

# LIVERPOOL CITY REGION COMBINED AUTHORITY

To: Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Meeting: 15 January 2020

Authority/Authorities Affected: All authorities

EXEMPT/CONFIDENTIAL ITEM: No

## REPORT OF THE ASSISTANT DIRECTOR OF POLICY AND STRATEGIC COMMISSIONING

### REVIEW OF ACTIONS TO IMPROVE POOR AIR QUALITY ACROSS THE LIVERPOOL CITY REGION

#### 1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 This report updates members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the Combined Authority's plans to improve poor air quality across the Liverpool City Region. This is intended as context, to inform the Committee's potential lines of inquiry in this area.
- 1.2 The commitment to take action follows an earlier examination into the issues of poor air quality by a Task and Finish Group, established by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in the spring of 2018. In turn, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee developed a series of recommendations, agreed by the Combined Authority in June 2018. These recommendations are reproduced in Appendix One as context.
- 1.3 Specifically, members' attention is drawn to the interim Air Quality Action Plan – a key recommendation made by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, and which has been developed by the Air Quality Task Force. Membership of the Task Force is set out within Appendix Two.
- 1.4 It was agreed that this action plan would be presented back to members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee ahead of consideration of its adoption by the Combined Authority (CA). This is to provide an opportunity to provide any further feedback and input, ensuring the plan is as comprehensive and robust as possible to act as a framework for action. This interim Action Plan is set out in Appendix Three.

#### 2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 It is recommended that the Combined Authority's Overview and Scrutiny Committee:
  - (a) considers the progress on agreed actions to improve air quality across the Liverpool City Region; and more specifically

- (b) provides comments upon, and any further input in to the interim Air Quality Action Plan that is set out within Appendix Three, ahead of its finalisation by the Combined Authority towards the end of the financial year.

### **3. BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 There is consensus locally, nationally and internationally around the need to take urgent action to address the significant challenges presented by poor air quality, and nitrogen dioxide specifically, not least from a health and wellbeing angle. This is a problem affecting the Liverpool City Region (LCR), and indeed, most major towns and cities globally. It comes in the main, but not exclusively, as a result of traffic and transport emissions.
- 3.2 In the spring of 2018 the CA's Overview and Scrutiny Committee established a Task and Finish Group to explore and make recommendations on the issue of poor air quality. A detailed report was developed together with a series of recommendations. These were presented to, and agreed by the Combined Authority in June 2018<sup>1</sup> and are set out in Appendix One.
- 3.3 Of the recommendations agreed by the Combined Authority, a key proposal related to the development of an air quality action plan. This was considered vital in clearly setting out the CA's approach to taking action on a LCR footing, recognising that statutory air quality plans have been developed at local authority level, but not at a strategic level.
- 3.4 Allied to this is the importance of working collaboratively with the constituent local authorities, local partners and central government to tackle the problem. It was also agreed that this collaborative approach would be formalised through a LCR Air Quality Task Force. This group has overseen the development of the interim Air Quality Action Plan as one of its principal tasks.

### **4. THE AIR QUALITY TASK FORCE**

- 4.1 The terms of reference and proposed membership of the proposed Air Quality Task Force were agreed by the CA in November 2018<sup>2</sup>. It was important for this group to comprise both officers and members from the local authorities, the CA, from key agencies and from business, to progress the range of actions and commitments needed in order to improve air quality. As no individual body holds all of the powers needed, effective and coordinated collective actions are required to tackle a problem that does not respect administrative boundaries. .
- 4.2 The Task Force was launched in March 2019 under the leadership of Cllr Liam Robinson, Lead Portfolio Member for Transport and Air Quality. The membership of the Task Force is set out within Appendix Two. The task force was initiated later than the planned date of September 2018 anticipated in the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's report to the CA, but time was spent scoping the role and membership of the group, ensuring it was was meaningful, transparent and inclusive. It was

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<sup>1</sup> <https://moderngov.merseytravel.gov.uk/documents/s26022/CAairqualityscrutinyreportJune2018.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> <https://moderngov.merseytravel.gov.uk/documents/s32330/Item%207%20-%20Report%20Appendicies.pdf>

agreed that the group would meet for a period of one year, guided by a work plan, and with a review after six months.

- 4.3 Membership of the group has evolved in response to new issues coming to light, and in response to new partnerships and links being formed (e.g. with Highways England and with NHS related bodies). The group is an effective example of partnership working, reflected in the consistently high levels of attendance at officer and at political level, together with its work in raising the profile of air quality issues across the board, and in shaping the interim Action Plan.
- 4.4 The group has agreed a work programme for the remainder of the financial year, which includes finalising the Action Plan and a series of “deep dives” into areas that have not yet been explored in detail. Areas being explored further include: engagement with NHS structures, working with schools and the education sector, and freight and port-related emissions. The need for, and role of the group will be reviewed at the end of the financial year.

## **5. THE INTERIM AIR QUALITY ACTION PLAN**

- 5.1 The Task Force has developed an interim plan to coincide with the end of its initial 6-month work programme. The draft plan was reported to, and endorsed by the Combined Authority in November 2019<sup>3</sup>, but with the expectation that the report would be presented to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee ahead of its finalisation. This feedback process recognises the important work of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in raising the profile of a longstanding problems across the city region, and the importance of challenging plans and protocols throughout the process.
- 5.2 The development of the action plan has come later than the date of October 2018 in the Combined Authority’s response to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee’s recommendations. This is due in part to the time taken to scope the Task Force, as noted above, but principally the breadth of issues that underpin the plan and the need for alignment with other plans and studies. For example, a high level technical air quality study was undertaken at the time that the task force was being established and which was extended in scope to support the Spatial Development Strategy process. Liverpool City Council was also undertaking detailed ‘mandated’ work to investigate Clear Air Zone options in response to air quality compliance problems within the city. Sefton Council has also recently agreed to develop a detailed non-statutory study into options on emissions in and around the Port.
- 5.3 The Action Plan is structured into short and longer-term actions across four main areas. It is reiterated, however, that there is fluidity across these four areas, recognising the collective approach needed to improving pollution levels, and that no individual body has all of the required levers or powers to tackle the problem.
- 5.4 The four main areas of the action plan are as follows:-

- a) Actions by the LCR Combined Authority;

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<sup>3</sup> <https://modern.gov.merseytravel.gov.uk/documents/s41839/Item%2015%20-%20Report%20Appendix%20One.pdf>

- b) Actions by the constituent local authorities and partners, supported by the LCR Combined Authority;
- c) Actions for the Liverpool City Region's residents, communities and businesses; and
- d) Actions for escalation nationally with central government or its agencies

5.5 Across these areas, examples of key actions in the plan include the following:-

- a) Embedding clean growth principles into the LCR Combined Authority's emerging Local Industrial Strategy, and which were positively received through the #LCR Listens consultation and engagement programme.
- b) the commissioning and delivery of a radical and comprehensive programme of walking and cycling upgrades within the next 4 years, linked to the Transforming Cities Funding programme and the development of a Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan to boost walking and cycling levels.
- c) working with Highways England to explore the scope of rolling-out their electric van pilot scheme, working closely with all parties, including local Chambers of Commerce to engage local small businesses and end users.
- d) investigating options for an LCR scrappage scheme to phase out dirty vehicles, including taxis, private hire vehicles, and light goods vehicles, targeted at small local businesses.
- e) championing greater consistency of taxi and private hire vehicle standards across the city region, to create higher environmental standards overall, building on earlier scoping work led by Knowsley Council in 2018.
- f) Through the Transforming Cities Fund's Green Bus Route proposals, developing a new approach to bus quality, convenience and punctuality, by giving buses the right priority on our highways to make bus travel a more attractive opportunity. Bus delivery options are also being tested, linked to powers in the Devolution Deal.
- g) Delivering measures to improve housing stock and domestic emissions. Potentially, this could be around an energy retrofit programme and city region domestic boiler scrappage scheme to help local residents reduce domestic consumption.
- h) developing and delivering a consistent marketing campaign on Air Quality, including public information and an agreed calendar of events linked to consistent press and PR messaging.
- i) piloting an approach to greening development across all districts to absorb pollutants, for consideration as part of the development of the LCR CA'S Spatial Development Strategy.
- j) engaging government on initiatives to remove the oldest and dirtiest engines from the vehicle fleet through scrappage schemes or similar for domestic vehicles.

5.6 Subject to further additions from members of the Air Quality Task Force, from the Fairness and Social Justice Advisory Board (FASJAB) and by members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, the plan will be refined further and strengthened in light of new findings wherever possible. A finalised version will be reported to the Combined Authority for consideration by the end of the financial year, though with the expectation that the plan and associated actions will evolve naturally as circumstances change.

5.7 Overall, the interim plan is considered a vitally important start in coalescing partners around a shared vision and action plan. It also provides a consistent framework against which more localised or specific plans and strategies can be structured by partners.

## 6. OTHER RELEVANT ACTIONS TO NOTE

6.1 The interim Air Quality Action Plan seeks to draw together a wide range of issues and actions needed to help tackle the causes of poor air quality, recognising the large number of factors that lead to atmospheric emissions and exceedances.

6.2 There are numerous commitments, plans and programmes being developed or supported by the CA that have a significant bearing on air quality, atmospheric emissions and health and well-being. These include:-

### (a) Climate Emergency declaration

- Recognising the impacts and threats arising from man-made climate change, and the urgent need to take action, the LCRCA declared a [climate emergency](#) at its Annual Meeting in May 2019.
- This built on a 2018 city regional target to achieve net zero carbon by 2040. This is ten years ahead of the UK national target and five years ahead of devolved governments in Scotland and Wales.
- This action demonstrates an understanding of the pressing threat of climate change and importantly, commitment to develop a climate action plan by the spring of 2020. This will entail the development of a co-ordinated and evidence-led response to the challenges.

### (b) Year of the Environment 2019 and its legacy

- Officers from the CA have worked with partners from the Year of The Environment steering group to scope and plan an LCR Environmental Summit held in early November 2019, to draw a close to the Year itself.
- The summit was headlined by the Metro Mayor and provided a forum for people involved in the year's events and activities, including the range of "Listening" events on various strands of the Year of Environment agenda (e.g. waste, water, trees, biodiversity, climate change, natural capital, health and wellbeing).
- The Summit also saw the publication of the University of Liverpool's Heseltine Institute's contribution to the Year of the Environment, "Towards a Green Future for Liverpool City Region", which considers the environmental challenges faced by the city region and the country and looks at what can be done to face them.
- As a legacy, a LCR Climate Partnership is being established in early 2020 to co-ordinate responses to the climate emergency and bring together all

organisations that want to play their part in achieving the city region's goal to be zero carbon by 2040 or sooner. A community environmental fund will also support this process.

(c) Plans and strategies that support clean growth

- The CA recently adopted a short term [Transport Plan](#) to set out its vision and plans for transport in July 2019 which has environmental sustainability as a precondition, linked to a low carbon, public transport, walking and cycling network, to support productivity in a way that tackles poor air quality and carbon emissions.
- Through the [LCR Listens](#) engagement programme, residents and businesses across the LCR have had an opportunity to have their say on the main issues of importance. The aim is to create a fairer, more prosperous city region for everyone on the big issues like employment, environment, housing, transport, skills and transport for the next 20 years. This has restated the importance attached by residents to a high quality, clean and healthy environment and the need to tackle poor air quality.
- This work is informing the LCR's emerging Local Industrial Strategy (the title of which is likely to change in light of the new Government) which will set out the long-term economic vision for the Liverpool City Region. An emerging priority is for the LCR to be one of the cleanest, greenest places in the UK. This is not only through tangible projects to invest in (e.g. clean public transport, cycling and walking, sustainable energy, high environmental standards for new homes) but by building on the LCR's strengths and unique selling points and supporting an inclusive economy.. This will challenge historic conventions whereby development and the protection of the environment have been seen as opposites or trade-offs.
- Allied to these concerns is a consensus around the need for better data to support decision-making across the city region. Work is underway involving the local authority air quality officers to scope new technologies to monitor air quality more comprehensively, against which LCRCA funding has been allocated. Scenario testing tools are also being developed to enable the LCRCA to model interventions in carbon and emission terms.

6.3 It will be appreciated from the examples above that the CA is working to embed the principles that have been brought into sharp focus over the past two years into its core policies and strategies, and into an overarching Air Quality Action Plan that is supported by a wide range of partners. This is vital to help deliver the change needed, and to make a practical difference to the health and wellbeing of the people, residents and businesses of the LCR.

## 7. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

### 7.1 Financial

There are financial implications associated with the implementation of the recommendations in this report, given the potential financial risks to the LCR and to

its constituent local authorities as a result of failures to meet air quality targets. There are also likely to be costs associated with the implementation of measures to address poor air quality and which will be supported by capital sources such as the Transforming Cities Fund to support a shift to cleaner forms of travel in the immediate term. Liverpool City Council is also securing government funds to support the implementation of clear air measures within the city. A modest budget exists within the CA's control to support air quality monitoring and modelling capabilities.

## 7.2 Human Resources

There are direct Human Resources implications associated with the implementation of the recommendations in this report, especially in terms of proposed actions such as the collection of better data sets, marketing and PR campaigns and better understand the impacts on air quality. The LCRCA is currently recruiting a Principal Officer – Environmental Officer to help coordinate and deliver measures set out within the Action Plan in conjunction with the local authorities and other members of the task force.

## 7.3 Physical Assets

There are no direct implications arising from this report, but as the Authority owns land and property, there is a potential impact in the event that green infrastructure retrofitting of its assets is necessary in an attempt to tackle poor air quality and to capture pollutants.

## 7.4 Information Technology

There are potential information technology implications associated with the implementation of the recommendations in this report in terms of any proposals to upgrade or renew the air quality monitoring process and to enhance modelling and scenario-testing tools.

# 8. RISKS AND MITIGATION

- 8.1 Environmental threats and climate change present significant risks to the people of the city region and beyond. A collective approach to take action to reduce these risks and to mitigate against, and adapt to climate change is essential. The Authority's emerging plans and strategies seek to build on the LCR's unique characteristics and make it one of the cleanest and greenest places in the UK.

# 9. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 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

## **10. COMMUNICATION ISSUES**

- 10.1 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 the interim Air Quality Action Plan in Appendix Three is to increase public awareness of the issues and options at stake.

## **11. CONCLUSION**

- 11.1 This report updates members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the CA's plans to improve poor air quality across the Liverpool City Region. This is intended as context, to inform the Committee's potential lines of inquiry in this area.
- 11.2 In particular, members' attention is drawn to the interim Air Quality Action Plan – a key recommendation made by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, and which has been developed by the Air Quality Task Force. This is set out within Appendix Three of this report and the views of members are welcomed ahead of its finalisation.
- 11.3 The interim plan is considered a vitally important start in aligning partners around a shared vision and plan. It is important to provide this opportunity for members to provide further feedback and input, so as to make the plan as comprehensive and robust as possible, to act as a clear and trusted framework for action.

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Appendices:

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

Appendix Two - Membership of LCR Air Quality Task Force

Appendix Three – Interim Air Quality Action Plan

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**  
**Membership of LCR Air Quality Task Force**

<b>Chair</b>	Cllr Liam Robinson	Portfolio Member – Transport and Air Quality, Liverpool City Region CA
<b>Elected members</b>		
Halton	Cllr Stef Nelson	Portfolio holder for Environment
Knowsley	Cllr Frank Walsh	Chair of Planning Committee
Liverpool	Cllr Laura Robertson-Collins	Cabinet Member for Environment and Sustainability
St Helens	Cllr Lynn Clarke	Portfolio Holder for Better Neighbourhoods
Sefton	Cllr Paulette Lappin	Cabinet Member - Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Services
Wirral	Cllr Elizabeth Gray	Cabinet Member for Environment and Climate Change
<b>LCR officers</b>		
Combined Authority	John McGee Huw Jenkins	Head of Government Relations Lead Officer – Transport Policy
Merseytravel	Gerry Nolan Matt Goggins	Technical Services Manager, Asset Management Head of Bus
Halton	Sarah Johnson Griffiths	Consultant in Public Health.
Knowsley	Sarah McNulty	Acting Director of Public Health
Liverpool	Colleen Martin	Assistant Director – Supporting Communities
Sefton	Matt Ashton	Director of Public Health, Sefton
St Helens	Tony Smith	Service Manager, Regulatory Services
Wirral	Daniel Dawson	Environmental Health Operations Manager
<b>External</b>		
Defra/DfT Joint Air Quality Unit	Simon Cox	Joint Air Quality Unit, Department for Transport / Department for Environment
LCR Local Enterprise Partnership	-	-
Liverpool and Sefton Chamber of Commerce	Michelle Cameron	Senior Policy and Communications Advisor
Public Health England	Dr Richard Jarvis	Consultant in Health Protection, Cheshire & Merseyside Health Protection Team, PHE North West
Highways England	John Hope	Spatial Planning Manager, Operations North West