

Report to:	CLIMATE CHANGE AND ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
Relevant Officer:	Jennifer Clayton, Head of Public Protection and Enforcement
Date of Decision/ Meeting:	15 November 2023

AIR QUALITY ACTION PLAN AND AIR QUALITY STRATEGY

1.0 Purpose of the report:

1.1 To consider the final draft Air Quality Action Plan (AQAP) and Air Quality Strategy (AQS) prior to Executive consideration, and contribute as appropriate.

2.0 Recommendation(s):

2.1 To review and make suggestions on the AQAP and AQS where appropriate and identify areas for further Scrutiny.

3.0 Reasons for recommendation(s):

3.1 The AQAP and AQS set out plans to improve air quality in Blackpool, reduce the effects of air pollution on public health and the environment, and comply with statutory requirements and DEFRA Technical Guidance.

3.2 Is the recommendation contrary to a plan or strategy adopted or approved by the Council? No

3.3 Is the recommendation in accordance with the Council's approved budget? Yes

4.0 Other alternative options to be considered:

4.1 None.

5.0 Council priority:

5.1 The work supports both of the Council's priorities:

- "The economy: Maximising growth and opportunity across Blackpool"
- "Communities: Creating stronger communities and increasing resilience"

6.0 Background information

- 6.1 Ricardo were commissioned by Blackpool Council to produce a ten-year Air Quality Strategy (AQS) for Blackpool that also focuses on wider outcomes, in addition to an Air Quality Action Plan (AQAP) and Annual Status Report (ASR) to ensure compliance with statutory requirements and DEFRA Technical Guidance. These three documents are complementary, each contributing towards improving Blackpool's air quality.
- 6.2 Under the Environment Act 1995 for Local Air Quality Management (LAQM), councils are legally required to monitor air quality to understand whether air quality standards and objectives are being reached. Under statutory duties, councils are required to implement an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) when monitored air pollutant concentrations are not compliant with the national air quality objectives. After declaring an AQMA, a local authority is required to prepare a remedial Air Quality Action Plan (AQAP) to improve air quality in that area.
- 6.3 In Blackpool, air quality is generally good. Since 2005, Blackpool has been subject to AQMA due to nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) levels exceeding national objectives, primarily caused by traffic congestion. The AQMA extends along the Town Centre, including Dickson Road, Church Street, Grosvenor Street, and Talbot Square. Although no exceedances were monitored between 2018-2022, the revocation of an AQMA can be considered following three consecutive years of annual mean concentrations being lower than 10% of the annual mean NO₂ objective. Monitoring at this site has been temporarily suspended since 2020 due to ongoing construction works and will be reinstated once the construction site hoarding has been removed. Three full years of monitoring data at this site (2024-2026) will provide evidence as to whether the Blackpool AQMA can be revoked.
- 6.4 In the meantime the AQAP outlines the actions that Blackpool Council will deliver between 2023-2028 to reduce concentrations of air pollutants and exposure to air pollution in the AQMA. The priorities of the AQAP are to:
1. Improve air quality in Blackpool AQMA and provide evidence to demonstrate this, so that the AQMA can be revoked in the future
 2. Improve air quality monitoring and communications, to ensure our residents and visitors are informed about local air quality
 3. Reducing particulate matter (PM_{2.5}) emissions
- 6.5 The development of the AQS is included as an action in the Climate Emergency Action Plan. Blackpool's 10-year AQS sets out the council's approach to achieve healthy air and improved quality of life for all in Blackpool. The strategy outlines the current air quality in Blackpool and the key sources of emissions, details of the actions that Blackpool Council will take to reduce emissions and improve air quality, and raise public awareness around the importance of improving air quality in Blackpool.

The AQS sets out current and future actions in Blackpool that will contribute to air quality improvements. These actions are grouped under the following six themes:

1. Reducing emissions
2. Encouraging Active travel
3. Domestic heating and burning
4. Green infrastructure
5. Reducing the impact of new developments
6. Public engagement

6.6 The ASR is an annual requirement showing the strategies employed by Blackpool to improve air quality and any progress that has been made.

6.7 The AQAP will be reviewed every five years at the latest and progress on measures set out within the AQAP will be reported on annually within Blackpool Council's air quality ASR. The AQS will be reviewed halfway through the course to assess the success of the implementation of the strategy.

6.8 Does the information submitted include any exempt information? No

7.0 List of Appendices:

- 7.1 Appendix 8(a) - Blackpool Council Air Quality Action Plan (2023 – 2028)
- Appendix 8(b) - Blackpool Air Quality Strategy (2023 – 2033)
- Appendix 8(c) - Blackpool 2023 Air Quality Annual Status Report
- Appendix 8(d) - Air Quality Equality Analysis Record Form
- Appendix 8(e) - Air Quality Consultation Report

8.0 Financial considerations:

8.1 Air pollution negatively affects the economy through a range of indirect impacts, such as decreased productivity, the reduction in the number of healthy working people, and the cost to the social care system and NHS. The actions within the document aim to improve air quality, which intend to reduce these financial costs.

8.2 A number of the actions within the document are already underway, while others are future ambitions. Budget and resources will be drawn from existing council and service provision where possible, and external funding will be sought if necessary.

9.0 Legal considerations:

9.1 The AQAP was developed in recognition of the legal requirement on the local authority to work towards Air Quality Strategy (AQS) objectives under Part IV of the Environment Act

1995 and relevant regulations made under that part and to meet the requirements of the Local Air Quality Management (LAQM) statutory process.

- 9.2 The ASR (attached at Appendix 8(c)) was developed in fulfilment of Part IV of the Environment Act 1995 Local Air Quality Management, as amended by the Environment Act 2021.

10.0 Risk management considerations:

- 10.1 Air pollution is the largest environmental health risk in the UK. By developing an AQAP and AQS, the council can work towards protecting the health of our communities, tourists, local environment, and economy. Without these documents, the risk of air pollution would be higher.

11.0 Equalities considerations and the impact of this decision for our children and young people:

- 11.1 As detailed throughout the Equality Analysis Record Form (attached at Appendix 8(d)).
- 11.2 It is acknowledged that children and young people are disproportionately affected by air pollution due to their age. The AQS and AQAP seeks to implement actions that improve air quality for everyone, reducing the disproportionate impact on children and young people. The council is currently working with primary schools in the town to review road safety at all primary schools located in Blackpool, as part of the Blackpool Community Safety Plan 2022-2025. Under the AQS, we will support the primary schools in pursuing the recommendations of the road safety review that will help to improve air quality and reduce children's exposure to air pollution.

12.0 Sustainability, climate change and environmental considerations:

- 12.1 Air quality and climate change are inextricably linked, as often sources of air pollutants are also a source of greenhouse gas emissions. This means that actions to mitigate air pollutants can also have a benefit for climate change, and vice versa. Improved air quality will be a key outcome of committing to the climate emergency action plan.

13.0 Internal/external consultation undertaken:

- 13.1 In November 2022, an online stakeholder workshop was held to seek input from relevant officers to inform the development of the AQS. The draft AQS was shared with workshop attendees and the Climate Action Partnership for feedback, and the comments received were considered and the document was amended accordingly.
- 13.2 Members of the Tourism, Economy and Communities Scrutiny Committee held a Review Panel Meeting in December 2022 to discuss the development of the AQS. The Review Panel discussed each of the six themes for the actions, and made recommendations which were

taken into consideration.

- 13.3 The Blackpool Council AQAP Steering Group was established in March 2023. An online workshop was held for the Steering Group to provide an overview of air quality in Blackpool, and to discuss the longlist of AQAP measures. This included discussion of the potential measures which had been compiled from existing regional and local policy as well as discussion on future ambition measures. Following the workshop, the longlist of AQAP measures was refined to the shortlist.
- 13.4 In addition to the above engagement, a public consultation took place to seek views on the proposed draft AQAP and AQS. The consultation was open between 17th July to 20th September 2023. There were 119 responses, 6 of which were from businesses. The survey found that the majority of respondents agreed that air quality is an important issue but that it is also relatively less important than other areas of statutory responsibility. Overall, respondents agreed with the vision and the actions of the AQAP and AQS.

A copy of the consultation findings and the council's response to those findings can be found in Appendix 8(e).

14.0 Background papers:

- 14.1 None.