

Environment Scrutiny Committee – 23rd January 2012

Informal 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. Defra funded projects
 - e. Statutory Requirements for 2012.

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 concentrations of all other pollutants covered by the NAQS are currently compliant. The Council continues to monitor concentrations of nitrogen dioxide and fine particulates to comply with its obligations under Local Air Quality Management (LAQM) requirements. Fine particulate matter is still monitored for trend purposes as high concentrations of this pollutant have been scientifically linked to increased mortality rate.
- 2.3 Dudley MBC's 2011 annual Air Quality Report was submitted to Defra in April 2011 and has been accepted. Ongoing exceedences of the annual mean objective for nitrogen dioxide were confirmed at a number of roadside locations throughout the Borough. The major source of pollution in these areas has been identified as road traffic.
- 2.4 It should be noted that the second 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 2010 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.

- 2.5 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.

The Dudley MBC Air Quality Action Plan has now been approved by full Council and a programme of measures identified in the action plan to control air quality and where practicable reduce concentrations of pollutants is being implemented.

Progress with the Air Quality Action Plan is closely monitored and reported on an annual basis to Environment Scrutiny Committee, the last report being presented to the Committee on the 16th June 2011. This is an update following a further six months. There is a statutory requirement to submit an annual air quality and action plan progress report to Defra by the end of April 2012.

- 2.6 The air quality monitoring programme throughout the Borough will continue during 2012 / 13, providing essential data to inform the ongoing review and assessment process. In particular monitoring continues at the following locations:
- (i) The air quality station at Burnt Tree Island will monitor air quality impacts of the 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 continues at the road side 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

- 2.7 In 2010 Dudley and the 6 other West Midlands Metropolitan Authorities received a grant of £100,000 to initiate a Low Emission Strategy (LES) pilot programme. In 2011 Defra provided a further £120,000 to extend the boundaries of the LES programme and incorporate a West Midlands Low Emission Zone feasibility study. The LES programme specifically examines the issues of common supplementary planning guidance for air quality, stimulating the uptake of low emissions technologies and strategies and establishing a sustainable procurement process. Dudley has taken a lead in the supplementary planning guidance project.

In addition to the Defra grants for the West Midlands, Dudley Council has been awarded a Defra grant of £9,900 which will be utilised to fund a joint project to be undertaken by the Environmental Protection and Traffic and Road Safety Teams. The project will raise awareness of air quality issues in school with particular emphasis in reducing emissions associated with idling vehicles.

- 2.8 There is a requirement within the Air Quality Action Plan 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 March 2014.
- 2.9 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.
- 2.10 Dudley's Air Quality action plan can be viewed on the Council's web pages via the link below and a hard copy is available to view in the Members Room.
<http://www.dudley.gov.uk/environment-planning/pollution-control/air-quality/air-quality-action-plan/>

Finance

- 3.1 Air Quality Monitoring work is funded from within existing budgets, external grants as they become available, together with contributions from 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 on a case by case basis with relevant partners.

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.

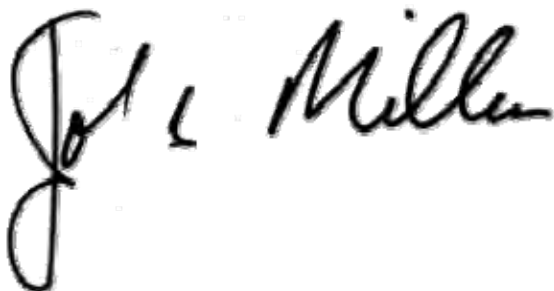
Equality Impact

- 5.1 The proposals in this report do not impact on relevant groups or conflict with the Council's commitment to equality.

Recommendation

- 6.1 It is recommended that members,
- a) Note the progress made with air quality monitoring and compliance with the Air Quality Action Plan
 - b) Support continued monitoring in 2012 / 2013 together with continued work to reduce air pollution in accordance with the aims of the Air Quality Action Plan and in partnership with the other 6 West Midlands Metropolitan Authorities.

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List of Background Papers

Dudley's Air Quality Action Plan
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
2011 air quality progress report to Defra