Executive Member Decision Session 5 September 2016. Air quality improvement / deterioration is also reported in the LTP3 progress report via the specific air quality indicator (based on city centre diffusion tube monitoring).
10. A Members' briefing session on the impact of air quality and people's health is being organised for later this month and the joint presentation by public protection and public health teams will detail the situation in York.

Council Plan

11. This report is linked to A Prosperous City for All, A Focus on Frontline Services and A Council that Listens to Residents elements of the Council Plan.

Risks & Implications

12. There are no risks or implications arising from the recommendations in this report.

Recommendations

13. Having considered the information and analysis above the Committee is asked to decide whether:
 - (i) A scrutiny review of the issues raised within the Council Motion is required;
 - (ii) This Committee has the capacity within its current workload to prioritise that review over its other commitments.

14. If the Committee decides it has insufficient capacity within its current workload to prioritise the required review, Members are recommended to refer the issue back to CSMC.
15. Alternatively the Committee may decide the requested actions within the Motion are an appropriate response to the air quality issues it raises, and decide therefore to refer the Motion back to Council for its full and proper consideration.

Reason: To ensure air quality issues affecting this city are given the due consideration they require.

Contact Details

Author:

Steve Entwistle
Scrutiny Officer
Tel: 01904 554279
steven.entwistle@york.gov.uk

Chief Officer Responsible for the report:

Andrew Docherty
Assistant Director – Legal & Governance
Tel: 01904 551004

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Wards Affected:

All

For further information please contact the author of the report