

BIRMINGHAM CITY COUNCIL

HEALTH, WELLBEING AND THE ENVIRONMENT AND ECONOMY, SKILLS & TRANSPORT O&S COMMITTEES

1000 hours on 17th January 2017, Committee Rooms 3 & 4 – Actions

Present:

Councillor John Cotton (Chair)

Councillors Uzma Ahmed, Deirdre Alden, Sue Anderson, Mick Brown, Andrew Hardie, Simon Jevon, Carole Griffiths, Mohammed Idrees, Karen McCarthy and Robert Pocock.

Councillor Eva Phillips (am)

Councillors Tim Huxtable and Phil Davies (pm)

Also Present:

Dr Wayne Harrison, Assistant Director of Public Health/Consultant in Public Health

Alec Dobney, Unit Head, Environmental Hazards & Emergencies Department, CRCE, Public Health England

Karen Exley, Senior Environmental Public Health Scientist, Air Pollution & Climate Change Unit, CRCE, Public Health England

Mark Wolstencroft, Air Quality Lead in Environmental Protection

John Newson, Birmingham Friends of the Earth

Libby Harris, Birmingham Friends of the Earth

Jane Harding, Project Manager, and Simon Needle, Birmingham Trees for Life

Councillor Fiona Williams

Paul O'Day, Street Services Manager, BCC

Councillor Lisa Trickett, Lead Cabinet Member for Reducing Air Pollution

Anne Shaw, Assistant Director, Transportation & Connectivity

David Harris, Transport Policy Manager

Adam Harrison, Senior Policy Officer, Transport for West Midlands

Mike Waters, Head of Policy & Strategy, Transport for West Midlands

Dr Chris Chiswell, Consultant in Public Health Medicine, Birmingham Children's Hospital NHS Foundation Trust

Rose Kiely, Overview & Scrutiny Manager, Scrutiny Office

Gail Sadler, Research & Policy Officer, Scrutiny Office

1. NOTICE OF RECORDING

The Chairman advised that this meeting would be webcast for live or subsequent broadcast via the Council's Internet site (which could be accessed at "www.birminghamnewsroom.com") and members of the press/public may record and take photographs.

The whole of the meeting would be filmed except where there were confidential or exempt items.

2. APOLOGIES

Councillors Hartley, Barrie, Donaldson, O'Shea

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Andrew Hardie declared an interest as a GP working in Birmingham.

4. BIRMINGHAM PUBLIC HEALTH/PUBLIC HEALTH ENGLAND

Dr Wayne Harrison (Assistant Director of Public Health, Birmingham Public Health) highlighted the main points in the submission from Birmingham Public Health. The main air pollutants which cause concern in terms of the evidence of their public health impact are Nitrogen oxides, principally NO₂ and Particles of different sizes (PM_{2.5} and PM₁₀ being the regulated size fractions). These are linked to a number of health effects and current estimates are that PM_{2.5} and NO₂ are responsible to 40,000 deaths annually. There is strong evidence for the impact of short and long-term exposure to PM_{2.5} on cardiovascular health, lung cancer, reduced life expectancy, reduced lung function and heightened severity of symptoms in individuals with asthma, chronic lung disease, ischaemic heart disease and stroke. NO₂ has a separate and additional impact on health and high acute levels are associated with respiratory morbidity, hospital admissions and emergency visits for cardiovascular and/or cardiac diagnoses and mortality.

Alec Dobney (Unit Head, Environmental Hazards & Emergencies Department, Public Health England) and Karen Exley (Senior Environmental Public Health Scientist Public Health England) then explained the main points from the Public Health England Report highlighting that within the UK, air pollution is the largest environmental risk linked to deaths every year and that air pollution is associated with much greater public health risk than was understood even a decade ago and more associated adverse health effects are emerging. On average around 80% of oxide of nitrogen (NO_x) emissions in areas where the UK is exceeding NO₂ limit values is due to transport, although urban and regional background non-transport sources are still considerable. The largest source is emissions from diesel light duty vehicles (cars and vans) and there has been significant growth in vehicle numbers over the last ten years in the UK. Attributing health outcomes from exposure to individual constituent pollutants in emissions is not simple and this supports the need to tackle emissions in general and not necessarily to focus on individual pollutants. For Birmingham, an estimated 5.7% of all-cause mortality is attributable to air pollution.

RESOLVED:-

- Public Health England has commissioned a tool which can be used to estimate the cost to the NHS of pollution which local authorities will be able to use. This will be available in June 2017.
- NICE Guidance on Green Infrastructure is currently out for consultation and due to be published June 2017.

Potential areas for recommendations

Raising Awareness/Public Access to Information

There are a number of services such as Text alert/Airtext that can be used to alert vulnerable people with air quality health advice. Schools should be alerted and aware of the systems but there is no consistency. Explore what BCC can do about raising awareness of air quality alerts, especially for schools?

Green Infrastructure

Can we encourage the building of “living walls” between schools and busy roads?

5. BIRMINGHAM ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH

Mark Wolstencroft (Air Quality Lead in Environmental Protection) attended to present the submission on behalf of Environmental Health. He provided evidence about the network of air quality monitoring stations which sample the air in real time and provide outputs over a short period. Members were provided with data giving the concentrations for the main pollutants, emission sources, levels and sources of air pollution in Birmingham and in specific pollution hotspots. The evidence included the legislative standards setting out the pollutants for which local authorities have a statutory responsibility to report, the locations of monitoring sites, the position for the West Midlands Urban Area and the UK in relation to compliance with air quality objectives and how these rates compare to other comparable major cities in the UK and Europe. He explained that Environmental Health run their own air quality modelling. In relation to local sources of air pollution, it is known that the primary source of NO₂ is from road traffic but that ‘source apportionment’ on the A38 fronting the Mailbox shows that diesel cars are the primary source of NO_x emissions.

RESOLVED:-

That the report be noted

Potential areas for recommendations

Coverage and adequacy of monitoring

The committee queried whether the coverage and location of the real time monitoring stations across the city is adequate?

Local sources of air pollution

It is known that the primary source of NO₂ is from road traffic. ‘Source apportionment’ carried out on the A38 fronting the Mailbox shows clearly that the largest source of emissions is from local sources and the largest contributor to the local sources are diesel cars followed by diesel LGVs.

6. BIRMINGHAM FRIENDS OF THE EARTH

John Newson, Birmingham Friends of the Earth attended to present the submission from Birmingham Friends of the Earth about what would be the most effective ways of implementing and operating a clean air zone, including what should be included, suggested measures and proposals. He was accompanied by Libby Harris, also from Birmingham Friends of the Earth. A variety of measures were proposed including:

- Larger static combustion plants produce a background level of polluted air and should be included in any proposed Clean Air Zone together with all polluting vehicles.
- Reducing traffic flows using a variety of means including provision of Park & Ride, car clubs, halting road widening and red routes that increase traffic flows, promoting active travel such as cycling and walking and promoting the use of fast, clean buses.
- Birmingham City Council planning for a rapid phase out of its own diesel fleet vehicles.
- Any charging in the Clean Air Zone should be proportional to the emissions produced by all vehicles including private cars with any charges collected being ring-fenced and spent on cost effective alternatives to the private car.
- Road space should be reallocated to allow convenient and attractive journeys by tram, bus, taxi and bicycle.
- Electric vehicle charging points should be made an early priority.
- A city-wide approach to clean air is necessary to prevent the diversion of traffic and relocation of the problem to areas outside the city centre.
- A carefully designed scrappage scheme is essential to encourage people to exchange their old diesel vehicles and keep them off the roads.

RESOLVED:-

- BFOE to provide data on air pollution levels which they have measured at various sites using diffusion tubes.
- Queries were raised about the Council's fleet and how many vehicles are diesel which were to be addressed in the evidence to be presented in the afternoon session.

7. BIRMINGHAM TREES FOR LIFE

Jane Harding, Project Manager and Simon Needle from Birmingham Trees for Life attended together with Councillor Fiona Williams to give evidence that tree planting is a valuable part of the overall strategy to alleviate air pollution in cities. It has recently been calculated that Birmingham only has 18% tree canopy cover, compared to an average of 25-30% in other European cities. Maintaining and planting of urban trees can be used to filter out particulate matter and absorb other air pollutants from the atmosphere and improve air quality. In addition the shade cast by trees, in addition to the transpiration of water during photosynthesis can help to reduce air temperatures.

Trees also form part of the wider urban nature network and there is evidence for the beneficial effects of nature on general health and well-being.

RESOLVED:-

That the report be noted.

Potential areas for recommendations

Approach to incorporating appropriate planting within planning permission for new developments

Broad approach to planning for new developments should incorporate appropriate planting of trees of a suitable species in the right place with careful selection of the spaces to be planted, density and placement of the trees, with provision for appropriate maintenance for a period after planting, as a condition of planning for new developments.

Approach to incorporating into planning for transport infrastructure

Need to consider the wider and longer term benefits of keeping mature trees and to incorporate appropriate protection for mature trees into any planning when planning transport infrastructure.

8. TRANSPORTATION AND CONNECTIVITY

Councillor Lisa Trickett (Cabinet Member for Clean Streets, Recycling and Environment) attended to set out the evidence about local road transport, sources of emissions which impact on local air quality and the transport challenge this presents for Birmingham. The city has been mandated by central government to introduce a Category C 'Clean Air Zone' which is currently in the evidence gathering stage. She emphasised the need for shared leadership and ownership of the issue in the city driven by a fundamental right to clean air.

Anne Shaw (Assistant Director, Transportation & Connectivity) and David Harris (Transport Policy Manager) provided evidence about the Birmingham Development Plan, the audit that is currently underway with a view to making the transition to a cleaner fleet, about revising BCC policies in relation to the transport system with a view to keeping vehicles moving, about work with Transport for West Midlands on lower emission vehicles and new technologies and about pursuing a Park and Ride Scheme and work being done to develop a framework across the West Midlands Combined Authority

RESOLVED:-

That the report be noted.

Potential areas for recommendations

Lobbying Central Government

Need to continue to lobby the government about the need to give detailed consideration to developing a diesel scrappage scheme.

9. TRANSPORT FOR WEST MIDLANDS

Adam Harrison (Senior Policy Officer, Transport for West Midlands) and Mike Waters (Head of Policy & Strategy, Transport for West Midlands) attended and gave evidence about the close working relationship between BCC and TfWM and the immediate priority work progressing on a number of sites in relation to Park & Ride and about the regional and national transport activity that is already happening. The M6 Toll is under- utilised against its design capacity and could be better utilised. TfWM are working with other West Midlands local authorities on various projects including traffic optimisation and are trying to get permission from government to enforce traffic management at a local level, on a HS2 connectivity strategy, with Highways England on a key route network approach to manage approximately 600 km of the road network across the metropolitan area which constitutes approximately 7% of the road network but which carries 50% of the traffic.

RESOLVED:-

- A note will be provided for Cllr Tim Huxtable on proposals/progress with the Longbridge Park & Ride.
- Evidence to be provided on data monitoring project currently happening at New Street Station with Network Rail and the University of Birmingham and also about rail electrification plans. (Note – Network Rail subsequently invited to attend March committee meeting to report on both of these.)
- Figures on increased tram usage since the extension opened to be provided.
- Cllr Phil Davies offered to provide some data on New Street Station and information about the number of diesel trains which can be circulated to the other committee members.

Potential areas for recommendations

Lobbying central government

Working with other West Midlands local authorities re traffic management optimisation if, through the West Midlands Combined Authority, could get the power from government to enforce moving traffic infringements at a local level.

Mayoral powers – It may be that one of the powers that comes with the Mayor is the ability to bring in Clean Air Zones which was one of the most popular elements within the Mayoral Consultation.

Pursue the Bus Alliance Partnership to improve bus emissions.

10. BIRMINGHAM CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL NHS TRUST

Dr Chris Chiswell, Consultant in Public Health Medicine, Birmingham Children's Hospital NHS Foundation Trust attended to give evidence about the smoke free zone outside the hospital that is currently voluntary but that the hospital is in discussions with BCC about implementation. Members heard that there is clear evidence of harm to children from poor air quality and about the growing body of literature that

indicates there should be concern about the impact of air quality on the health of children in Birmingham. Members were told that air pollution may contribute towards congenital anomalies, that long term exposure to particulate matter has been linked with overall child mortality and that increased risk was found for post-neonatal infant deaths (between one month and one year) and for deaths from Sudden Infant Death Syndrome. Members were also told about the relationship between childhood exposure to traffic-related air pollution and subsequent risk of developing asthma and that exposure to residential traffic after birth increases the risk of childhood leukaemia.

RESOLVED:-

That the report be noted.

Potential areas for recommendations

Strong Public Health Message

There is a strong public health message about the importance of good air quality and how we value the health of our citizens and especially children that needs to be highlighted with Birmingham citizens.

Smoke Free Zone Initiative

Would like to see the smoke free zone outside the hospital initiative extended to all hospitals and other public facilities, especially where there are children.

11. AUTHORITY TO CHAIRMAN AND OFFICERS

RESOLVED:-

That in an urgent situation between meetings the Chair, jointly with the relevant Chief Officer, has authority to act on behalf of the Committee.

The meeting ended at 1600 hours.