

Air Quality Feasibility Study

Summary

The National Air Quality Plan for Nitrogen Dioxide sets out how the Government will ensure that compliance with air quality limits is achieved in the shortest time possible. A key part of the Plan is a requirement on some local authorities to undertake feasibility studies to explore a range of measures to improve air quality. Surrey Heath Borough Council is one of the authorities named in the Plan as needing to undertake a feasibility study. This is because computer modelling has shown that along parts of the A331 concentrations of nitrogen dioxide are predicted to exceed the annual mean objective for nitrogen dioxide.

The Government has allocated funding for the feasibility study and for the implementation of any agreed scheme. The Council has been allocated an initial grant of £50,000. Approval is requested to use the grant to fund the feasibility study and any subsequent scheme in Surrey Heath.

Portfolio - Community

Date Portfolio Holder signed off report: 4th September 2017

Wards Affected - All

Recommendation

The Executive is advised to RESOLVE to

- (i) undertake a feasibility study to explore a range of measures to ensure compliance with the air quality objectives in the shortest time possible. The cost of the study to be funded from a grant of £50,000 allocated by the Government.
- (ii) note the 2017 Annual Air Quality Status report for Surrey Heath.

1. Resource Implications

- 1.1 The Government has recognised that to produce an air quality feasibility study and to implement schemes to improve air quality will require time and expertise from Council staff and contractors. In recognition of this the Government has allocated the Council initial funding of £50,000.
- 1.2 This funding will enable the Council to develop its feasibility study proposal as well as conduct local assessments to support its evidence and local understanding which will form part of the proposal. This funding represents one tranche of the funding required for the feasibility study. It does not prejudice further bids. Any further funds required will be subject to the approval and submitted by the council for review by Defra's Assurance Panel.

- 1.3 As Rushmoor and Guildford Borough Councils are also named in the plan as required to undertake feasibility studies. The Council will work in partnership with these Councils as well as the Highways Agency, Highways Authority and the Defra/Department for Transport Joint Air Quality Unit (JAQU).

2. Key Issues

- 2.1 Air pollution is associated with a number of adverse health impacts. It is recognised as a contributing factor in the onset of heart disease and cancer. Additionally, air pollution particularly affects the most vulnerable in society: children and older people, and those with heart and lung conditions.
- 2.2 The main sources of air pollution in the Borough are associated with the emission of pollutants from road traffic, in particular the M3 motorway, the A30, A325, A322 and the A331. The main pollutant of concern is nitrogen dioxide (NO₂), for which Air Quality Objective values are listed in Appendix E to Annex A of this report. Apart from road traffic there are no other significant sources of air pollution in the Borough.
- 2.3 Surrey Heath Borough Council is one of a number of authorities in the country with roads where computer modelling predicts that concentrations of NO₂ will exceed legal limits if no additional measures are taken. In Surrey Heath the road in question is the A331 where exceedances are predicted until 2021.
- 2.4 The Council has been directed by the Secretary of State for the Environment to produce a feasibility study by March 2018 on options for ensuring compliance with the air quality objectives on the A331 in the shortest period possible.
- 2.5 The Council will not be required to carry out feasibility studies for the remainder of the Borough but will continue to carry out air quality monitoring, in fulfilment of its obligations under Part IV of the Environment Act 1995 Local Air Quality Management. The 2017 Air Quality Status Report is attached

3. Options

- 3.1 The Council does not have an option as to whether or not to carry out the feasibility study as it has been directed to do so. However, it does have the option of agreeing the allocation of the Defra funding for this purpose and agreeing the scope of the study.

4. Proposals

- 4.1 It is proposed that the Council carries out the feasibility study using funding allocated by Defra for this purpose. The study will be carried

out in conjunction with Guildford and Rushmoor Borough Councils and working with Defra; Highways Agency and SCC Highways Authority.

5. Supporting Information

5.1 The following documents support this report

- a. UK plan for tackling roadside nitrogen dioxide concentrations Detailed plan – Defra July 2017
- b. Environment Act 1995 (Feasibility Study for Nitrogen dioxide compliance) Air Quality Direction 2017.
- c. Surrey Heath Borough Council 2017 Air Quality Annual Status Report (ASR)

6. Corporate Objectives And Key Priorities

6.1 The Executive approved a new Five Strategy in August 2016 which sets out the Council's vision and objectives for the next five years. It also includes a number of longer term key priorities in addition to the Council's ongoing service delivery. The Five Year Strategy is a rolling document and a refreshed version was approved earlier this year. The priorities are presented under the headings of Place, Prosperity, Performance and People.

6.2 The objective under people is that we will build and encourage communities where people can live happily and healthily. Clean air is a fundamental requirement for people to live healthily.

7. Legal Issues

7.1 Part IV of the Environment Act (1995) sets out a strategic and local framework for national air quality. This includes a requirement for local authorities from time to time cause a review of the quality of air and the likely future quality of air within the authority's area. Where an exceedance is considered likely the local authority must declare an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) and prepare an Air Quality Action Plan (AQAP) setting out the measures it intends to put in place in pursuit of the objectives. The Annual Status Report (ASR) is an annual requirement showing the strategies employed by the Borough of Surrey Heath to improve air quality and any progress that has been made.

7.2 The UK Plan for tackling roadside nitrogen dioxide was published by the Government in July 2017. The Plan sets out how the Government will ensure that compliance with air quality limits is achieved in the shortest time possible. A key part of the Plan is a requirement on some local authorities to undertake feasibility studies to explore a range of measures to improve air quality. Surrey Heath has been named as one of the authorities required to undertake a feasibility study.

- 7.3 The Environment Act 1995 (Feasibility Study for Nitrogen dioxide compliance) Air Quality Direction 2017, places a legal duty on the Council to undertake the feasibility study.

8. Consultation

- 8.1 This will be considered as part of the feasibility study.

9. PR And Marketing

- 9.1 This will be considered as part of the feasibility study

10. Officer Comments

- 10.1 The main source of air pollution in the Borough is exhaust emissions from road traffic. The main area of concern is the M3 motorway and the A331. Computer modelling is forecasting exceedances of the air quality objective for NO₂ along stretches of the A331 until 2021. The feasibility study will consider options on how compliance with legal limits can be achieved in the shortest period possible. The opening of the M3 SMART motorway is expected to have a major part to play in preventing congestion on the motorway and taking traffic off the A331.
- 10.2 Air quality monitoring in 2016 only showed one exceedance of the Nitrogen dioxide objective. This was at a location close to the M3 motorway. In areas where there is a public exposure the concentration of Nitrogen dioxide was generally well under the limit.

Annexes	Annex A : Surrey Heath Borough Council 2017 Air Quality Annual Status Report (ASR)
Background Papers	UK plan for tackling roadside nitrogen dioxide concentrations Detailed plan – Defra July 2017
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Consultations, Implications and Issues Addressed

Resources	Required	Consulted
Revenue	✓	✓
Capital		
Human Resources		
Asset Management		
IT		
Other Issues	Required	Consulted
Corporate Objectives & Key Priorities	✓	✓
Policy Framework		
Legal	✓	✓
Governance		
Sustainability		
Risk Management		

Resources	Required	Consulted
Equalities Impact Assessment		
Community Safety		
Human Rights		
Consultation	✓	✓
P R & Marketing	✓	✓

Review Date:

Version: