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| Subject: | DAERA public discussion into a Clean Air Strategy for Northern Ireland. |
| Date: | 9 th February 2021 |
| Reporting Officer: | Siobhan Toland, Director of City Services, City and Neighbourhood Services Department |
| Contact Officer: | Vivienne Donnelly, City Protection Manger, City and Neighbourhood Services Department. |

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| Restricted Reports | |
| Is this report restricted? | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted? | |
| After Committee Decision | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| After Council Decision | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Some time in the future | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Never | <input type="checkbox"/> |

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| Call-in | |
| Is the decision eligible for Call-in? | Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> |

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| 1.0 | Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues |
| 1.1 | The Committee is advised that the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) have recently commenced a consultation exercise, in the form of a public discussion document, into a new Clean Air Strategy for Northern Ireland. |
| 1.2 | DAERA have stated that the purpose of the public discussion document is to provoke discussion towards policy options that could contribute to meeting the challenges associated with achieving outcomes 2, 4 and 12 of the Northern Ireland Civil Service 'Outcomes Delivery Plan', ' <i>we live and work sustainably - protecting the environment</i> ', ' <i>we enjoy long, healthy, active lives</i> '; and ' <i>we give our children and young people the best start in life</i> ' respectively. |

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| 1.3 | This report therefore serves to provide to Committee for consideration, proposed responses to the 29 questions that DAERA have posed throughout the seven thematic chapters of the Clean Air Strategy for Northern Ireland Public Discussion document. |
| 2.0 | Recommendations |
| 2.1 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Committee is requested to consider proposed responses to the 29 questions posed by DAERA as part of the public discussion process, summarised in Appendix 1 to this report and detailed in full within Appendix 2. • The Committee is further requested to recommend that Appendix 1 and 2 responses be both submitted to DAERA by the Belfast City Council consultation deadline of 15th March 2021. |
| 3.0 | Main report |
| | <u>Key Issues</u> |
| 3.1 | In commencing a public discussion exercise into options for a new Clean Air Strategy for Northern Ireland, DAERA have advised that clean air is vital for human health and for our natural environment but increasingly, research is showing that the effects of ambient air pollution on human health are more complex and widespread than previously thought. |
| 3.2 | To that end, DAERA have advised that within Northern Ireland, we face similar issues with ambient air pollution to the rest of the UK and Europe; most notably, concentrations of nitrogen dioxide (NO ₂) found in urban areas, arising principally from road traffic and particularly from diesel engined vehicles. |
| 3.3 | The Committee will be aware that the Council has declared four Air Quality Management Areas across the city encompassing major arterial road transport routes for exceedences of Air Quality Strategy objectives for nitrogen dioxide (NO ₂). The AQMAs cover the M1 Motorway / A12 Westlink corridor, the Ormeau Road, the Upper Newtownards Road and Cromac Street to the junction with East Bridge Street and then from East Bridge Street to the junction with the Ravenhill and Albertbridge Roads and Short Strand. |
| 3.4 | The Committee will also be aware that the Council has developed a series of Air Quality Action Plans for the city, in pursuit of the nitrogen dioxide air quality objectives, incorporating actions from our competent authority transport partners including the Department for Infrastructure, Translink, Northern Ireland Railways, Sustrans, the Road Haulage Association and the Freight Transport Association, etc. The Council has also included information on the actions that it can take to address transport emissions, including |

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| | introduction of the Belfast Bikes public cycle hire scheme and 'greening' its own vehicle fleet, etc. |
| 3.5 | In addition to nitrogen dioxide issues in urban areas, DAERA have also highlighted that issues persist around emissions from household heating and from agriculture. |
| 3.6 | DAERA have advised that Northern Ireland has not had its own dedicated Clean Air Strategy before now and that the public discussion document has set forth a wide range of policy options that are based on research, examples of best practice elsewhere, and on the basis of the air quality problems that are facing Northern Ireland. |
| 3.7 | The public discussion document therefore incorporates a comprehensive review of current ambient air quality policy and legislation within Northern Ireland and invites views on possible solutions to take forward further improvements in ambient air quality. |
| 3.8 | Accordingly, the public discussion document incorporates 7 chapters and 29 specific questions covering the background to ambient air pollution issues, including; (i) the sources and effects of ambient air pollution; (ii) transport; (iii) household emissions; (iv) agriculture emissions; (v) industrial emissions; (vi) local air quality management and; (vii) communication. |
| 3.9 | The Committee is therefore advised that the public discussion document raises issues around the introduction of legally binding WHO targets for particulate matter, about further expanding the Northern Ireland air quality monitoring network, about discouraging the uptake of biomass and about linking noise, climate change and air quality action plans. In addition, the public discussion document asks about the introduction of low emission zones, vehicle charging cordons and the uptake of electric vehicles. With regard to domestic emissions, the discussion document asks about extending smoke control areas and controlling the fuels that can be supplied. The discussion document also asks about controlling ammonia emissions and emissions from industry. Finally, the public discussion document poses questions around revising the local air quality management regime for Northern Ireland and about the creation of a Northern Ireland Air Quality Forum and better raising awareness of ambient air quality issues. |
| 3.10 | In developing responses to the various questions posed throughout the public discussion document, the Committee is advised that the views of relevant Council Departments and |

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| | Operational Units have been sought and where obtained, those views have been incorporated into the responses provided at Appendices 1 and 2 to this report. |
| 3.11 | The Committee is advised that Appendix 1 provides an overview of proposed responses to the public discussion document to assist in Committee consideration of this matter, whereas Appendix 2 provides detailed responses to the public discussion document. |
| 3.12 | Financial & Resource Implications. None |
| 3.13 | Equality or Good Relations Implications / Rural Needs Assessments. None. |
| 4.0 | Appendices – Documents Attached |
| | <p>Appendix 1 – Summary of proposed Belfast City Council responses to the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs Clean Air Strategy for Northern Ireland. A Public Discussion Document. November 2020.</p> <p>Appendix 2 – Proposed Belfast City Council detailed responses to the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs Clean Air Strategy for Northern Ireland. A Public Discussion Document. November 2020</p> |