
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, ENVIRONMENT AND INFRASTRUCTURE SCRUTINY PANEL

A meeting of the Economic Development, Environment and Infrastructure Scrutiny Panel was held on 7 November 2018.

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

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: M Mace, Group Manager, Transport Strategy, Leicester City Council

OFFICERS: D Carter, J Hedgley, S Lightwing, C Orr

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE were submitted on behalf of Councillors Hubbard and Lewis.

DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

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

1 **MINUTES - ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, ENVIRONMENT AND INFRASTRUCTURE SCRUTINY PANEL - 3 OCTOBER 2018**

The minutes of the meeting of the Economic Development, Environment and Infrastructure Scrutiny Panel held on 3 October 2018 were taken as read and approved as a correct record.

2 **AIR POLLUTION**

Matthew Mace, Group Manager - Transport Strategy, for Leicester City Council provided a presentation in relation to Leicester's Air Quality Action Plan (2015-2026) - Healthier Air for Leicester.

Currently Leicester failed to meet the EU air quality standards in Nitrogen Dioxide (NO₂) levels in and around the city. However, in the most polluted areas the levels were significantly above the target of 40 µ/m³, at around 55 µ/m³. The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) was currently compiling a new Environment Bill and was considering introducing the World Health Organisation (WHO) limits. Leicester would currently be breaching the limits in PM₁₀ and PM₂₅ if the WHO limits were applied.

The main source of Nitrogen Dioxide was from road traffic (80%) and the decision was taken to move the air quality section from Leicester's Environmental Health Department into Transport. One of the key reasons for this decision was that Transport was able to bid for funding from several sources including DEFRA and the Department for Transport (DfT).

Leicester had one Air Quality Management Area, which included the inner and outer ring roads. NO₂ levels were exceeded on the inner ring road in its entirety and also on radial routes and part of the outer ring road. There were five automatic monitoring stations and a modelling system was used rather than diffusion tubes. A bid for funding had recently been made to the Joint Air Quality Unit (JAQU) to purchase some portable monitors. There had also been a pilot exercise with Leicester University where portable monitors had been attached to electric vehicles to monitor pollution hotspot levels around the City. NO₂ levels were trending downwards in the City, in part due to the Air Quality Action Plan.

The Air Quality Action Plan - Healthier Air For Leicester - was introduced by the City Mayor in 2015 and would run until 2026. The Plan was a top priority for the Mayor and millions of pounds had been invested in the project. The Plan had 7 ambitions, 4 themes and 16 headline actions.

The 7 ambitions were:

- Reduce 162 premature deaths per year.

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- Introduce a Low Emission Zone.
 - Deliver Phase II of Connecting Leicester.
 - Increase the number of people cycling to 52,000 by 2023.
 - Lowest emission vehicle to be the choice for bus companies, taxi drivers and freight operators.
 - Reduce Council fleet emissions by 50% by 2025.
 - Incorporate air quality into land use planning.

A low emission zone, now called 'Clean Air Zone' had been introduced. Over the last 8 years most of the inner ring road had been pedestrianised. The whole of Leicester was a shared space for cycling and walking and cycling was encouraged in pedestrian areas. It was a novel idea and there was no huge friction between walkers and cyclists.

There were currently approximately 23,000 cyclists and efforts were being made to hit the 2023 target of 52,000. Two strategic cycle parks had been introduced and a third one was planned. Local businesses could apply for grants of up to £3,000 to provide changing areas for those cycling to work. There were also three Park and Ride facilities, which were joint funded by the City Council and the County Council. The City Council had been shortlisted for the DfT's Transport for Cities bid and was looking to establish a parking hub as well as a sky link to connect the City to Nottingham and East Midlands Airport.

It was queried whether the cost of providing such facilities was shared with other neighbouring Authorities as many of those travelling into Leicester for work did not live there. Like some other cities, there had been quite a big expansion of people living in the City Centre and this was being encouraged through inward investment and economic development. Park and Ride facilities were the main way of trying to address the issue.

The City Council had a fleet of over 800 vehicles, which it aimed to reduce by 50% by 2025. Having already reduced to under 700, this aim was currently on target.

The four themes in the Air Quality Action plan had a combined aim of improving the health of people in Leicester. Reducing transport emissions was one of the big themes and a bus and taxi low emission zone had been introduced in 2017. Most vehicles were now of Euro 4 standard or better.

Bus Companies had invested £25 million in their fleets during the last six years and moved from Euro 3.8 to 4.8 standard. Over £2.7 million had been spent on retro-fitting 109 older buses. There would also be a Bus Clean Air Zone by the end of 2020 and local bus companies had signed an agreement to have at least Euro 6 standard across their whole fleets by 2020, which was significant. The bus system was a partnership in Leicester and the Council had provided a new bus station and also written the bid for the retrofits.

A Leicester Low Carbon Transport Accelerator Grant had been established and £6.5 million had recently been secured from the European Regional Development Fund for low carbon. £2.2 million of that funding was available to any organisation that did significant mileage within Leicester or Leicestershire to provide a grant of up to 40% in the difference between buying a new diesel and a low emission vehicle. An on-street charger trial was also in place for electric vehicles where there was no off-street parking. Using funding from EDRF, solar panels would be installed in car parks with charging points.

A test was in place for all new fleet purchase so that if the City Council decided to purchase a new vehicle checks were made to see whether there was a low emission alternative and funding was set aside in the budget to make up the difference in cost. Unfortunately there were currently no electric or low emission transit sized vehicles available and there were approximately 550 of these in the fleet.

The City Council had purchased an electric taxi, which could accommodate wheelchairs and was currently used for social services transport. It was primarily an electric car with a very small engine, which could be charged overnight like a conventional electrical vehicle. The range was claimed to be 160 miles but this had not yet been tested by the City Council. Plans were in place for the taxi to be loaned out from January 2019 for people to try before they

bought.

In relation to promoting sustainable transport, Connecting Leicester was establishing more shared spaces, including a 'Cycle Super Highway' - a £3.9 million scheme to bring cyclists into the heart of the City. A significant amount of funding had also been spent upgrading cycling routes.

'Choose How You Move' was a one stop website that provided travel information for Leicester and Leicestershire, with a journey planner which allowed residents and visitors to consider the different travel options available to them. The journey planner offered a variety of travel methods starting with the most active or sustainable travel options. This included a car share matching service which offered a monetary reward of £5 for each journey.

Leicester's Cycle City Action Plan had 107 actions in it and Cycling England had provided good support and approximately £100,000 per annum into various events. Originally the City had hosted the Sky Ride and this had now been replaced by Leicester City Ride. There was also a schools ride involving ten schools per year.

As part of the Parking Improvement Action Plan, £2.2 million had been spent on parking improvements, with campaigns in relation to anti-idling and school parking. As part of a Clean Air Day, a road in front of a school was closed for the day and used as a school facility. No Parking and No Alighting areas had been extended outside of schools, cameras had been installed and the number of enforcement officers increased. It was highlighted that the use of white pin lines outside residential properties had been successful in Middlesbrough.

There was also an Eco Schools model on air quality which was in place to educate pupils as well as teachers and parents. Schools were in competition with each other and there was an annual Awards Ceremony.

Air quality was also prominent in the Local Plan for 2019 and was also likely to feature in the Land Use Planning Guidance for 2019. It was highlighted that previously transport and air quality modelling for land use planning would have been carried out separately, but were now coming together. Much of this type of planning was done by modelling to add capacity to new roads and take traffic pollution away from heavily residential areas and town centres.

It was highlighted that there needed to be a balance between sustaining the town centre economy whilst discouraging people from travelling in to the centre by car. Leicester City Council had been monitoring the profitability of the City Centre through its Business Improvement District. City Centre living was also increasing with the re-development of old factories and office blocks.

In response to a query as to whether the rail network could be incorporated to improve the number of people not travelling on the roads, it was explained that this was beyond the City Council's control. However, there were regular meetings with the rail franchises. A key issue was that the Government was not pursuing previous plans to electrify the midland main line.

Reference was made to Middlesbrough's Local Improvement Plan (LIP) which underpinned the Tees Valley Combined Authority's (TVCA) Strategic Transport Plan. The Strategic Transport Plan was originally planned to go out for consultation this year but was not yet ready and now scheduled for January 2019. As part of the LIP, Middlesbrough's Cycling and Walking Strategy was being refreshed, with air quality issues being embedded. LFG Funding Local Growth Funding (LFG) had enabled more cycle routes in place that connected to encourage people to cycle into the Town Centre areas.

Middlesbrough Council had a range of initiatives designed to promote sustainable travel including a Bike to Work Scheme, and a Car Ride/Share Forum for employees. There was also a journey planner tool on the Connect Tees Valley website. A Member suggested that these initiatives should be promoted in the Love Middlesbrough magazine.

It was highlighted that, unlike in Leicester, there was no designated Air Quality Zone in Middlesbrough and therefore no requirement for an Air Quality Action Plan. As noted at a

previous meeting, in Middlesbrough the two main areas of concern currently were on the A66.

The TVCA had been awarded £59 million from the Transforming Cities Fund over a four-year period, with a further £16 Million for a fifth year also announced. The five Local Authorities in Tees Valley were able to bid for funding from the TVCA for transport schemes. Middlesbrough was looking at Urban Traffic Management Control (UTMC) to improve congestion through traffic management signals and also variable message signs.

Members discussed the use of Tram or Light Rail systems and it was highlighted that whilst such schemes could be implemented, the size of the population in Middlesbrough and wider Tees Valley did not make them financially viable. One option that was being discussed was a shared rail park and ride with Redcar and Cleveland Council. However, one of the big issues was train frequency, which was an issue to be resolved with the rail operators.

With regard encouraging people to use public transport more, the issues included the cost, frequency and travel time. Whilst an express bus service using a dedicated bus lane with fewer stops would address the time issue, it would need sufficient passengers to make it financially viable. It was also much easier to include bus lanes at the planning and development phase of a project, rather than trying to re-allocate road space later on.

The process of traffic modelling included air quality, traffic volume and likely congestion, as well as population. Building more houses inevitably led to more traffic on the network and traffic modelling attempted to reduce congestion and therefore mitigate air pollution. When new road schemes went through the planning process they might be re-routed or remodelled. Middlesbrough had a Local Plan which mapped out potential developments ten years in advance and more detailed work on school and road linkages was carried out as developments came forward.

Draft Terms of Reference for the scrutiny were tabled at the meeting for Members' consideration and approval.

The Chair thanked Matthew Mace, David Carter and Chris Orr for attending the meeting.

AGREED as follows:

1. That the information provided was received and noted.
2. The following Terms of Reference for the scrutiny into Air Pollution were approved:
 - A) To investigate air pollution in Middlesbrough: how it is monitored and how it compares regionally/nationally and in relation to EU Standards.
 - B) To identify and explore what measures Middlesbrough Council has implemented to improve air quality and any future initiatives that are planned.
 - C) To investigate examples of good practice in other local authority areas which could be adopted in Middlesbrough.
 - D) To investigate the impact of air quality on the local social and physical environment and how this can be mitigated.

3 **OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD UPDATE**

The Chair gave a verbal update on items discussed at the Overview and Scrutiny Board meeting held on 30 October 2018.

NOTED