

**Title of meeting:** Cabinet Member for Traffic and Transport Decision Meeting

**Subject:** Portsmouth Clean Air Zone Update

**Date of meeting:** 16<sup>th</sup> July 2020

**Report by:** Tristan Samuels, Director of Regeneration

**Wards affected:** All

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## **1. Purpose of the Report**

- 1.1 To provide an update on the progress of the development and delivery of Portsmouth's Clean Air Zone.

## **2. Background**

- 2.1 On 31<sup>st</sup> October 2020 Portsmouth City Council submitted its Local Air Quality Plan Outline Business Case (OBC) to government's Joint Air Quality Unit (JAQU) in fulfilment of the Ministerial Direction issued to PCC on 4th October 2018. This ministerial direction required PCC to conduct a technical study and develop a plan setting out the measures that would be implemented in the city to reduce concentrations of nitrogen dioxide (NO<sub>2</sub>) to within legal limits in the shortest possible time.
- 2.2 Per the requirements set out by JAQU, Portsmouth's OBC made the case for the delivery of measures that would be effective in reducing NO<sub>2</sub> emissions from road traffic sources. The plan was informed by detailed transport and air quality modelling which demonstrated that non-charging measures would not be sufficient to achieve the reduction of air pollution needed in the city. Therefore options for a charging Clean Air Zone (CAZ) were considered.
- 2.3 As set out in the report to Cabinet on 29<sup>th</sup> October 2019, the final package of measures that were included within the OBC included a Class B CAZ, accompanied by a number of non-charging measures and support packages. Specifically, the OBC concluded that the following measures would be required to deliver legal compliance with NO<sub>2</sub> limit values in the city:
- Class B CAZ covering a small area in the southwest of Portsea Island (this will issue a daily charge to the most polluting buses, coaches, taxis, private hire vehicles and heavy goods vehicles for driving within the zone);
  - Improvements to strategic cycle routes;
  - Review of car parking availability;

- Changes to traffic signal timings on Alfred Road;
- Tightening of taxi licensing requirements for taxi and private hire vehicles;
- Financial support towards upgrade or replacement of non-compliant vehicles;
- Delivery of anti-idling and behaviour change communication activities;
- Incentives to encourage use of public transport.

2.4 Following submission of the OBC on 31st October 2019, government ministers confirmed approval of the OBC on 25th March 2020. However, not all of the measures proposed by PCC in the OBC were supported, including the proposed improvements to strategic cycling routes in the city and incentives to encourage the use of public transport. These measures were not supported by JAQU because they were considered not to be essential in achieve compliance. JAQU's view was that legal levels of nitrogen dioxide can be reached without these measures.

2.5 The measures approved by government and which have received funding for delivery are:

- Class B CAZ covering a small area in the southwest of Portsea Island (this will issue a daily charge to the most polluting buses, coaches, taxis, private hire vehicles and heavy goods vehicles for driving within the zone);
- Review of car parking to consider availability and charges;
- Changes to traffic signal timings on Alfred Road;
- Tightening of taxi licensing requirements for taxi and private hire vehicles;
- Financial support towards upgrade or replacement of non-compliant vehicles (funded through a successful bid to the government's Clean Air Fund).

2.5 In approving the OBC government have issued PCC with a forth ministerial direction requiring the council to implement a Class B CAZ and the approved measures as soon as possible and at least in time to bring forward compliance to 2022.

### **3. Update on Progress**

3.1 Since the OBC was submitted work has continued on the refinement of the proposed measures. This includes preparing a public consultation, developing a full business case and on undertaking a procurement process to secure a supplier to design and deliver the charging CAZ.

#### Public Consultation

3.3 The public consultation aims to engage the general public and those likely to be subject to a CAZ charge. It has the following objectives:

- To obtain feedback on the operation of the CAZ (including hours of operation, exemptions, sunset periods etc.);
- To gauge interest and preferred eligibility criteria for financial support packages available through the Clean Air Fund; and
- To gain further insight into the travel behaviour in Portsmouth's residents to help shape the communications and marketing campaign.

- 3.4 The public consultation was planned to launch early in 2020 once the OBC was approved by government. However, as the approval of the OBC was delayed until 25<sup>th</sup> March, it was deemed appropriate to postpone the consultation until after the local elections that were due to take place in May 2020.
- 3.5 In light of the COVID-19 pandemic all PCC consultation activity was ceased and the public consultation for the CAZ was again put on hold. As the government eases lockdown restrictions PCC will commence public consultations. Therefore the consultation on the CAZ is due to commence in July and will be open to responses for six weeks. It will take the form of a questionnaire and industry specific virtual focus groups.
- 3.6 The public consultation will be open to all residents, visitors and businesses in Portsmouth and the surrounding areas. We would be particularly interested in hearing from those who drive, or whose businesses rely upon the use of buses, coaches, taxis, private hire vehicles and heavy goods vehicles. More information about the consultation can be found at [www.portsmouth.gov.uk](http://www.portsmouth.gov.uk) and searching for 'air quality'.

Procurement of a charging CAZ supplier

- 3.7 A procurement exercise has been undertaken to establish a multi supplier framework for the provision of Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) camera hardware, software and associated services. Through this procurement exercise the highest ranked supplier has been selected to work with PCC on the design, delivery and operation of the charging CAZ in Portsmouth.
- 3.8 The supplier selected to design and deliver Portsmouth charging CAZ is Siemens who are experienced in the supply of ANPR cameras for road user charging schemes. This includes for the Ultra-Low Emission Zone (ULEZ) in London and for the charging clean Air Zones that are due to launch in Leeds and Birmingham in early 2021.

Impact of COVID-19 on the CAZ

- 3.7 As noted in section 3.5 above, COVID-19 has impacted the delivery timetable for the public consultation. This will likely cause delays to the development of, and submission to JAQU, of the full business case (FBC). At the point of submitting the OBC for approval, it was anticipated that the FBC would be ready for submission in November 2020, however JAQU have been informed that the submission of the FBC will now be in December 2020.
- 3.8 Despite the delay to the consultation and the development of the FBC caused by COVID-19 PCC still has a legal requirement to reduce air pollution to within specified limits in 2022, and to do this through delivering a charging CAZ in the city. Therefore the charging CAZ is still on track to come into operation in late 2021 as outlined in the OBC.

- 3.9 Since the government introduced lockdown measures in March 2020 there have been reductions in road traffic in the city and increases in levels of cycling and walking. As has been demonstrated in the short term air quality monitoring data, this reduction in road traffic has correlated with reduced concentrations of NO<sub>2</sub>. Whilst it is not expected that such lockdown travel trends will extend into the COVID-19 recovery period, it is anticipated that there will be some changes in travel behaviour and renewal of the vehicle fleet. This will likely have a longer term impact on NO<sub>2</sub> concentrations in the city.
- 3.10 To consider the likely impact of COVID-19 on future compliance with legal limits for NO<sub>2</sub>, sensitivity tests are being carried out on the air quality modelling that was undertaken for the OBC. These tests will consider the economic consequences of COVID-19 by reducing the rate at which the local vehicle fleet naturally renews over the coming year. The tests will also consider the impact that increased home working could have on levels of traffic on the road. All local authorities working on Local Air Quality Plans are undertaking such sensitivity tests, the results of which will be shared with JAQU for review.

Next Steps

- 3.11 The public consultation on the changing CAZ commences in July. The feedback gathered from this process will be used to prepare the FBC and to develop the design for the charging CAZ. A report will be presented to this committee in September to outline the feedback that has been received through the consultation process and how this has been applied to the FBC.

Signed by (Director)

**Background list of documents: Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972**

The following documents disclose facts or matters, which have been relied upon to a material extent by the author in preparing this report:

Title of document	Location
Ministerial Direction- October 2018	<a href="https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/744442/quality-no2-plan-direction-2018-feasibility-study2.pdf">https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/744442/quality-no2-plan-direction-2018-feasibility-study2.pdf</a>
Cabinet Report- 29 <sup>th</sup> October 2019	<a href="https://democracy.portsmouth.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=126&amp;MId=4402&amp;Ver">https://democracy.portsmouth.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=126&amp;MId=4402&amp;Ver</a>

Ministerial Direction- 25 <sup>th</sup> March 2020	<a href="https://www.thegazette.co.uk/notice/3582637">https://www.thegazette.co.uk/notice/3582637</a>
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