SCRUTINY INQUIRY PANEL - AIR QUALITY

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 18 SEPTEMBER 2014

Present: Councillors Galton, Hammond, McEwing, O'Neill, Parnell, Lewzey and Lloyd

5. **APOLOGIES AND CHANGES IN PANEL MEMBERSHIP (IF ANY)**

It was noted that following receipt of the temporary resignation of Councillors Coombs and Thorpe from the Panel, the Head of Legal and Democratic Services, acting under delegated powers, had appointed Councillors Lewzey and Lloyd to replace them for the purposes of this meeting.

6. **ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIR**

RESOLVED that Councillor McEwing be elected as Chair for the remainder of the Municipal Year 2014/2015.

7. **MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING (INCLUDING MATTERS ARISING)**

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 31st July 2014 be approved and signed as a correct record.

8. **AIR QUALITY IN SOUTHAMPTON: A PUBLIC HEALTH PERSPECTIVE**

The Panel considered the report of the Assistant Chief Executive providing a Public Health Perspective of Air Quality in Southampton.

Debbie Chase, Consultant in Public Health, Southampton City Council, provided a presentation on the public health perspective of air quality in the City and further evidence was given from the draft findings of a Health Impact Assessment of air pollution in Southampton (attached as Appendix two to the report) by Fiona Davey, University of Southampton. Key areas included:

- impact of air pollution on health;
- the impact for Southampton in particular;
- Mortality and Particulate Air Pollution in Southampton;
- respiratory and cardio vascular health and air quality – in particular the connection with asthma and Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD);
- Air Quality Management Areas in the City;
- where improvements could be made taking into consideration what was being done already.

It was reported that impacts for the City of poor air quality included increased hospital admissions and deaths from respiratory and heart conditions. Whilst the symptoms of these were exacerbated in the short term by poor air quality; there were also longer term affects in particular for children, the elderly, those with pre-existing conditions; the obese and for smokers. Evidence indicated that the health impact increased as the level of pollution increased and that the evidence base for the causal links to air pollution was growing.

Reference was made to the data from Public Health England's report published in April 2014, on the health burden of air pollution which, along with other statistical evidence, estimated the following affects attributable to air pollution on mortality in Southampton in 2011:

- in comparison to other cities (ie to 11 equivalent local authorities) Southampton had the highest estimated fraction of mortality associated with particulate air pollution - at 6%. Local cities (such as Portsmouth – 5.3%, Brighton and Hove – 5.0%, Oxfordshire – 5.1% Bristol – 5.2% and Bournemouth – 4.1%) were rated better than Southampton
- 1,280 associated years of life lost / equivalent life expectancy loss of 7-8 months; and
- COPD prevalence in Southampton (2.0%) is significantly higher than England (1.7%) and the 4th highest amongst statistical neighbours.

However, it was clarified that the data represented the potential increased risk of mortality assuming long term exposure of the current population to current levels of pollution and that the report was based on modelled concentrations of air pollution. Other evidence presented included:

- the cost impact estimate from the Department of Transport of the health impact of air pollution from motorised transport for the UK was around £10 billion per annum and for Southampton it was thought to be £50 million;
- motor vehicle traffic and diesel engines in particular, especially HGVs, was the main source for many air pollutants;
- mapping of Air Quality Management areas in the City indicated links between exposure to air pollution / instances of associated diseases and areas of social deprivation.

In summary, when considering the degree to which tackling the issue should be a priority for the City, the following factors needed to be taken into account:

- heart and lung diseases were significant issues for Southampton;
- air pollution caused 1 in 15 deaths;
- there was a growing evidence-base of health impact, particularly for those most vulnerable;
- stopping smoking had largest impact on individual risk;
- the promotion of walking and cycling as an alternative to motorised transport had additional health benefits;
- the links with sustainable development agenda.

The following were highlighted as activities by SCC already in place:

- Air Quality Action Plan - previous air quality actions had focused on transport related projects to improve the efficiency of the road network and reduce congestion;
- Active Travel Strategy:
  - eg My Journey' initiatives which included 100% of City schools having school travel plans to encourage children and parents to cycle or walk to school instead of driving;
  - the Council's 'Cycle to Prosperity' scheme which aims to increase cycling levels from 3% to 18% within 10 years; and

  - a 10 year cycling strategy produced in association with Sustrans to increase the provisions for cyclists and make it safer to cycle throughout the City;
- City Wide Low Emission Strategy:
  - including cleaner buses using the Clean Bus Technology Fund;
  - a working group from departments across the Council established to promote the delivery of existing initiatives and identify new ones. A City-wide emission reduction strategy to be developed for passenger cars, freight, buses and taxis (as described in the background information for meeting 1);
- Air Alert - enabling people more vulnerable to air pollution to manage the health impact in the event of high pollution levels - free service and with currently 201 subscribers - 96 air alerts had been issued since June 2010.

Potential improvements included:

- improve public awareness – eg a clearer Council webpage to inform on progress since the last Air Quality Action Plan;
- better promotion of benefits of tackling air pollution – eg health improvements associated with active transport; reduced traffic leading to fewer road accidents;
- alternative forms of transport – low emission / electric vehicles, active alternatives such as cycling and walking;
- Park and Ride scheme – there was a potential site for the west of the City (old Ford site) but this was more difficult to achieve in the east; Southampton alone amongst the comparator cities in not having one;
- cycle path infrastructure – e.g. incorporating cycle lanes into new road builds as part of planning policy and making cycling safer in the City;
- Urban Greening / Green Screens (tree planting to absorb pollutants - in particular Silver Birch);
- Titanium Dioxide-covered (TiO2) covered roofs and concrete as used in the Netherlands to absorb pollutants – embedded within Planning Policy
- Shirley High Street was particularly cited for potential road improvements to reduce congestion as currently it was seen as obstructive to free-flowing traffic;
- Port relations – engaging in dialogue with the Port authorities to tackle issues such as pollution from idling port traffic / trains, use of on-shore power to ships at berth rather than on board generators;
- congestion Charging scheme per London;
- use of fines for idling vehicles - as introduced in Kingston upon Hull and Oxford – and that taxis be a particular consideration in this regard.

In response to questions from the Panel, urban greening was identified as being particularly effective and affordable. Additionally, during discussion the following points were raised:

- the use of face masks was felt to be of low acceptability to the public and lack of costs/resources would require partnership working;
- due to current resource and cost issues particularly for SCC, it was recommended resources be targeted to action to tackle pollution rather than used for continuous monitoring in the City;
- with regard to idling vehicles (and introducing fines) - it was agreed that this be taken up with the Port Authority who, although unable to attend a future meeting of the inquiry would shortly be meeting with the Chair; and that as

meetings 3/4 of the inquiry would focus on transport, the issue be given further consideration then;

- initiatives should be embedded into planning policies.

9. **AIR QUALITY IN SOUTHAMPTON: A RESIDENTS' PERSPECTIVE**

The Panel considered the report of the Assistant Chief Executive detailing a Residents' Perspective of Air Quality in Southampton.

The Western Docks Consultative Forum (WDCF) delivered a presentation on air quality in Southampton and this was followed by feedback from the air quality survey, which had been undertaken to inform this inquiry.

The Panel noted that the WDCF represented the views of residents living or working in the vicinity of the Western Docks concerned by the high levels of pollutants affecting the air quality in the area bordered by the docks and surrounding residential areas. Key points of the presentation included the following:

- residents' concerns had been raised by comments from local children that it was "too smelly and difficult to breathe" to walk to school;
- the recent shutdown of the Automatic Monitoring Station at Redbridge School had added to their concerns;
- the Nitrogen Dioxide levels monitored by Diffusion Tubes on Redbridge Road and Millbrook Road had remained at a high level for a number of years;
- concerns were heightened by press reports stating that air pollution would continue to kill scores of people every year in Southampton and that European limits were now unlikely to be met until 2030;
- research showed that one of the major causes of air pollution was road vehicles, and the number of diesel powered cars, vans and heavy goods vehicles on the roads was increasing;
- roads causing concern were the M271 leading onto the Redbridge roundabout, and the Redbridge to the Millbrook roundabout link which were heavily congested at peak times with frequent standing traffic on both carriageways and carried a large proportion of HGV's heading into dock gate 20 and the container port;
- Ministry of Transport data showed a 37% increase in HGV traffic on the M271 to Redbridge Roundabout over the past 14 years with the largest increase over the past three years;
- the Forum was concerned that the added pollution caused by actual and proposed developments concentrated in one area of the City resulted in an ongoing failure to meet EEC standards with consequent health problems for residents well beyond the 2030 projection. These included:
    - the 201/202 Deep Water Berths, expansion of the Sewage Treatment Works, Sulphur Pellet Manufacturing Plant and the possibility that a Biomass Power Station could still be built in the Western Docks - all accessed from Dock Gate 20 via Millbrook roundabout;
    - the Adanack Park, Lidl Distribution Warehouse and recent pre-planning proposals by Evander Properties for a large scale development on the Green Field Site in Test Lane all accessed from M271 junction 1;
    - West Quay stage 2 and the Royal Pier Waterfront proposal;
    - increased cruise traffic with larger capacity ships entering service in 2015;

    - the future sale of Marchwood Military Port and resulting change to commercial use.
- The expansion and growth in trade of Southampton Docks and dock side activities were a major cause of the high pollution levels in the area: major causes of pollution caused by the docks were identified as:
    • noise and dust created by the bulk handling of scrap metal and wood pellets;
    • movement of HGV traffic delivering and collecting containers;
    • movement of straddle carriers transporting containers within the docks;
    • stationary diesel rail locomotives idling for long periods prior to leaving the docks;
    • car transporters leaving engines running while loading or unloading vehicles;
    • car carrying ships loading and unloading vehicles which could involve 3000 plus vehicle movements;
    • vessels running auxiliary engines in Port.

Based on the contention that pollution is at its highest when traffic is at a standstill or travelling at low speed in stop/start conditions; suggestions from WDCF for improvement included:

- reduction of traffic volume by providing out of town “Park and Ride” service possibly serving Eastleigh and Southampton;
- encouragement of car sharing and use of public transport;
- provision of more segregated “commuter” cycle lanes to encourage safer cycling;
- encouraging the use of low emission cars and buses;
- re-establishing passenger traffic on the Marchwood to Southampton railway line;
- removal of many unnecessary traffic lights and improving operation of the Romanse control system to maintain traffic flow;
- provision of more layby’s for buses to enable traffic to pass when the bus stops;
- introduction of regulations to ensure buses, taxi and coaches switch off engines when stationary for any extended period;
- more emission and safety checks on vehicles to ensure compliance with regulations;
- reduced speed limit to 40mph on Millbrook Road and 20mph around schools and side streets.

The WDCF referred to the lack of response to the Forum from the docks authorities and also expressed a number of concerns around the docks in particular:

- unless major changes were made to enable direct access into the docks from the M271, the congestion on both Redbridge and Millbrook roundabouts was likely to continue;
- consideration ought to be given to reducing pollution created by ships in port. Current regulations stated that ships must switch from the primary power source to auxiliary engines within two hours of docking but questioned whether this was enforced. The cumulative effect of up to 20 or more ships in port including large cruise liners with diesel engines were a major concern;

- other ports provided shore based power supplies especially in cities with close proximity to residential properties, as in Southampton. This had been proposed in the past but discounted by ABP on cost grounds.

The Inquiry went on to consider the results of the Air Quality Survey which had run from 7 August 2014 – 5 September 2014 and had received a high response of 298 reported as demonstrating the importance of air quality to Southampton residents. Responses to the survey indicated that:

- cars, HGVs, industry, buses and shipping and other port based activities were identified as being the highest contributors to the City's poor air quality – cars rated highest of all;
- most respondents felt that air quality has worsened in recent years;
- 245 respondents were not aware of the Air Alert service – although 83 of those had answered that air quality was a significant issue to them.

Suggestions from respondents for improving air quality included:

- Public Transport – review fares and improve networks, introduction of eco-friendly buses;
- Park and Ride – to encourage large scale modal shift;
- Encourage cycling – improving existing and introducing new routes, introduce cycle hire scheme;
- lowering speed limits – to 20mph across City/ residential areas;
- No Idling Zones - e.g. Islington Borough Council's 'Don't be idle campaign';
- Low Emission Zone – within the City Centre;
- planting trees – improve green infrastructure;
- Port – investigate a way for ships to get electricity from the shore and not to use on board generators;
- air quality information – more accessible, real-time alerting, promotion of Air Alert;
- industry – restrict further hazardous and health harming industries and increase planning controls on higher polluting industries;
- national policy – Government to implement nationwide plans to tackle polluting cars and HGVs;
- culture change – a change of mind-set for all needed.

It was noted that many of the suggestions from the Air Quality Survey were in common with those of the WDCF. In response to questions from the Panel the WDCF stated that their top concerns were: controls on HGV traffic, and specifically mentioned idling traffic opposite houses in Freemantle and queried whether the Local Authority could influence increased use of rail transport as an alternative.

Key points arising from subsequent discussion included:

- that the City were in a strong position to negotiate with the dock authorities – for example the business benefits of being a double tide dock and major port meant there were few comparable alternatives available;
- that cost would be the main motivator for consideration of alternative/cleaner fuels/transport and whilst some were not currently commercially viable – the tipping point could be in the near future;

- that European Union funding for a new road to connect the M271 with the docks be investigated;
- that whilst lorries had to comply with fuel emission regulations, their refrigeration units did not;
- the viability of electric vehicles in the City and possible increased use by SCC;
- the potential benefits of a regular traffic free day in the City centre had been demonstrated by the Sky Ride events and such days in other cities (Make Sunday Special in Bristol);

The Chair reiterated as a point of information that transport was to be the focus for the third meeting of the inquiry and that representatives from bus companies would be in attendance.