

RECORD OF EXECUTIVE DECISION

Tuesday, 20 December 2022

Decision No: (CAB 22/23 35685)

DECISION-MAKER:	CABINET
PORTFOLIO AREA:	Cabinet Member for Housing and the Green Environment
SUBJECT:	Air Quality Action Plan 2023 – 2028
AUTHOR:	Steve Guppy

THE DECISION

- (i) To formally adopt and implement the Air Quality Action Plan update as presented in Appendix 1.
- (ii) To delegate authority to the Director of Environment to introduce future revisions, including making minor amendments following consultation with the Cabinet Member Housing and the Green Environment and S151 officer, so that the plan is able to respond to both national and local changes.

REASONS FOR THE DECISION

Air quality remains the greatest environmental risk to health in the UK. Part VI of The Environment Act 1995 sets out the national air quality management framework. It broadly involves a requirement for local authorities to monitor and manage certain pollutants which may exceed national air quality objectives. This duty is referred to as the Local Air Quality Management (LAQM) regime.

In areas where persistent exceedances of objectives are monitored, Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs) must be defined and established by the local authority. In local authorities where AQMAs are established, an Air Quality Action Plan (AQAP) must be adopted and updated regularly. AQAPs aim to demonstrate how the Local Authority will work towards compliance with air quality standards in its AQMAs. They also provide an opportunity to set out wider strategic measures. They offer an important policy tool for air quality and related agendas including sustainable transport and climate change, helping leverage funding opportunities, including the annual Defra air quality fund.

Southampton City Council (SCC) has declared 10 AQMAs (See section 7) due to monitored exceedances of the national air quality objective for annual concentrations of Nitrogen Dioxide (40 ug/m³). The first AQAP was adopted in 2008 and later updated in 2009 to work towards addressing these exceedances.

This original plan includes a number of measures to improve air quality including upgrades to public transport, shore side power for cruise ships, school and workplace travel plans and improvements to the council's own fleet. Most of these measures are now complete.

DETAILS OF ANY ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

1. Delay adoption of the provided version of the AQAP.
 - Benefits - more time to review and amend plan including incorporating any known changes as a result of The Local NO2 Plan review (in approximately 6 months' time)
 - Risks/ reasons rejected - slower adoption of plan and benefits realisation, potential for escalation process from Defra including warning letters and eventually ministerial intervention under Environment Act 2021

2. Do not progress with the update to the AQAP
 - Benefits – No reputational risk from poor feedback to the plan
 - Risks/ reasons rejected – Non-compliance with expectations from Defra and potential for warning letters and ministerial intervention, multiple missed opportunities to align plan with other policy, no benefits realisation from plan including potential for missed funding opportunities

3. Delay approval of the provided version of the AQAP update and reduce the number of actions to those which are either already committed or are considered most likely to be fully funded in the period of the plan.
 - Benefits – less likely to be perceived as under-delivering at the end of the plan's implementation period
 - Risks/ reasons for rejecting – plan may be seen as lacking ambition and not willing to address opportunities which the shortlisting process suggests could be effective, could risk future funding opportunities if bid cannot reference policy

OTHER RELEVANT MATTERS CONCERNING THE DECISION

Cabinet considered recommendations from Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee meeting held on 15th December 2022. In particular, they accepted the request for ongoing stakeholder engagement to be reflected in the new Air Quality Action Plan.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

None.

CONFIRMED AS A TRUE RECORD

We certify that the decision this document records was made in accordance with the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2000 and is a true and accurate record of that decision.

Date: 20 December 2022

Decision Maker:
The Cabinet

Proper Officer:
Judy Cordell

SCRUTINY

Note: This decision will come in to force at the expiry of 5 working days from the date of publication subject to any review under the Council's Scrutiny "Call-In" provisions.

Call-In Period expires on

Date of Call-in *(if applicable) (this suspends implementation)*

Call-in Procedure completed *(if applicable)*

Call-in heard by *(if applicable)*

Results of Call-in *(if applicable)*