



Communities Regeneration and Housing: Policy and Scrutiny Committee

Date:	14 th October 2021
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Title:	Westminster's Air Quality Programme 2021
Report of:	Cllr Heather Acton
Cabinet Member Portfolio	Communities and Regeneration
Wards Involved:	All / Specific
Policy Context:	Climate Emergency / Environment / Public Health
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1. Executive Summary

1.1 Improving air quality continues to be a corporate and resident priority. The council has a very ambitious air quality programme and is taking an evidence-based approach to challenge ourselves to further strengthen our policies and projects across this portfolio.

1.2 The covid-19 pandemic created a dramatic traffic reduction intervention. Despite this, Nitrogen Dioxide levels fell significantly but Particulate Matter did not. The two appended slide decks were presented to Informal Cabinet on July 12th 2021 and provide a summary analysis of pollutant data from the past two years. It also provides an overview of the air quality programme and its priorities for the coming year, supported by the current Air Quality Action Plan (AQAP) which runs to 2024.

1.3 The data and analysis of the levels of pollutants during and post pandemic demonstrate the need to specifically prioritise Particulate Matter reduction through strong policies and projects as well as continuing with our sustainable transport interventions.

2. Key Matters for the Committee's Consideration

Officers are seeking a view from the committee on the following:

- 2.1 What is the best way to ensure that the actions in the current Air Quality Action Plan appropriately reflect post pandemic green recovery and public health priorities?
- 2.2 How should the council be responding to the Ella Aloo-Kissi-Debrah case and maximising interventions for residents that live within 25m of the strategic road network?
- 2.3 Do the committee agree that a resident led air quality focus group should be created to provide a dedicated forum for the co-creation of responses to the city's poor air quality? How could it be most effective? What should this look like? How can we ensure good representation across the community?
- 2.4 The revised 2021 draft Code of Construction Practice has recently completed a public consultation. It has been updated to reflect the representations received both internally and externally. Do the committee have further comments on the document?

3. Background

3.1 Air Quality Programme (see both Informal Cabinet Slide Decks appended)

Westminster's Air Quality Programme aims to exceed national and international standards in air quality (WCC have committed to achieving WHO guidelines, which were further strengthened in September 2021) by reducing emissions from buildings and transport through technological innovation and working with our communities.

The attached slide decks were presented at Informal Cabinet in July 2021. They set out:

- the current objectives of the programme
- detailed data analysis of pollutant levels during lockdown
- how the AQ programme contributes to the council's climate emergency targets, how the AQ programme is embedded across Cabinet portfolios, and
- current activity in the programme.

The strategies mentioned in the slides have been submitted with this report as background reading.

The committee is being asked to consider the following as key matters of consideration.

3.2 Air Quality Action Plan (AQAP) 2019-2024

Westminster City Council is required to produce an AQAP as part of its duty to London Local Air Quality Management, and all London councils work with the GLA on this. Part one sets out the context incorporating the council's statutory requirements as an Air Quality Management Area. Part two is the Action Plan - 88 individual actions that the council will undertake to support air quality improvement in the city across five themes:

1. **Monitoring Air Quality** – to consistently monitor air quality across the city to continually assess our compliance with Air Quality Limit Values and against World Health Organisation targets
2. **Reducing emissions from transport** – to implement a range of measures to reduce emissions from transport sources throughout the city, to continue to be the leading local authority for Electric Vehicle Charging infrastructure and to continue to support major policy interventions to reduce emissions from transport sources
3. **Reducing emissions from buildings and new development** – to mitigate and minimise emissions from both existing buildings and from new development using a combination of policy, partnership working and specific projects and interventions that will support creating a net zero emission city by 2040

4. **Awareness raising** - to continue to research and implement wide ranging behaviour change and awareness raising projects around air quality to inform and educate our stakeholders, and
5. **Lobbying and partnership working** – to call for more action from where necessary from regional and national government

The current iteration of the AQAP was published in December 2019 after a detailed development and consultation process – but was pre-pandemic and pre Ella Adoo-Kissi-Debra’s landmark ruling (see below). The council publishes an annual monitoring report - the latest monitoring update was submitted August 2021 (2020 data) but is heavily caveated to consider the specific impact of lockdowns on the data.

Following Cllr Acton’s direction, it is planned to update the AQAP to reflect both these factors and our strengthened public health priorities (see para 3.3) and ensure our air quality work underpins the city’s green economic recovery while retaining as much of the air quality improvements as possible as the city reopens.

As such it is proposed that there will be a combination of new actions and strengthened existing actions within the AQAP. These will fall under four categories, which the committee is encouraged to provide feedback on:

1. Reflecting the impact of the covid-19 pandemic and its impact on the city: the covid-19 pandemic has necessitated a variety of changes in how we as a council manage, support and promote our city. A number of these ambitious policies and actions have had additional environmental benefits and improvements, which a revised AQAP can help promote and advance.
2. Closer alignment of air quality goals with the council’s Climate Emergency work: since the original publishing of the AQAP, the council’s work on the Climate Emergency has advanced significantly, and there are considered opportunities to maximise the co-benefits of policies and projects that will reduce air pollution and contribute to our ambitious city-wide Climate Emergency targets.
3. An increased focus on actions to reduce Particulate Matter emissions: reducing Particulate emissions has been a focus of attention for the GLA and London boroughs for some time, and the relative lack of reduction of articulate emissions due to covid-19 related lockdowns has highlighted a need for more work in this area. For Westminster, it is increasingly understood that emissions from wood burning stoves (domestic and commercial) are a larger than previously realised source of harmful Particulate pollution; this is one area where the AQAP can be strengthened.
4. Strengthening working with Public Health: while already considered throughout the existing AQAP, the Ella Adoo-Kissi-Debra case has highlighted potential areas for stronger partnership working between local authorities and Public Health counterparts, particularly focusing on how we communicate information and advice around air pollution to vulnerable resident groups and families.

In addition, over the summer three strategies from the environment portfolio that significantly impact the air quality agenda underwent public consultation:

- Climate Emergency Action Plan,
- Environment Supplementary Planning Document and the
- Code of Construction Practice (see para 3.5)

Reviewing the AQAP at this stage will ensure that the actions are fully aligned with the three strategies and that all actions coming out of these four policy documents complement and strengthen each other.

3.3 Ella Adoo-Kissi-Debrah

Nine-year-old Ella Adoo-Kissi-Debrah lived in Lewisham and tragically died in 2013 from asthma. She lived close to the South Circular (A215) and had been exposed to air pollutants at a level that exceeded both World Health Organisation (WHO) and legal limits. Ella Adoo-Kissi-Debrah's case is ground-breaking as for the first time in the UK, air pollution was listed as a cause of her death.

Southwark's assistant coroner authored the [Report to Prevent Future Deaths](#) following Adoo-Kissi-Debrah's inquest which has the following recommendations for healthcare providers, local authorities, and central government:

- Medical professionals must provide information for patients about the adverse health effects of air pollution
- Government and local authorities must improve public awareness about air pollution and its adverse impacts upon health
- Government must adopt WHO air quality standards as legally-binding objectives in the UK

The council's response to this case is going to be discussed jointly with the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea at the next Health and Wellbeing Board (date to be confirmed). Through the Schools Clean Air Fund, the council has been actively providing information to raise awareness and facilitating the installation of air quality interventions at schools including installing green walls. Westminster also supported the GLA's [London Schools Pollution Helpdesk](#) which promotes anti idling and air quality audits to schools. Officers are currently drafting a bid to the Defra Air Quality Fund (closes 8th October) to develop specific training for front line workers (such as our social workers) and follow up online training on the health impacts of air quality.

3.4 Air Quality Focus Group

The review of the responses to the consultations that have been carried out over the summer has demonstrated the widespread commitment that residents have to supporting the council on climate change challenges and specifically improving air quality. The city benefits from stakeholders with an unsurpassed breadth of expertise and the opportunity to co-create policies and projects that are reflective of what communities want and allow us to be ambitious and innovative in our thinking. Co-creation of policy development through meaningful conversations and welcoming external challenge will ensure that the council benefits from both diversity of opportunity, experience and innovation and ensure that we are engaging and

consulting with our communities regularly and not only when the authority is seeking a consultation response to pre-thought out work.

3.5 Code of Construction Practice

The newly updated Code strengthens our requirements for developers in a number of areas. As well as updating the Code to reflect changes in best practice since it was first published in 2016, there are many brand-new requirements that go beyond current accepted best practice. While not an exhaustive list of updates, some of the new requirements for developers include:

- Community liaison – stronger requirements for large scale developments to provide ongoing information and communications channels to the local community and local stakeholders, through regular email newsletters and dedicated project websites. Major developments are also required to work with other ‘overlapping’ developments to reduce potential cumulative impacts.
- Sensitive receptors – the council is now able to ‘upgrade’ projects to require stronger mitigation from developers in areas where there are higher than average incidences of public health concerns such as asthma and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD). The council also reserves the right to ‘upgrade’ projects based on their proximity to sites such as schools/nurseries, care homes and other healthcare uses.
- Noise – the CoCP updates and strengthens previous wording around noisy working and hours of working, and embeds a number of new best practice guidance published since the 2016 version of the Code.
- Dust / air pollution – the new CoCP goes beyond requirements made by the GLA or by any other London borough in our standards for emissions from construction equipment (Non Road Mobile Machinery, often abbreviated to NRMM), and in the ‘trigger levels’ we require for monitoring dust emissions on site. These standards have been developed in conjunction with the GLA and are an example of the new Code’s ‘best in class’ status in many areas.
- Live hoardings – the CoCP includes a new requirement for major developments to use green hoardings where practicable.

The final draft of the Code has been provided as a background paper. The representations received during the public consultation have been incorporated into the document along with comments from colleagues from Environmental Sciences, Highways and Transportation and Planning. Subject to the committee’s agreement / comments, the Code will be published in time for COP 26 (1st November onwards) and uploaded to the council website.

If you have any queries about this Report or wish to receive or inspect any of the Background Papers, please contact Report Author 02076411021 cjohn@westminster.gov.uk

APPENDICES:

None

BACKGROUND PAPERS

This section is for any background papers used to formulate the report or referred to in the body of the report.

Background paper 1 - WCC Air Quality Programme 2021 slide deck (presented to informal cabinet on 12/07/21)

Background paper 2 - WCC Air Quality in Westminster, *the impact of lockdown* slide deck (presented to informal cabinet on 12/07/21)

Background Paper 3 - WCC Air Quality Annual Status Report 2020

WCC Draft Code of Construction Practice 2021 – available on request due to size of document

[WCC Air Quality Action Plan 2019 – 2023](#)

[WCC Climate Action Plan 2021 - 2040](#)

[WCC Draft Environment SPD 2021](#)

[WCC Schools Clean Air Fund programme report](#)

[Phillip Barlow, April 2021 - Annex A: Regulation 28 Report to Prevent Future Deaths \(Judiciary\)](#)