

ECONOMY, ENVIRONMENT & PLACE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Thursday, 12th November, 2020
Time of Commencement: 8.05 pm

Present:	Councillor Gill Heesom (Chair)		
Councillors:	Mark Olszewski Barry Panter Marion Reddish	Amelia Rout Dave Jones Andrew Fear	Jennifer Cooper David Grocott
Officers:	Georgina Evans David Adams Nesta Barker Geoff Durham David Elkington Martin Hamilton	Head of People and Organisational Development Executive Director Operational Services Head of Environmental Health Services Mayor's Secretary / Member Support Officer Head of Customer and Digital Services Chief Executive	
Also in attendance:	Pete Price	Air Quality Project Manager	

Note: In line with Government directions on staying at home during the current stage of the CV-19 pandemic, this meeting was conducted by video conferencing in accordance with the Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020.

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillors John Tagg and Gary White.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest stated.

3. MINUTES OF A PREVIOUS MEETING

Resolved: That the Minutes of the meeting held on 30 September, 2020 be agreed as a correct record.

4. NORTH STAFFORDSHIRE LOCAL AIR QUALITY PLAN - OUTLINE BUSINESS CASE

The Portfolio Holder for Environment and Recycling, Councillor Trevor Johnson introduced the item stating that the Plan had been put together to tackle the air pollution caused by road traffic. Two years ago, councils were issued with a directive

to investigate where emissions were excessive and to formulate a plan to tackle the issues.

The Borough has one area within its area where emissions were excessive - at the junction of Basford Park Road and Victoria Street. There were two further areas which had been identified within the Stoke on Trent boundary. Newcastle Borough Council and Stoke City Council had been working together to find a solution to bring the emission levels down.

The Council's Head of Environmental Health Services, Nesta Barker gave a presentation to Members which outlined the main points and which covered the following:

- (i) The legislative and Government requirements on Stoke-on-Trent City, Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough and Staffordshire County Councils
- (ii) The study to date, including options identification, appraisal and emergence of preferred option, plus Covid sensitivity testing
- (iii) Key decision process to approve preferred option
- (iv) Full Business Case submission and funding bid to Government
- (v) Process for funding approval and implementation of preferred option
- (vi) Achievement of compliance with Ministerial Direction, monitoring, evaluation and decommissioning

The presentation outlined six options which were:

1. Benchmark Clean Air Zone D
2. Low impact traffic management scheme
3. High impact traffic management plus Victoria Road Mini Clean Air Zone
4. High impact traffic management scheme
5. Alternative Benchmark Clean Air Zone C
6. High impact traffic management scheme plus complementary measures.

Members' attention was drawn to pages 8 and 9 of Appendix A which gave further options.

The preferred option was set out in detail at Appendix B of the agenda report. In July, 2020, the Government asked local councils to look at the impact that Covid-19 had on traffic as more people were working from home and there were more people cycling and walking for exercise. There had also been a reduction in the use of public transport.

Members were advised of the decision process in approving the preferred option which was:

- Cabinet report recommendations:

- a) Cabinet considers the comments received in relation to the North Staffordshire Local Air Quality Plan from Economy, Environment & Place Scrutiny Committee held on 12 November 2020.
- b) Cabinet approve the Outline Business Case for the North Staffordshire Local Air Quality Plan for tackling roadside nitrogen dioxide exceedances, including technical addenda, as contained in Appendices C and D, for submission to Government, in line with the requirements of the Environment Act 1995 (Implementation of Measures for Nitrogen Dioxide Compliance) Air Quality Direction 2018 (the “2018 Direction”) and subsequent amendments by the Secretary of State for the Environment.
- c) Subject to approval of (a), that Cabinet request a further report from the Head of Environmental Health Services in June 2021, setting out the Full Business Case, including the detailed costs and proposed funding bid to Government
- d) Subject to approval of (a), that Cabinet delegates authority to the Director of Operational Services alongside Portfolio Holder for Environment & Recycling to enter into a legal agreement with Staffordshire County Council (SCC) and Stoke-on-Trent City Council (SOTCC) to jointly submit the Full Business Case and deliver the preferred option in line with the requirements of the Environment Act 1995 (Implementation of Measures for Nitrogen Dioxide Compliance) Air Quality Direction 2018 and subsequent amendments by the Secretary of State for the Environment.
- e) The Chief Executive is authorised to enter into a contract to complete the Full Business Case (and inform the Cabinet Member for Environment and Recycling), by direct award to the supplier for the delivery of the Outline Business Case for the North Staffordshire Local Air Quality Plan.
- f) Members note the progress made in relation to the delivery of the Ministerial Direction requiring a bus retrofit scheme for busses operating on the A53.

If approved, there would be a Full Business Case and funding bid to the government which would involve:

- Responding to Government feedback on the Outline Business Case
- A legal agreement drawn up for the delivery of the preferred option
- Finalising the Commercial and Management Cases
- Completion of impact assessments:
 - Health Impact Assessment (HIA)
 - Equalities Impact Assessment
 - Community Impact assessment (County Council)
- Detailed design and costings and finalising the Financial Case
- Full Business Case sent to Cabinet meetings in –June/July 2021
- Submission of the Full Business Case to Government by 31 July 2021.

Compliance would be achieved by 2023, following which there would be a period of monitoring and evaluation between 2023 and 2026. In 2026/2027, natural compliance would be achieved through natural fleet renewal which would result in the bus gates no longer being required to deliver compliance. This would then present the potential for decommissioning and removal of the gate which would be funded by the government.

Councillor Olszewski asked how residents on Etruria Road would access their properties. Also, how would bus emissions be measured and finally, where would traffic that would normally travel up Etruria Road go to?

Nesta Barker advised that an alternative route would have to be found by residents on Etruria Road, possibly going around and back down the A53. Alternative routes were being looked at in the modelling completed.

With regard to the bus emissions, First Buses had retrofitted some of their vehicles and it would be those vehicles operating on these routes.

Councillor Fear stated that he was pleased to hear that it would be one way and queried reference to the removal of vegetation stating that he thought that vegetation was a good thing.

Nesta Barker advised that the reference was to vegetation on the hill. To improve air quality, good dispersal was required. The vegetation currently created a canopy/ tunnel so the emissions could not disperse.

Councillor Fear asked if this would mean the total removal or a trimming back. Nesta Barker advised that this had not yet been fully decided upon. All of the vegetation could not be removed as this would affect the stability of the slope.

Councillor Fear stated that he would like to see the plans for removal of vegetation as an oversight of this was needed. Nesta Barker advised that this could be taken up in terms of the Full Business case.

Councillor Panter asked what monitoring devices would be used to catch anyone using the bus route. Nesta Barker advised that the bus gate would have Automatic Number Plate Recognition to pick up on non-compliance. This would be regulated, monitored and enforced.

There were no fixed air quality monitoring stations. Diffusion tubes were used and located around the Borough

Pete Price advised Members that the figures that had been quoted in the presentation were based on a model which now needed to be backed up by real time monitoring.

Councillor Jenny Cooper asked what the traffic calming measures would be. The diverting of traffic had been mentioned. What would the impact on surrounding areas be?

Nesta Barker advised that the traffic calming measures related to Victoria Road, Stoke on Trent.

Pete Price advised that there would be two traffic changes. The traffic signals at Sandy Lane junction would include pedestrian plus the relocation of a bus stop was proposed – to move it opposite to the New Vic Theatre which would move it away from the exceedance location.

Councillor Olszewski asked if both junctions would have pelican crossings. Nesta Barker advised that adding a pedestrian phase into the signals would encourage walking and cycling.

Councillor Olszewski stated that the May Bank corridor had always been on the brink of exceeding the emissions level and asked if the relocation would push the levels over the top and also, what modelling had been done to ensure that the exceedance was not just being moved.

Nesta Barker advised that the Etruria Valley Link Road was included in the model. In terms of the annual status report to the government, the Council had complied in the May Bank area and therefore the Government were asking for that measure to be revoked.

The modelling that had been undertaken did not show an exceedance of $40\mu\text{gM}^{-3}$. Councillor Olszewski asked how close to forty the figures were. Nesta Barker would check on this and inform the Members.

Councillor Panter referred to paragraph 1.9 of Appendix A which related to ages of vehicles and asked if this was fixed or if it could be moved. Nesta Barker advised that this related to the dates of the European classifications and was the latest date for engine types. Provided that you have a vehicle registered on those dates it would meet the standard. This is applicable to clean air zone only.

Pete Price advised that if the Council went down the route of a Clean Air Zone everyone would need to know when their vehicle was registered and whether it complied.

Councillor Jenny Cooper asked if the areas currently being monitored in Porthill, Wolstanton and May Bank were part of the scheme. Nesta Barker confirmed that that was a separate scheme for local air quality management.

Councillor Olszewski asked for clarification of the bus gateway –if it would run from the roundabout to the former Queen's nightclub. Nesta Barker advised that it would run from the roundabout and would just be in that area – not going up to the Queens' as compliance was achieved further up the road.

Councillor Olszewski asked that Councillor Fear's concerns regarding the vegetation be taken into account.

Nesta Barker confirmed that the Full Business Case would take the details into account.

Councillor Reddish asked for clarification that, from the roundabout could all vehicles still go up there to Basford Park Road. Nesta Barker stated that the restriction on access would only allow buses, cycles and taxis to go through at the specified times.

Resolved: That Cabinet be advised that the Economy Environment and Place Scrutiny Committee support the preferred option and outline business

case and request that additional specific detail on the tree removal is provided at the Full Business Case stage

5. **PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

There were no questions from the public.

6. **URGENT BUSINESS**

There was no urgent business.

CLLR GILL HEESOM
Chair

Meeting concluded at Time Not Specified