

LIVERPOOL CITY REGION COMBINED AUTHORITY

To: The Metro Mayor and Members of the Combined Authority

Meeting: 16 November 2018

Authority/Authorities Affected: All

EXEMPT/CONFIDENTIAL ITEM: No

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF POLICY AND STRATEGIC COMMISSIONING AND PORTFOLIO LEAD MEMBER FOR TRANSPORT AND AIR QUALITY

TACKLING POOR AIR QUALITY ACROSS THE LIVERPOOL CITY REGION

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The aim of this report is to secure the Combined Authority's agreement to establish an advisory Liverpool City Region Air Quality Task Force. This is to support the need to take action at a city region level, to raise awareness of, to advise, and make recommendations in order to progress actions that tackle poor air quality.
- 1.2 This builds on one of the Metro Mayor's key pledges for the City Region to be Carbon Neutral by 2040 and making it the greenest UK City Region. It also follows earlier evidence and recommendations by the Combined Authority's Overview and Scrutiny Panel.
- 1.3 In addition, Members are asked to nominate political representatives from their constituent local authorities onto the group.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 It is recommended that the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority:
 - (a) Agrees to establish an advisory Liverpool City Region Air Quality Task Force in line with the draft Terms of Reference set out in Appendix Two, in support of the previously endorsed recommendations to the Combined Authority from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in July 2018; and
 - (b) nominates political leads from the Combined Authority and from the constituent local authorities in the interests of transparency and inclusivity.

3. INFORMATION

- 3.1 Members will recall that the Combined Authority's Overview and Scrutiny Committee convened a series of Task and Finish Groups in the spring of 2018 to examine a range of salient topics. One such topic concerned poor air quality across the city region, which is an issue that is increasingly being raised and debated nationally.
- 3.2 The work stemmed from growing realisation of the need to take urgent action to address the challenges presented by poor air quality from nitrogen dioxide (the main pollutant) at a pan-city region level. In particular, the opportunity to link the Scrutiny Panel's review with a parallel technical air quality feasibility study was valuable, to secure complementarity between the two related work streams.
- 3.3 The Scrutiny Panel's task group considered evidence from a wide range of leading experts. The report was reported to, and agreed by the Combined Authority in June 2018¹ and the main recommendations are reproduced in Appendix One to this report.
- 3.4 Although the Combined Authority is not specifically covered by local air quality management legislation, the evidence developed by the Overview and Scrutiny panel culminated in a recognition that it can, and must act in response
- 3.5 The main cause of nitrogen dioxide exceedances locally stem from transport emissions, which transcend local authority boundaries. As the Combined Authority has statutory responsibilities over transport policy and funding, it was recognised that its policies and priorities have a direct bearing on transport, and in turn, on transport emissions and local air quality management.
- 3.6 Equally, its wider portfolio of responsibilities, such as economic development, employment and skills, land use planning, housing, fairness, the low carbon economy and digital agenda impact on air quality emissions, and which need to be considered and maximised. The development of tidal power is a specific example of a priority that could offer very significant air quality benefits.
- 3.7 Members will appreciate that a significant recommendation agreed by the Combined Authority concerned a need to raise the profile of poor air quality cross the LCR and to act as an advocate and champion:-

“The Combined Authority should support the six constituent local authorities in their statutory duties to monitor and address air quality...the Combined Authority also needs to work collectively with the constituent local authorities and with central government to tackle the problems caused by vehicles and engines that create the most pollution. This should take the form of an LCR air quality task force, convened by the Authority, comprising officers from the local authorities, Combined Authority and public health bodies, to progress the actions needed in order to improve air quality.”

¹ http://liverpoolcityregion-ca.gov.uk/uploadedfiles/meetings/LCR_CA_290618.pdf

- 3.8 Accordingly, this response seeks the Authority's approval to establish this advisory Task Force, and the draft Terms of Reference are set out in Appendix Two to this report.

4. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 There are no direct financial implications associated with the establishment of the Task Force, though wider recommendations may have financial implications which will need to be fully considered by the Combined Authority. The Task Force's work would be supported by officials based within the Combined Authority's Policy and Strategic Commissioning Directorate.
- 4.2 Notwithstanding uncertainties surrounding 'Brexit', the EU has the power to take action against non-compliant member states in the form of fines. There remains a real risk that fines could be levied on the UK for not having a 'credible plan' to meet air quality standards, and these could be passed down to local authorities to pay.
- 4.3 Poor air quality exerts costs on the health sector and on society in general, including impacts that cannot be quantified easily. It is also recognised as a factor that can discourage inward investment as a result of the stigma associated with the problem, and the risks presented to end users, staff or customers.

5. RISKS AND MITIGATION

- 5.1 Poor air quality is now recognised as a potential risk to local authorities, in addition to the serious health risks that it causes. These health risks are wide ranging and well documented, including heart and lung disease, autism, brain development, cancer and overall reduced life expectancy. Measures to reduce the impact of car traffic and to clean existing vehicle fleets will make some contribution towards mitigation against these risks, but it is recognised that further work is needed to test and evaluate the likely costs and relative benefits of these measures and that they will need to form part of a package of wider interventions.

6. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 Evidence suggests that the poorest and most vulnerable people in society are often those who are most exposed to pollution arising from road traffic, as these areas are typically those most affected by road traffic on main arterial routes. As such, measures to improve air quality will be likely to have greatest benefit from the point of view of this cohort.

7. COMMUNICATION ISSUES

- 7.1 The Government's publication "Air Quality: A Briefing for Public Health Directors" sets out good practice on how best to communicate with stakeholders on the issues at stake, recognising that they are typically complex and scientific in nature.

It will be appreciated that a key aim of this report is to increase public awareness of the issues and options at stake.

8. CONCLUSION

- 8.1 This report seeks to secure the Combined Authority's agreement to establish an advisory Liverpool City Region Air Quality Task Force. This is to support the need to take action at a city region level, to raise awareness of, and make recommendations to progress actions that tackle poor air quality.
- 8.2 The main cause of poor air quality locally is from transport emissions, which transcend local authority boundaries. As the Combined Authority has statutory responsibilities over transport policy and funding, it is recognised that its policies and priorities have a direct bearing on transport, and in turn, on transport emissions and local air quality management.
- 8.3 Accordingly, this response seeks the Authority's approval to establish an advisory Task Force on the issue. The draft Terms of Reference are set out in Appendix Two to this report and members are also asked to nominate political representatives from their constituent local authorities onto the group.

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Appendices:

Appendix One – Recap on Air Quality Recommendations Agreed by LCRCA in June 2018

Appendix Two - Proposed Membership of Task Force and Outline Terms of Reference

Background Documents:

None.

Appendix One

Recap on Air Quality Recommendations Agreed by LCRCA in June 2018

1. That the Metro Mayor, on behalf of Combined Authority, acts as a political “champion” for a series of long term measures to improve air quality across the Liverpool City Region, involving a wide range of influential bodies and decision makers. The preliminary air quality feasibility study which is in the process of being finalised, and the action plan that needs to be developed in response, should be formally considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in due course. This will come ahead of consideration by the Combined Authority.
2. Allied to this, the Metro Mayor and the Combined Authority should champion a communications plan to set out a commitment to engage with people across the LCR. This should be targeted as follows:-
 - a. to engage with schools and young people who are particularly vulnerable to the effects of poor air quality, aided by consistent educational materials and best practice across the LCR;
 - b. to engage with the public protection and public health sectors to jointly raise awareness, which could be through roadshows and events, as examples; and;
 - c. To promote National Clean Air Day and related campaigns.
3. The communications plan needs to explain clearly that the LCR has a problem and set out what can be done to both alleviate symptoms, and help address the root of the problem.
4. The Combined Authority needs to fully utilise and align its funding, transport, planning and economic development powers to create an environment where people have reduced reliance on road transport and make greater use of walking, cycling and public transport. For example, this could be linked to the Authority’s emerging digital strategy and the powers that it has over a Key Route Network of local roads. This also needs to be consistently applied through the Authority’s plans and strategies, e.g. through the Freight Strategy and Local Journeys Strategy.
5. The Combined Authority should use its emerging Spatial Development Strategy to address poor air quality and to raise air quality as a policy consideration.
6. The Combined Authority should give prominent and consistent consideration to air quality implications in its decision-making processes and in its investment decisions. This could include much better “before and after” analysis in project and programme evaluations.
7. The Combined Authority should support the six constituent local authorities in their statutory duties to monitor and address air quality, and seek to foster a more “high tech”, consistent and extensive air quality monitoring regime across the LCR. The Combined Authority also needs to work collectively with the constituent local authorities and with central government to tackle the problems caused by vehicles and engines that create the most pollution. This should take the form of an LCR air quality task force, convened by the Authority, comprising officers from the local authorities, Combined Authority and public health bodies, to progress the actions needed in order to improve air quality.

Appendix Two
Proposed Membership of Air Quality Task Force

Membership

(a) Elected members

- LCR CA Transport and Air Quality Portfolio Lead (Chair)
- Local authority political representatives (maximum of 6)

(b) Officers / external representatives

- LCRCA Policy and Strategic Commissioning representative
- Merseytravel
- Senior Local Authority Officers
- Chambers of Commerce
- Local Enterprise Partnership
- Academia / University sector
- Public Health England
- Representatives from CHAMPS Public Health Alliance
- Representative from Defra

Note: Additional external experts or advisors may also be invited to join the group in response to specific issues or requests

Outline Terms of Reference

1. To support and advise the Combined Authority in its strategic leadership and advocacy role in order to raise the profile of, and to actively tackle poor air quality across the LCR. This is by harnessing the collective strengths, roles and best practice of the consistent members of group
2. To consider and make recommendations on how best to maximise the Authority's policy, commissioning and investment functions to positively affect air quality. Specifically, the Task Force would provide input to the Combined Authority's emerging Air Quality Action Plan, ahead of its consideration by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the Combined Authority in the spring of 2019.
3. To make recommendations and aid the commissioning of suitable communications messages and campaigns by which to raise the public's awareness of the problem and the actions needed in response.
4. To examine and make recommendations to the Authority and constituent members on improved means by which to measure and communicate information on quality emissions across the city region.
5. Procedurally, the group will meet on a monthly basis for a period of 12 months, after which time its need, membership and terms of reference will be reviewed. It will be administered and supported by the Combined Authority's staffing body.