



Subject:	Committee Update on Local Air Quality Management Matters
Date:	12 th January 2021
Reporting Officer:	Siobhan Toland, Director of City Services, City and Neighbourhood Services Department
Contact Officer:	Vivienne Donnelly, City Protection Manger.

Restricted Reports	
Is this report restricted?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?	
After Committee Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
After Council Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
Some time in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>
Never	<input type="checkbox"/>

Call-in	
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>

1.0	Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues.
1.1	The Committee will be aware that a number of ambient air quality initiatives and projects have been progressed by officers within the City and Neighbourhood Services Department during 2020. Including the development of new Air Quality Action Plan for the city, procurement of consultancy services to deliver a detailed assessment for nitrogen dioxide (NO ₂) and fine particulate matter (PM _{2.5}) and the provision of local site operator and technical project support to the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) to enable research into the chemical composition of particulate matter within the city, to include the role of ammonia (NH ₃) in formation of local particulate matter. An update report on these initiatives and projects was provided to the Committee at its meeting of 8 th September 2020.

1.2	This report serves to provide a further 'year-end' update to Committee and to provide an overview of the how these projects are to be progressed during 2021.
2.0	Recommendations.
2.1	The Committee is asked to <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Note contents of this report.
3.0	Main report.
3.1	<p><u>Key Issues.</u></p> <p>Air Quality Action Plan.</p> <p>Committee Members will be aware that the current Belfast City Air Quality Action Plan is scheduled to conclude at the end of 2020. Accordingly, officers have already engaged with a range of government Departments, the Public Health Agency, local public transport providers, the Port of Belfast and sustainable environment and transport organisations in order to develop a new Air Quality Action Plan for the city. In accordance with government policy guidance, a Steering Group, comprising representatives from the above-mentioned organisations, has been convened in order to oversee development, implementation and delivery of the new Air Quality Action Plan.</p>
3.2	Organisations represented on the Steering Group have recently provided the transport and related actions that each organisation proposes to implement throughout the anticipated 5-year duration of the Air Quality Action Plan in order to address any remaining nitrogen dioxide (NO ₂) hot spots and to improve ambient air quality generally across the city. In addition, it is anticipated that the new Action Plan will also reflect actions to address fine particulate matter (PM _{2.5}) once the detailed assessment for nitrogen dioxide and fine particulate matter has been concluded and reported by December 2022.
3.3	The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) has provided a standardised Action Plan template for local authorities and Steering Group partners to populate with their actions, under the headings of public health, planning and policy context, source apportionment, the required reduction in emissions, key priorities and action plan measures. It is for council officers, working alongside their Steering Group counterparts to now populate this Defra template in order to create a draft Air Quality Action Plan for the city. It is anticipated that the key components of the draft Action Plan will be presented to the People and Communities Committee for consideration at its meeting of 9 th February 2021.
3.4	In addition, and by way of a limited internal consultation, ahead of any formal engagement process that might be required in March and April 2021, it is proposed that the draft Action

	<p>Plan will also be presented to the council's 'Living Here' Board in February 2021 in order to ensure consistency with the Belfast Agenda Community Plan. An overview of the draft Plan will similarly be presented to the Climate Plan Programme Board in order to ensure consistency with the council's Resilience Strategy and its associated actions on climate change. Subject to any comments received through both internal and other engagement processes being addressed within the Plan, it is anticipated that the Air Quality Action Plan will be presented to the 11th May 2021 meeting of the People and Communities Committee and to the June 2021 Council meeting for formal consideration and adoption.</p>
3.5	<p>The Air Quality Action Plan must then be uploaded to the Defra Local Air Quality Management Report Submission Website so that an appraisal of the technical aspects of the Plan can be completed. The outcome of this appraisal process is normally known within 4 to 6 weeks of the submission date. Where necessary, technical aspects of the Air Quality Action Plan will be amended to take account of the appraisers' comments and it is anticipated that the Action Plan can then be implemented from August or September 2021.</p>
3.6	<p>Detailed assessment for nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) and fine particulate matter (PM_{2.5}).</p> <p>Members were previously advised that officers had completed development of a detailed technical specification for the appointment of a suitably qualified and experienced environmental consultancy to deliver a detailed assessment for nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) and fine particulate matter (PM_{2.5}) for the city. This specification has since been issued by way of local and European tenders, with the council's Air Quality and Procurement staff currently engaged in the evaluation process, with a view to appointing a contractor from early 2021.</p>
3.7	<p>The detailed assessment project will comprise additional ambient monitoring for nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) and fine particulate matter (PM_{2.5}) across the city through the deployment of a number of small sensor air quality monitoring equipment; the development of an up to date local emissions inventory for the city for nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) and fine particulate matter (PM_{2.5}) sources; and atmospheric dispersion modelling employing the local emissions inventory data in order to generate spatial and temporal predictions for nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) and fine particulate matter (PM_{2.5}) concentrations across the city. The dispersion modelling will also identify the locations and extents of any exceedences of national, European or WHO air quality standards for nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) and fine particulate matter (PM_{2.5}).</p>
3.8	<p>The detailed assessment for nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) and fine particulate matter (PM_{2.5}) project is being supported via the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs</p>

	<p>(DAERA) local air quality management grant process and the project is scheduled to be concluded and reported by December 2022.</p>
3.9	<p>Installation of an Ion Chromatogram analyser at the Belfast Centre Lombard Street monitoring site.</p> <p>In the previous update report of 8th September 2020, Members were advised that as an addendum to the detailed assessment for nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) and fine particulate matter (PM_{2.5}), council officers were liaising with their DAERA counterparts and the UK Centre for Ecology and Hydrology regarding a project to identify and quantify the water-soluble gases and aerosols in air containing different sizes of particulate matter. The aim of this project was to aid in the better understanding of some of the chemical mechanisms involved in the formation of particulate matter in Belfast and across Northern Ireland. It was therefore proposed that council officers would undertake a local site operator role for the Monitor for AeRosols and Gases (MARGA) ion chromatogram equipment that was to be installed at the Belfast Centre Lombard Street monitoring site. Council air quality staff already provide local site operator functions for some of the analysers located at this Environment Agency operated monitoring station.</p>
3.10	<p>However, as a consequence of detailed discussions with DAERA and the UK Centre for Ecology and Hydrology staff regarding the technical and operational requirements of the Marga equipment, it was concluded that the project could not be reasonably and safely undertaken at the Lombard Street site at the current time due to various national, regional, travel and workplace Covid 19 restrictions. Accordingly, it has been proposed that delivery of this project will be revisited whenever Covid 19 restrictions and working practices safely permit.</p>
3.11	<p><u>Financial & Resource Implications.</u></p> <p>Permission for the public advertisement of Tender T2044 for ambient air quality assessment within the Council boundary for PM_{2.5} and NO₂ ambient pollutants was obtained at the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee meeting of Friday 24th January 2020. Funding of up to £125,000 to support delivery of the detailed assessment project has been secured from the DAERA Local Air Quality Management grant scheme for the 2020-2021 grant year.</p>
3.12	<p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications / Rural Needs Assessments</u></p> <p>None.</p>
4.0	Appendices – Documents Attached

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