

TRAFFIC, ENVIRONMENT & COMMUNITY SAFETY SCRUTINY PANEL

MINUTES OF A MEETING of the Traffic, Environment & Community Safety Scrutiny Panel held on Tuesday 23 October 2012 at 4pm in Conference Room K, 2nd Floor, The Civic Offices, Portsmouth.

(NB These minutes should be read in conjunction with the agenda for the meeting which can be found at www.portsmouth.gov.uk).

Present

Councillor Caroline Scott (Chair)
Ken Ellcome (Standing Deputy for Neill Young)
Phil Smith
Sandra Stockdale (Vice Chair)

Officers

Richard Lee, Environmental Health Manager
Redouan Sadak, Environmental Protection Officer

23 Apologies for Absence (AI 1).

Apologies were received from Councillor Neill Young.

24 Declarations of Members' Interests (AI 2).

Councillor Ellcome declared a personal, non-prejudicial interest: his wife works for Environment & Transport.

25 Minutes of the meeting held on 25 September 2012 (AI 3).

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Traffic, Environment & Community Safety Scrutiny Panel held on 25 September 2012 be confirmed as a correct record.

26 Air Quality in Portsmouth (AI 4).

Mr Lee, Environmental Health Manager and Mr Sadak, Environmental Protection Officer gave a presentation, a copy of which is attached to these minutes as appendix one. In response to questions from the panel, the following points were clarified:

All likely sources of pollution in the city were initially screened following the prescribed Review and Assessment process. Sources with high levels at relevant exposures are assessed further following DEFRA's prescribed method known as Detailed Assessment. As road traffic was identified as the main source of nitrogen dioxide, this was identified as the main air pollutant locally and a Detailed Assessment was carried out using dispersion modelling for the pollutant. This required numerous input data such as road traffic average speed, annual average daily traffic volume, percentage of Heavy Goods Vehicles (HGVs) and a meteorological file. A prediction of future air quality is then made for the target date.

Air pollution, mainly nitrogen dioxide and PM10, are monitored continuously at the following four locations:

- Gatcombe Park,
- London Road,
- Burfields Road,
- Mile End Road.

Nitrogen dioxide monitoring is however expanded locally to an additional 36 locations using diffusion tubes. This method of monitoring is based on a passive method through the exposure of a diffusion tube that contains a mesh which absorbs nitrogen dioxide. These tubes are sent for analysis to determine the level of nitrogen dioxide at each of the locations after a month's exposure.

The council carries out a co-location study where diffusion tubes are placed at each of the four continuous air quality monitoring stations. A bias correction is generated from this process which is applied to the results of the all 36 diffusion tube locations.

Detailed dispersion modelling is carried out using dispersion modelling software that predicts present and future air quality.

The results of air pollution predictions for future years are normally lower than the baseline year because the modelling software takes into account all emission factors, including the introduction of more efficient new cars and the removal of the older cars with worse emissions. These factors are reviewed by the Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (DEFRA) as and when necessary.

The outcome of this desktop study is compiled in a report in accordance with DEFRA's guidance. This report is a statutory requirement that is subjected to an appraisal by a qualified independent air quality practitioner/ consultant on behalf of DEFRA.

The panel was reminded that if the front of a building is within the predicted exceedance level, the whole building is included in the Air Quality Management Area (AQMA).

At the request of the panel, maps showing the AQMAs and the local authority housing stock were made available. The panel noted that in some areas local authority housing stock was considerable whilst in other such as AQMA 7 there was a complete absence. A table showing further details was supplied after the meeting and is attached to these minutes as appendix two.

Epidemiological studies showed that smaller particles in the ultrafine range tend to penetrate further into the gas exchange area of the lungs. However the toxicity of the particles depends on the nature of their components. The open question that remains to be answered is which component(s) of particles is (are) responsible for their observed effects on health.

A rubber processing company in the north of the city emits 1,3-Butadiene but not in sufficient amounts to cause concern.

The project that was mentioned at the previous meeting to optimise the use of existing traffic management systems is due to go out to tender next month.

The bus priority route from Horndean to the Hard was discussed.

Work has been successfully carried out to divert HGVs in the north of London Road and around the port. This has been effective at reducing the air pollution levels in these areas but not in significant quantities. Further measures are required to reduce pollution levels and in particular nitrogen dioxide across the city.

New industry standards, ultra sulphur fuel, and more efficient engines have been introduced for shipping. These emissions are not considered to be a major source of air pollution. P&O was the largest shipping company operating the largest ferry service in Portsmouth.

It was reported in the news today that 50,000 new homes and businesses were planned in South East Hampshire.

A significant political push would be required to encourage a change of attitude towards air quality, as happened for climate change. Nitrogen dioxide and carbon dioxide have the same sources. The main difference is that poor air quality has a direct and immediate effect on the health of the person with relevant exposure whereas the effects of climate change are not so obvious at a local level.

The pollution haze above Portsmouth is caused by a temperature inversion that traps the pollution on stagnant, sunny days.

Mr Sadak has sole responsibility at the council for the Local Air Quality Management Process:

- Air quality monitoring;
- Air quality review and assessment;
- Reporting statutory returns to DEFRA
- Appraising air quality assessment reports submitted as part of the planning application process for developments that are likely to have an impact on local air quality.

The council is currently working on a large scale project that is funded through the local sustainable transport grant. This will address many issues and will include the establishment for cycling hubs on the south western side of the city.

The council also issues environmental permits for industry in order to monitor emissions. These are reviewed every four years for a fee.

Details of smoke control zones are available on the council's website. Having the Environment and Transport (E&T) portfolios under one head of service is important as it works closely with the Environmental Health service

in many ways e.g. the data submitted for planning applications is assessed by the E&T service before it is considered by the Environmental Health service. However, the Environmental Health service has more of an enforcement role and therefore to ensure that this is not lost it is better to be slightly removed from E&T.

Members discussed electric cars and noted that the range of electric cars is improving but these currently cost twice the price of petrol and diesel cars. The council considered installing charging points in the city, however not enough cars were registered for it to be viable. The council disposed of its electric car because of the high cost to replace the battery.

Officers commented that the impact of electric cars is not as environmentally friendly as it could be as the electricity is generated from fossil-fuelled power stations. However, the technology exists to improve alternative fuel cars it just needs investment from the government.

The meeting concluded at 5:45pm.