

From: Matthew Balfour Cabinet Member for Planning, Highways,
Transport and Waste

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Transport

To: Environment and Transport Cabinet Committee – 15 June
2017

Subject: **Air Quality**

Classification: **Unrestricted**

Past Pathway of Paper: N/A

Future Pathway of Paper: N/A

Electoral Division: All

Summary:

Air quality is rapidly moving up the agenda of Government and residents alike. This paper summarises KCC's proposed approach to tackling this issue and seeks feedback as to local context and endorsement of the approach.

Recommendation(s):

The Environment and Transport Cabinet Committee is asked to consider and endorse, or make recommendations to the Cabinet Member for Planning, Highways, Transport and Waste as to:

1. The recommended approach and the actions outlined in Section 4, and specifically the production of a Kent Low Emissions Strategy
2. Future Member involvement, and the possibility of a Member Information Briefing.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Air Pollution is currently estimated to be the largest environmental risk to the public's health, contributing to cardiovascular disease, lung cancer and respiratory illness. Poor air quality affects everyone and has long term impacts on all, and immediate effects on the vulnerable, with a disproportionate impact on the young, old, sick and poor.
- 1.2. Consequently, improving air quality has been identified as a key challenge within the Kent Environment Strategy which is coordinated by KCC . This paper outlines how KCC is proposing to approach this issue and recommended actions. **www.kent.gov.uk/environmentstrategy**

2. Financial Implications

- 2.1 There are costs associated with the health impact of poor air quality and also any mitigation measures relating to improving air quality
- 2.2 However, this paper is focusing on how KCC is planning to tackle the issue at a strategic level and what potential action may be needed. Therefore, there are currently no direct financial implications for KCC.

3. Policy Framework

- 3.1 This paper and the activity within it is directly linked to KCC Strategic Outcomes and to the Kent Environment Strategy and its Implementation Plan. It is also relevant to the emerging Health and Wellbeing Strategy and Kent's Public Health indicators.

4. Developing KCC's approach to tackling poor air quality

- 4.1 KCC has no statutory duty to take action with regards to improving air quality. County councils do have obligations to proactively engage with District Councils once an air quality issue has been identified and during the production of an Air Quality Action Plan, as laid out in the Government's Local Air Quality Management Policy Guidance – PG16.
- 4.2 However, as air quality has been identified as a key issue in the KES, this paper sets out a potential approach for KCC as the KES strategic lead, for consideration and endorsement by Cabinet Committee. The suggested focus is twofold:
 - **To improve data and evidence base for action, making links with health data and raising awareness and understanding** - Currently, Districts have a number of monitoring stations around Kent but not a comprehensive picture across all of Kent. Current air quality levels can be found at www.kentair.org.uk KCC, including the Council's Public Health Service is currently working with the Kent and Medway Air Quality Partnership to:
 - review data available
 - identify gaps and potential improvements needed in order to develop targeted action in areas worst affected and for the most vulnerable residents and
 - make stronger links to health data
 - make data more accessible and understandable
 - raise the profile of air quality issues with key decision makers in Kent and Medway, identifying where partners can work together to develop joint communications and initiatives.
 - **To develop targeted action in partnership with public sector partners, business and communities** - As with a number of environmental challenges and opportunities, responsibility for delivery of air quality mitigation measures and initiatives is spread across a number of sectors and organisations. Therefore, KCC is seeking to facilitate the development of a joint Kent and Medway wide approach through the production of a Low

Emission Strategy that links up ongoing and planned activity in Local Air Quality Action Plans and Strategies. This is in the early stages of discussion and development with partners, though initial feedback has been supportive of this approach. The intention would be to have a draft Low Emissions Strategy by the end of the calendar year.

4.3 In relation to KCC activity, an internal workshop chaired by the Director of Public Health has been held to review current activity, identify gaps and strengthen the approach being undertaken across KCC services and by KCC as a business. Current activity includes:

- KCC's Corporate Environmental Performance programme – focusing on business miles and fleet, including hybrid vehicles such as those used by Highways, flexible working and emissions from buildings
- KCC's transport innovations, looking at the use of new technology both in terms of traffic management and vehicles
- KCC's Active Travel Strategy and Countryside Access Improvement Plan – focusing on walking and cycling, connecting communities
- KCC's travel planning function, encouraging virtual working, car sharing, use of public transport and initiatives such as walking buses at schools

If required a report can come back to Cabinet Committee in the Autumn.

5. Equalities Impact Assessment

5.1 As this paper is high level, it is not yet possible to meaningfully assess equality impacts however, as actions develop, these will be assessed and an EQIA produced for any Low Emissions Strategy.

6. Conclusions

6.1 Air quality as an issue is rapidly moving up the agenda, both in terms of the Government and residents. No one organisation is responsible for leading, therefore, in our role as Public Health Authority and the strategic owner of the Kent Environment Strategy, it is recommended that KCC take the lead and facilitate a Kent-wide approach.

7. Recommendation(s)

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8. Background Documents

Kent Environment Strategy – www.kent.gov.uk/environmentstrategy

9. Contact details

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