



Subject:	Update on Progress with Development of a new Air Quality Action Plan and concerning the Detailed Assessment for Fine Particulate Matter (PM _{2.5}) and Nitrogen Dioxide (NO ₂) for Belfast City.
Date:	13 th April 2021
Reporting Officer:	Siobhan Toland, Director of City Services
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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"/>
Sometime in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>
Never	<input type="checkbox"/>

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

1.0	Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues
1.1	The Committee will be aware that Council Air Quality staff have been working with Competent Authorities and other partner organisations within the city to develop a new 5-year Air Quality Action Plan for Belfast covering the period 2021-2026.
1.2	A paper was presented to the remote Committee meeting of 9 th February 2021 detailing a list of proposed actions that the Council and our partner organisations are proposing to implement throughout the duration of the new Action Plan in order to address the few remaining nitrogen dioxide (NO ₂) hotspots within our Air Quality Management Areas and to improve ambient air quality generally for the city.

1.3	<p>Since that remote Committee meeting, Air Quality staff and our partners have continued development of the new Air Quality Action Plan, including arrangements for consultation and engagement on the requirements of the new plan.</p>
1.4	<p>Members may recall that following a previous air quality update report, presented to the Committee meeting on Tuesday 8th September 2020 (agenda item 7a), the Committee agreed consultation and engagement in respect of the new Belfast City Air Quality Action Plan and noted the comments to include engagement with communities and business interests and specifically the West Belfast Taxi Consortium.</p>
1.5	<p>This report serves therefore to present final proposals for consultation and engagement on the new Belfast City Air Quality Action Plan 2021-2026 for Members consideration and approval.</p>
1.6	<p>This report additionally serves to provide, from paragraph 3.1 onwards, a brief update to Committee on progress with the Detailed Assessment for Fine Particulate Matter (PM_{2.5}) and Nitrogen Dioxide (NO₂) and concerning the ambient monitoring component of this project.</p>
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	<p>The Committee are invited to;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider and approve the proposals for consultation and engagement on the new Belfast City Air Quality Action Plan 2021-2026. • Identify any additional specific groups to be included within the proposed consultation and engagement process. • Agree that a report will be provided to the 11th May 2021 remote meeting of the Committee concerning ambient monitoring aspects of the Detailed Assessment project and that Council Air Quality staff and representatives from AECOM, the appointed consultant, will attend that meeting in order to answer Member questions or queries concerning the ambient monitoring proposals.

3.0	Main report
3.1	<p><u>Key Issues.</u></p> <p>Proposals for consultation and engagement on the new Belfast City Air Quality Action Plan 2021-2026.</p> <p>Part III of the Environment Order (Northern Ireland) 2002 establishes statutory requirements for Northern Ireland district councils to periodically review and assess ambient air quality within their districts, for the designation of Air Quality Management Areas when health based air quality objectives are not being achieved, and for the development and consultation on Air Quality Action Plans.</p>
3.2	<p>'Schedule 2 Air Quality: Supplemental Provisions' of the Order advises in relation to consultation requirements that a district council, in carrying out its functions in relation to the preparation of an Action Plan shall consult the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA); each district council whose district is contiguous to the council's district; such competent authorities exercising functions in, or in the vicinity of, the council's district as the council may consider appropriate; such bodies or persons appearing to the council to be representative of persons with business interests in the district to which the action plan relates as the council may consider appropriate and; such other bodies or persons as the council may consider appropriate.</p>
3.3	<p>Moreover, the Defra template being employed for development of the new Air Quality Action Plan 2021-2026 contains a section for reporting on the outworkings of any consultation process and stakeholder engagement. As part of the template, councils are required to provide a summary of their engagement activities, including for example, websites used, articles in local newspapers and examples of any questionnaires distributed to households. In addition, the final Action Plan must include a section summarising responses to any consultation or stakeholder engagement, together with an explanation of the reasons for not pursuing action plan measures, taking account of stakeholder views or comments.</p>
3.4	<p>Considering the above-mentioned statutory consultation requirements, it is proposed that Belfast City Council will schedule a 12-week consultation and engagement exercise on the Air Quality Acton Plan 2021-2026, to include completion of an associated Equality Screening and Rural Needs Assessment. It is anticipated that the consultation and engagement exercise will run from 10th May 2021 until 30th July 2021.</p>

3.5	<p>As part of the consultation and engagement exercise, the Council will consult directly with DAERA and relevant Competent Authorities concerning the new Air Quality Action Plan. It should be noted however that the Competent Authorities are represented on the Air Quality Action Planning Steering Group that developed the new Action Plan and that they have contributed the majority of the Action Plan measures. It should also be noted that some Competent Authorities will themselves be required to undertake separate consultation exercises on the measures that they have proposed. Consultation and engagement on the Air Quality Action Plan will therefore be undertaken in a manner so as not to replicate any consultation exercises being undertaken by partner organisations. We will however encourage our partner organisations to publicise the Council's consultation and engagement exercise through their various fora.</p>
3.6	<p>In addition, Belfast City Council will provide copies of the Air Quality Action Plan to Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council, Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council and Ards and North Down Borough Council in order to obtain their views.</p>
3.7	<p>In respect of bodies or persons appearing to the Council to be representative of persons with business interests in the district to which Action Plan relates, the Committee has already identified the West Belfast Taxi Consortium. The Committee is invited however to identify any further business interests that should be specifically consulted and engaged concerning the new Air Quality Action Plan.</p>
3.8	<p>Whilst not identified as a specific consultee within Schedule 2 of the Environment Order (Northern Ireland) 2002, the Council intends to seek the views of the general public in Belfast on the new Air Quality Action Plan in order to address the Committee requirement for community engagement. It is proposed that public consultation and engagement will be facilitated via an article in the June 2021 edition of City Matters, via a tailored social media campaign and through an online consultation and engagement exercise delivered via the Council's '<i>Your Say Belfast</i>' engagement hub.</p>
3.9	<p>Air Quality staff have already received requests from some Councillors for engagement with specific Community Groups as part of the Action Plan consultation and engagement process. In view of likely continuing Covid-19 restrictions, it is anticipated that engagement of this nature could be achieved through the use of online meeting tools such as Microsoft Teams, Zoom or equivalent. Accordingly, the Committee is invited to identify any additional</p>

	<p>Community or other groups to be included within this aspect of the proposed public consultation and engagement exercise.</p>
3.10	<p>At the conclusion of the consultation and engagement exercise, Air Quality staff will analyse the findings of the various surveys and submissions, provide feedback to our partners and agree any necessary final revisions to the Air Quality Action Plan 2021-2026. The completed Action Plan will then be submitted to Defra for technical appraisal, ahead of formal adoption and implementation. A further progress report will be provided to Committee at this time.</p>
3.11	<p>Update on Progress with the Detailed Assessment for Fine Particulate Matter (PM_{2.5}) and Nitrogen Dioxide (NO₂).</p> <p>By way of a brief update on progress concerning the detailed assessment for fine particulate matter (PM_{2.5}) and nitrogen dioxide (NO₂), Members may recall from the, '<i>Update on Local Air Quality Management Matters</i>' paper (agenda item 8b) presented to the 12th January 2021 remote Committee meeting, that a tender exercise was underway with a view to appointing a contractor to deliver the detailed assessment project from early 2021. The Committee is advised that as a result of the competitive tender exercise, AECOM has since been appointed to deliver the detailed assessment project.</p>
3.12	<p>Members may additionally recall that the detailed assessment project comprises three principal technical components; additional ambient monitoring across the city for fine particulate matter (PM_{2.5}) and nitrogen dioxide (NO₂), development of an emissions inventory to characterise significant emission sources of these pollutants within the city area and atmospheric dispersion modelling for the city area in order to generate spatial and temporal predictions for nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) and fine particulate matter (PM_{2.5}) concentrations that can be compared with national and European air quality standards and World Health Organisation air quality guideline values.</p>
3.13	<p>Having now concluded initial contractual arrangements with AECOM, Council Air Quality staff have recently commenced preliminary discussions with AECOM representatives in order to determine suitable locations for installation of the additional ambient monitoring equipment. The monitors are to be installed, having regard to the relevant public exposure requirements outlined within the government's local air quality management technical guidance document (LAQM.TG(16)). However, in order to afford Committee with an opportunity to consider the monitoring locations currently proposed by AECOM and to provide input into final locations, it is proposed that a report concerning ambient monitoring proposals will be presented to the</p>

3.14	<p>11th May 2021 remote Committee meeting. It is additionally proposed that AECOM and Council Air Quality staff will attend the remote meeting in order to respond to any questions or queries that Members may have.</p> <p><u>Financial & Resource Implications.</u></p> <p>Development and delivery of the proposed consultation and engagement exercise is to be undertaken by Air Quality and Business Research and Development staff from within existing resources.</p> <p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications / Rural Needs Assessments.</u></p>
3.15	<p>An Equality Screening and a Rural Needs Assessment are to be undertaken as components of the consultation and engagement exercise on the Air Quality Action Plan 2021-2026.</p>
4.0	Appendices – Documents Attached
	None