

**Report of the Director of Resources and Housing**

**Report to Environment, Housing and Communities Scrutiny Board**

**Date: 24<sup>th</sup> July 2017**

**Subject: Consultation Strategy for the Clean Air Solution**

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**Summary of main issues**

1. Air quality is now a major issue of growing interest and significance at a national and international level. Leeds was identified in 2015 by DEFRA as one of six locations in England that is not expected to meet air quality standards by 2020 and to require the introduction of a Clean Air Zone.
2. DEFRA published a draft National Air Quality Plan in May 2017 in response to the high court ruling in December 2016. The new plan uses more realistic emission factors and is intended to achieve compliance as quickly as possible rather than by 2020. The number of cities included in the plan has increased from 6 to 42. All the core cities are now included and within Yorkshire, Bradford and Wakefield are also named.
3. The council is undertaking comprehensive transport and air quality modelling in order to determine the optimum solution for the city to ensure compliance. A further report on this will be brought back to Executive Board in Autumn.
4. Prior to implementing the preferred Air Quality Solution the council will need to go out to consult with a wide range of stakeholders.

**Recommendation**

5. Members of the Environment, Housing and Communities Scrutiny Board are asked to consider and provide any comment on the proposed consultation process for the implementation of an Air Quality Solution in Leeds.

## **1. Purpose of this report**

1.1 Provide an overview on the proposed consultation process for the implementation of an Air Quality Solution in Leeds to ask scrutiny to help shape the process.

## **2. Background information**

2.1 There is now categorical evidence that long-term exposure to everyday air pollutants contributes to cardiovascular disease (including heart diseases and stroke), lung cancer, and respiratory disease (including asthma and chronic bronchitis). Failure to improve air quality also means a risk of failing to deliver a health benefit to the public, and that the impact in terms of deaths and ill health associated with poor air quality aren't reduced. Air pollution is responsible for approximately 680 deaths per year in Leeds.

2.2 The government published its updated National Air Quality Plan in May 2017, in response to the high court ruling in December 2016. The plan emphasises that Councils are responsible for ensuring that they have air quality plans which achieve compliance. The guidance also states within the main body of the report that councils should only use charging cleaning air zones as a last resort.

2.3 Nevertheless, within the technical appendices attached to the plan it states that the DEFRA model predicts that Leeds and Birmingham will have the highest exceedances in 2020 and will, in their view, require a charging Clean Air Zone.

2.4 The government has evaluated 60 different potential options to achieve compliancy and has assessed them all in accordance with the standard treasury methodology. The assessment was against three critical success factors: air quality impact, timing to impact and deliverability.

2.5 The following options were evaluated in detail:

- Clean Air Zones (CAZs)
- Scrappage (targeted at car and van fleet)
- Retrofit (for taxis, buses and HGVs)
- Support for Ultra Low Emissions vehicles
- Speed limits (motorway specific action to reduce limits to speeds that produce less emissions)
- Improved labelling for consumers (similar to those used on white goods) to assist the public to make informed choices
- Influencing driving styles

2.6 Detailed air quality monitoring has been carried out in Leeds for more than 20 years. In more recent times, monitoring sites have been chosen alongside the busiest roads to identify the highest pollutant concentrations, thereby giving assurance that other more distant positions will experience cleaner air. The key pollutant of concern in Leeds is nitrogen dioxide (NO<sub>2</sub>) – as a result, the majority of monitoring activity across the city is focusing on tracking this pollutant.

2.7 Leeds currently has 6 AQMAs, the most recent declared in 2016. All areas were declared due to annual average nitrogen dioxide (NO<sub>2</sub>) concentrations being above the national Air Quality Objective. The principal source of this pollutant is vehicle emissions. These sites each have an air quality action plan to deliver targeted monitoring and initiatives to reduce air quality in the AQMA.

### 3. Main issues

- 3.1 The model used by the government to assess air quality is indicative of issues but is not precise. There are discrepancies between the predictions in the model and the results of the monitoring the council has undertaken. The Council wishes to ensure that the proposals to improve air quality are grounded in reliable local data. As the modelling to determine the air quality solution for the city is still underway, the consultation plan is generic and will be developed further once the air quality solution has been identified. However, as the city has to achieve compliance as soon as possible, it is important that the different activities are developed in parallel.
- 3.2 The consultation plan will have a two-step approach that will cover the communication of elements of the solution, for information only, and consultation for sections that have some flexibility and require feedback. A draft table is shown below:

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Timescale</b>
Executive Board (outline solution)	October 2017
Consultation Initiation – Stage 1	October 2017
Workshops/Drop-in Sessions and other consultation initiatives	November 2017
Consultation Close – Stage 1	December 2017
Report Drafted incorporating consultation feedback	January 2018
Executive Board (final solution)	February 2018
Formal Consultation Initiation – Stage 2 (if required)	February 2018
Workshops/Drop-in Sessions and other consultation initiatives	March 2018
Consultation Close – Stage 2/ Final Executive Board Approval	April 2018
Final business case and scheme presented to government	May 2018
Scheme approval	September 2018
Project Implementation	September 2018

- 3.3 It is expected that the air quality solution would need an extensive consultation regardless of which option is selected to meet the required air quality levels.
- 3.4 There are several different initiatives that are being considered as part of our air quality solution. These have been listed.
- Improved public information to aid cleaner transport choices
  - More sustainable parking choices through park and ride
  - Low emission vehicle infrastructure
  - Sustainable transport planning by large employers and freight users

- Licencing (Taxi) and Bus improvements
- Highway infrastructure improvements to deliver better traffic flow
- Charging zone

3.5 It is estimated that the consultation will initiate towards the third quarter of financial year and commence for a duration of two months.

3.5.1 This document provides an outline approach to how we are proposing to consult on the Air Quality Solution.

3.5.2 Key Communication Messages:

- What is Air Quality and the importance of it.
- Impacts of vehicles and the difference it would make to reduce vehicle numbers.
- What options were available and the actions LCC has decided to take.
- Actions we have already taken that will look to improve air quality in the city and consequently, the proposed Air Quality Solution (previous/ongoing projects: Park and Ride, industry expert events, priority bus initiatives, LCC zero or ultra low emission vehicle replacement scheme, Cycle Superhighway, new train stations [Apperley Bridge and Kirkstall Forge], free parking for zero or ultra low emission vehicles, UKs largest alternative fueling station, as well as working closely with bus operators & taxi and private hire firms etc).
- Signposting to available grants/loans to improve vehicle emissions.

3.5.3 The Council will consult on the measures that might be taken to improve air quality and achieve compliance in isolation of a charged Clean Air Zone and will assess whether these are capable of achieving legal targets.

3.5.4 In the event that a charging clean air zone is required, some of the key issues for consultation will be:

- Reduced Rates/Exemptions for certain categories of vehicle
- Impacted sectors
- The impact of a charged zone on adjacent road networks  
Diverted traffic route  
feedback
- Operating times

3.5.5 A list of proposed stakeholders can be found listed in the attached table (Appendix 1).

3.5.6 Key stakeholders range from local to national (e.g. experts, businesses, political influencers/decision makers, RTA, Unions, government organisations, NHS, Public sector bodies, higher education, businesses and homes within the zones, internal departments etc Chamber of Commerce, YCA, SMEs etc). Those located within the directly impacted area(s) should also be consulted in advance to inform them that their business/residence may be affected.

3.5.7 Categorise the importance of communication and access to information as some consultees may need specialist communication routes.

- 3.5.8 Regular liaison with key stakeholders will be necessary via private briefings, workshops and/or third party events.
- 3.5.9 Consideration needs to take place beyond Leeds Boundaries – Consultation should encompass all neighbouring authorities, at the minimum.
- 3.5.10 The consultation plan will be supported by a targeted and coordinated communications and marketing plan. The plan will complement the two tiered approach and enable us to effectively reach and engage the wider public, residents, business community and key stakeholders. The plan will include cost effective strategies using a variety of media channels with a strong social media presence.
- 3.5.11 The following approach is suggested for consideration during this consultation, and reflects similar approaches for previous consultations:
- Branding Strategy – lead with Leeds City Council supported by Clean Air Leeds brand
  - Press and Media – Media briefings, reactive and proactive responses, interviews, social media
  - Multi-channel marketing strategies – including but not limited to outdoor, digital, social, print, web
  - E-mail Marketing
  - Direct Mail
  - Stakeholder events, workshops and drop in sessions at community hubs
  - Member and internal briefings
- 3.5.12 It is essential that we develop timely, clear and consistent messages throughout the consultation process and explain how the public can have their say and get involved.
- 3.5.13 A detailed approach will be produced once the preferred option for the Air Quality Solution is known moving forward.

## **4. Corporate considerations**

### **4.1 Consultation and engagement**

- 4.1.1 The consultation plan is being presented to scrutiny and will form part of the Executive Board report, planned for submission in autumn 2017.

### **4.2 Equality and diversity / cohesion and integration**

- 4.2.1 An Equality, Cohesion and Diversity Impact (ECDI) Assessment will be conducted once the preferred option for the Air Quality Solution has been selected.

### **4.3 Council policies and best council plan**

- 4.3.1 The consultation is a necessary component for further projects that are supporting the council's breakthrough project on cutting carbon and improving air quality.

#### **4.4 Resources/Costs and value for money**

4.4.1 The following internal partners will be leading and supporting the consultation process:

- Communications Team
- Web Team
- Intelligence and Policy Team
- Cutting Carbon and Improving Air Quality Programme Team

4.4.2 Funding for the consultation will be taken from a general reserve for clean air initiatives.

#### **4.5 Legal implications**

4.5.1 The various stages of informal and Statutory Consultation will shape the final scheme that is to be implemented pursuant to the Transport Act 2000.

4.5.2 The Council is in the process of seeking advice of Counsel with regards to the scope of solutions and consultation plan in accordance with the legislative requirements for the proposed scheme.

#### **4.6 Risk management**

4.6.1 A risk register will be developed and updated during the progress of the consultation once the preferred project(s) have been selected.

4.6.2 Current risks include meeting an expected timetable, keeping within budget and ensuring we adequately consult all affected stakeholders.

4.6.3 A key risk for Leeds is failure to achieve compliance with air quality standards as defined in EU directives, which have also been incorporated into national legislation. The government has indicated that leaving the EU will not affect its commitment to achieve the targets. It is unclear, however, what the exit from the EU might mean in terms of the implications for infraction fines if targets are not met. As it stands failure would mean that significant infraction fines could be passed to the local authority by the government utilising the Localism Act. Consequently air quality is included on the Corporate Risk Register and is reviewed by CLT four times a year.

### **5. Conclusions**

5.1 Whilst there will be few people who will deny the importance of air quality to health and the desirability of reducing emissions, the measures that may be required to achieve the rapid improvement to achieve compliance are likely to be controversial.

5.2 The consultation will encourage feedback about the proposed measures to improve air quality and achieve compliance and we will respond by:

- Preparing a table of responses with dates to show when they were received and when and what we responded with
- Frequently asked questions and answers
- We will look to summarise key findings within a report once the closing date has expired.

5.3 Data will be analysed and results submitted to the Executive Board in early 2018.

5.4 The analysis and findings will be made available on the relevant website.

## **6. Recommendation**

6.1 Members of the Environment, Housing and Communities Scrutiny Board are asked to consider and provide any comment on the proposed consultation process for the implementation of an Air Quality Solution in Leeds.

## **7. Background documents<sup>1</sup>**

7.1. None used

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<sup>1</sup> The background documents listed in this section are available to download from the Council's website, unless they contain confidential or exempt information. The list of background documents does not include published works.