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| <b>MIDDLESBROUGH COUNCIL</b> |  |
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| <b>Report of:</b>                 | Director of Environment and Community Services                         |
| <b>Relevant Executive Member:</b> | The Mayor and Executive Member for Adult Social Care and Public Health |
| <b>Submitted to:</b>              | Executive  |
| <b>Date:</b>                      | 24 July 2024   |
| <b>Title:</b>                     | South Tees Clean Air Strategy  |
| <b>Report for:</b>                | Decision   |
| <b>Status:</b>                    | Public   |
| <b>Council Plan priority:</b>     | A healthy place  |
| <b>Key decision:</b>              | Yes  |
| <b>Why:</b>                       | Decision(s) will have a significant impact in two or more wards        |
| <b>Subject to call in?:</b>       | Yes  |
| <b>Why:</b>                       |  |

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| <b>Proposed decision(s)</b>  |
| That Executive approves the South Tees Clean Air Strategy that will ensure the local authority meets its statutory obligation under the Environment Act 1995 and amendments within the Environment Act 2021. |

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| <b>Executive summary</b>   |
| <p>The South Tees Clean Air Strategy aims to raise awareness of the importance of air quality. It has been developed jointly with Redcar and Cleveland Council and sets out how each authority will maintain and improve air quality standards in collaboration with partners and their local communities, to work together to improve the air that we breathe. Statutory limits on air pollutants were imposed by the Government over 30 years ago and over this time air quality across the South Tees area has improved significantly. Some air pollutants such as sulphur dioxide from coal burning, and lead from petrol, are fractions of their previous levels due to the measures that have been taken to reduce these pollutant sources. Good air quality is associated with reducing the burden of disease and inequalities on our communities, including a reduction in strokes, heart disease, lung cancer, and both chronic and acute respiratory diseases, including</p> |

asthma. The air quality in Middlesbrough is good and it complies with the UK National air quality objectives. However, whilst air quality has improved, it still remains the largest environmental health risk in the UK and the World Health Organisation advocates that there is no clear evidence of a safe level of exposure to air pollution below which there is no risk of adverse health effects. Therefore, the aim of the Clean Air Strategy is to ensure that air quality in Middlesbrough is as good as it can be and not just meet legal standards. The strategy will contribute to the council priorities around climate change and physical environment by improving the health of those who live in Middlesbrough as improvements to air quality are achieved.

The development of the South Tees Clean Air Strategy fulfils the mandatory requirement to have an Air Quality Strategy.

## **1. Purpose**

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to seek approval for the South Tees Clean Air Strategy (Appendix 1)

## **2 Recommendations**

- 2.1 That Executive approves the South Tees Clean Air Strategy

## **3 Rationale for the recommended decision(s)**

- 3.1 The Clean Air Strategy set the policy and process for improving the air quality standards across the South Tees, to improve the physical environment, improve the health of our populations and tackle health inequalities. It is a statutory requirement for Middlesbrough to have a Clean Air Strategy in place.

## **4. Background and relevant information**

- 4.1 Exposure to air pollution can affect everyone's health. When we breathe in air pollutants, they can enter our bloodstream and contribute to coughing or cause eye irritation, they can cause or worsen many breathing and lung diseases, leading to hospitalisations, cancer, or even premature death. The effects of air pollution can be severe in people that already have underlying medical conditions. It is important that we monitor the air quality in our area to ensure that we are not exceeding levels that could cause illness to our residents.
- 4.2 In Middlesbrough there are two air quality monitoring sites located at BreckonHill Primary School and MacMillan College. Each site monitors air quality using real time monitoring equipment. The pollutants measured are particulate matter (PM<sub>10</sub> and PM<sub>2.5</sub>), nitrogen dioxides, sulphur dioxides and ozone. There are also 24 tubes located across Middlesbrough which monitor nitrogen dioxide. These tubes are changed on a monthly basis and give an annual average result for the area which provides an indication of nitrogen dioxide levels across the whole of the town. All of the pollutants measured in Middlesbrough have the ability to impact on the health of our communities and therefore air quality monitoring is vital to ensure that we do not reach levels of air quality that could cause ill effects.
- 4.3 The sources of pollutants are varied:
- nitrogen dioxide from car exhaust emissions.
  - particulate matter comes from construction dust, industrial processes and domestic burning. Particulate matter can increase the risk of health problems like heart disease, asthma, and low birth weight.
  - sulphur dioxide is from burning of fossil fuel e.g. domestic and industrial burning and car exhaust fumes.
- 4.4 Public Protection also plays a proactive, preventative role in assessing new planning developments proposed for areas of Middlesbrough and whether they would require an

air quality assessment to be submitted as part of the application. This identifies any requirements for air quality mitigation measures as part of the development.

- 4.5 The South Tees Clean Air Strategy demonstrates that air quality across Middlesbrough is good and meets the UK legal standards. The graphs in Appendix 2 show the air quality levels for PM<sub>10</sub> and nitrogen dioxide and how they have compared with both the national and the WHO standards over the period 2011-2022. Although our air quality levels meet the UK legal standards, these may change and become more stringent in the future. The World Health Organisation have their own air quality guidelines (AQG) as a global target for national, regional and city governments to work towards improving air pollution. Most local authorities within England and Wales do not meet these AQG guidelines, however they set an aspirational target, a reminder that there is still room for improvement and that we should be working towards them. Therefore, through our Clean Air Strategy aims to improve our air quality in the South Tees beyond UK legal standards, to protect the health of our residents and to make our air as clean as it can be.
- 4.6 The strategy aims to raise awareness of the importance of air pollution, by setting out how the Council will maintain and improve air quality in collaboration with partners and our local communities. Improvements to air quality cannot be undertaken as a standalone local authority responsibility. There is a need for collaborative working across all sectors including our community, industries and businesses. Many of the measures which contribute to improving air quality are linked to regional and local spatial planning and our response to climate change. By delivering these together we can have far reaching benefits for South Tees and the wider area.
- 4.7 South Tees is proud of its heavy industrial heritage, along with its more recent expansion and development of industry that utilises cleaner technologies. Industrial and commercial enterprises are subject to robust regulation by both the Environment Agency (EA) and Local Authorities. Large planning developments are accompanied by Environmental Impact Assessments, inclusive of air quality and transport assessments, therefore with careful scrutiny of new developments, expansion of industry should not have an adverse negative impact on our existing good air quality.
- 4.8 The UK Government announced that it is mandatory for all Local Authorities which have not been required to have an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) in place to develop an Air Quality Strategy. An AQMA is required when a local authority establishes, through air quality monitoring, that an area within their district is not likely to achieve the national air quality standards. Neither Middlesbrough or Redcar and Cleveland are required to have an AQMA as we have no exceedances of the air quality objectives. The development of the South Tees Clean Air Strategy fulfils the mandatory requirement to have an Air Quality Strategy.
- 4.9 In 2017 the Government published the UK plan for tackling roadside nitrogen dioxide (NO<sub>2</sub>) concentrations (“The National NO<sub>2</sub> Plan”). The National NO<sub>2</sub> Plan used national

modelling of NO<sub>2</sub> levels and these identified Middlesbrough as a Local Authority where annual average NO<sub>2</sub> concentrations would persistently exceed the annual average limit. The two locations that the national modelling identified as exceeding the NO<sub>2</sub> limit value were both along the A66 trunk road corridor. As a result, Middlesbrough Council were required to put together a plan to address this matter. Detailed local modelling was carried out and provided the evidence that NO<sub>2</sub> levels were not exceeded in these locations. These findings were accepted by the governments Joint Air Quality Unit and no additional measures were needed to achieve compliance with the NO<sub>2</sub> standards.

4.10 The measures that improve air quality can also offer wider public health and wellbeing co-benefits, including an improvement in overall environmental quality, increased physical activity, reducing injuries and accidents, preventing social isolation, noise education, greater road safety and climate change mitigation.

4.11 The South Tees Clean Air Strategy identifies five workstreams for sustainable air quality improvements. These are:

- Planning for cleaner air (data & intelligence)
- Reduce vehicle emissions and promotion of active travel (alternative fuel/modal shift).
- Raise awareness of air quality (communications/engagement and awareness raising).
- Educate to improve indoor air quality.
- Enforcement.

4.12 Strategy work will be regularly reviewed with partners to ensure that it remains relevant to the delivery of the South Tees Clean Air Strategy. Implementation of the strategy requires collaborative working with internal teams and external organisations to improve the air for all within the borough and across the South Tees area. Progress reporting for the strategy will be undertaken by each council via their Annual Statutory Air Quality Status Report which is required to be submitted every June to the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra).

4.13 Public consultation of a draft strategy was undertaken between 01 August and 22 August 2023, a survey was published on the council website, providing public access to the draft strategy, surveys were also sent to 59 target groups, including cabinet members of both local authorities, to encourage feedback. A total of 10 responses were received following consultation. Each response was reviewed and some minor amendments were made to the draft strategy resulting in the final strategy.

## **5. Other potential alternative(s) and why these have not been recommended**

5.1 The UK Government as part of the publication of the Environment Act 2021 announced that it will be mandatory for all Local Authorities who have not been required to have an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) in place, to develop an Air Quality Strategy by 2023. As Middlesbrough has not had to declare an AQMA due to the national air quality

objectives not being breached we are required to develop an Air Quality Strategy. On this basis, there is no alternative to this proposal.

## **6. Impact(s) of the recommended decision(s)**

### **6.1 *Financial (including procurement and Social Value)***

There are no financial implications associated with this strategy, the actions are delivered by the partners and stakeholders. The costs of managing the air quality stations are met from the revenue budget.

### **6.2 *Legal***

To comply with the requirements in the Environment Act 2021, those local authorities which have not declared an Air Quality Management Area are required to have an Air Quality Strategy in place.

### **6.3 *Risk***

There are no risks associated with this report.

The current economic environment and associated budget constraints may result in changes to the delivery of local services, local and national policies, and this may impact on the ability to deliver the strategy action plan.

### **6.4 *Human Rights, Public Sector Equality Duty and Community Cohesion***

Protected groups will not be adversely affected by the decision. An initial Impact Assessment has been carried out and no negative or adverse impacts have been identified. Poor air quality can affect anyone who lives, works, or visits the South Tees area. Improvements to air quality have a positive benefit for all and having an Air Quality Strategy in place will help work towards achieving the cleanest air.

### **6.5 *Climate Change / Environmental***

The implementation of the Clean Air Strategy will contribute towards the council priority of climate change and enhancing the natural environment reducing vehicle emissions, promoting active travel, and improving indoor air quality.

### **6.6 *Children and Young People Cared for by the Authority and Care Leavers***

There are no adverse impacts of the Clean Air Strategy on looked after children and young people.

### 6.7 Data Protection

The proposed decision does not involve the collation, use or release of personal data

### Actions to be taken to implement the recommended decision(s)

| Action | Responsible Officer | Deadline |
|--------|---------------------|----------|
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### Appendices

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| 1 | South Tees Clean Air Strategy                              |
| 2 | Air quality monitoring results for Middlesbrough 2011-2022 |
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### Background papers

| Body | Report title | Date |
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