



## **HEALTH AND WELLBEING BOARD: 8 JULY 2021**

### **REPORT OF DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC HEALTH**

#### **AIR QUALITY AND HEALTH ACTION PLAN**

##### **Purpose of report**

1. The purpose of this report is to provide the Health and Wellbeing Board with an update concerning the progress to date to deliver the multi-agency Air Quality and Health Action Plan.

##### **Link to the local Health and Care System**

2. Air pollution has a significant impact on public health and wellbeing, and poor air quality is the largest environmental risk to the public's health in the UK.
3. Health effects from air pollution occur across the life course - from conception to older age. Conditions caused by air pollution not only cause deaths but also significantly reduce quality of life. They also mean people are less able to work and need more medical and social care support, resulting in higher social costs and greater burden on the Health and Care System.
4. The Air Quality and Health Action Plan aims to improve air pollution across Leicestershire through joint working across organisational boundaries, with professionals and the public to improve air quality in the county and reduce the impact of air pollution on the environment and human health, contributing to the reduction in health inequalities.
5. The Action Plan complements the work conducted through the County Council Environment Strategy to reduce carbon and other greenhouse gases and protect people from harm caused by the deteriorating condition of the environment. It also contributes to the LLR health inequalities framework as improving air pollution should reduce the number of people living in poor health due to respiratory and cardiovascular disease.

##### **Recommendations**

6. The Health and Wellbeing Board is recommended to:
  - a) Note the progress to date in delivering the Air Quality and Health Action Plan;
  - b) Request that health partners within LLR further consider how their organisations can improve air quality.

## **Policy Framework and Previous Decisions**

7. In July 2019 the Air Quality and Health Joint Strategic Needs Assessment was presented to the Health and Wellbeing Board. It demonstrated the local need within Leicestershire, sharing the National Clean Air Strategy, that sets out the Government's main plan to curb emissions of nitrogen oxides (NO<sub>x</sub>), sulphur dioxide, volatile oxide compounds, ammonia and particulate matter (PM<sub>2.5</sub>) emissions as required by the National Emissions Ceilings Directive and the Gothenburg Protocol underpinning it.
8. In two-tier authority areas, such as Leicestershire, the duties placed on local government associated with air quality management are the responsibility of district authorities. This includes identification of air quality management areas (AQMA), monitoring and reporting on air quality, producing, and delivering action plans, and assessing the impact of development on air quality through the planning process.
9. However, there are obligations on both the county and district councils within Part IV of the Environment Act 1995 in relation to air quality. The Secretary of State expects lower and upper-tier councils to work together to develop their approach and, with respect to action plans, ensure that all necessary measures to address air pollution in their local area are included.
10. It was subsequently agreed that a multi-agency partnership group be established to devise an action plan and deliver the priorities set out in the JSNA.

## **Background**

11. Air pollution is the biggest environmental hazard in terms of mortality and there are 16 Air Quality Management Areas (AQMA) in Leicestershire:
  - 14 of these monitor Nitrogen Dioxide (NO<sub>2</sub>).
  - One AQMA monitors Sulphur Dioxide (SO<sub>2</sub>) and covers the Great Central Railway area and one AQMA monitors particulate matter (PM<sub>10</sub>) and covers the Mountsorrel Quarry area.
  - Melton Borough Council, Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council and Oadby and Wigston Borough Council have currently no declared AQMAs. However, looking at preventable deaths attributable to PM<sub>2.5</sub> Oadby and Wigston features as an area. AQMAs are not the only areas where people may suffer worse health outcomes due to air pollution.
12. The majority of AQMAs appear to fall, roughly, along or around the central North / South spine of Leicestershire. It is estimated that over 0.6% (>4000) of the Leicestershire population live in an AQMA area. Background levels of PM are found to be higher in North West Leicestershire, Loughborough and Kegworth. Quarries and the airport considered as the cause. There are also higher levels of NO<sub>2</sub>, PM<sub>2.5</sub> & PM<sub>10</sub> around the main road routes in the county; namely the M69, A42, A46, A6 and the M1. 10% of Leicestershire's working population is at risk from higher levels of air pollutants due to occupational exposure.

13. Leicestershire was found to have significantly lower walking and cycling rates for travel in comparison to England rates. 14. It is estimated that cases (per 100,000 population) attributable to the pollutants PM2.5 and NO2 will increase by 2035 in Leicestershire if no action no additional action on air quality is taken.
14. The vision for the air quality and health action plan is to improve air pollution in the county and reduce the impact of air pollution on the environment and human health, contributing to the reduction in health inequalities.
15. The key aims of the action plan are to:
  - a. Reduce the impact of poor air quality on the health of residents, workers and visitors, and the environment.
  - b. Raise public awareness of air quality, its impact on health and personal protection measures to promote sustainable behaviour change.
  - c. Increase our understanding of the state of air quality in Leicestershire and the impact of measures to improve air quality.
  - d. Meet and exceed statutory obligations and national targets on air quality.

### **Delivery of the Action Plan – Progress to Date**

16. Detailed progress against the action plan to date can be found in the appendix. A brief summary is included below.
  - a. Active and sustainable travel:**
    - Promotion of active travel to and from schools continues.
    - COVID 19 has created additional challenges to promoting public transport, but also created huge opportunities to develop walking and cycling infrastructure
    - Walking and Cycling Strategy for Leicestershire developed
  - b. Planning and development strategies and proposals:**
    - Strategic Planning Group and Planning Officers Forum have signed up to embed health including addressing air quality as part of the planning policy process
    - A pilot project in Blaby is underway to embed health through the planning system, with the Town and Country Planning Association supporting to evaluate the work
    - A healthy environment web portal has been created to support developers conduct health impact assessments on their developments.
  - c. Information sharing and campaigns:**
    - Initial engagement work has started through clean air day this year.

### **Looking Forward**

17. Whilst significant progress has been made to date, there will now be further opportunities to progress the Action Plan via COVID recovery and the Government's commitment to prevent further deaths due to air pollution. The Government is considering establishing new legal air pollution targets following the Coroners Prevention of Future Deaths Report.

18. Further work is underway looking at emergency admissions for wheeze and asthma in children and young people and how that relates to air pollution levels across the County. It would be helpful to consider links between emergency admissions and air pollution for other vulnerable groups as the evidence shows they suffer more from the adverse impacts of poor air quality on their health.
19. Locally, there is an opportunity for partners to work more closely, particularly those with the health service to consider the role they have in improving air quality. A framework exists based on hospitals, but the suggested actions are transferable to any organisation. They include minimising air pollution from staff and visitors travel, training staff, communicating with visitors, and working in partnership. A good example of this being UHL's consideration of the Clean Air Hospital Framework.

### **Background papers**

*Report to the Cabinet – 20 October 2020 – Air Quality and Health Joint Action Plan 2020 - 2024* <http://cexmodgov1/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=135&MID=5998#AI64511>

*Report to the Health and Wellbeing Board – 11 July 2019 – JSNA – Air Quality and Health* <http://cexmodgov1/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=1038&MID=5741#AI60278>

*Air Quality and Health JSNA*

<https://www.lsr-online.org/uploads/jsna-air-quality-2019-v10-final.pdf?v=1561477116>

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### **Appendix**

Detailed summary of actions completed to date.

### **Relevant Impact Assessments**

#### **Equality and Human Rights Implications**

An Equality and Human Right Impact Assessment (EHRIA) screening of the Action Plan was completed when the Plan was developed. It concluded that a full impact assessment was not required.

#### **Partnership Working and associated issues**

The multi-agency partnership has agreed a plan to deliver joint actions to address poor air quality and related health issues.