

Bromsgrove District Council



Air Quality Task Group Report

September 2013



Bromsgrove
District Council

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MEMBERSHIP OF THE TASK GROUP

Councillor Sean Shannon (Chairman)
Councillor Chris Bloore (withdrew)
Councillor James Brogan
Councillor Margaret Buxton
Councillor Steve Colella
Councillor Brian Cooper
Councillor Keith Grant-Pearce (withdrew)
Councillor Pete Lammas
Councillor Luke Mallet
Councillor Peter McDonald
Councillor Chris Scurrall
Councillor Les Turner

SUPPORTING OFFICER DETAILS

Amanda Scarce – Democratic Services Officer
a.scarce@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk
Jess Bayley - Democratic Services Officer
Jess.bayley@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk

FOREWORD FROM THE CHAIRMAN

“What is Air Quality?”

Air quality generally refers to levels of pollution contained in the air that we breathe. Air quality falls when chemicals, particulates, or biological matter is present in the air. This contamination can cause harm to humans and other species. A range of illnesses have been linked to poor air quality these include respiratory, cancers, organ failures and brain damage. It is recognised that people who live in areas with poor air quality are prone to deteriorating health and a reduced life expectancy. Poor air quality also damages the natural environment and contributes to the destruction of fragile ecosystems. It has been established that the principle source of pollution to the air in the four **Air Quality Management Areas** (AQMAs) around Bromsgrove district is from road transport emissions and this is exacerbated by congestion and traffic jams.

Production of this report results from a comprehensive examination of evidence and data related to a complex subject matter. It has included interviews with experts from across the fields of science, medicine, planning, and transport infrastructure. Members of the Task Group and the Democratic Service Officers have endeavoured to produce a report that will inform and influence those responsible for implementing measures to improve the air quality across the district.

During the Task Group work timetable, a consensus of concern developed related to recommendations from the original 2007 report and subsequent review in 2009 not being actioned or implemented. It is vitally important that the Overview and Scrutiny Board will be provided with regular progress reports from The Air Quality Steering Group, and that the Air Quality Action Plan be closely monitored on a regular basis.

Finally, thanks go to the Task Group Members for their support, local knowledge and views together with Democratic Services Officers, Amanda Scarce and Jess Bayley for their organisational and research skills and keeping the Task Group on track.

**Councillor Sean Shannon
Chairman of the Air Quality Task Group**

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

Worcestershire Regulatory Services have considered the recommendations and commented on and provided estimates for, financial implications, resource implications and timescales. It should be noted that these are all based on the current proposed financial contribution from the Partner Authorities at this time. This is subject to change depending on budget and resource demand.

CHAPTER 1 – Review of the Air Quality Scrutiny Report December 2007

Recommendation 1	Portfolio Holder	Completion Date
<p>That further consideration be given to the implementation of the following approved recommendations, which remain outstanding, from the original report (full details are provided within the body of the report):</p> <p><u>Recommendation 1 – Low Emission Zones</u> Further consideration be given for LEZs to be included within the Air Quality Action Plan.</p> <p><u>Recommendation 7 – Town Centre Redevelopment</u> A representative from Worcestershire Regulatory Services to be included within the membership of the Town Centre Redevelopment Group.</p> <p><u>Recommendation 8 – High Street and The Strand</u> Although not declared as an AQMA the continued monitoring of the air quality at Davenal House should take place and consideration be given to alterations to the traffic lights.</p> <p><u>Recommendation 17 – Taxi Rank</u> Regular reminders to taxi drivers in respect of leaving their engines running whilst waiting for the next fare at a taxi rank.</p>	<p>Councillor Kit Taylor</p>	<p>[R1] Initial consideration estimated as 6 months. Feasibility Study as 1 year and implementation is unquantifiable at this time. [R7] Unknown [R8] Unknown - Annual review of relevance. [R17] to be clarified by AQTG</p>

Recommendation 1 (continued)		
<p>Financial Implications [R1] Consideration initially is proposed to be covered by existing budgets (estimated as £1000)². A Feasibility Study would require Defra Grant application or Authority funding (estimated as greater than £100,000)¹. [R7] None - Proposed to be covered by existing budgets. [R8] None - Proposed to be covered by existing budgets. [R17] None - Potentially included within existing WRS budgets.</p> <p>Resource Implications [R1] Officer resource (estimated as STO x 24 days and TSO x 12 days and preparation time) [R7] None - Officer resource (proposed to be covered by existing resource) [R8] None - Officer resource (proposed to be covered by existing resource) [R17] None – Officer resource (proposed to be covered by existing resource)</p>		

CHAPTER 2 – Worcestershire Regulatory Services

Recommendation 2	Portfolio Holder	Completion Date
<p>(a) That separate Air Quality Action Plans be produced for the four AQMAs in Bromsgrove district in order to address the particular circumstances in each location.</p> <p>(b) That the Action Plans contain specific targets and detail projected timeframes and all actions should be implemented within those timescales.</p>	<p>Councillor Kit Taylor</p>	<p>(a) 6 months (b) After 2023 – dictated by estimate of timescale of measure that would take the longest to achieve.</p>
<p>Financial Implications</p> <p>(a) WRS staff cost estimated as £900² (cost incurred as Countywide AQAP already produced)</p> <p>(b) Proposed to be covered by existing budgets</p> <p>Resource Implications</p> <p>(a) WRS Officer resource (estimated as STO for 20 days and SP for 5 days and additional costs)</p> <p>(b) WRS Officer resource (to be covered by existing Officer resource)</p>		

Recommendation 3	Portfolio Holder	Completion Date
That a separate Air Quality Steering Group should be established in respect of the four AQMAs in Bromsgrove district.	Councillor Kit Taylor	After 2023 – dictated by estimate of timescale of measure that would take the longest to achieve.
<p>Financial Implications Annual cost of £250² (cost incurred as this would be in addition to Group already proposed)</p> <p>Resource Implications WRS Officer resource (estimated as STO for 3 days per meeting twice a year and preparation costs)</p>		

Recommendation 4	Portfolio Holder	Completion Date
That the Overview and Scrutiny Board be provided with regular progress reports from the Air Quality Steering Group.	Councillor Kit Taylor	Quarterly following the commencement of the Steering Group.
<p>Financial Implications None – Proposed to be covered by existing budgets with current proposals as Countywide Air Quality Action Plan Progress Report to be reported to Defra Annually. (if Bromsgrove specific Air Quality Steering Group) then additional cost of estimated £250².</p> <p>Resource Implications None – if current proposal with WRS Officer time proposed to be covered by existing officer resource (if Bromsgrove specific Air Quality Steering Group then WRS Officer resource estimated as STO at 5 days and SP for 1 day annually and preparation costs.</p>		

Recommendation 5	Portfolio Holder	Completion Date
<p>Worcestershire Regulatory Services (WRS) applies for funding from the DEFRA Air Quality Grant Programme.</p> <p>If the first application is not successful the WRS should persist in submitting further applications in subsequent years.</p>	<p>Councillor Kit Taylor</p>	<p>After 2023 – dictated by estimate of timescale of measure that would take the longest to achieve.</p>
<p>Financial Implications None – proposed to be covered by existing budgets</p> <p>Resource Implications WRS Officer resource (proposed to be covered by existing resource)</p>		

CHAPTER 3 – The Role of Worcestershire County Council

Recommendation 6	Portfolio Holder	Completion Date
<p>Worcestershire County Council applies for funding from the Worcestershire Local Transport Body in order to fund traffic management measures that will tackle air pollution in the Bromsgrove AQMAs.</p>	<p>Councillor Kit Taylor</p>	<p>As soon as possible/within 12 months following completion of the Task Group.</p>
<p>Financial Implications There are no financial implications for Bromsgrove District Council.</p> <p>Resource Implications There are no resource implications for Bromsgrove District Council.</p>		

Recommendation 7	Portfolio Holder	Completion Date
<p>Worcestershire County Council liaises with local bus operators to establish a local bus quality partnership in order to investigate the potential to update the bus fleets operating within Bromsgrove District.</p>	<p>Councillor Kit Taylor</p>	<p>As soon as possible/within 12 months following completion of the Task Group.</p>
<p>Financial Implications There are no financial implications for Bromsgrove District Council.</p> <p>Resource Implications There are no resource implications for Bromsgrove District Council.</p>		

CHAPTER 4 – Health Implications

Recommendation 8	Portfolio Holder	Completion Date
That the health implications of air pollution be the focus of a detailed review by Worcestershire Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (HOSC).	Councillor Margaret Sherrey	6 months from notification of the request.
<p>Financial Implications There are no financial implications for Bromsgrove District Council.</p> <p>Resource Implications There are no resource implications for Bromsgrove District Council.</p>		

Recommendation 9	Portfolio Holder	Completion Date
That the regular monitoring of particulate air pollutants within the Bromsgrove District's four AQMAs is carried out by Worcestershire Regulatory Services.	Councillors Kit Taylor/ Margaret Sherrey	As soon as practicably possible once funding has been secured.
<p>Financial Implications Estimated £50-75,000 for purchase and installation of Automatic Analyser, estimated £3-8,000 annual service and maintenance costs, estimated data management & QA/QC costs £5-10,000 annually and estimated £2-3,000 annual cost of electricity/phone³. Estimated £5,000² annual WRS staff and mileage costs to calibrate and maintain equipment.</p> <p>Resource Implications Estimated WRS Officer resource (TSO x 3hrs a fortnight to calibrate and 20 miles @45p/mile each occasion).</p>		

CHAPTER 5 - Conclusion

Recommendation 10	Portfolio Holder	Completion Date
That Bromsgrove District Council sends a letter to the relevant Government Minister urging him/her to accelerate efforts to address problems with the higher emission levels from HGVs.	Councillor Kit Taylor	To be sent immediately following approval of the recommendation.
<p>Financial Implications There are no financial implications arising from this recommendation.</p> <p>Resource Implications There are no additional resource implications.</p>		

Recommendation 11	Portfolio Holder	Completion Date
That Bromsgrove District Council sends a letter to DEFRA urging it to review the role of those responsible for Air Quality.	Councillor Kit Taylor	To be sent immediately following approval of the recommendation.
<p>Financial Implications There are no financial implications arising from this recommendation.</p> <p>Resource Implications There are no additional resource implications.</p>		

Recommendation 12	Portfolio Holder	Completion Date
The Overview and Scrutiny Board consider launching a separate review of CO ₂ emissions in the District.	Councillor Mark Bullivant	To be included within the work programme immediately following approval of the recommendation.
<p>Financial Implications There are no financial implications arising from this recommendation.</p> <p>Resource Implications There are no additional resource implications.</p>		

THE TASK GROUP WISH TO HIGHLIGHT THE FOLLOWING:

The Task Group was aware that recommendations in respect of the following would not be appropriate; however, it would like to bring these to officers' attention for further consideration.

- The Task Group had considered recommendations in respect of a continuous slip road on the A38 north at Junction 1 of the M42 gyratory and part-time traffic lights also being introduced at this junction. However, the advice received from WCC and WRS was contradictory in its nature and the Task Group therefore agreed it would not be appropriate for this to be included within its report.

The Task Group would suggest that further consideration is given to this to clarify the position and the feasibility of the changes suggested.

- The Task Group noted that there were other specific actions which, though potentially capable of addressing air quality issues in the district, may not be suitable as a recommendation. This included the suggestion that signs could be installed at junctions in the four AQMAs urging drivers to turn off their engines at junctions and traffic lights in order to reduce air pollution in the vicinity.

The Task Group would suggest that the Air Quality Steering Group give consideration to the feasibility of this suggestion.

- During the course of its enquiries the Task Group were provided with information on the "Make Sundays Special" project which has been set up in Bristol by the current elected Mayor. The vision of this was "to create a greener city that promotes and improves health and wellbeing of all its citizens". This involved a part of the city centre being closed to traffic one Sunday a month, two such events have already taken place and been hailed as a success.

Whilst the Task Group appreciates that such a project would not be appropriate for Bromsgrove District it would suggest that consideration is given to this in other more suitable areas of the county, for example Worcester City.

INTRODUCTION/BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The Overview and Scrutiny Board received a presentation on the work of the Local Strategic Partnership at its meeting held on 22nd October 2012. Following this presentation the Board agreed at its following meeting, in November 2012, to set up a Task Group which would investigate the air quality issues in the District including revisiting the Air Quality Scrutiny Report which was prepared in December 2007.

Under Part IV of the Environment Act 1995 local authorities have a statutory duty to undertake periodic reviews of ambient air quality within their boundaries. The Council therefore has a statutory duty to review and assess air quality against national air quality standards and objectives. If any air quality objective is not likely to be met an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) must be declared for the relevant pollutant.

At the time of the original report being published there was one AQMA within Bromsgrove District. Since that date a further 3 AQMAs have been declared. It is these 4 AQMAs which the Task Group has focused its work on, together with measures which could be taken to generally improve air quality.

For information the details of the AQMAs are:

Lickey End, Bromsgrove

Date of Detailed Assessment: January 2001
Date of Declaration: 26th July 2001
Date of Further Assessment: September 2002

Redditch Road, Bromsgrove

Date of Detailed Assessment: July 2009
Date of Declaration: 17th February 2010
Date of Further Assessment: March 2012

Kidderminster Road, Hagley

Date of Detailed Assessment: July 2009
Date of Declaration: 17th February 2010
Date of Further Assessment: March 2012

Worcester Road, Bromsgrove

Date of Detailed Assessment: July 2010
Date of Declaration: 24th October 2011
Date of Further Assessment: March 2012

The key objectives of the Task Group were to promote the understanding of air quality issues within the District, highlight progress being made by the Council and others to address the issue of poor air quality within the district and to make recommendations that would assist in making improvements to the environment and lives of residents.

(Full details of the Terms of Reference are available at Appendix 1 of this report.)

The Task Group has held a total of 13 meetings and interviewed numerous internal and external witnesses. The Task Group has also considered written evidence from a number of sources and considered information provided by Parish Councils and residents. The initial meeting of the Task Group took place on 4th December 2012 when Members considered the terms of reference and discussed in detail how it would carry out its investigation. The penultimate meeting of the Task Group took place on 8th August 2013 when Members formulated the recommendations which are now outlined within this report and the final meeting took place on 22nd August 2013 to discuss the draft report before submitting it to the Overview and Scrutiny Board at its September 2013 meeting.

CHAPTER 1 – REVIEW OF THE AIR QUALITY SCRUTINY REPORT DECEMBER 2007

One of the main areas of investigation, detailed in the Task Group's terms of reference, was to revisit the Air Quality Scrutiny Report prepared in 2007 (which had subsequently been reviewed in February 2009). Officers were tasked with providing updates on the implementation of all the recommendations which had originally been agreed by Cabinet on 9th January 2008. There had been 21 recommendations in the report one of which was rejected. At the review in February 2009 it was noted that 6 of the recommendations had been completed and no further work was required in respect of those, but the remaining 14 recommendations were either partially implemented or required ongoing work. The aim of the review was to ascertain whether that ongoing work had continued.

Officers were able to provide the Members with a comprehensive update on those 14 recommendations and following discussions Members requested that further action should be considered in respect of 3 of those recommendations, together with a refresh of a completed recommendation (No 8). The detailed wordings of those recommendations are recorded in Appendix 2. The reasoning behind the Task Group's decision is detailed below:

Recommendation 1 – Low Emission Zones (LEZs)

Initially, the Cabinet resolved that this recommendation be deferred until further information was available regarding the results of the scheme which was shortly to be introduced in London. However, Members of the former Scrutiny Steering Board questioned the decision and Cabinet reconsidered its response and in March 2008 agreed "that the relevant Portfolio Holder, in Conjunction with the Chairman of the Air Quality Task Group take the matter further with the appropriate officers at Worcestershire County Council (WCC)." The February 2009 update stated that the Executive Director, Partnerships and Projects had sent a letter to WCC's Highways Unit in April 2008 asking them to explore designation of roads as Low Emission Zones (LEZs), various reminders had been sent but a response remained outstanding.

When Officers reviewed this recommendation in January 2013 it appeared that this remained outstanding and the following response was received from WCC "*a limited amount of investigation work had been done however to date there are no resources available to fund the required detailed technical work and design work involved. Work will be required to understand what the impact on the wider highway network would be and to understand whether the introduction of a Low Emission Zone would achieve the required outcome.*"

A response was also received from the Senior Practitioner, Pollution at Worcestershire Regulatory Services (WRS), which stated "*WRS were not involved in the previous work on this matter; however LEZs are something that will be included in the Action Plan.*"

Upon receipt of the draft document for consultation, Air Quality Action Plan for Worcestershire, Members found that reference was made to LEZs. Although it is made clear in the Action Plan that LEZs have significant financial implications, reference is made to an LEZ having a higher cost-benefit in large urban areas and where there are a number of AQMAs including Bromsgrove. The Task Group therefore agreed that this should be given further consideration and supports the Air Quality Steering Group undertaking feasibility studies to assess whether LEZs would be a viable option in specific locations, as stated in the Action Plan.

Recommendation 7 – Town Centre Redevelopment

The Town Centre Redevelopment Steering Group (originally an LSP Theme Group) was requested to consider air pollution caused by traffic congestion when looking at redevelopment of the town. In February 2009 it was understood that the recommendation had been implemented and work was continuing, with various proposals submitted for improvements to specific road junctions and proposed changes to filtering arrangements and traffic management.

When Officers requested a further update in January 2013 the following responses were received; WCC *“it has at WCC level and was considered when (the) application was submitted. Subsequently a sum has been agreed between the developer and the local authorities as part of the process of the application.”* WRS responded that *“as WRS are not involved in either group, I can not comment further than saying that WRS are in communication with the policy and development control planners to make sure that air quality issues are high on their agenda.”*

The response received from WRS has led the Task Group to request that this recommendation be revisited and that a representative of WRS be included within the membership of the Town Centre Redevelopment Group.

Recommendation 8 – High Street and The Strand

Air Quality at this location was specifically mentioned as the original Task Group were informed that although it had not been declared as an AQMA, there were air quality issues in the vicinity of Davenal House, Birmingham Road, Bromsgrove. The recommendation made specific reference to reviewing the timing of the traffic signals and the monitoring of air quality.

The February 2009 update referred Members to the response in respect of recommendation 7 (as detailed above). In January 2013 WRS responded *“monitoring has been continuous at Davenal House since 2003. Recent conversations with the Planning Team indicate that alterations to the traffic lights are planned but do not believe this has been undertaken at this time”*.

The Task Group therefore request that the monitoring continues and if alterations to the traffic lights are deemed necessary this matter is finally addressed.

Recommendation 17 – Taxi Rank

The Licensing section was requested to remind taxi drivers not to leave their engines running whilst waiting for the next fare at a taxi rank, the incentive being it would save fuel and that it was an offence to leave a vehicle running when not in the vehicle and any person doing so was at risk of receiving a fixed penalty notice. In February 2009 Members were informed that, as agreed, a newsletter incorporating this information had been sent to all taxi drivers and operators in February 2008.

Officers passed on the following response from WRS to Members in respect of this recommendation as they were keen to ensure that the taxi drivers/operators received regular reminders in respect of this. *“Since the previous update, when a newsletter incorporating the message was sent to all taxi drivers and operators, there are no records that indicate the exercise has been repeated. The feasibility and effect of adoption of the Road Traffic Act to restrict such activity would be considered as part of the Action Plan.”*

The Task Group agreed that a requirement for repeat action on this by Licensing should be incorporated within the Air Quality Action Plan and reference is made within the draft to cars being the biggest source of roadside pollutants within some areas. It should also be stressed to the taxi operators/drivers that such action was an offence and that any person doing so was at risk of receiving a fixed penalty notice.

It was noted that if this was to be included within the Action Plan it would need to be a general air pollution measure rather than specific to the AQMAs within Bromsgrove district as there are no taxi ranks within those AQMAs.

The Task Group therefore recommends the following:

Recommendation 1

That further consideration be given to the implementation of the following approved recommendations, which remain outstanding, from the original report (full details are provided within the body of the report):

Recommendation 1 – Low Emission Zones

Further consideration be given for LEZs to be included within the Air Quality Action Plan.

Recommendation 7 – Town Centre Redevelopment

A representative from Worcestershire Regulatory Services to be included within the membership of the Town Centre Redevelopment Group.

Recommendation 8 – High Street and The Strand

Although not declared as an AQMA the continued monitoring of the air quality at Davenal House should take place and consideration be given to alterations to the traffic lights.

Recommendation 17 – Taxi Rank

Regular reminders to taxi drivers in respect of leaving their engines running whilst waiting for the next fare at a taxi rank.

CHAPTER 2 – THE ROLE OF WORCESTERSHIRE REGULATORY SERVICES

As one of the key outcomes of the Task Group's terms of reference was to promote the understanding of air quality issues within the District Members agreed that it would be useful to ask residents for their views on air quality in general. With this in mind a press release was issued on 12th December 2012 asking residents to get in touch. In total 7 responses were received, predominantly from residents within the Hagley area. An email was also sent to all Parish Clerks asking for help by providing any information they had on the topic or if they were aware of any issues with air quality within their parish. The Task Group received 3 responses to this request.

The Task Group was also made aware of the Hagley Parish Air Quality Group who it was understood had carried out indepth investigations into air quality issues as there was an AQMA within the area and it had also carried out a local survey in respect of health problems residents suffered with air quality being the suspected cause (further details are provided within Chapter 4 of this report). Members of this group were invited to a meeting of the Task Group and provided details of their investigations and spoke at length of their concerns and discussed how they believed improvements to air quality could be made.

As Worcestershire Regulatory Services was responsible for monitoring air quality throughout the District, the Task Group was provided with evidence, both written and verbally, from the Senior Practitioner, Pollution WRS. Updates were provided in respect of those recommendations which had been approved and statistical information was provided in respect of the four AQMAs within the District. The Task Group discussed in detail with the Senior Practitioner, Pollution WRS its concern that there had been very little, if any, improvement in the air quality of those AQMAs and that it appeared that little or no action was being taken to address this. Three of the AQMAs had Action Plans in place which needed to be refreshed. Members were informed that, as required under legislation, WRS was in the process of producing an Air Quality Action Plan which would cover AQMAs within the County of Worcestershire. This was a total of 10 AQMAs (including the 4 within Bromsgrove) – 3 in Worcester City, 2 in Wyre Forest and 1 in Wychavon. The Task Group's initial reaction to the production of an overarching Action Plan was that each of the AQMAs would have very different needs and the document could become too big, impractical and difficult to use. This view was also shared by the Hagley Parish Air Quality Group during their discussions with Members as it was felt that the circumstances varied so much between each AQMA.

A Member of the Task Group informed it that during the previous 12 months he had been approached by WRS with a view to joining a Steering Group which he understood would contribute to the content of the Air Quality Action Plan. It was confirmed by Officers that this was best practice and DEFRA guidelines suggest that *“local authorities may wish to set up a steering group to take forward the development and implementation of an Action Plan.”* It was also suggested that

the steering group could play a key role in formulating the annual Action Plan Progress Report. The Task Group was therefore disappointed to be informed that the Steering Group would not be in place until after the Air Quality Action Plan had been agreed.

The Senior Practitioner, Pollution WRS also provided the Task Group with general information about the role of WRS within the Planning process and the impact of developments of various types (including housing developments) on air quality and the advice that WRS would provide in order to mitigate any problems.

The Air Quality Action Plan went out to consultation in April 2013 and the Task Group took the opportunity to review this in detail and fed back their comments to WRS (a copy of the content of that letter is attached at Appendix 3). The Task Group Members agreed that the Action Plan was “unfocused” and did not have any real targets or timescales and that this was due to it covering 10 AQMAs all of which had very different needs. Many of the actions detailed in the Action Plan were generic and the Task Group questioned how WRS could raise awareness of air quality in order to successfully implement changes as detailed in those generic actions and measure their effectiveness. Members were also concerned that a large number of the actions would require a feasibility study before the cost, impact and effectiveness could be understood, so timescales and close monitoring would be imperative for these actions in order to ensure that those studies were carried out. It was agreed that the Action Plan had very few targets or measures with which to monitor any improvements in air quality. Both quantitative and qualitative targets and deadlines should be included in order to ensure that the Action Plan can be monitored to keep it “on track” or the appropriate officers held to account if this was not the case.

As previously stated in Chapter 1 in respect of Low Emission Zones, the Task Group agreed that although it is made clear in the Action Plan that LEZs have significant financial implications, reference is made to an LEZ having a higher cost-benefit in large urban areas and where there are a number of AQMAs including Bromsgrove. The Task Group supports the Air Quality Steering Group undertaking feasibility studies to assess whether LEZs would be a viable option in specific locations, as stated in the Action Plan and that these studies should be carried out as soon as possible for the Bromsgrove District.

In respect of the forming of a single Steering Group, Members also raised concerns as they believed that this would be unmanageable due to the geographical area and the number of authorities involved. The make up of such a Steering Group was also questioned, as again this could lead to difficulties in not only arranging convenient meetings but also in the number of people involved.

The Task Group agreed that as Bromsgrove District had the largest number of AQMAs not only should it have separate Air Quality Action Plans but also a Steering Group which would be dedicated to implementation of that Action Plan. A Bromsgrove Air Quality Steering Group would be more familiar with local

circumstances and could make good use of local knowledge. Again, this view was shared by the residents consulted by the Task Group during its investigations.

When considering all the points included in this section of the report the Task Group agreed that it was important that the actions within the Plan were monitored and reported back to each authority to ensure that sight was not lost of the importance of the Action Plan and Air Quality generally. In the case of Bromsgrove District Council the Task Group agreed that this could be done through regular updates being provided to the Overview and Scrutiny Board.

The Task Group therefore recommends the following:

Recommendation 2

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">(a) That separate Air Quality Action Plans be produced for the four AQMAs in Bromsgrove district in order to address the particular circumstances in each location.(b) That the Action Plans contain specific targets and detail projected timeframes and all actions should be implemented within those timescales. |
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Recommendation 3

That a separate Air Quality Steering Group should be established in respect of the four AQMAs in Bromsgrove District.

Recommendation 4

That the Overview and Scrutiny Board be provided with regular progress reports from the Air Quality Steering Group.

During the course of its investigations the Task Group's attention was brought to various funding opportunities that were available to local authorities in respect of assistance in making improvements to air quality. In particular, Members noted that Bromsgrove District Council was eligible to apply to the DEFRA Air Quality Grant Programme. The aim of this programme was to support eligible capital expenditure by English local authorities on their air quality management duties under Part IV of the Environment Act 1995. Whilst it was noted that applications for the 2013/14 funding had now closed, Members were keen for this opportunity of funding to be explored in future years. The Task Group agreed that the feasibility studies needed in respect of Low Emission Zones and previously mentioned in Chapter 1, could be an ideal project to be carried out with the assistance of such funding.

The Task Group wished to stress the importance of accessing such grants in order to progress the improvement of air quality within the District as quickly and cost effectively as possible.

(For information Worcester City, Wychavon and Wyre Forest Councils were also listed on the Eligibility and Criteria Assessment list provided by DEFRA.)

WRS has confirmed that it proposes to apply for funding for specific measures as they are identified as relevant and appropriate and Defra advice would be sought on ensuring applications were considered as favourably as possible.

The Task Group therefore recommends the following:

Recommendation 5
<p>Worcestershire Regulatory Services (WRS) applies for funding from the DEFRA Air Quality Grant Programme.</p> <p>If the first application is not successful the WRS should persist in submitting further applications in subsequent years.</p>

CHAPTER 3 – THE ROLE OF WORCESTERSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

As the Task Group's investigations progressed it was apparent to it that many changes which needed to be made to improve air quality, not only in Bromsgrove District, but throughout the county, were reliant upon Worcestershire County Council (WCC). Those changes also came at a financial cost, which the Task Group appreciated would be difficult for WCC to cover in the current economic climate. However, after investigation the Members agreed that there were various options available to WCC which could be investigated in order to receive funding for particular projects. By working in partnership there could also be opportunities to receive grants for example towards updating bus fleets.

The Task Group understood that the Local Transport Boards (LTB) would provide funding for major transport schemes in local areas from April 2015. Membership of the Board in Worcestershire and the local criteria for funding remained to be confirmed at the time of writing this report. However, the confirmed allocated funding for the Worcestershire LTB was announced on 16th July 2013 and for the period 2015/16 to 2018/19 totalled £7.7million. There is no guarantee at this stage that the criteria would encompass a focus on air quality. However, as a number of the actions listed in the Draft Air Quality Action Plan would require significant funding (for example the introduction of Low Emission Zones) funding from the LTB could potentially assist with a number of the actions listed.

Reference throughout the investigations was made to public transport, not only to the service provided but also to the quality of the vehicles which were used. It was acknowledged that the age of a vehicle could have a significant impact on the emissions which it produced, which in turn impacted on the air quality. During an interview with the Transport Planning Officer WCC the Task Group was informed that measures taken by WCC to address air quality issues included promoting sustainable travel; developing the cycle network, improvements to the local bus network and influencing travel behaviour, particularly with a view to encouraging greater use of public transport. This view was also reiterated within the Draft Air Quality Action Plan when reference was made to Voluntary Bus Quality Partnerships, with a view, for example, to encouraging bus companies to improve emission performance of fleets through rolling vehicle replacement programmes and integrating bus services with rail networks and new developments.

Voluntary Bus Quality Partnerships are informal agreements between relevant bus operators and local authorities that are not enshrined in legislation. These partnerships are usually formed between a local authority and bus operator(s) and each party makes a commitment to improvements that will result in the enhancement of services within the area, whether it be through improvement to infrastructure or better vehicles.

The Task Group therefore recommends the following:

Recommendation 6

Worcestershire County Council applies for funding from the Worcestershire Local Transport Body in order to fund traffic management measures that will tackle air pollution in the Bromsgrove AQMAs.

Recommendation 7

Worcestershire County Council liaises with local bus operators to establish a local bus quality partnership in order to investigate the potential to update the bus fleets operating within Bromsgrove District.

CHAPTER 4 – HEALTH IMPLICATIONS

During its investigations the original Task Group had, in December 2007, held the view that poor air quality could have serious effects on people's health as it could trigger and exacerbate respiratory illnesses such as asthma. The Task Group received information from both the World Health Organization (WHO) and Defra where air pollution had been cited as an environmental risk to human health. In particular air pollution had been linked to respiratory illnesses and heart conditions. The current Task Group therefore requested current data from the Public Health Consultant, WCC in order to establish whether this was the case and whether there had been an increase within the district and in the AQMAs in particular.

The Public Health Consultant attended as a witness and provided Members with a report which covered hospital admissions for respiratory illness, broken down into the 4 AQMAs and covering 3 x 3 year periods (2004/05 – 2006/07, 2007/08 – 2009/10 and 2010/11 – 2012/13, together with average comparisons for both Bromsgrove and Worcestershire. This information was also broken down into specific Electoral Ward areas. It was noted that very few of the relevant Electoral Ward areas had higher admission rates than the Worcestershire average, the only exception being St Johns which fell within the Worcester Road AQMA and Charford which had postcodes which fell into both Worcester Road and Redditch Road AQMAs. However, Members were informed that caution needed to be taken as there could be a number of reasons as to why the respiratory disease admission rates were higher for example in areas of deprivation and lifestyle choices.

Although Members accepted that the evidence did not support their concerns they agreed that, as there were 4 AQMAs within Bromsgrove District and 10 throughout Worcestershire, it would be useful for a more in depth study to be carried out by the Health and Wellbeing Board. The Public Health Consultant informed Members that the Health and Wellbeing Board had consulted last year on priorities for the Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy and air quality was not highlighted as an issue.

A Task Group meeting was also attended by representatives (a GP, a Parish Councillor and a local resident) from the Hagley Parish Air Quality Group and the Hagley Action Group, who had carried out a health survey in response to worries from some residents (around 4,000 homes had received "door stop" visits, the findings of which led to the survey) who were concerned about the effects of the AQMA on themselves and their children. The health survey was a study of 182 respondents based within the Hagley AQMA and the questions ranged from the types of symptoms suffered to how long the resident had lived in the area and whether they were smokers. The Group had carried out a great deal of research and had spoken to a health expert on air pollution at Kings College, London. Members were provided with a copy of that survey and a summary of the responses received. The representatives spoken about their concerns, the

potential worsening of the air quality and measures that they felt could lead to improvements.

Although accepting of the information provided by the Public Health Consultant, the Task Group agreed that the subject continued to be of concern to both Members and residents living in the vicinity of an AQMA. The Council's representative on the Worcestershire Health Overview & Scrutiny Committee (HOSC), also a Member of the Task Group, suggested approaching HOSC requesting that it carry out a detailed review, particularly in light of further information which had been provided. This information was in respect of new evidence, which had recently been in the news and referred to two papers published by the Lancet which made reference to a link between levels of air pollution (particulates, sulphur dioxide, carbon monoxide and nitrogen dioxide) and hospitalization and death in patients with chronic heart failure. The units used for the levels of nitrogen dioxide in the paper were different from those used in Worcestershire so direct comparison with the data that had been provided would need expert interpretation. The second paper showed a significant association between exposure to particulates and the risk for adenocarcinoma of the lung (this is not the type of lung cancer associated with smoking) in European populations. Unfortunately the Task Group believed that the levels of particulates in the Council's AQMAs were not recorded and therefore it was not currently possible to check the levels.

It is appreciated by the Task Group Members that the cost of monitoring particulate air pollutants would be costly; however this could be a specific measure to which WRS could apply for funding as detailed in Recommendation 5 of Chapter 2 to this report.

The Task Group therefore recommends the following:

Recommendation 8

That the health implications of air pollution be the focus of a detailed review by Worcestershire Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (HOSC).
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Recommendation 9

That the regular monitoring of particulate air pollutants within the Bromsgrove District's four AQMAs is carried out by Worcestershire Regulatory Services.

CHAPTER 5 - CONCLUSION

Upon conclusion of its investigations there were two issues which were apparent to Members, both of which were outside of the Council's control and which could make a significant impact on air quality; these were pollution from HGVs and a clearer steer on responsibility for air quality within the District in order for actions to be taken to make improvements.

Whilst it was acknowledged that Air Quality was a worldwide problem and that although Bromsgrove had four Air Quality Management Areas, the largest number in Worcestershire, the Council was limited in the way it could make improvements. The Task Group agreed that this should not deter the Council from taking whatever actions it could to either make changes and/or raise awareness of the issue and its causes. It was understood that pollution from vehicles was a major contributor, in particular from HGVs, which had an impact on the District due to the road network, any changes to which were unfortunately outside of the Council's control. Whilst significant improvements to motor vehicle engines have been made in recent years and which have led to reduced emission levels, HGV improvements were long overdue. Members considered the best way in which to support and encourage such and it was agreed that the Council should write to the appropriate Government Minister requesting action be taken on this issue.

Throughout its investigations it was also apparent to the Task Group that, although the Council was responsible for air quality and the action plan in respect of Air Quality Management Areas, much of the work to address the problem was outside of the Council's control, thus making it difficult to implement changes, for example in respect of highways issues and improvements. It was clear from the evidence received that there was no "joined up" working on this subject and neither the Council nor Worcestershire County Council was able to take the lead role. Within the Draft Air Quality Action Plan it was in fact stated that *"It is generally recognised that although a Local Authority has the responsibility of managing the air quality in their areas they are unlikely to have direct control or capability to effect real reductions in pollution levels."* During an interview with the Senior Practitioner, Pollution at WRS the Task Group was informed that this was something which Defra would be reviewing and it was anticipated that more defined guidelines would be published. The Senior Practitioner, Pollution was however unable to confirm a timescale for this review.

It should also be noted that whilst under legislation, the Council was responsible for producing an Air Quality Action Plan for each Air Quality Management Area, there was no legal requirement to implement the Action Plan.

The Task Group therefore recommends the following:

Recommendation 10

That Bromsgrove District Council sends a letter to the relevant Government Minister urging him/her to accelerate efforts to address problems with the higher emission levels from HGVs with a copy of the letter also being sent to the local M.P. (See *Appendix 4 for suggested wording*).

Recommendation 11

That Bromsgrove District Council sends a letter to the relevant Government Minister responsible for DEFRA urging him/her to review the role of those responsible for Air Quality with a copy of the letter also being sent to the local M.P. (*See Appendix 4 for suggested wording*).

Finally, at an early stage within the investigation it became apparent to Members that the scope of the Task Group was large and it would be difficult to complete within the timescale allocated. At the meeting held on 9th January 2013 the Climate Change Manager raised concerns that consideration of information about CO₂ Emissions alongside data on the subject of air quality would be distracting and would require Members to dedicate a much longer timescale to complete the review. After discussions it was therefore agreed that the Task Group would concentrate on reviewing Air Quality with a recommendation that an investigation into CO₂ Emissions be included within the Overview & Scrutiny Board's Work Programme. The Task Group's terms of reference were amended and the Board informed at the meeting held on 25th February 2013.

The Task Group therefore recommends the following:

Recommendation 12

The Overview and Scrutiny Board consider launching a separate review of CO₂ emissions in the District.



Bromsgrove
District Council
www.bromsgrove.gov.uk

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY EXERCISE SCOPING CHECKLIST

This form is to assist Members to scope the overview and scrutiny exercise in a focused way and to identify the key issues it wishes to investigate.

- Topic: **Air Quality Task Group**

- Specific subject areas to be investigated:

To revisit the Air Quality Scrutiny report prepared in December 2007. This will include:

- Investigating whether the recommendations have been implemented successfully.
- The effect of poor air quality on residents within the District
- Progress made to date in improving air quality in the District.
- Future plans to improve air quality in the District.

- Possible key outcomes:

(i.e. please state what Members hope to achieve through this investigation):

- Promote the understanding of air quality issues within the district.
- Highlight progress being made by the Council and others to address the issues of poor air quality within the district.
- Make recommendations which would assist in making improvements to the environment and lives of residents within the district.

- Should the relevant Portfolio Holder(s) be invited to give evidence? **YES**

- Which officers should be invited to give evidence?

(Please state name of officer and/or job title)

Head of Regulatory Services, Head of Environmental Services
Environmental Health Team Representative
Climate Change Manager
Relevant Portfolio Holder
Relevant Ward Members
Parish Councillors

- Should any external witnesses be invited to give evidence? **YES**
If so, who and from which organisations?

Representatives from:
Highways Agency, Worcestershire County Council's Transport Team, Worcestershire Acute Health Trust.

- What key documents/data/reports will be required?

Air Quality Scrutiny Report (December 2007)
Air Quality a Strategy for Hereford and Worcestershire (November 2008)
Air Quality Progress Report 2010: Bromsgrove District Council (May 2010)
WCC Transport & Air Quality Policy
Health Profile for Bromsgrove district

- Is it anticipated that any site visits will be required? **YES ***
If so, where should members visit?

Possibly – may become more apparent as the investigation is carried out.

- Should a period of public consultation form part of the exercise? **NO**
If so, on what should the public be consulted?

(Please Note: A separate press release requesting general comments/suggestions from the public will be issued in the normal way at the beginning of the investigation.)

- Have other authorities carried out similar overview and scrutiny exercises? **NO***
If so, which authorities?

Not that we are aware of.

- Will the investigation cross the District boundary? **NO***
If so, should any other authorities be invited to participate? **NO***
If yes, please state which authorities:

- Would it be appropriate to co-opt anyone on to the Task Group/Board whilst the Overview and Scrutiny exercise is being carried out? **NO***
If so, who and from which organisations?

- What do you anticipate the timetable will be for the Overview and Scrutiny exercise?

It is anticipated that this review could be completed in a maximum of five months with a draft report being presented to the Board meeting to be held on 17th June 2013.

FULL WORDING OF RECOMMENDATIONS FROM DECEMBER 2007

AS DETAILED IN RECOMMENDATION 1 OF THIS REPORT

Recommendation 1 – Low Emission Zones

This Council considers applying to Worcestershire County Council for certain roads to be made low emission zone roads therefore limiting access to certain types of vehicles which reduce air quality. Specifically, the Task Group believe the following roads/areas should be low emission due to high NO₂ levels:

- Approximately a 2 mile radius around Bromgrove town centre
- A38 Bypass in Rubery
- All roads in Rubery with a weight restriction
- A456 in Hagley
- A491 in Hagley

Recommendation 7 – Town Centre Redevelopment

The Town Centre Redevelopment Steering Group (LSP Theme Group) be requested to consider air pollution caused by traffic congestion when looking at redeveloping the town. This would include the Group looking at the possibilities of having vehicle access to The Strand from Birmingham Road (by Davenal House) and investigate, in partnership with Worcestershire County Council Highway's, whether or not it might help decrease traffic congestion and therefore lower the air pollution at this location which has high NO₂ levels.

Recommendation 8 – High Street and The Strand

- (a) Request that Worcestershire County Council review the timing of the traffic signals located at the top end of the High Street by The Strand with a view to reducing the build up of standing traffic;
- (b) If (a) is agreed and County Council decide to amend the timing of the traffic signals, request that they monitor the traffic congestion before and after making the alteration to measure whether the action has had a positive impact; and
- (c) If (a) is agreed, request Environmental Health monitor air quality around Davenal House, Birmingham Road before and after the alteration to measure whether it has helped improve air quality (which is known to be poor at this location).

Recommendation 17 – Taxi Rank

The Licensing Section be requested to remind taxi drivers not to leave their engines running whilst waiting for the next fare at a taxi rank. As an incentive to change their behaviour, it should be pointed out that (a) it will save fuel; and (b) it is an offence to leave a vehicle running when not in the vehicle and any person doing so is at risk of receiving a fixed penalty notice. This information could be included in a newsletter for example.

Response from Task Group to WRS Air Quality Action Plan Consultation
27th June 2013

I have been asked to respond to the Air Quality Action Plan consultation on behalf of the Air Quality Task Group which has been set up by the Overview & Scrutiny Board at Bromsgrove District Council. Where an AQMA is in a specific Ward the relevant Councillor will also respond to the consultation individually.

The Task Group has held discussions with Mark Cox – Senior Practitioner, Pollution WRS and Andy Ferguson, Central Operations Team Manager, WRS and has expressed its concern over a number of issues in respect of air quality in Bromsgrove District. Some of the areas that have been discussed are detailed below, together with other areas the Task Group has considered at its meetings:

- Little or no improvement to air quality appears to have been made since the implementation of three of the AQMAs (and Action Plans) in Bromsgrove.
- That although actions were being taken these appeared not to be actually addressing the problem, only mitigating its effects.
- That the Action Plan previously developed for the AQMAs in the District did not result in tangible improvements in those areas and the concern is that this will be the case with the latest action plan.
- That air quality did not appear to be a priority in respect of strategic planning, planning applications and the town centre regeneration programme.
- Improvements to public transport, including its availability and the types of vehicles used.
- Members believe the action plan is “unfocused” and does not have any targets or timescales. This is due to it covering 10 AQMAs all of which have different needs. This should have been broken down into more specific areas and as Bromsgrove has the greatest number then it may have been more appropriate for it to have a separate Action Plan.
- How WRS could raise awareness of air quality and the successful implementation of changes as detailed in the generic actions and the effectiveness of those actions.
- Clarification on whether the Steering Group is a single steering group for all 10 Worcestershire AQMAs? If so, Members believe that this would be unmanageable due to the geographical area and as Bromsgrove has the largest number of AQMAs it would be appropriate for a Steering Group to be set up specifically for the District.
- Why the decision has been made to form a steering group after the Action Plan consultation rather than before and therefore allowing the group to assist with the development of it.

Recommendation 10 - Suggested Wording for Transport Minister Letter

Bromsgrove District Council holds the unfortunate position of being responsible for four Air Quality Management Areas. Following the completion of its investigations, the Overview and Scrutiny Board Air Quality Task Group, which was set up to investigate the effect of poor air quality on residents and actions which the Council could take to improve air quality, has brought to the Council's attention information which shows that HGVs are the largest source of pollution within one of these AQMAs.

Whilst excellent progress has been made in the manufacture and use of cleaner motor vehicles, HGVs are sadly falling behind with this development. The Council therefore urges you to take action in order to ensure that this problem is addressed at a national level. The Council would also urge you to investigate actions that could be taken to enable more large vehicles to be fuelled by alternative fuels such as methane.

In a report commissioned by the Road Transport Association (RTA) it states that operators of national heavy goods vehicle fleets are considering wider use of natural gas powered vehicles to help achieve operational efficiencies and reduce greenhouse gas emissions, in order to provide the necessary confidence in making these investments Government need to support the development of national refueling infrastructure, provide stability in future duty rates for road gas fuel and work with vehicle operators to understand the barriers to wider uptake and work with the operators to remove those barriers. This Council supports the RTA in this request and would ask that the Government not introduce punitive tax measures and encourage RTA members to switch to cleaner fuels.

Recommendation 11 – Suggested Wording for Defra Letter

Bromsgrove District Council holds the unfortunate position of being responsible for four Air Quality Management Areas. Following the completion of its investigations, the Overview and Scrutiny Board Air Quality Task Group, which was set up to investigate the effect of poor air quality on residents and actions which the Council could take to improve air quality, has brought to the Council's attention the need for further clarification to be provided on responsibility for tackling air quality.

Following the findings of this investigation the Council would urge DEFRA to review its guidelines in respect of the lead authority for air quality as it has become apparent to this Council that although it is responsible for air quality the majority of actions which need to be put in place to make improvements to this come under the remit of the County Council, thus limiting the actions that this Council can take to make improvements. A clearer steer on the role of the lead authority, which this Council strongly believes should be the County Council, for air quality would enable work to be carried forward more effectively and ensure that appropriate action is taken where necessary.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

As there was an Air Quality Management Area in the ward of the majority of Members of the Task Group it was agreed that it was not necessary to declare this as an interest at the meetings.

The following interest was also declared during the Task Group's investigation:

Councillor	Interest Declared
Councillor L. Mallett <i>(Pecuniary disclosable interest)</i>	Employed by the British Heart Foundation. (The British Heart Foundation had provided funding for research, the details of which were provided to Members at the meeting held on 18th July and further discussed on 8th August 2013.)
Councillors S. Colella, L. Mallett and S. Shannon	Wished it to be noted that they had already approached WRS with a view to joining the Air Quality Steering Group.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Task Group wishes to thank the Democratic Services Officers, Amanda Scarce and Jess Bayley for their support throughout the Task Group's investigations.

Thanks also go to all those Ward Councillors, Parish Councils and residents who took the time to respond to requests for information.

WITNESSES

The Task Group considered evidence from the following sources before making its recommendations:

Internal Witnesses:

Ruth Bamford – Head of Planning and Regeneration
Mike Dunphy – Strategic Planning Manager
Ceridwen John – Climate Change Manager

Worcestershire Regulatory Services:

Mark Cox – Senior Practitioner (Pollution)
Andy Ferguson – Central Operations Team Manager

Councillors:

Councillor Kit Taylor – Portfolio Holder for Planning, Core Strategy & Regulatory Services

External Witnesses:

Liz Altay – Public Health Consultant, Worcestershire County Council
David Balme – Transport Planning Officer, Worcestershire County Council
Steve Harrison – Transport Strategy & Policy Team Leader,
Worcestershire County Council
Sally Everest – Network Control Manager, Worcestershire County Council
Representatives from Hagley Parish Air Quality Group (Dr. Steve Pannell,
Fran Evans, Parish Councillor Paul Johnson)

KEY DOCUMENTS

Air Quality Scrutiny Report December 2007
Overview Board – Air Quality Review February 2009
Worcestershire Regulatory Services Air Quality Action Plan for Worcestershire
(Draft Document for Consultation April 2013)
DEFRA Local Air Quality Management Guidance February 2009

Legal, Equalities and Democratic Services

Bromsgrove District Council, The Council House, Burcot Lane,
Bromsgrove, Worcestershire B60 1AA

Telephone: 901527) 881288

Email: scrutiny@bromsgrove.gov.uk