

Walsall Council

1.0 Public Health and Licensing Activity

- 1.1 Walsall Council's Transformation project "Shaping a Sustainable Healthy Environment" focuses on improving residents health through their environment and has 4 key themes:

- Where we live
- Where we play
- Where we eat
- Where we travel

- 1.2 Membership of this Board includes officers from Public Health, Transport, Planning, Environmental Health, Resources, Clean Green, Housing and Procurement.

- 1.3 A Transport and Health Sub Group focussing on "where we travel" includes officers from Transport, West Midlands Combined Authority, Transport, West Midlands, Licensing and Public Health and aims to pool expertise and develop programmes of work to ensure better use of Walsall's transport network, particularly in the promotion of healthy living.

- 1.4 There is a detailed action plan and indicators. Those that contribute to air quality are:

- Increase the number of electric vehicle charging points within the authority by March 2019. Walsall Council have submitted a bid to the European Regional Development Fund under the priority 'supporting the shift towards a low carbon economy' which will increase the number of electric charging points in the borough.
- Actions to increase modal share of active and sustainable travel acknowledging the Cycle Charter Target of an increase in cycle mode share to 5% of all trips by 2023 and 10% of all trips by 2033 with key actions

While there are a range of actions being delivered in Walsall in relation to this, one example of some recent activity to promote cycling in Walsall and to highlight the benefits that cycling brings to the environment as well as to health and the local economy was a recent campaign of activity as part of national Bike Week 2018 (9-17 June 2018). The campaign was promoted through a dedicated cycle to Work Day on 15th June. This involved employees across Walsall Council and partners (including Police and Fire Service) cycling from various places across the West Midlands into

Walsall. The opportunity was used to gather insights on local cycle routes and whether cyclists would consider cycling to work again. 80% of employees including half who were not regular cyclists reported that they would.

- We also promoted the official Cycle to Work Day 15th August and asked partners to do the same

1.5 As part of a comprehensive approach to the ongoing promotion of cycling in Walsall we will be:

- Planning a Walsall Green Spaces Event in 2019 to be held in conjunction with the launch of the Bikeshare Scheme
- Promoting existing Walsall Council Services to support cycling:
 - Pool Bike Scheme – Bikes available for staff to travel to and from meetings.
 - Cycle to Work Initiative - enables Walsall Council to lease bikes and associated safety equipment to their employees through what's called salary sacrifice.
 - Cycle mileage – option for cycle mileage to be claimed by staff

1.6 In partnership with the WMCA, £6 million has been identified to develop the A34 Sprint Cycling route in to Walsall.

1.7 **Public Health – Pollution Control Partnership:** The impact of air pollutants (PM2.5) on acute care admissions for chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) has been investigated. From April 2016-December 2017, monthly PM2.5 levels ranged from 6.99-18.36 g/m3, and positively correlated with COPD admissions. Peak pollutant levels, observed in January 2017, corresponded with an excess of 53 admissions compared to the baseline, representing an 11.3% increase. The estimated cost to the local NHS economy of these excess admissions during this single month was £123,483, non-inclusive of the wider social and economic costs.

Some of the highest levels of pollutants were observed in areas of high deprivation, which also accounted disproportionately for COPD admissions. The link between clean air and better emotional and mental well-being is well-evidenced. Therefore, reducing air pollution is imperative to achieving a healthier and fairer society.

Current work involves expanding the data collection system and including other emission indicators to allow for enhanced modelling.

1.8 We are looking to submit a research bid to evaluate the impact of air quality alerts on health and health service usage of people with respiratory conditions in Walsall.

2.0 Highways and Environment Activity

- 2.1 Redressing poor air quality is a statutory function for the Council and is an important focus that spans multiple service areas. Recent activity includes:
- 2.2 **Targeted Feasibility Study:** Together with Dudley MBC, Sandwell MBC, Wolverhampton CC, Walsall Council were issued with a Ministerial Direction on 23 March 2018 to consider air quality mitigation measures that could bring forward compliance with the National Air Quality Objective (NAQO) for NO₂ in the shortest possible time, but by 2020. The Direction required the authority to submit a TFS to the government's Joint Air Quality Unit by 31 July 2018. Defra provided the Council with a £50,000 grant to complete the study which was undertaken jointly with the Black Country authorities. The Black Country TFS combined submission was completed on 31 July and the Council received a formal response from Defra on Friday 5 October (attached). Resulting from this, Dudley, Wolverhampton, Sandwell, Solihull, will use government funding to implement measures to improve air quality. This will be used, for example, to retrofit buses with technology to reduce emissions, traffic management measures and behavioural change campaigns to encourage individuals to take action.
- 2.3 **Walsall NO₂ Air Quality Management Area (AQMA):** The Walsall borough-wide AQMA for NO₂ came into effect on 1 April 2006, consolidating five previously declared AQMAs. It should be noted that, subject to on-going monitoring and reporting, there will possibly be opportunity within the next two to three years to review the extent of the AQMA to determine both its merits and extent. This will need to be considered alongside the AQMAs of neighbouring authorities and government change arising as a result of actions on behalf ClientEarth that have challenged actions and policies on air quality at a national level. Presently it is considered that there is insufficient evidence to modify the AQMA along with an inherent risk that any proposal to do so could be deemed premature by Defra.
- 2.4 **Walsall PM_{2.5} Study:** The Council also recognises concerns both locally and nationally regarding the health impacts of PM_{2.5}; importance to this is given by the inclusion of an Indicator in the Public Health Outcomes Framework'. This is intended to enable Directors of Public Health to prioritise action on air quality in their local area to help reduce the health burden from air pollution. The West Midlands currently reports a comparatively higher percentage fraction than the East Midlands, North East, North West, South East, South West and Yorkshire and Humberside regions, with an increasing trend showing since 2015. Within the West Midlands Walsall is marginally better than Birmingham, Coventry and Sandwell in regard to the reported percentage of adult mortality. As part of its statutory requirements to undertake monitoring and assessment of air quality, the Council is engaged in a project since 2015 to monitor and assess PM_{2.5} in the context of public health dis-benefits.

This has been driven by the revised 2016 Local Air Quality Management Policy Guidance which introduced a PM_{2.5} role for local authority air quality teams and qualified the role of Directors of Public Health, so that alongside measures to tackle other pollutants, they are also consider action if necessary to address PM_{2.5}, aligning the interests of environmental protection practitioners with those of public health officers.

- 2.5 **Birmingham Clean Air Zone (CAZ):** Birmingham City Council opened a public consultation on options for a CAZ for central Birmingham on 4 July 2018; the consultation ended on 17 August 2018 and the Council submitted a joint response with Dudley MBC and Wolverhampton CC that was been led by external consultants. Concern was raised regarding the displacement of 'dirtier' buses and taxi's into the surrounding area(s) as well as the use of the park and ride facilities.

- 2.6 **Economy & Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee:** At the 11 September 2018 meeting E&E OSC were provided with an update on how the Council continues to safeguard improvements in air quality and the current challenges the Council faces in tackling air pollution. The Chair of the Committee requested an update on how air quality can be improved in Walsall and the current challenges tackling air pollution. The Chair also asked for an update on the Clean Air Zone proposals for Birmingham with indications on how this may impact on Walsall and the wider Black Country. The report recommended that Members supported the application of Public Health approaches for sustainable travel. The OSC also resolved to establish an Air Quality Working

At the 16 October 2018 meeting E&E OSC were provided with an overview and update on a wide range of transport-related matters in the Borough. The Chair of the Committee requested a meeting to be focused on transport related matters within the Borough which included how the Council is promoting sustainable transport and low-emission vehicles; and how the Council is tackling air quality issues around schools.

- 2.7 **Tackling Air Pollution around Schools:** The A*STARS Programme helps to indirectly address poor air quality around schools by actively promoting sustainable transport for pupils i.e. discouraging parents from driving their children to school. A number of monitoring stations have been installed which has shown that there are no schools within areas where the Council is currently monitoring or predicting an exceedance of any air quality objective.
- 2.8 **Low Emission Vehicles and Electric Vehicle Charging:** The government is currently under pressure to bring forward a deadline and ban all sales of new petrol and diesel cars by 2032 following a report by a Parliament's business select committee. Government's current plan is to ensure all new cars are "effectively zero emission" by 2040. To assess the demand for electric vehicle (EV) charging infrastructure in residential areas a consultation exercise has recently been conducted, and following on from this, the Black Country local authorities are exploring the potential for direct action to facilitate uptake of clean vehicle technology across the Black Country.

The consultation results are intended to be used to build a package of incentives that will encourage prospective EV buyers to make the switch from conventionally fuelled vehicles. This will investigate bus lane access and parking incentives for Ultra-Low Emission Vehicles (ULEVs) while whilst focussing on the most appropriate locations for infrastructure, including exploring the potential for on-street residential charging. Work is also being considered to understand how partners can best use the workplace charging scheme grant to provide charging provision for employees and support the greening of fleet vehicles to minimise our impacts on the environment. Talks are ongoing with the national Go Ultra Low project to support their 2019/20 promotional campaign and events and promote EVs across the region.

- 2.9 Walsall Council is considering options for moving towards electric and/or hybrid technologies for its vehicle fleet. Whilst the technology is not sufficiently advanced for HGV vehicles, a pilot project for vans and couriers is actively being investigated, and is expected to commence in the next few months. Charging infrastructure will need to be installed at both the depot and Civic Centre to facilitate such a project. In the long-term, if the pilot project is successful, it is expected that vehicle replacement will increasingly be focused on ULEV vehicles.
- 2.11 **West Midlands Air Quality Improvement Programme (WM Air):** In a new regional air quality initiative, Walsall Council is to act as a project partner for the West Midlands Air Quality Improvement Programme (WM-Air) funded by the Natural Environment Research Council (NERC). This is part of a Regional Impact from Science of the Environment (RISE) initiative, led by Birmingham University. NERC is the UK's main funder of environmental science and co-ordinates key research projects tackling major environmental issues that have national and inter-national relevance. RISE aims to bring research organisations together with businesses, policy bodies and others contributing to economic development specific to their location, to deliver significant regional benefits. Working with a range of stakeholders across business and public sectors, WM-Air will seek to provide a better understanding of pollution sources and levels of pollution across the West Midlands Region, tapping into data and resources that have been collated and used by local authorities over many years. It will seek to examine the scientific challenges facing air quality specialists and provide a platform to support work to tackle poor air quality. Walsall Council already has a well-developed air quality model for the Black Country and has been engaged since 2016 in a Public Health funded study into fine particles and their health impacts which it is envisaged can feed into the WM Air work programme.

3.0 Planning Activity

3.1 Whilst pollution and environmental health legislation is concerned with the emissions from transport, industry and other activities, planning is concerned to try to help address air quality issues in 3 main ways.

1. To avoid locating sensitive receptors (especially such as medical facilities, schools and homes) in places where there is poor air quality.
2. Seeking to provide patterns of development that minimise vehicle emissions overall (notably by seeking to minimise the need to travel and to provide a choice of means of transport. In Walsall, this should mean concentrating activities in centres and in other accessible locations (even though that might lead to localised issues) as the alternative would be a more dispersed pattern of development (with higher vehicle emissions overall and adverse effects in terms of social inclusion and sustainable communities).
3. Seeking compensation or mitigation where developments (and the travel they might generate) would lead to adverse impacts on air quality.

In respect of these roles:

1. For example, in allocating land through the SAD, we took account of modelling of where in the borough toxic emissions from vehicles exceeded EU limits; see page 3 at <https://go.walsall.gov.uk/Portals/0/images/importeddocuments/sm5 - sad technical appendices assets and constraints maps updated november 2016 -2.pdf>
2. National Planning Policy in the NPPF provides a framework for sustainable development(, but we have developed a an approach for the Black Country through the Black Country Core Strategy which aims for sustainable and accessible and inclusive patterns of development. The Core Strategy was adopted in 2001 and is now under review: see https://go.walsall.gov.uk/language/en-us/environment/planning/planning_policy/local_plans/ldf_core_strategy
3. Besides the development strategy, the Core Strategy also contains a specific Policy (ENV8) on Air Quality, to allow the planning roles to be applied.
Policy: New residential or other sensitive development, such as schools, hospitals and care facilities, should, wherever possible, be located where air quality meets national air quality objectives. Where development is proposed in areas where air quality does not meet (or is unlikely to meet) air quality objectives or where significant air quality impacts are likely to be generated by the development, an appropriate air quality assessment will be required.

The assessment must take into account any potential cumulative impacts as a result of known proposals in the vicinity of the proposed development site, and should consider pollutant emissions generated by the development. If an assessment which is acceptable to the local authority indicates that a proposal will result in exposure to pollutant concentrations that exceed national air quality objectives, adequate and satisfactory mitigation measures which are capable of implementation must be secured before planning permission is granted.

4. Following work among Pollution Control officers (on the Low Emissions Towns and Cities Programme) the Black Country Councils worked together on a Supplementary Planning Document on Air Quality, to provide guidance on assessing air quality impacts and on what mitigation to require: https://go.walsall.gov.uk/Portals/0/images/importeddocuments/black_country_air_quality_spd.pdf

4.0 Other: Council meeting 12 November:

- 4.1 **Question to Council meeting 12 November 2018:** *“Could the portfolio holder inform me of what the Council is doing to support owners of electric vehicles and what measures the Council is taking to improve access to electric vehicle charging points”.*

Through the planning process, the Council already requires all new residential and commercial developments to have electric charging points provision and includes the necessary specifications, to enable many of the variable charging systems and cars to be accommodated. Information relating to the consultation being carried out along with the wider Black Country is explained elsewhere in this briefing. There will be two charging points in Walsall town centre installed before the end of this financial year. The principle of providing charging points in the Town Centre pay and display car parking has been approved. Funding to install a wider network of points remains challenging as there is a minimum of 25% local contribution required for grant funding.

- 4.2 **Notice of Motion to the Council meeting on 12 November 2018:** *“That from 1 January 2019, all new housing, new or replacement domestic garages and business/commercial planning applications to Walsall Council include the provision of an electric vehicle charging scheme”; and that any such scheme would not become binding on the applicant unless included by the local planning authority as a condition of any planning permission granted”*

The Motion was approved. The Black Country Air Quality Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) already requires all new residential and commercial developments to have electric charging points provision and includes the necessary specifications to enable many of variable charging systems and cars to be accommodated. There are occasions when this cannot be provided or is impracticable for example premises where there is no off road provision, communal facilities and flats etc. but provision is always a consideration and conditioned when appropriate.

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Department
for Environment
Food & Rural Affairs



Department
for Transport

Cllr Mike Bird

Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council
Civic Centre
Walsall
WS1 1TP

October 2018

Dear Cllr Bird,

We are writing to update you on your authority's recent air quality assessment regarding roadside concentration of nitrogen dioxide as required by a direction issued (by Dr Coffey) on 23rd March 2018.

The information you presented in your study indicated that one road link became compliant with legal limits in 2016 (a section of the A4148) and one road link had no public access (a section of the A463). For a further two road links the study considered a short list of measures but was unable to find any measures that would bring forward compliance with legal limits. Your study has completed our assessment and approvals process and we have approved this conclusion.

We would like to thank you and your officers for the hard work that has clearly gone into developing this study and assessment. Constant improvements in air quality are important for the people we all represent and for the environment. We look forward to continuing to work with you as you review and assess local air quality, in accordance with the statutory Local Air Quality Management (LAQM) guidance.

Yours sincerely,

DR THERESE COFFEY MP

JESSE NORMAN MP

