

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

COMMUNITY, LEISURE SERVICES AND ENVIRONMENT OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

TUESDAY 11 MARCH 2014

REPORT OF HEAD OF HOUSING & COMMUNITY SERVICES

Report prepared by John Newington

1. AIR QUALITY ACTION PLAN UPDATE

1.1 Issue for consideration for scrutiny

1.1.1 To note this update and approve the recommendations

1.2 Recommendation of the head of Housing & Community Services

1.2.1 That scrutiny note this update and provide comment to the Cabinet Member for the Environment.

1.3 Reasons for Recommendation

1.3.1 Our statutory duty is to work towards achieving the air quality objectives in those areas identified as exceeding through the implementation of the Local Air Quality Management Regime. In Maidstone we have six areas that have been identified as exceeding the annual mean nitrogen dioxide air quality objective (AQO) and there are two sites under investigation for potentially exceeding the hourly nitrogen dioxide AQO. All six sites fall within the urban area of Maidstone and into the Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) that was declared in 2008.

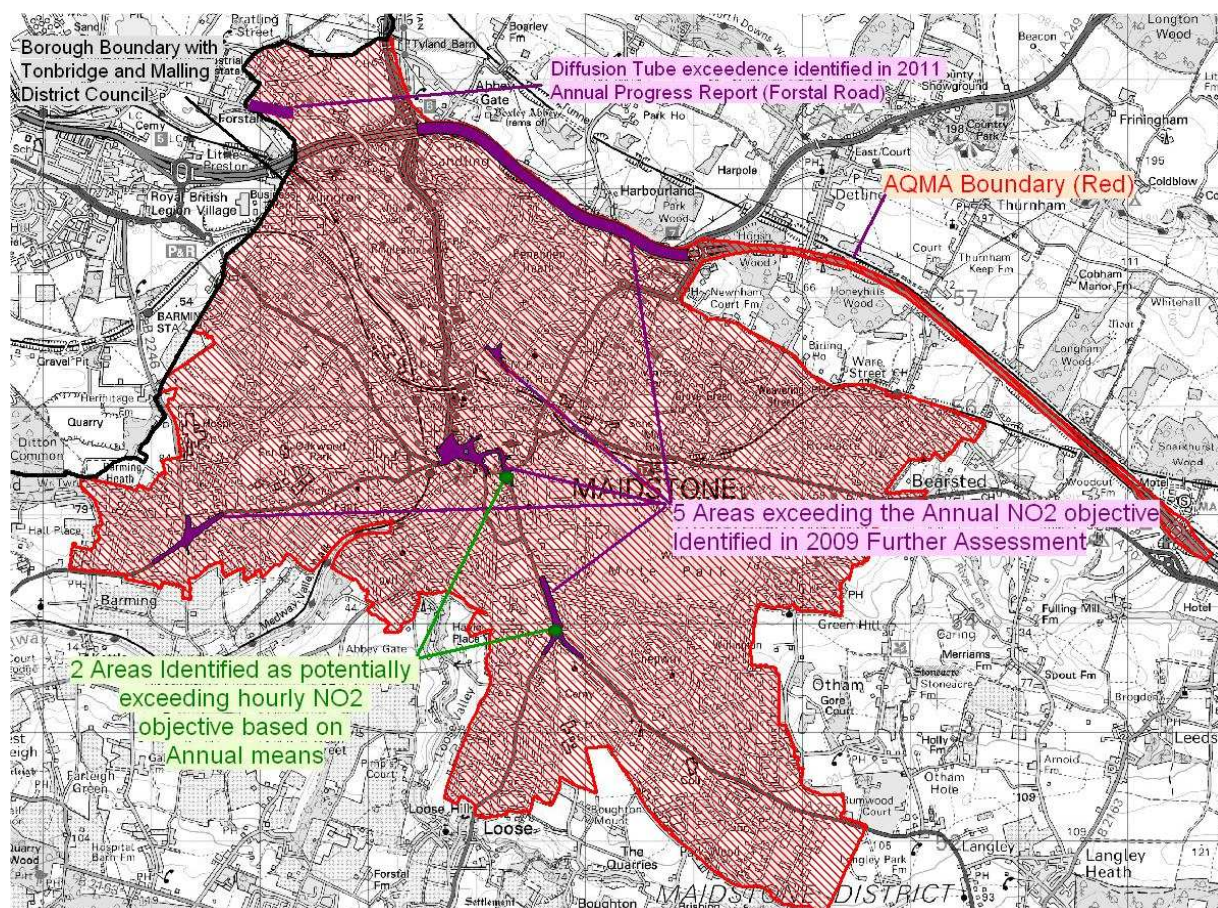
1.3.2 There are 43 AQMAs across Kent & Medway (mainly for the annual nitrogen dioxide mean and not for particulates) and all districts and County partners work together under the Kent & Medway Air Quality Partnership currently chaired by Maidstone.

1.3.3 The Air Quality Action Plan (AQAP) represents the Council fulfilling its statutory requirements under Part IV of the Environment Act 1995 which places a statutory duty on local authorities to review and assess the air quality within their area and take account of Government Guidance when undertaking such work.

1.3.4 The action plan was published in 2010 and we have fulfilled our statutory obligation of delivering the actions contained within it and providing annual reports to Defra each year since that time.

1.3.5 The action plan identified 40 measures in total. 17 of these measures are relevant to the specific geographic area within the air quality management area (see map below 1.3.6) and will be most influential in working towards the target values.

1.3.6 Map Showing the Air Quality Management Area (Red Outline) and Air Quality Objective Exceedence Areas (purple):



1.3.7 Table 1 attached in appendix 1 outlines the top 17 measures and shows progress made against them, however updates on any of the 40 can be provided on request and will be provided in the 2014 Annual Progress report to Defra which is currently being prepared. Successes include:

- Significantly improved bus fleet, which now includes 16% hybrid buses and with soon to be implemented retrofitting 43% EU 4&5 rated buses
- In 2012-13 the walk to school scheme identified in the Action Plan removed 25,524 car trips in peak travel times around the hotspot areas.
- Grant aided publically accessible Electric Vehicle charging points will be installed by April 2014 at 3 town centre

locations and next year there are plans to install 1-2 Rapid charging facilities which can charge a vehicle in 20-30mins.

- Specific Air Quality Policy to directly link the Local Plan with the Air Quality Action Plan and emerging Low Emission Planning guidance which is under development.

1.3.8 One of the challenges in delivering this action plan is to ensure that it remains up to date. In 2011 KCC underwent significant structural re-organisation which is not reflected in this action plan. The recent inclusion of public health to County and their new responsibility to report against air pollution related targets under their Public Health Outcomes Framework are also not recognised within this document and neither is the districts health inequalities action plan work as the AQAP predates it.

1.3.9 Despite the range of changes across partner organisations, which has seen 51% of originally named partners changing, progress has been made in relation to the action plan. It is acknowledged that the plan needs to be refreshed and this will take place once the planned MKIP shared Environmental health Service has been established in the Summer of 2014.

1.3.10 Other documents that will be considered for the review include:

- 1.3.10.1 Action Plan Quantitative appraisal (2013) where the following measures were assessed:
- 1.3.10.2 Local Plan developments including ITS & associated Parking Standards.
- 1.3.10.3 Low Emission Zone/Scheme Feasibility Study (in progress).

1.3.11 The quantitative appraisal modelling assessed the following scenarios:

- LDF Optimal Option (2026);
- Tackling Hotspots for Hourly NO₂ Objective (peak hour HGV restrictions through Town Centre);
- Controlled Motorway (Peak Hour and 24/7 50mph speed limit);
- Urban Traffic Management and Control (UTMC) 10-20% increase in speed through town centre; and
- Improvements to Bus Fleet Composition

It concluded that the current AQAP is unlikely to bring air pollutant concentrations below the target values by 2015 and therefore new measures and schemes are required in any reviewed document. The Low Emission Zone/Scheme Feasibility study has already identified several schemes and the work of this project should help the council deliver the modelled shortfall.

1.3.12 The Council continues to comply with the requirements at a district level, engage with key partners at county level and is always looking for opportunities align the work in related areas with the Air Quality Action Plan and realise the co-benefits that this work can provide to our communities.

1.3.13 The review and update of the AQAP will reflect this.

1.4 Alternative Action and why not Recommended

1.4.1 Not engaging in this topic would lead to a missed opportunity to maximize both health and economic benefits to the Borough. It could also lead to European fines being handed down to Local Authorities through Localism Bill. Further information on this can be found here:

http://www.theguardian.com/environment/2014/feb/20/air-pollution-european-commission-legal-action-uk-nitrogen-dioxide?CMP=tw_t_gu

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/science-environment-26257703>

1.5 Impact on Corporate Objectives

1.5.1 **For Maidstone to have a growing economy:** The AQAP supports the councils vision of growing in a sustainable way and therefore ensure continued growth into the future. If the AQAP is not considered then growth will not be sustainable and economic growth may be hindered in the medium to long term.

1.5.2 **For Maidstone to have a growing economy:** The AQAP directly supports the council deliver this objective by encouraging and working towards a cleaner environment for all that come to the Borough. It also provides support for financial savings to local business through improved sustainable transport options.

1.5.3 **Corporate and Customer Excellence:** The AQAP makes a significant contribution to tackling health inequality as it is often the people living in deprived areas that are most impacted by poor air quality. Poor Air Quality impacts vulnerable groups the most including the elderly, the sick and the young.

1.6 Other Implications

1.6.1

1. Financial
2. Staffing
3. Legal
4. Equality Impact Needs Assessment
5. Environmental/Sustainable Development

X

- 6. Community Safety
- 7. Human Rights Act
- 8. Procurement
- 9. Asset Management

1.6.2 The recommendations, if accepted, could benefit many decision making bodies both within and outside the council thereby positively influencing the understanding of air quality and it's role as a key component of sustainable development.

1.7 Relevant Documents

1.7.1 Appendices

1.7.2 Table 1 Measures 1-17 Progress 2010 - 2014

1.7.3 Background Documents

1.7.4 Annual Progress report 2013 available on request or from (http://www.kentair.org.uk/documents/Maidstone_APR2013_Final.pdf)

<u>IS THIS A KEY DECISION REPORT?</u>		<u>THIS BOX MUST BE COMPLETED</u>	
Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
If yes, this is a Key Decision because:			
.....			
Wards/Parishes affected: All			
.....			