

## **MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL**

### **RECORD OF DECISION OF THE CABINET**

Decision Made: 25 October 2023

#### **Air Quality Action Plan**

##### **Issue for Decision**

To seek approval of the Air Quality Action Plan developed as a result of revised air quality management area, following a public consultation.

##### **Decision Made**

That the Air Quality Action Plan attached at Appendix 3 to the report, be approved.

##### **Reasons for Decision**

The council declared a new Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) in Upper Stone Street, on 1 December 2022, because of exceedances of the annual mean objective for nitrogen dioxide. Officers were requested to conduct a public consultation on an Air Quality Action Plan (AQAP) to address poor levels of air quality within the Air Quality Management Area. DEFRA requires the council to adopt the AQAP within 18 months of declaring the AQMA. The AQMA covers an area of Upper Stone Street in the High Street Ward stretching from Wrens Cross to Old Tovil Road. A copy of the AQMA order is appended to the report as Appendix 1.

The list of actions consulted on were developed by a Steering Group consisting of Local Ward Members, Planning Officers, Environmental Health Officers, and relevant KCC Officers. It should be noted that in previous years, many actions to improve air quality in Upper Stone Street have been considered, many of which were rejected due to cost, or the likelihood of simply displacing the problem to somewhere else.

The public consultation was conducted by the council's engagement team between 28 November 2022 and 29 January 2022. A total of 471 responses were received in addition to a letter from Kent County Council (KCC). The consultation report provided by the consultation team is appended to the report as Appendix 2.

The actions that were consulted on were grouped into themes. A brief commentary on the responses received is provided below:-

**Transport:** the majority of respondents felt that the actions proposed were achievable. With the exception of the measure to improve the bus fleet operating in the Maidstone area, where less than half of the respondents believed that the actions would have more than a moderate impact on air quality, although the majority considered that they would have at least some impact.

**Information and Education:** the majority of respondents felt that all of the actions proposed were achievable. The exception to this was the action to promote and encourage changes to transport modes, which only 42% considered achievable. Most respondents considered that measures in this category would

achieve some impact.

**Miscellaneous measures:** this section included a review and update of planning guidance and the continuation of sponsorship of walking to school schemes. The majority of respondents considered that these measures were achievable. Here most respondents thought that these measures would have some to slight impact.

Following the consultation, the results were discussed by the steering group and a number of actions were added to the action plan. Following adoption of the AQAP the steering group will meet quarterly for the life of the action plan to report progress on actions.

The amendments and actions added to the action plan are as follows:

### **Transport Theme**

Additional action to explore the expansion of the additional parking restrictions currently in place on Upper Stone Street to other roads connected to it such as Palace Avenue and Knightbridge Street.

### **Education and Awareness Theme**

Additional action to prioritise promotion of the new digital resource aimed at raising awareness of Air Quality effects on health to GP's and Public Health Professionals currently being developed using DEFRA funding. Re wording of measure 6 to specifically reference Pollution Patrol and place it at the core of our work with schools.

### **Miscellaneous Theme**

Additional action to work with KCC to ensure that potential for appropriate and beneficial tree planting is completed on Upper Stone Street Additional action to identify and bid for any grant funding for suitable projects. Additional action to explore the use new and novel solutions that may be used to reduce the impact of pollution on Upper Stone Street.

### **Actions carried forward from previous action plan**

The following actions have been carried forwards from the previous action as either no completed or being of an ongoing nature. Extension of Clean Air for Schools Scheme via continued roll out of Pollution Patrol Resource Anti Idling signage at suitable locations such as schools or identified problem areas Review of EV parking provision in MBC car parks Sponsorship of Kent Messenger Walk on Wednesday Scheme Beneficial and suitable tree planting on Upper Stone Street.

The revised actions are shown in the table below. The full action plan is appended to this report as Appendix 3.

### Air Quality Action Plan Measures

Measure No.	Measure
1	Engage with bus service providers to encourage improvement to bus fleet in Maidstone, with special emphasis on services operating on Upper Stone Street
2	Explore expansion of the additional parking restrictions already introduced on Upper Stone Street to include adjacent roads such as Palace Avenue and Knightrider Street
3	Review of Air Quality Guidance to reflect updated air quality information
4	Review of Taxi Policy
5	Information Campaign to residents of the new AQMA
6	Extension to the Clean Air For Schools (CAFS) programme, with emphasis on roll-out of the Pollution Patrol Resource
7	Prioritise the AQMA and surrounding areas for roll out of new DEFRA funded Health Professionals AQ resource.
8	A campaign of anti-idling signage across the Borough, focussing on schools and other known or identified problem areas
9	Consider discount on resident's parking for EV vehicles.
10	Review provision of EV parking in Council car parks
11	Continuation of MBC sponsorship of the Walk on Wednesday Scheme
12	Work with KCC to ensure that potential for appropriate and beneficial tree planting is completed on Upper Stone Street
13	Identify and bid for any grant funding for suitable projects.
14	Explore the use of new and novel solutions that may to reduce the impact of pollution on Upper Stone Street

The matter has been considered by the Housing, Health and Environment Policy Advisory Committee on 10 October 2023 with a recommendation made to approve the air quality action plan.

### **Alternatives considered and why rejected**

Option 2. Do not adopt the Air Quality Action Plan. This option will mean that the council is in breach of its legal responsibilities under the local air quality regime. Any work to improve air quality will be unfocussed and there will be no obligation for partners to contribute to this work. This was not a recommended option.

Option 3. Make changes to the proposed action plan. This option will ensure that the council is compliant with the local air quality regime and will ensure that the council and partners are working to improve air quality. There is a risk that further exploration of additional actions will take the adoption of an Action Plan outside the 18 month period specified in the local air quality regime and delay implementation of actions to improve air quality. This was not a recommended option.

The options above were rejected as the proposed actions have been subject to public consultation, with the action plan having been produced for the agreed air quality management area. The results of the consultation have been considered and discussed in detail by a steering group made up MBC officers, external partners and elected representatives, followed by Cabinet consideration.

### **Background Papers**

None.

I have read and approved the above decision for the reasons  
(including possible alternative options rejected) as set out above.



Signed: \_\_\_\_\_  
Councillor David Burton, Leader of the Council

Full details of both the report for the decision taken above and any consideration by the relevant Policy Advisory Committee can be found at the following area of the [website](#)

Call-In: Should you be concerned about this decision and wish to call it in, please submit a call-in form signed by any three Members to the Proper Officer by: **5pm on Friday 3 November 2023**