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**Select Committee on the Environment, 28<sup>th</sup> January 2008**

**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 monitored within Dudley MB. It addresses the following areas of work;
- Air Quality monitoring undertaken within Dudley MB
  - Areas identified as having poor air quality
- Air Quality Management Area and Action Plan progress

**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 including, 1,3-butadiene, benzene, carbon monoxide, lead, nitrogen dioxide, ozone, fine particles (PM- PM<sub>10</sub> and PM<sub>2.5</sub>), sulphur dioxide and polynuclear aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs). Objectives for seven of the nine pollutants addressed in the NAQS are prescribed in regulations as air quality objectives for the purposes of Local Air Quality Management (LAQM); ozone and PAH remain as national objectives not prescribed in regulation and presently remain outside the scope of LAQM.
- 2.2 Since the publication of the first edition of the NAQS in 1997, Dudley MBC has either monitored or modelled concentrations of all NAQS pollutants (except for PAHs) across the borough. This work indicated that levels of benzene, sulphur dioxide, carbon monoxide, lead and 1,3-butadiene easily met government objectives and these pollutants are no longer monitored on a permanent basis. The Council continues to monitor concentrations of nitrogen dioxide and fine particulates to comply with its obligations under LAQM and also continues to monitor ozone on a voluntary basis. No requirement to monitor PAH's has been identified.
- 2.3 The latest air quality data collected indicates that air quality in Dudley continues to be generally good with concentrations of fine particulates meeting current NAQS objectives. However, breaches of the nitrogen dioxide objective have been confirmed at roadside locations in various locations within the Borough. These breaches are related to traffic congestion in confined "street canyon" environments.

- 2.4 Dudley MBC is legally required to declare one or more Air Quality Management Areas (AQMA's) for those parts of the borough in which the air quality objective is likely to be exceeded. Declarations of AQMA's in Brierley Hill and Sedgley took place in 2005 / 2006. Following extensive consultation in September 2007 Cabinet agreed that a whole borough Air Quality Management Area should be made to combat the nitrogen dioxide issue more effectively. An Air Quality Management Order is being prepared by the Legal & Property Services Directorate which will declare the whole borough and revoke the Brierley Hill & Sedgley AQMA's. The areas of exceedence at Sedgley & Brierley Hill will remain as areas of exceedence within the Whole Borough AQMA along with the other eleven areas currently identified. The Whole Borough AQMA will provide better opportunities to fund and provide actions to combat poor air quality, in particular traffic congestion problems can be tackled on a wider scale and be better integrated with the West Midlands Local Transport Plan (LTP2).
- 2.5 Local authorities are required to draw up their own practical strategies for achieving air quality objectives in their areas. Authorities have a range of powers they can use in pursuit of air quality objectives. These include Local Air Quality Strategies, smoke control and local traffic powers. Land use planning and the new local transport plans and strategies will also have a direct effect on improving air quality.
- 2.6 An Air Quality Action Plan (AQAP) is in progress for Brierley Hill which relies on two principle elements, namely the construction of the Sustainable Access Network traffic relief route (BHSAN) scheduled for completion in 2009 and implementation of local travel plans. An AQAP focusing on Sedgley has not been finalised. Both AQAP's will be integrated into the Whole Borough AQAP which is currently being prepared. As the air quality improvements are actioned, it is predicted that nitrogen dioxide concentrations will be reduced within the areas of exceedence.
- 2.7 A draft Local Air Quality Strategy is in preparation which clearly states the Council's position on air quality issues. The Strategy has been delayed due to the work on the whole Borough declaration, once this matter is finalised the air quality strategy can also be completed. The strategy outlines 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 planning functions, including land-use (development planning and control), transport, economic, environmental and sustainable development. The strategy will be updated on a regular basis to reflect changes in local and national policy, e.g. revisions to National Air Quality Strategy, national air quality objectives, etc.
- 2.8 The work carried out on air quality monitoring and the declaration of a whole Borough Air Quality Management Area and a subsequent Air Quality Action Plan is designed to reduce concentrations of specific pollutants to within National Objectives. This will have a positive impact on the environment and the health of people residing and working within the Borough.

## **Finance**

- 3.1 Air Quality Monitoring work is funded from within existing budgets. The financial implications of resultant activities identified within Air Quality Action Plans will need to be identified and funding sources to deliver the plans explored, as each action plan is developed.

## **Law**

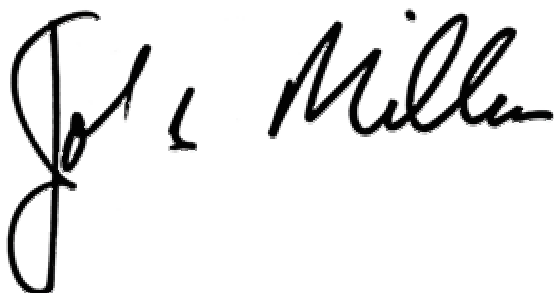
- 4.1 Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council has a statutory duty under the provisions of Part IV of the Environment Act 1995 to review and assess air quality in its area.

## **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 support the continued monitoring in 2008 / 2009 which will assist in furthering our understanding and making further improvements to air quality.



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### **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