



OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY VIEWS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

TO CABINET 21 JUNE 2017

Report Title	RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – EMISSION STRATEGY (ACTION PLAN)
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Agenda Status: PUBLIC

1. Purpose

- 1.1 To present to Cabinet for consideration, the comments and recommendations of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the findings of the Scrutiny Review – Emissions Strategy (Action Plan.)
- 1.2 Members of Cabinet have been issued with a copy of the full report. All Overview and Scrutiny review reports are published on the Overview and Scrutiny page on the Council's Webpage and a copy of this report can be located: www.northampton.gov.uk/scrutiny - Previous Scrutiny Reviews.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 The Overview and Scrutiny Committee recommends to Cabinet that:

Emissions Strategy Action Plan

- 2.1.1 The Scrutiny Panel notes that the Emissions Strategy only covers the period till 2025. A longer term strategy is devised and implemented so that major stakeholders in the town will have a better understanding of the goals of the town, and can plan ahead to meet them.
- 2.1.2 The Scrutiny Panel notes that while vehicle emissions contribute to poor air quality, there are other sources of pollution in the town, including residential, commercial and industrial activity. It should be ensured that the Borough Council uses all measures available to influence all planning activities and the development of the Local Plan and licensing, to help mitigate any adverse effects, and to ensure that any developments in the future do not adversely contribute to poor air quality.

- 2.1.3 The Borough Council takes the initiative with electric charging points. Borough owned car parks should have charging points installed so that those with electric cars can charge them while they shop. These charge points should allow preferential parking to encourage the use of electric vehicles.
- 2.1.4 The NLES contains a procurement guide which seeks to emphasise low emission procurement. The procurement guide that has been developed is championed, trialled and applied throughout Council procurement policy where possible, and use this as best practice for investigating the benefit of whole life costing for ULEV. A local employer is identified to trial this as a best practice example.
- 2.1.5 There is a requirement for any new commercial development to have provision for car charging points. Furthermore, the Council should work with existing commercial developments such as Sixfields, Riverside retail park and major supermarkets to provide charging points for electric vehicles.
- 2.1.6 Northampton Borough Council works with private companies to provide electric charging points at minimal cost to the tax payer in those places not covered above and where there is demand.
- 2.1.7 The Scrutiny Panel informs Cabinet that it supports the production of the Borough Council's Low Emissions Strategy and Action Plan; noting the measures included within it that will improve air quality in Northampton, which places an emphasis on emissions reduction (e.g. shift to cleaner alternative vehicles and reduction of users on Northampton's roads.)
- 2.1.8 It is strongly recommended that a town centre wide AQMA is implemented and enquiries are made to more joined up or expanded the AQMAs in Northampton.
- 2.1.9 The following are included within the Low Emissions Strategy Action Plan:
- Where it is not feasible to install full electric vehicle recharging points, developers are encouraged to install cabling for electric vehicle charging points so that they can be activated at a later date.
 - The draft NICE guidelines in respect of minimising the exposure of vulnerable groups to air pollution by siting buildings away from busy roads and ensuring facilities such as schools, nurseries and retirement homes are located in areas where pollution levels are low is considered in relation to development proposals and planning decisions.
 - The Low Emissions Strategy links to Northamptonshire County Council's Health and Wellbeing Strategy.
 - Northampton Borough Council works with Northamptonshire County Council and bus operations regarding the viability and mode of usage of a park and ride scheme for Northampton. The appropriate Community Groups and Councillors are consulted on this.
- 2.1.10 The times that free parking in Northampton are offered is investigated to ascertain whether a better balance of free parking and the minimisation of pollution and congestion is achieved.

- 2.1.11 Enquiries are made with Planning Services regarding how the most effective way bus routes can be maximised through the use of spine roads and direct through routes (separate entry and exits) in developments; encouraging bus routes and off street parking within residential areas to allow for a more free flow of public transport.
- 2.1.12 Investigations are carried out into the feasibility of a Clean Air Zone for Northampton.
- 2.1.13 Investigations into potential sources of funding to develop an electric taxi trial and on street electric charging points for residential areas are carried out.
- 2.1.14 Support is given to a mitigation as standard approach for all new developments regarding air quality impact.

Councillor and Public Awareness of Air Quality Issues

- 2.1.15 Initiatives to raise awareness regarding air quality are investigated; such as the offer of a voucher for a week's trial of an electric car and "Don't use the car for a day" initiative.
- 2.1.16 Real time air quality information and pollution prevention advice is published on information boards on main roads into AQM areas.
- 2.1.17 Information regarding Electric Corby's Initiative – Electric Cars for Private Hire is circulated to all Private Hire Operators in Northampton.

Partner Agencies

- 2.1.18 The Terms of Reference of Multi Agency and Community Meetings regarding developments on the edge of Northampton are investigated to improve the effectiveness of the meetings.
- 2.1.19 A feasibility study is undertaken regarding the viability of changing the entry and exit of the Mayorhold car park and whether this would help congestion, taking into account of the development of the Greyfriars site.
- 2.1.20 The Scrutiny Panel notes that partner Agencies and Councils are also undertaking work on air quality. To ensure that there is co-operation between County, borough, district and other stakeholders (including Community Groups), a cross Council Working Group is established so that co-operation is improved.
- 2.1.21 The Licensing Committee works with partners such as the Hackney carriage association to promote the use of low emissions vehicles. The licensing committee should work with partners to formulate a robust strategy when licensing new vehicles in the town.
- 2.1.22 The Borough Council works with partners such as stagecoach and UNO to ensure that any new buses moving into the town meet high standards, and that the council works with its partners at the County Council to investigate the setting of an emissions standards for buses, such as the introduction of a Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) or a Clean Air Zone. This should be a progressive standard which sets an initial benchmark.

- 2.1.23 The Borough Council works with stagecoach and UNO to trial Electric and/or alternate fuel vehicles if funding can be secured from central Government.
- 2.1.24 Northampton Borough Council works with Highways, Northamptonshire County Council to review the current and future planned road network to determine if there are any changes that can be made to speed up traffic into, out of, through and around the town.
- 2.1.25 A strong emphasis is placed on the planning system to encourage any new development (where members of the public are able to commute to home, work or retail) to be serviced by public transport. Where feasible this should be secured as a condition of development or by agreement, e.g. use of s106 agreement.
- 2.1.26 Investigations are carried out to clarify responsibility for the provision of appropriate infrastructure to promote the use alternative means of transport such as the use of buses, walking and cycling, for example bus shelters and cycle routes.

3. Background and Issues

- 3.1 The objective of the pre-decision scrutiny review was to provide Scrutiny input into the Action Plan for the Council's Emissions Strategy

Key lines of Inquiry:

- To increase Councillor and public understanding of air quality issues in Northampton
 - To understand the causes and impact of air pollution
 - To understand the actions being taken to reduce air pollution in Northampton
 - To understand the actions being taken by partners to reduce air pollution in Northampton
 - To provide recommendations for the production of the Action Plan for the Council's Emissions Strategy, which will identify ways of improving air quality in Northampton
 - Examine all current air quality management areas to ensure they are performing.
 - To see if they can be improved and consider all other factors and future factors in moving forward
- 3.2 The Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered a briefing note regarding the Emissions Strategy, including hotspots, at its meeting held on 15 August 2016. Following consideration of this information it was agreed that a Scrutiny Review would commence to investigate the Air Quality Action Plan and how Scrutiny could provide input into this. An in-depth review commenced in October 2016 and concluded in April 2017.
- 3.3 This review links to the Council's corporate priorities, particularly corporate priority Protecting Our Environment - A clean and attractive town for residents and visitors.
- 3.4 The Scrutiny Panel established that the following needed to be investigated and linked to the realisation of the Council's corporate priorities:

Background data, including:

- Presentation to set the scene: “Overview of air quality in Northampton”
- Relevant national, other background research papers and relevant Legislation
- Relevant data:
 - Hotspots and trends
 - Draft Low Emissions Strategy 2016/17
 - Statistical data, including national comparison
- Best practice and successful initiatives in both Northampton and elsewhere
- Case studies
- Witness evidence:

Internal

- Cabinet Member for Environment, Northampton Borough Council (NBC)
- Head of Planning (Planning Policy), NBC
- Senior Environmental Health Officer, NBC

External

- Consultant, Low Emissions Strategies Ltd
- Director of Public Health, Northamptonshire County Council (NCC)
- Residents’ Groups
- Northamptonshire Green Party
- Highways/Transport choices, NCC
- Carbon Management Team, NCC
- Electric Corby
- Stage Coach/Uno

4 Key Findings and Conclusions

4.1 After all of the evidence was collated the following conclusions were drawn:

Emissions Strategy Action Plan

- 4.1.1 The Scrutiny Panel supported the production of the Borough Council’s Emissions Strategy and Action Plan; noting the measures that will improve air quality in Northampton. The Scrutiny Review had identified further suggestions for improvement for inclusion within the Action Plan, as detailed below:
- 4.1.2 The Scrutiny Panel was pleased that electric charging points are starting to be installed around the town. The Scrutiny Panel recognises that there is currently low demand for charging points and welcomed the fact that developers will put the cabling in for charging points, so that they can be activated at a later date.
- 4.1.3 The Scrutiny Panel conveyed concern about the building of houses near to busy roads and the problem of this needs recognition. The draft NICE guideline does indeed refer to minimising the exposure of vulnerable groups to air pollution by siting buildings away from

busy roads and ensuring facilities such as schools, nurseries and retirement homes are located in areas where pollution levels will be low. The Scrutiny Panel emphasises that this needs to be considered in relation to development proposals and planning decisions.

- 4.1.4 The Scrutiny Panel welcomed the discount Mega Rider Ticket Scheme officer that had been put forward to Northamptonshire County Council to help reduce the traffic congestion impact of the relocation of its staff to the Angel One site in the town centre.
- 4.1.5 The Scrutiny Panel realised that a park and ride could be viable in Northampton but would require NCC, NBC and the bus operators to all work together.
- 4.1.6 Evidence received highlight the need to obtain a better balance free car parking and minimising pollution and congestion. Problems in Northampton often occur during the late afternoon period, particularly in the months leading up to Christmas, when shoppers leave the town at the same time as people leaving work, severely worsening the congestion in the town centre.
- 4.1.7 The Scrutiny Panel was pleased to note that the St James Smart Corridor will in theory help to speed up buses.

Councillor and Public Awareness of Air Quality Issues

- 4.1.8 Evidence received highlighted the need to look at how awareness can be raised regarding air quality and new initiatives brought in, for example a suggested initiative being the offer of a voucher for a week's trial of an electric car, and "Don't use the car for a day" initiative.
- 4.1.9 There are around 400 air quality management areas in England alone. There are seven in Northampton at present.
- 4.1.10 The Scrutiny Panel welcomed the report that £8 million had been approved for the North West bypass. The need for an orbital road system was highlighted. It was acknowledged this would cost in the region of £150 million. Busy and complex traffic junctions will continue unless a more strategic solution is found.

Actions taken by Partner Agencies

- 4.1.11 Evidence detailed that Transport Planners do not necessarily consider air quality. The Scrutiny Panel felt that there is a need to consider how Northampton Borough Council (NBC) communicates with Authorities/Agencies that are pushing for developments on the edge of the boundary of Northampton. The Scrutiny Panel was pleased that cross border meetings do take place but there is a need to improve their effectiveness.
- 4.1.12 The Scrutiny Panel welcomed that NBC has a good working relationship with StageCoach.

- 4.1.13 Evidence received highlighted that there is very good working by Agencies but also an element of disconnectivity between NBC, NCC, Public Health and the public. There is a need to link the Emissions Strategy to the Health and Wellbeing Strategy. Agencies need to work together to tackle this. Agencies often have different priorities.
- 4.1.14 NICE has produced a draft guideline document around outdoor air quality and health.
- 4.1.15 The Scrutiny Panel realised that no one Agency is responsible for the installation and maintenance of bus shelters, some are the responsibility of NBC, some NCC and others commercial organisations or Parish Councils. The cost of a bus shelter is around £8,000
- 4.1.16 Evidence received highlighted that options that help to increase road capacity in the town centre area should be looked at. The Scrutiny Panel felt that it would be useful to investigate the feasibility of changing the entry and exit of the Mayorhold car park and whether it would help congestion.
- 4.1.17 Evidence received showed that it is vital to ensure that core spine routes are built through adjoining residential developments to enable the maximum level of bus service to be provided and to help ensure that such services become commercial.
- 4.1.18 The Scrutiny Panel supported the information from Electric Corby regarding its initiative – Electric Cars for Private Hire should be shared with Private Hire Operators in Northampton.

5. 5 Options

- 5.1 Cabinet will need to consider the possible options as part of its response to the recommendations.

Implications (including financial implications)

6.1 Policy

- 6.1.1 The work of Overview and Scrutiny plays a major part in the development of the Council's policy framework through its work programme.
- 6.1.2 The report and its recommendations have policy implications in relation to the Council's response to the Emissions Strategy (Action Plan). Cabinet's response will need to consider these issues in detail.

6.2 Resources and Risk

- 6.2.1 Cabinet will need to consider the resourcing issues for the recommendations made.
- 6.2.2 **Legal**

6.2.3 Legal issues will need to be considered as part of Cabinet's response to the recommendations.

6.3 Equality

6.3.1 Equality issues will need to be considered as part of Cabinet's response to the recommendations.

6.5 Consultees (Internal and External)

6.5.1 The Committee received evidence from a variety of sources as detailed in paragraph 3.4 of this report.

Background Papers

Overview and Scrutiny Committee report – Emissions Strategy (Action Plan)
Minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee – 8 May 2017

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