

AIR QUALITY IN EPSOM AND EWELL

Head of Service: Rod Brown, Head of Housing & Community
Wards affected: (All Wards);
Urgent Decision?(yes/no)
If yes, reason urgent decision required:
Appendices (attached): Annex 1 – 2020 Annual Status Report
Annex 2 – DEFRA letter of approval
Annex 3 – Technical appraisal

Summary

The Council has a statutory role to manage local air quality and is required to produce annual reports for submission to DEFRA. This paper presents the findings of the 2020 annual report and proposes it be published on the Council's website.

Recommendation (s)

The Committee is asked to:

- (1) Note the findings of the report and the continuing resource requirements to fulfil this statutory role.**
- (2) Agrees to publish the report on the Council's website**

1 Reason for Recommendation

- 1.1 The availability of safe air to breathe has been described by the United Nations as a key human right and the Council's four year plan identifies the importance to residents of being safe and well with the area being green and vibrant. The publication of annual reports gives transparency to the work of the Council in managing local air quality.
- 1.2 Previous Air Quality Status Reports have been circulated via Members Update but as a consequence of a recent audit report it has been requested that this matter be considered by the relevant committee.

2 Background

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- 2.1 Air quality in Epsom and Ewell is generally good. There is evidence that air pollution is on a downward trend and the majority of the borough's population should be able to enjoy a life without concern for exposure to poor air quality.
- 2.2 In keeping with the Council's statutory duty, a report detailing the Council's air quality work in 2019 has been produced and approved by the Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA). The contents of the report outline the monitoring information, the policy measures adopted by the Council to improve air quality and specifically the measures in place for the borough's single Air Quality Management Area (AQMA).
- 2.3 Additionally for this year, the report details the outcome of an air quality modelling exercise which estimates concentrations of nitrogen dioxides and particulate matter across the borough for the baseline year 2017.
- 2.4 As a result of this modelling, an additional two monitoring sites have been established to confirm the indicative findings of this modelling and, depending on the outcome, it may be necessary to carry out a more detailed assessment in future years.
- 2.5 Although falling outside of the reporting period for this report, the provisional assessment of 2020 data indicates the COVID-19 "lockdown" had a profound and significant effect on air quality, substantially reducing the level of measured pollutants during the lockdown months. As the lockdown was eased and traffic levels return to more normal levels, the corresponding pollution concentrations have returned to previous patterns. The full 2020 dataset will be available next year and will be reported on in the 2021 Annual Status Report.

3 Risk Assessment

Legal or other duties

3.1 Impact Assessment

3.1.1 Poor air quality is strongly associated with poor health and there are longstanding national policy measures in place to assess air quality and to require local authorities to take steps to improve it where it fails to meet national objectives. The impact of the Council's work in this area over a long period can be expressed in terms of a reduction in life years lost which is particularly relevant for those more vulnerable members of society who may have co-morbidities.

3.2 Crime & Disorder

3.2.1 No implications for crime and disorder have been identified.

3.3 Safeguarding

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3.3.1 No implications safeguarding have been identified.

3.4 Dependencies

3.4.1 Since air quality in the borough is linked with the use of the road transport network, close working with Surrey County Council is vital for success. The Council has formed a partnership known as the Surrey Air Alliance with representation from Surrey County Council and the other 11 districts and boroughs to coordinate air quality activity.

4 Financial Implications

4.1 The bulk of the air quality work is carried out within existing budgets with a staffing allocation amounting to approximately 0.15 Full Time Equivalent (FTE). Should there be a need to significantly expand this area of work, savings would need to be found in order to fund it.

4.2 **Section 151 Officer's comments:** none for the purposes of this report.

5 Legal Implications

5.1 The Council's legal obligation to manage local air quality originates in part four of the Environment Act 1995.

5.2 **Monitoring Officer's comments:** none for the purposes of this report

5.3 **Council's Key Priorities:** The following Key Priorities are engaged: Green and Vibrant, Safe and Well.

5.4 **Service Plans:** The matter is included within the current Service Delivery Plan.

5.5 **Climate & Environmental Impact of recommendations:** There is a clear link between air quality and sustainability both involving the Council's own emissions and acting as a community leader in promoting alternatives to conventional road transport.

5.6 **Sustainability Policy & Community Safety Implications:** It is recognised that driving across the borough to attend to pollution monitoring stations is inherently a polluting activity. Where possible, the Council's electric enforcement car is used to mitigate this effect. There are no community safety implications.

5.7 **Partnerships:** The Surrey Air Alliance is the principle means by which regional representation is achieved including opportunities for joint funding bids and coordinated media campaigns.

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6 Background papers

The documents referred to in compiling this report are included as annexes.