

OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - 26 FEBRUARY 2018

AIR QUALITY MONITORING

Executive Summary

The Environment Act 1995 places a duty on the Council to monitor air quality (AQ) within the Borough. Generally the AQ across the Woking Borough is good. We have a total of 34 diffusion tubes in place which monitor levels of Nitrogen Dioxide (NO_x) and each year we produce a report which is submitted to Defra for approval which outlines pollution levels across the Borough and how these compare to Government standards.

Recommendations

The Overview & Scrutiny Committee is requested to:

RESOLVE That the report be noted.

The Committee has authority to determine the above recommendations.
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Background Papers:

Sustainability Impact Assessment
Equalities Impact Assessment

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1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 District and Borough councils have a statutory duty to assess air quality (under the Environment Act 1995) and declare an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) if there is a potential breach in the standards. Generally, the AQ in Woking is good. AQ in the Borough is measured by monitoring levels of Nitrogen Dioxide (NO_x). The main source of NO_x across the Borough, and County, is road traffic vehicle emissions, and this is a reflection of the national picture.
- 1.2 We currently have 34 NO_x tubes around the Borough which are changed over every month and then submitted to the laboratory for analysis. The Council has a legal duty to produce a yearly report, the 'Annual Status Report' outlining the levels across the Borough and how these compare to the Government standard of 40ug/m³. This report is submitted to Defra for approval and the most current version is attached as Appendix 1 – Annual Status Report 2017. Within the report are maps showing the locations of each of the diffusion tubes (see Appendix D within the report. Enlarged maps will be available in the Members Lounge and during the meeting on 26th Feb) and also a table which shows the average annual result from each tube (see Appendix B within the report). Please note that during 2016 there were 30 tubes installed around the Borough.
- 1.3 If annual average results are above the Government standard, we are required to undertake further analysis of that particular area, in terms of a Detailed Assessment. This consists of modelling AQ in the specific area and looking at traffic data, among other parameters. The Detailed Assessment identifies if any receptors are going to be exposed to the high levels of pollution and this will determine whether we need to declare an AQMA for that location.

2.0 Air Quality Management Areas

- 2.1 Woking currently has 2 AQMAs in the borough, one at Anchor Hill which was declared in 2014, and one along Guildford Road which was declared in May 2017. There are currently 26 AQMAs declared in Surrey distributed between nine of the eleven boroughs and districts. Mole Valley and Tandridge have not, to date, declared any AQMAs.
- 2.2 The Annual Status Report 2017 identified that the results for the 7 tubes in the Anchor Hill location were all below the Government standard in 2016, which is the first time that this has happened since we declared the AQMA. This indicates that the pollution in the area is improving, and if we have 2 further years where the results are below the Government standard, we hope to revoke the AQMA.
- 2.3 The majority of the results in 2016 reduced in comparison to the results in 2015, with only 6 locations increasing in levels, although several of these sites only increased marginally.

3.0 Addition and Removal of NO_x Tubes

- 3.1 It is considered that we have an adequate number of tubes around the Borough. They are carefully located where pollution could have the potential to be high, but also in places which provide average residential pollution levels and represent background sites to provide baseline data. Locations are chosen where poor AQ would have most impact on public health, which usually means long exposure e.g. housing near to the source e.g. roadside. This provides a good overall picture of AQ across the Borough and we therefore have no intention of adding to current numbers.
- 3.2 We do not tend to install new tubes on individual request, although requests are considered and an additional tube may be permitted dependant on the reasons for that

request, locations of the nearest diffusion tubes and therefore the value of extra monitoring data. New tubes are normally put up either as part of planning application for a large scale housing or business development, or from recommendations set out by our consultants to allow us to gather further data regarding pollution levels in a certain location if the results from existing tubes demonstrate that there may potentially be a problem.

- 3.3 We have recently installed 3 new tubes in the town centre along Victoria Way between Lockfield Drive and Victoria Arch. This is due to a proposal as part of the town centre development to install 'moss walls' and central reservation vegetation which is designed to absorb harmful pollutants from the air. The new tubes will monitor AQ before and after the walls and vegetation are installed to determine whether there is an improvement in the AQ as a result of this project.
- 3.4 We do not propose to remove the majority of the tubes that we currently have in place. Diffusion tubes that have been added to monitor AQ as part of a planning application or due to the declaration of an AQMA may be removed once they are no longer needed if it is felt that they do not contribute to the overall picture of AQ across the Borough, (e.g. if the development has been built for a period of time or the results of monitoring in an AQMA are consistently below the government objective).

4.0 Overall Quality of Air in Woking Borough Council

- 4.1 Although AQ in Woking is generally very good, air pollution is an important determinant of health, and therefore the Council is committed to finding ways to improve AQ.
- 4.2 AQ has become headline news in the last couple of years, mainly due to the successful legal action that Client Earth took against the Government in relation to poor air quality across the whole country. As a result of this legal action, a national report was produced in 2017, 'UK Plan for Tackling Roadside Nitrogen Dioxide Concentrations, July 2017' https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/633269/air-quality-plan-overview.pdf which provides a list of local authorities where poor air pollution required action as soon as possible to improve the situation. Woking was not named in this report as needing to take action, however, Guildford and Surrey Heath are included on the list of Local Authorities that need to implement measures to reduce NOx due to the A331 running through their Boroughs.
- 4.3 Across Surrey there is recognition that AQ is important in the health and well-being of our residents. The Surrey Air Alliance has been formed of colleagues from all the 11 Surrey Boroughs, Surrey County Council and Public Health England. The group has agreed to work in partnership and has drafted a work plan identifying actions that can be taken to improve AQ. The work plan will be taken to the Surrey Chief Executive Group and the Health & Well-Being Board. Quarterly meetings allow colleagues to discuss AQ matters and monitor progress of the work plan.
- 4.4 Woking Borough Council now provides Air Alert which is a free subscription service which any resident who suffers from a respiratory illness can sign up to. Whenever the pollution levels are moderate, high, or very high, the resident will receive a notification, informing them of the elevated levels, and the expected time period that it will be at this level. This service allows residents to manage their respiratory condition more effectively.
- 4.5 In addition, the Council has agreed to participate, along with 9 other LA's in Surrey, to undertake a detailed modelling exercise of particulate matter (PM_{2.5}), which will also give an indication of predicted levels of NOx in coming years. This will provide a more accurate picture and prediction of AQ levels across the Borough, as well as looking at source apportion to allow us to see where the main source of pollution may be and hence

where to target improvement measures. The modelling exercise will be conducted during 2018.

- 4.6 Woking's taxi licensing is ahead of other local authorities in Surrey in terms of the more stringent conditions that taxis are required to meet with regard to vehicle emissions.
- 4.7 Further options to improve AQ will also be considered, particularly in the Guildford Road area where there is an AQMA in place. We are liaising with Surrey County Council to develop an action plan for this area within the Woking Borough.

REPORT ENDS

