

BABERGH DISTRICT COUNCIL

FROM: Head of Natural and Built Environment

REPORT NUMBER **F108**

TO: Overview and Scrutiny (Community Services)
2006

DATE OF MEETING: 17 October

ENVIRONMENT ACT 1995 – REPORT ON THE UPDATING AND SCREENING ASSESSMENT OF AIR QUALITY IN THE BABERGH DISTRICT, 2006

1. **SUMMARY**

In 2000 the Government published its revised Air Quality Strategy in response to the requirements of the Environment Act 1995. Local Authorities must periodically review and assess air quality in their areas. This report presents the findings of the latest review ('Updating and Screening Assessment'). It also serves to notify the Committee of progress with regard to air quality monitoring.

2. **RECOMMENDATION**

2.1 That the contents of the report and future actions and implications be noted.

The Committee is able to resolve this matter.

3. **FINANCIAL INFORMATION**

3.1 At present, the financial implications are limited to the cost of carrying out the necessary monitoring and future Progress Reports, for which adequate funding has been allocated.

3.2 If at any point in the future the Council has to designate an Air Quality Management Area there are likely to be significant cost implications for the Council in carrying out further monitoring and/or modeling for a Detailed Assessment and the preparation of an Action Plan. In such an eventuality it would be the intention to bid for funding from the Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs' direct grant programme, which supports expenditure on the capital costs of such work.

4. **KEY INFORMATION**

4.1 **Background and Details of Investigations**

4.1.1 The Government's revised Air Quality Strategy has been implemented through regulations which set Air Quality Standards and Objectives for seven prescribed pollutants of greatest local concern: carbon monoxide, benzene, 1,3-butadiene, lead, sulphur dioxide, nitrogen dioxide and particulate matter (PM₁₀). The objectives have been set having regard to the health effects of the pollutants, together with the costs, benefits, feasibility and practicality of achieving the standards. In some cases the objectives have become more demanding with time.

4.1.2 The Environment Act 1995 requires local authorities to periodically review and assess air quality within their areas to determine whether the Air Quality Objectives will be met by specified target dates. The Council has previously carried out two rounds of review and assessment of the entire Babergh district commencing in 1999 and 2003.

- 4.1.3 The 2006 Updating and Screening Assessment updates the Council's previous studies by screening the various potential sources of prescribed pollutants that could impact on the District. The screening models and monitoring data used in the assessment were as recommended in the Government's technical guidance and a precautionary approach was adopted throughout.
- 4.1.4 Where the screening process identifies a significant risk that a potential emission source could lead to an exceedance of the Air Quality Objectives, the Council is required to proceed to a 'Detailed Assessment'. If a Detailed Assessment confirms that the objectives will not be met, the affected location must be designated as an "Air Quality Management Area" and an Action Plan developed detailing how the Council and other stakeholders will work towards achievement of the objectives.
- 4.1.5 The Updating and Screening Assessment report is a substantial technical document and for this reason it has been decided not to provide each Member with an individual copy. However, copies of the report are available on request, for inspection in the Members' Room and for public inspection at the offices in Hadleigh and at Sudbury Town Hall. The report may also be examined on the Council's Internet site at:
www.babergh.gov.uk/Babergh/Home/Environment+and+Health/Environmental+Protection/Air+Quality/Local+Air+Quality+Management.htm.

4.2 **Results of the Assessment**

- 4.2.1 A wide range of transport, industrial, commercial and residential sources were assessed for potential emissions of the prescribed pollutants. The length and technical detail of the report make it impractical to summarise the many issues covered, but a copy of the contents of the report is reproduced at Appendix A.
- 4.2.2 At the time of writing the Updating and Screening Assessment concluded that for each of the seven prescribed pollutants, the Air Quality Objectives are likely to be met and that a more Detailed Assessment was not required.
- 4.2.3 The Updating and Screening Assessment is confined to the pollutants listed. No other pollutants or issues can be considered at this stage.

4.3 **Consultation**

- 4.3.1 The following stakeholders have been consulted on the Updating and Screening Assessment, in accordance with the statutory requirements:
- All Members of the Council
 - Secretary of State for DEFRA
 - Suffolk County Council and all neighbouring district and borough councils
 - All Parish Councils
 - Environment Agency
 - Highways Agency
 - Ministry of Defence
 - Bodies representing local business interests, environmental pressure groups and other organisations as appropriate
 - Businesses implicated in the conclusions to the report

The consultation exercise was carried out between 25 May 2006 and 25 August 2006.

- 4.3.2 DEFRA's air quality specialists accepted the conclusions of the report for all pollutants. A summary of all responses received is provided at Appendix B.

5. **FUTURE ACTIONS AND IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 Central Government is currently consulting on options for further improvements in air quality with a view to revising the national Air Quality Strategy. It is understood that this review will be completed before the next scheduled updating and screening assessment due in 2009. Members will be advised of any significant amendment to the Council's local air quality management duties.
- 5.2 In the interim years the Council is required to produce annual "Progress Reports" to report progress on implementing local air quality management in the District and in achieving, or in many cases maintaining, concentrations below the Air Quality Objectives.
- 5.3 The 2006 Updating and Screening Assessment acknowledges the potential impact on local air quality of Suffolk County Council's trial traffic management scheme in Cross Street, Sudbury designed to prevent passing vehicles mounting the kerb by creating a single-lane priority system at certain points. It was recognised that this scheme could have an impact on local air quality and so, as part of the trial, Babergh and the County Council are working in partnership to extend and review the monitoring of nitrogen dioxide concentrations along Cross Street. The results of this extended monitoring will be used to assess the success of the trial scheme and will be reported in 2007, once sufficient data has been obtained.

6. **APPENDICES**

Appendix A - Contents of Updating & Screening Assessment of Air Quality in the Babergh District, April 2006

Appendix B - Summary of Consultation Responses

7. **BACKGROUND PAPERS REFERRED TO:**

Updating & Screening Assessment of Air Quality in the Babergh District, July 2003, Version 2

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Summary of Consultation Responses

- DEFRA's air quality specialists accepted the conclusions of the report for all pollutants and commented that the Updating and Screening Assessment was well structured.
- Councillor Booth requested further information with respect to the impact on air quality of Suffolk County Council's trial traffic management scheme in Cross Street, Sudbury.
- Suffolk County Council noted the contents of the report and undertook to work closely with Babergh to resolve any traffic related air pollution problems.
- Sudbury Town Council noted the contents of the report, requested further information about monitoring in Cross Street, Sudbury and sought assurances about Babergh's future role in monitoring in the vicinity.
- Suffolk West Primary Care Trust queried certain technical issues with a computer spreadsheet that was used to model air quality for the report (which were answered). The PCT also requested further information about Babergh's on-going monitoring programmes in Cross Street, Sudbury and on the A12, and the impact on air quality of Suffolk County Council's trial traffic management scheme in Cross Street, Sudbury.
- The Highways Agency noted the contents of the report and that there were no issues in respect of the roads under its management.
- English Nature reminded the Council of the duty imposed on local authorities by the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) to take reasonable steps to further the enhancement and conservation of designated interest features of statutory protected sites.