

## **Maidstone Borough Council**

### **Regeneration & Economic Development Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

**Tuesday 28 June 2011**

#### **Air Quality Review Group**

**Report of:** Overview and Scrutiny Officer

#### **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 Maidstone Borough Council has a statutory duty to periodically monitor emission levels within the area. This has shown that levels of emissions in several areas exceed EU Permitted levels. A Town Air Quality Management Action Plan (LAQM) has been drawn up to identify ways in which the levels can be reduced. The plan is attached at **Appendix A**.
- 1.2 On 25 May 2011 the Communities Overview & Scrutiny Committee discussed 'Air Quality' in relation to the Joint Sustainable Communities Act Working Group which had been established the previous Municipal Year. Councillors Paterson and Mortimer had been Members and expressed a need for this topic to be kept on the agenda. The group had looked at Air Quality in Maidstone and wanted to explore the possibility of a Low Emission Zone.

#### **2. Recommendation**

- 2.1 The Committee is recommended to nominate 2 Members to join Councillors Paterson and Mortimer to form a working group for this municipal year.

#### **3. Background information**

- 3.1 Five areas have been identified within the urban area with emission levels that exceed the EU Permitted maximum:
  1. The Town Centre area, including the High street and Upper Stone Street (a street canyon), which required a 41-88% reduction in NO<sub>2</sub> concentrations across the whole area.
  2. The Loose road/ Sutton Road junction which required a 51% reduction in NO<sub>2</sub> concentrations
  3. The Tonbridge Road and Fountain Lane junction required a 4.8% reduction in NO<sub>2</sub> concentrations
  4. The Well road/Boxley road Junction had recently fallen 1% below the exceedence level, but any small changes in traffic flows in the area would re-instate its AQO failure.
  5. M20 J6-7 junction required an 8.8% reduction in NO<sub>2</sub> concentrations,

Two further areas have been identified where levels would potentially exceed permitted levels:

6. A229 Chatham Road where data suggested that a 25% reduction in NO<sub>2</sub> concentrations was required to achieve the AQO.
7. Wildfell Close, Walderslade (adj M2) where data monitoring was ongoing.

- 3.2 Following extensive consultation, a Town Air Quality Management Action Plan (LAQM) was declared in 2010.
- 3.3 The LAQM has been developed following extensive consultation with partner organisations, including Kent County Council and the Highways Agency, and has been submitted to the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA).
- 3.4 The UK is obliged to bring emissions below maximum permitted levels by 2020. Failure to do so could result in the UK being penalised by the EU.
- 3.5 Members should note although the Council is required to monitor emission levels, many of the proposed measures to reduce emissions are not within the direct control of the Council. The Borough will therefore have to work with partner organisations such as the Highways Agency and Kent County Council to achieve improvements.

#### **4. Impact on Corporate Objectives**

- 4.1 Considering the LAQM and making recommendations should help to deliver the Council's objectives for the Borough to be a decent place to live.
- 4.2 There are no risks involved in considering the LAQM and making recommendations.