
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, ENVIRONMENT AND INFRASTRUCTURE SCRUTINY PANEL

A meeting of the Economic Development, Environment and Infrastructure Scrutiny Panel was held on 3 October 2018.

PRESENT: Councillors Storey, (Chair), Arundale, Branson, Higgins, Hubbard, Walkington and Walters

OFFICERS: J Hedgley, S Lightwing, P MacGregor

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE were submitted on behalf of Councillors Lewis, McGloin.

DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

There were no Declarations of Interest at this point in the meeting.

18/13 **MINUTES - ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, ENVIRONMENT AND INFRASTRUCTURE SCRUTINY PANEL - 12 SEPTEMBER 2018**

The minutes of the meeting of the Economic Development, Environment and Infrastructure Scrutiny Panel held on 12 September 2018 were taken as read and approved as a correct record, subject to the addition of the following, after the third paragraph, Agenda Item 5:

It was suggested that additional information in relation to the housing stock transfer to Erimus Housing in 2004 should be included in the background information in the report. It was also proposed that tenants and/or local residents should have representation on the Board of any HDV Company that was constituted.

18/14 **AIR POLLUTION**

The Head of Public Protection and the Principal Public Protection Officer provided a presentation in relation to Air Quality in Middlesbrough.

Air quality and pollution had changed over time. In the 1940s and 1950s the main pollutant was sulphur dioxide which was present in the soot from heavy industry. From the 1960s to the 1980s there were different pollutants linked to different types of industry including carbon monoxide. Since the 1980s, nitrogen dioxide had become an issue, in the form of particulates which were very small and could enter the bloodstream. This increase was linked with transport, with ten times more journeys being made by vehicles, combined with a 30% decrease in people walking. Since the 1980s, lead had been removed from petrol and diesel but now electric and other forms of low emission vehicles were being developed.

Air quality affected health and often the most deprived populations were the most affected by poor air quality. Standards were in place to protect health and Local Authorities had a legal duty to monitor air quality. Air quality was measured against the European Standards. The World Health Organisation (WHO) stated that there was no safe level of air pollution because even at very low levels it could affect those who were vulnerable, such as people with respiratory illnesses, asthma and the elderly. Another factor was indoor air quality and what people breathe in their own homes.

Local Authorities had a legal duty to monitor air quality standards and to protect the health of the population. It was part of the Director of Public Health's role. Air quality had to be monitored to ensure that standards were being met and the limits were not exceeded. An Annual Status Report (ASR) was produced for the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) on the measurements taken throughout the year and whether limits had been exceeded. To date, Middlesbrough had never had to declare an Air Quality Management Area.

Common pollutants in Middlesbrough included Nitrogen Dioxide (NO₂), Particulate Matter (PM₁₀ PM_{2.5}) and Sulphur Dioxide. Nitrogen Dioxide (NO₂) came from road transport, energy generation, domestic and industrial combustion and other transport and could

exacerbate the symptoms of those already suffering from lung or heart conditions. High levels of NO₂ could also change soil chemistry and affect biodiversity in sensitive habitats, although Middlesbrough was not markedly affected in this way.

Particulate Matter (PM₁₀ PM_{2.5}) was an emerging pollutant consisting of microscopic particles that could enter the bloodstream through inhalation and could cause respiratory illnesses, cancers, dementia and low birthweight in babies. Particulates came from domestic wood and coal burning, industrial combustion, road transport and industrial processes. Many sources of PM_{2.5} travelled from further afield and this could not be controlled, so it was quite a hard task to reduce it.

Sulphur Dioxide contributed to the formation of acid rain and came from energy generation, industrial combustion and the manufacture and use of domestic solid fuel. Sulphur Dioxide was a respiratory irritant and people with asthma were particularly susceptible.

There were currently two Air Quality Monitoring Stations in Middlesbrough. One was at Macmillan College and one at Breckon Hill School. The station at Breckon Hill School was attached to the national recording network and provided continuous updates to the national report network at DEFRA. The Air Quality Monitoring Station was a sophisticated piece of equipment for reporting air quality and the standards were published on the DEFRA website. Members of the public could sign up to the DEFRA website to receive alerts when the pollution levels were high.

The Breckon Hill site was chosen because it was an urban site which referenced similar types of environment in Middlesbrough. It was also a school, it was secure, and children were more susceptible to pollution than adults. The Macmillan site was also a school and was close to the A66 and A19 roads. It was emphasised that the stations were static and monitored the air quality only at those locations.

In addition, the Council used Diffusion Tubes to monitor air quality. There were 27 Diffusion Tubes located at 23 sites across the town which had been in place since 2015 and measured NO₂ only. The tubes were made of acrylic plastic and contained a chemical soaked gauze which absorbed NO₂. The tubes were replaced on a monthly basis and sent to a laboratory for testing. The results provided by the tubes were not as accurate as those from the monitoring stations as sometimes insects got inside or the tubes were vandalised or stolen.

The use of Diffusion Tubes, although not as accurate, enabled monitoring to be carried out at different locations.

Graphs illustrating the NO₂ levels recorded since 1995 at Breckon Hill and since 2000 at Macmillan showed that levels were reducing. The Diffusion Tube results showed some high levels, the highest being recorded next to the A66. Twelve measurements were taken over the year and then averaged out. The Diffusion Tubes had been in place for three years and consideration was being given to moving some, but not all, to other locations. The PM₁₀ PM_{2.5} and Sulphur Dioxide results were all at a low level and there had not been any exceedances of the limits.

One of the main contributors to PM_{2.5} was burning and this was highlighted on the graph by large increase in levels of concentration on Bonfire Night. The Government's Clean Air Strategy was focussed on fires and the use of wood burning stoves. Whilst this was not a huge issue in Middlesbrough some advice would be available on the Council website in the near future. A new standard for wood burning stoves would be issued by the Government to ensure cleaner burning.

Improving air quality linked with a wide range of strategies including:

- Transport Plans: public transport, cycle routes, infrastructure, reducing congestion.
- Public Health: improving physical activity.
- Planning and Development control.
- Modal shift: moving away from car use or to low emission vehicles.
- Promoting active travel including walking and cycling.

A list of Middlesbrough's plans to improve air quality was included in the presentation. Transport plans were looking at public transport, school routes, alternative forms of transport and infrastructure. There was an active travel policy engaging people to walk and cycle more and increase physical activity, whilst reducing vehicle emissions. Planning and Development control considerations could include whether Charging Points should be included in new developments and bus routes also linked in.

As part of the NO₂ work a traffic study had been carried out which gathered information about older vehicles on the road and their efficiency. The study also showed the routes that people were taking around the town. The development of the Rail Station was also included in road infrastructure plans to try and divert people from using the cars, as well as electrification of the line. It was highlighted that some rail companies were proposing not to take cycles on trains unless they were pre-booked.

Reference was also made to levels of asthma in Middlesbrough. The Principal Public Protection Officer had provided 2017 data to a health consultant who was examining the information to check whether there was any correlation to raised pollution levels and the numbers of people presenting at GPs and/or Accident and Emergency with asthma. This work was ongoing and it was noted that most of the data provided showed low levels of air pollution.

In terms of national plans and strategies, the Clean Air Strategy produced by DEFRA identified national measures to reduce emissions from residential housing, farming and industry. The Strategy also contributed to the Government's action on Clean Growth and sought ways to support investment in technologies and solutions that tackled emissions. The Road to Zero Strategy produced by the Department for Transport (DfT) identified national measures to reduce emissions from vehicles already on the roads and to drive up the uptake of the cleanest new vehicles. The Strategy also promoted, amongst other things, the Government's policy to develop one of the best electric vehicle infrastructures in the world.

The UK had been challenged by the EU in terms of progress to reduce NO₂ and at the end of 2017 had produced a list of Local Authorities exceeding levels, as identified using their own model. Middlesbrough was on the list for two locations in the town centre, on the A66. Middlesbrough had been tasked with the using its local model and local data to compare whether the same data was identified through the national model imposed by the EU. The aim was for Middlesbrough to achieve compliance in the shortest time. Work was in progress and modelling had been carried out. The results would be fed back to DEFRA and would be reviewed by an independent panel. In terms of the findings, it was anticipated that this information would be available by January/February 2019. The two areas being monitored were next to Crown House on the A66 as it passed through the town centre and a stretch where the A66 joined the A19.

Panel Members suggested car sharing, re-routing heavy goods vehicles, implementing charging zones and incentives for the use of electric vehicles, as possible mitigating measures that could be explored. It was also highlighted that people's shopping habits had changed with many people ordering goods online for home delivery, rather than walking to the shops, which in turn led to more vans on the roads.

In summary, the air quality levels within Middlesbrough were good and were being monitored locally and nationally. A policy was in place to identify any issues and there were long term plans which linked in regionally and nationally.

Members discussed the information provided at the meeting and suggested some future lines of enquiry.

AGREED as follows:

1. That the information provided was received and noted.
2. Draft Terms of Reference for the scrutiny review would be presented to the next meeting for approval.

The Chair gave a verbal update on items discussed at the Overview and Scrutiny Board meeting held on 2 October 2018.

NOTED