

COMMUNITIES CABINET ADVISORY BOARD

Wednesday, 11 July 2018

Present: Councillor Jane March (Chairman)
Councillors Weatherly (Vice-Chairman), Dr Basu, Ellis, Hill, Huggett, Nuttall,
Ms Palmer and Scholes

Officers in Attendance: Karin Grey (Sustainability Manager), Gary Stevenson (Head of Housing, Health and Environment) and Mark O'Callaghan (Democratic Services Officer)

Other Members in Attendance: None

APOLOGIES

COM11/18 Apologies were received from Councillors Elliott and Thomson.

DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

COM12/18 There were no disclosable pecuniary or significant other interests declared at the meeting.

NOTIFICATION OF VISITING MEMBERS WISHING TO SPEAK

COM13/18 There were no Visiting Members registered as wishing to speak.

MINUTES OF THE MEETING DATED 30 MAY 2018

COM14/18 Members reviewed the minutes. No amendments were proposed.

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting dated 30 May 2018 be approved as a correct record.

WORK PROGRAMME AS AT 03 JULY 2018

COM15/18 Members reviewed the work programme. It was noted that there would be an additional item added to the work programme, for consideration at the next meeting, regarding the retendering of the new waste recycling and street cleansing contract. Also, the final report of the Air Quality Action Plan, scheduled to return after the consultation to Cabinet in October, would be put back to February. This was largely due to the scale of work being greater than initially expected, delays from competing priorities and changes in government guidance.

RESOLVED – That the work programme dated 03 July 2018, subject to the amendments mentioned in the discussion, be noted.

DRAFT AIR QUALITY ACTION PLAN

COM16/18 Councillor Dr Basu and Karin Grey, Sustainability Manager, introduced the report which included the following comments:

- The new Plan covered the period 2018 to 2023 and was in draft form seeking permission to consult.
- Preparation of the draft Plan had involved a wide range of stakeholders, including KCC Highways, Transport Planning, Arriva buses and various teams around the Council.

- Many sources of research had informed the new Plan and these were referenced in the report.
- The Plan cross-referenced to several other Council policies and strategies, these were also referenced in the report.
- Two pollutants were key, particulates of up to 10 microns and Nitrogen Dioxide, which contributed to various health issues.
- Despite being refused a grant from the government to reduce air toxicity, the Council was taking steps to do what it could.
- The Council had a statutory duty to assess air quality and had been monitoring pollution for several years. There was an issue with Nitrogen Dioxide levels and further research was underway as to the specific forms of transport which were most contributing to the problem.
- An Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) had first been declared in 2005 and reviewed in 2011.
- The first Air Quality Action Plan (AQAP) had been adopted in 2010, many of the actions had been completed so this was an opportunity to review and revise the Plan in accordance with Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) guidance.
- It was proposed to amend the AQMA as set out at Appendix A to the report. The narrower boundary of the area was in line with new information on the dispersal of pollutants, easy of use in a Planning context and in accordance with DEFRA guidance. The shape of the AQMA would not impact on the actions to be taken.
- Good progress had been made, many of the actions from the 2010 AQAP, set out at Appendix B to the report for reference, had been completed.
- The new implementation plan of the AQAP was set out at Appendix C to the report, actions were proposed following collaborative workshops with a range of stakeholders under the headings of Transport, Planning and Public Health. These would be the basis of an eight-week public consultation including a number of statutory consultees before further workshops to finalise the Plan for Cabinet approval.
- The Plan also brought together or linked to some actions from other strategies and policies, the intention was to complement rather than to duplicate.
- Air quality was improving but it was important to improve further and maintain progress. Officers were looking to implement an Air Quality Protection Zone (AQPZ) through long term Planning policies. The AQAP was intended to reduce pollution to the point where the AQMA was no longer needed leaving the AQPZ to keep pollution at a low level.

The discussion included consideration of the following additional matters:

- Hawkhurst and Pembury were not included in the AQMA as recorded pollution was well below the statutory threshold of 40 micrograms per cubic metre. Actions taken to improve air quality in the AQMA would also benefit other areas of the Borough.
- KCC were consulting on bus services.
- The AQAP included a target on biodiversity and supporting the separate Green Infrastructure Plan which was better suited to dealing with issues around trees. Consideration to be given around the optimal type of trees and risk of a dense tree canopy

close to the road which could trap pollutants. This could be better highlighted within the report.

- Pollutants had been measured and found to disperse rapidly from the point of emission; the 80m buffer zone established in 2005 had been precautionary. Properties that were no longer within the AQMA would not be adversely affected as the pollutants did not reach them. The change would mean that in the case of planning applications for small developments there would no longer be a need to consult on the impact of air quality, however for larger developments there would still be the need to mitigate the impact of the traffic.
- The new boundary of the AQMA reflected the actual extent of where the pollutants exceeded the threshold and it would be contrary to DEFRA guidelines to extend it arbitrarily. However, the Council would continue to take actions to reduce pollution which would have benefits outside the defined area.
- There had not been any specific studies on the impact of air pollution on the schools in St. Johns, however, pollution had improved and was currently within the annual objective threshold. Public health was a KCC matter but the Council could in future measure the cost of illness using a new tool from Public Health England. Wider studies clearly highlight the health impacts of pollution, even below 40 micrograms, so the Council was committed to reducing pollution beyond the objective levels.
- Low emission vehicles would play an important role in reducing pollution but was not the sole solution. Active travel was also important and would have considerable additional benefits around physical activity including fitness and reducing obesity and diabetes.
- The pre-consultation workshops were for officers and intended to collate an initial set of actions. Following the consultation the workshops could be opened to interested Councillors provided the numbers attending did not become impractically large. There may be benefits for members to attend at an early stage and to reduce duplication; however, a Members' Briefing may be more effective.
- Planning Committee style 'short bite briefings' before Communities Cabinet Advisory Board meetings may be an effective and efficient method of involving Members. Wider consideration by the Leadership would be necessary as issues may be of interest beyond the membership of this committee.
- KCC were in the process of developing the Kent Tree Strategy which, along with the Green Infrastructure Plan, would address many of the concerns relating to a loss of trees. References to these documents could be strengthened in the report.
- Kent County Councillors through their Combined Member Grant could be a helpful source of funding for the replacement of lost trees.
- Nitrogen Dioxide diffusion tubes monitoring Nitrogen Dioxide levels were located around the borough and were checked monthly, data since 2010 was available. The Council reported annually to DEFRA an Annual Status Report, the latest report for 2017 was just about to be published and showed all the data from all the diffusion tubes. The Annual Status Report could be referenced within the report.

- Perceptible pollution, which was usually the source of complaints, was a result of larger particle pollution such as soot, diesel fumes and dust, this was not monitored locally. Nitrogen Dioxide and small particulate matter up to 10 microns was not usually perceptible but was measured and were a good indicator of other pollution types. Ozone was monitored but on a regional level. The actions in the Plan would have an impact on all types of pollution.

RESOLVED – That the recommendations in the report be supported subject to the following issues being taken into consideration:

- That the report include reference to the latest DEFRA Annual Status Report;
- That the report give greater emphasis on the links with the Green Infrastructure Plan; and
- That there be Councillor involvement in compiling the final Action Plan, after the consultation, through workshops or Member Briefings.

URGENT BUSINESS

COM17/18 There was no urgent business.

DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING AND SCHEDULED ITEMS

COM18/18 It was noted that the date of the next scheduled meeting was Wednesday 22 August 2018 at 6.30pm in Committee Room A, Town Hall, Tunbridge Wells.

The following items were scheduled (subject to change) to be discussed:

- Royal Tunbridge Wells Town Centre Business Improvement District
- Cultural Hub – Update and Fundraising
- Waste Recycling and Street Cleansing Contract

NOTES:

The meeting concluded at 7.15 pm.

An audio recording of this meeting is available on the Tunbridge Wells Borough Council website.