

Select Committee on the Environment, 24th January 2011

Report of the Director of The Urban Environment

An update on Air Quality within Dudley Metropolitan Borough

Purpose of Report

- 1.1 This report is to provide members with an update on the current situation with respect to air quality within Dudley Metropolitan Borough. It addresses the following areas of work;
- a. Air Quality monitoring undertaken within Dudley Borough.
 - b. Air quality issues in specific areas of the Borough.
 - c. Air Quality Action Plan progress & monitoring.
 - d. Statutory Requirements for 2011.

Background

- 2.1 Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council has a statutory duty under the provisions of the Environment Act 1995 to review and assess air quality in its area. The latest edition of the UK National Air Quality Strategy (NAQS) published in 2007 identifies nine key pollutants which can adversely affect human health.
- 2.2 Since 1997, Dudley MBC has either monitored or modelled concentrations of all NAQS pollutants across the Borough. This work indicated that levels of nitrogen dioxide did not meet the government objectives but all other pollutants met the objectives and so these pollutants are no longer monitored. The Council continues to monitor concentrations of nitrogen dioxide and fine particulates to comply with its obligations under Local Air Quality Management (LAQM) requirements.
- 2.3 The Council has reviewed the requirement for benzene monitoring since a more demanding objective to be achieved by 31/12/2010 has now been introduced. The Council considers it unlikely that there have been any significant changes since the last benzene survey was carried out in 2005 and as compliance was demonstrated at that time, proposes no further action regarding this pollutant.
- 2.4 The latest air quality data collected indicates that air quality in Dudley continues to be generally compliant with the national air quality objectives. However, breaches of the annual mean nitrogen dioxide objective have been confirmed at several roadside locations across the Borough.
- 2.5 Dudley MBC's 2010 annual Air Quality Report was submitted to Defra in April

2010 and has been accepted. Exceedences of the annual mean objective for nitrogen dioxide have been confirmed at various locations throughout the Borough.

- 2.6 The major source of pollution in the areas listed above has been identified as road traffic.
- 2.7 It should be noted that the first year's air quality monitoring in Brierley Hill following the implementation of the Sustainable Access Network scheme has indicated a significant reduction in nitrogen dioxide levels in the High Street during the 2009 calendar year. No exceedences of the objective at areas of relevant residential exposure were recorded during this period. It is proposed to retain a small number of monitoring tubes in this area for evaluation of future pollution trends.
- 2.8 Additionally, breaches of the hourly objective for nitrogen dioxide in Halesowen Road, Netherton and High Street, Wordsley are still under further investigation. The Council has been awarded a DEFRA grant of £5,054 to relocate existing monitoring equipment into High Street, Wordsley to assist with this project.
- 2.9 Dudley MBC is legally required to declare one or more Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs) for those parts of the Borough in which the air quality objective is likely to be exceeded. Declaration of The Dudley Borough AQMA was completed in December 2007, amalgamating the former AQMAs of Brierley Hill and Sedgley.
- 2.10 Dudley MBC is now in the process of completing the final draft of the Air Quality Action Plan (AQAP) designed to improve air quality across the Borough. Relevant stakeholders including the public, have been consulted on the draft action plan via direct contact, the DMBC website, displays in strategic locations and via local centre regeneration consultation initiatives. The redrafted AQAP, which has considered consultation feed back and improvements already instigated, will be resubmitted to Defra and to Cabinet for final approval during 2011.
- 2.11 Air quality monitoring will continue during 2011 / 12, providing essential data to inform the ongoing review and assessment process. Monitoring continues at the following locations:
 - (i) The air quality station at Burnt Tree Island will monitor air quality impacts of the planned retail development expansion at Town Gate Retail Park. This project is being funded via a Section 106 agreement with the developer (Tesco) to validate the results of their air quality assessment.
 - (ii) Air quality monitoring is being undertaken at the new site in High Street, Wordsley.
 - (iii) The urban background air quality monitoring station located in the Members car park, off St James's Road, Dudley, continues to provide essential background information

- (iv) The roadside station at Colley Gate, Cradley, continues to provide essential information on air quality in Windmill Hill
 - (v) In addition, there are approximately 130 nitrogen dioxide diffusion tubes located at strategic locations throughout the Borough. These locations have been chosen to reflect new areas of possible concern or to measure the effectiveness of actions being carried out as part of the AQAP.
- 2.12 There is a statutory requirement to submit an annual air quality and action plan progress report to Defra by the end of April 2011.
- 2.13 The AQAP will be supported at regional level during 2011 with a Low Emission Strategy (LES) pilot programme being undertaken in partnership with the 6 other West Midlands Metropolitan Authorities. The programme is being funded via a £100,000 Defra grant and will examine issues such as the development of a common supplementary planning guidance for air quality across the 7 West Midland Authorities, stimulating the uptake of low emissions technologies and strategies and establishing a sustainable procurement process.
- 2.14 Once the AQAP has been formerly adopted, there will be an annual and ongoing requirement to submit an action plan progress report to DEFRA.
- 2.15 There is a requirement to complete a Local Air Quality Strategy which clearly states the Council's position on air quality and climate change issues. The strategy will outline the Council's aims and objectives in improving local air quality and the policies which will be needed to deliver these improvements and their integration into the various functions, including land-use planning, transport, economic regeneration, environmental and sustainable development. The strategy is scheduled to be complete by the end of 2013.
- 2.16 Air quality monitoring and the declaration of a whole Borough Air Quality Management Area and the subsequent Air Quality Action Plan are designed to reduce concentrations of specific pollutants in air to within National Objectives. This will have a positive impact on the environment and the health of all people residing and working within the Borough.

Finance

- 3.1 Air Quality Monitoring work is funded from within existing budgets, external grants as they become available, together with planning obligations where appropriate. The financial implications of resultant activities identified within Air Quality Action Plan will need to be identified and funding sources to deliver the actions contained within the plan explored, as each action plan activity is considered.

Law

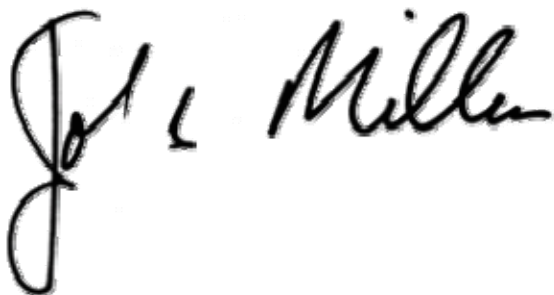
- 4.1 Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council has a statutory duty under the provisions of Part IV of the Environment Act 1995 to review and assess air quality in its area.

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 air quality monitoring and compliance with the AQAP and support continued monitoring in 2011 / 2012 together with continued work to reduce air pollution in accordance with the aims of the AQAP.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'John Millar'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name 'John' written in a stylized 'J' and the last name 'Millar' in a more standard cursive script.

John Millar
Director of Urban Environment

Contact Officer: Tim Glews (Environmental Protection Manager)
Telephone: 01384 814606
Email: tim.glews@dudley.gov.uk

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