
AIR QUALITY REVIEW - UPDATE

1 SUMMARY

- 1.1 To update Members regarding statutory air quality reviews and the joint initiatives being considered by the Essex Air Quality Consortium.

2 INTRODUCTION

Air Quality Reviews

- 2.1 Members will recall that the Authority is required to undertake a number of air quality reviews, each of these reviews being carried out in stages. The third and final stage of Rochford's first air quality review, which recommended that this Authority does not declare an Air Quality Management Area, was approved by the Transportation & Environmental Services Committee on 25 January 2001 (Min 35/01). The Department of the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) has commented on a number of technical issues regarding this first review and a reply to those comments, produced in consultation with the Council's environmental consultant, has been forwarded to them.
- 2.2 The Council's second air quality review is required to be completed by 2003 and officers are giving consideration to its completion, in conjunction with the Essex Air Quality Consortium,

Air Quality Objectives

- 2.3 Air quality objectives are set by Central Government and are subject to revision, having regard to European Union Directives. DEFRA has issued a recent consultative document in respect of proposed revised objectives for a number of pollutants. It is not thought at this time that these proposals, if adopted, will have a significant effect on the Council's own air quality reviews as far as meeting these revised objectives is concerned. However, it is indicative of the trend towards higher air quality and the need for Authorities to continue to monitor and assess pollutant levels within their Districts.

Monitoring and Modelling

- 2.4 Air Quality reviews of this nature are reliant on predictions made by sophisticated modelling software. There is, however, a necessity to gather monitoring source data on which to base the model and to test the accuracy of its predictions. The Council has not been minded in the past to undertake potentially costly air quality monitoring, although

at some point in the future this may become necessary. The operation of sophisticated modelling packages is a specialist discipline in itself.

- 2.5 In addition to pollutant monitoring, models require accurate and comprehensive road traffic data, probably in addition to that maintained at present by the Highways Authority.

3 ESSEX AIR QUALITY CONSORTIUM INITIATIVE

- 3.1 In line with the successful Essex contaminated land initiative which Members will be familiar with, the Essex Air Quality Consortium, at which Rochford is represented, is assessing areas where joint working by Authorities and institutions within the county may be beneficial under the Government's Air Quality Strategy.

- 3.2 The agreed terms of reference for the consortium initiative are:

- A fundamental review of the type and location of all monitoring in Essex, identifying any gaps. To investigate the possibility of setting up a monitoring network for the County.
- Investigating trends in air quality over time for the County with a view to producing an annual report of findings.
- Investigate whether the County should be supporting the monitoring of ozone, and taking the initiative regarding this pollutant of local significance in terms of public health.
- Establish what road traffic data is available; decide whether more sophisticated traffic data needs to be purchased.
- Formulate and achieve a joint approach for the 2003 air quality reviews including the potential for engaging a single specialist contractor.
- Investigate the costs and viability of the County Airviro modelling system; determine its future role.
- Look at pollution forecasting and public awareness
- Identify other areas/issues as appropriate and make recommendations.

4 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The Government's stated objective for air quality policy in the United Kingdom is to ensure that polluting emissions and ambient air quality

generally throughout the country do not cause harm to human health and the environment.

- 4.2 Local Authorities are required to work towards the achievement of this objective within their area.

5 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The potential financial implications for the Authority will not be fully known until the Essex Air Quality Consortium has considered the options and made its recommendations. It can, however, be anticipated that costs will be incurred in work needed for the statutory second review of air quality whether or not the initiative reaches fruition. These costs will include approximately £7,000 for sophisticated modelling work and approximately £2,000 for data collection and validation (based on year 2000 costs).
- 5.2 In addition, it is anticipated that the consortium may recommend some small areas of expenditure within the current financial year and where these occur, they will be met from existing budgets.

6 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 The Environment Act 1995 places a statutory duty on the local authority to carry out reviews of air quality.

7 RECOMMENDATION

It is proposed that the Committee **RESOLVES:-**

- (1) That the initiative of the Essex Air Quality Consortium be supported in assessing areas where joint working by authorities and institutions within the county may be beneficial under the Government's Air Quality Strategy.
- (2) That £9,000 be included in support of the air quality review within the draft revenue estimates for 2002/03.

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Background Papers:

The Air Quality Strategy for England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland

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