

AIR QUALITY IN EPSOM & EWELL - ANNUAL STATUS REPORT

Head of Service:	Rod Brown, Head of Housing & Community
Wards affected:	(All Wards);
Urgent Decision?(yes/no)	No
If yes, reason urgent decision required:	
Appendices (attached):	Appendix 1 - 2021 Annual Status Report Appendix 2 – DEFRA letter of approval Appendix 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. The findings of the 2021 report are presented to Members and a proposal made to publish the report on the Council's website.

Recommendation (s)

The Committee is asked to:

- (1) Note the findings of the report**
- (2) Agree to publish the report on the Council's website.**

1 Reason for Recommendation

- 1.1 The availability of safe air to breath has been described by the United Nations as a key human right and the Council's corporate plan identifies the importance to residents of being safe and well living in an area which is green and vibrant. The publication of annual reports gives transparency to the work of the Council in managing local air quality.

2 Background

- 2.1 The Council has a legal duty under [Part IV of the Environment Act 1995](#) to review and assess current and future air quality within the Borough against health-based air quality objectives established in the National Air Quality Strategy.

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- 2.2 Air quality in Epsom & Ewell continues to be relatively good. There is evidence for a long term improvement in air quality and the majority of the borough's population is able to enjoy a life without exposure to poor air quality.
- 2.3 There is one area in the borough that has been identified as an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA). This area is located in Ewell because the level of Nitrogen Dioxide (NO₂) exceeds the nationally set level of 40 µg/m³ expressed as an annual mean. The Council is responsible to undertake air quality monitoring and results within this area indicate the levels of Nitrogen Dioxide have reduced from a high of 63 µg/m³ in 2007 to 46.1 µg/m³ in 2020, reducing to 42 µg/m³ once corrections have been applied. Although Coronavirus restrictions have contributed to this, it still represents part of a sustained improvement brought about by delivery of the action plan and national measures.
- 2.4 In keeping with the Council's statutory duty, a report detailing the Council's air quality work in 2020 has been produced and approved by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA). The contents of the report outlines monitoring information, the policy measures previously adopted by the Council to improve air quality and specifically those measures which were put in place for the borough's single Air Quality Management Area (AQMA)
- 2.5 The 2020 monitoring year was profoundly affected by the various degrees of restrictions imposed on society as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. For example, there was a decrease in the concentrations of nitrogen dioxide by up to 60 percent in some areas owing to fewer vehicles on the road. Although for this reason, 2020 is not a representative year, it presented a rare opportunity to assess the impact of an unprecedented reduction in road traffic, the type of which may ultimately be necessary to achieve for air quality and wider sustainability objectives.

3 Proposal

- 3.1 The Air Quality Annual Status Report 2020 has been submitted to and approved by DEFRA. This report sets out the findings from the air quality monitoring completed for 2020 and is produced for Members to note the work carried out.
- 3.2 The report also seeks Member's approval to publish the Air Quality Annual Status Report 2020 on the Council's website, making it available for public scrutiny.

4 Risk Assessment

Legal or other duties

- 4.1 Impact Assessment

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4.1.1 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 can be expressed as a reduction in life years lost which is particularly relevant for those more vulnerable members of society who may have co-morbidities.

4.2 Crime & Disorder

4.2.1 No implications have been identified.

4.3 Safeguarding

4.3.1 No implications have been identified

4.4 Dependencies

4.4.1 In recognition of the transboundary nature of pollution, close working with neighbouring boroughs and the County Council as Highways Authority is vital for success. This is achieved via the Surrey Air Alliance with representations from across the county to co-ordinate air quality activities.

4.5 Other

4.5.1 None identified.

5 Financial Implications

5.1 The majority of the work in this area is carried out by the Environmental Health team within the Public Protection Service amounting to approximately 0.15 Full Time Equivalent (FTE). Should there be a need to significantly expand this area of work, additional staff resource would need to be identified and savings found to fund it.

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

6 Legal Implications

6.1 The Council's legal obligations to manage local air quality originate in part four of the Environment Act 1995.

6.2 **Legal Officer's comments:** to be completed by Legal Department

7 Policies, Plans & Partnerships

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

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- 7.2 **Service Plans:** The matter is not included within the current Service Delivery Plan as the production of the status report is an existing statutory duty. Wider commitments to addressing climate change are however part of the Service Delivery Plan
- 7.3 **Climate & Environmental Impact of recommendations:** There is a clear link between the broader sustainability aims and improvement of air quality. The Council has a clear responsibility both to fulfil its statutory obligation in relation to the monitoring and management of pollution as well as to act as a community leader in its own emissions and promoting alternatives to conventional road transport.
- 7.4 **Sustainability Policy & Community Safety Implications:** It is recognised that the use of a motor vehicle to carry out the task of visiting pollution monitoring sites is inherently a polluting activity. Where possible, the Council's electric enforcement vehicle is used for this purpose. There are no community safety implications.
- 7.5 **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.

8 Background papers

- 8.1 The documents referred to in compiling this report are as follows:

Previous reports:

- [20 October 2020 Environment and Safe Communities](#)

Other papers:

- The documents referred to in this report are included as appendices.