

<b>Report title</b>	<b>Air Quality Action Plan</b>
<b>Report author</b>	Lucy Hawkings
<b>Department</b>	Environmental Services
<b>Exempt?</b>	No
<b>Exemption type</b>	N/A
<b>Reasons for exemption</b>	N/A

**Purpose of report:**

- **For information**

**Synopsis of report:**

To inform Members of the submission of Runnymede Borough Council's (RBC's) 2024 Air Quality Action Plan (AQAP) which was submitted to the Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (Defra) in draft for comment and subsequent consultation on Monday 29<sup>th</sup> January 2024.

**1. Context and background of report**

The report provides Members with updated Air Quality information in the form of RBC's Draft 2024 Air Quality Action Plan (AQAP) which was submitted to Defra in January 2024

- 1.1 RBC as a Local Authority has a Statutory responsibility to review and assess the current and likely future air quality in their area within a specified time frame.
- 1.2 Air quality is assessed against objectives for various pollutants. Where a Local Authority identifies that an air quality objective for a particular pollutant is unlikely to be met in a particular area and where there is relevant public exposure, they must designate this area as an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA). The major source of air pollution affecting the RBC area is due to road traffic. An AQMA covering the route of the M25 through the borough was declared in 2001. An AQMA covering the junction of the High Street, Station Road, Brighton Road and Church Road, Addlestone was declared in 2008; both were declared for the pollutant, Nitrogen Dioxide (NO<sub>2</sub>).
- 1.3 Data since 2019 indicates that air quality is improving and that both AQMAs could be revoked. However, due to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and associated travel restrictions the monitoring data for 2021 and 2020 may not be representative of long-term trends. To ensure that the AQMAs are not revoked prematurely the Council intends to continue to monitor and review air quality in these areas for at least

another two years, as well as continuing to review air quality in potential pollution hotspots in Chertsey and near the Ottershaw Roundabout (further information on these areas can be found in the RBC 2023 Annual Status Report (ASR) at Appendix B

- 1.4 Air quality objectives were achieved across the Borough in 2022 including in the two AQMAs. The general trend is an improvement in air quality and the Council is working towards revoking the AQMAs in the coming years.

## **2. Report and, where applicable, options considered and recommended**

- 2.1 Members are made aware that RBC's Draft 2024 AQAP was submitted to Defra for their consideration in January 2023. The report fulfils RBC's obligations with respect to managing the AQMAs within Runnymede.
- 2.2 There are two Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs) in Runnymede Borough Council relating to NO<sub>2</sub>.
- 2.3 Consideration of how to improve air quality has been included in the Council's 2024 draft AQAP and this includes a raft of measures such as consideration for planning applications within or near the Borough's AQMAs as per the Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) in production as part of the Local Plan. The SPD contains guidance on when an air quality impact assessment is required to be submitted with a planning application, as well as the information which should be covered within the assessments.
- 2.4 Whilst there was a requirement for RBC to submit their AQAP to Defra in June 2023, Defra has been and Members are hereby made aware that, due to a number of issues the RBC submission occurred after this date.

This 2024 AQAP has been prepared continue to deliver the following;

- Quantify the different source contributions.
  - Evidence that all available options have been considered.
  - Plan of how RBC proposes to use its powers and work in conjunction with other organisations to implement the AQAP.
  - Develop timescales for AQAP implementation and an impact assessment of the proposed measures.
- 2.5 Please refer to Table 5.1 within the Draft 2024 AQAP in Appendix A for the table of proposed measures.
- 2.6 The Runnymede AQAP is intended to be an evolving plan that will further develop in time and a result will be the subject of on-going consultation with stakeholders. The Environment Act 1995 requires the Council to undertake extensive consultation at each stage of the process, thus creating an iterative method of action.
- 2.7 The current draft 2024 AQAP is now with Defra awaiting return of comments. After review by Defra, the AQAP will be sent to Surrey County Council, the Highways Agency, neighbouring Local Authorities and other Statutory and non-Statutory consultees. All consultee comments received on the draft AQAP will be considered

and incorporated where appropriate into the final AQAP. The final AQAP will be the subject of Full Council approval.

- 2.8 In addition to the high-level national programmes policies and initiatives that are seeking to reduce levels of emissions there is a joint working approach through the efforts of the Surrey Air Alliance. RBC have also joined the Air Alert scheme which provides a valuable service to vulnerable people about poor air quality days.

### **3. Policy framework implications**

- 3.1 The AQAP conforms and supports rate the Corporate Business Plan, specifically regarding two of the strategies, those being; responding to climate change and supporting the health and wellbeing of local people.

### **4 Resource implications/Value for Money**

- 4.1 Additional funding via the Contain Outbreak Management Fund (COMF) has been used to develop the service and update the AQAP, complete the detailed assessment of potential Chertsey AQMA and to explore our potential additional responsibilities for particulate monitoring pending publication of the government's guidance. Further information is in the Annual Status Report (ASR) at Appendix B
- 4.2 The main constraint that can be anticipated is the lack of funding. Due to financial constraints, Surrey County Council's Local Transport Plan LTP3, similar to LTP2, prioritised Surrey's transport hubs (Guildford, Woking, Reigate and Banstead) for the delivery of its strategies and transport measures. However, it is hoped that in the future Runnymede AQAP can be integrated with the Local Transport Plan.
- 4.3 Sources of air quality funding available to District/Borough Councils mainly include revenue funding, Environmental Health (EH) revenue budget and developer contributions. Currently, the EH budget for RBC is sufficient to cover the cost of the NO<sub>2</sub> diffusion tube network. Specific projects may be successful in receiving funding through the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) annual Air Quality Grants programme. Previous grants have been awarded to RBC, for example approximately £57k in 2010/11.
- 4.4 The current air quality functions are undertaken by the Council's Scientific Officer. However, to successfully deliver the revocation of the two Runnymede AQMAs in the future consultant expertise will be needed to provide a detailed assessment and modelling. Funding will be considered at the point when data collected has proven revocation is applicable.

### **5. Legal implications**

- 5.1 As mentioned elsewhere in this report, if, following a review of the air quality within the borough, it appears that standards or objectives are not and will not be met, the local authority has a duty under section 83(1) of the Environment Act 1995 (the Act) to designate, by order, an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA). The order can be varied or revoked under s83(2) of the Act following successful further air quality reviews.

5.1 Section 83A(2) requires local authorities with an AQMA to prepare an Action Plan to achieve air quality in the AQMA. This Action Plan can be varied when required, which is the subject of this report.

5.4 This Action Plan will be reviewed every five years at the latest and progress on measures set out within this Plan will be reported on annually within Runnymede Borough Council's air quality annual status report (ASR)

5.5 As mentioned above, this Action Plan has been sent to Defra for approval and once Defra approval or comments have been received from Defra, a final document will be produced for consultation

## **6. Equality implications**

6.1 Officers will submit the final document to the Equalities Group for review once the Action Plan has been returned by DEFRA. Officers will also update the equalities group in terms of the how the consultation will be carried out.

## **7. Environmental/Sustainability/Biodiversity implications**

7.1 It is hoped that if the proposed measures within the AQAP are implemented with the assistance of other agencies, including Surrey County Council and that modest improvements will take place with pollution levels from road traffic falling especially in the Addlestone AQMA.

## **8. Risk Implications**

8.1 It has been widely reported that the European Union may issue significant fines to Member states, including the UK. It is also reported that the UK Government will pass these fines to Local Authorities, especially those who are not doing enough to tackle and reduce poor air quality.

## **9. Other implications**

9.1 The Air Quality Action Plan supports the objectives of the Runnymede Health and Wellbeing Strategy within the Corporate Business Plan

## **10. Timetable for Implementation**

10.1 AQAP actions will commence with immediate effect and continue with yearly review, though the production of the Annual Status report each June. A revision of the AQAP will be required by 2029. It is anticipated that evidence will suggest the revocation of both AQMAs before 2029.

## **11. Conclusions**

- 11.1 The 2024 draft AQAP will be finalised after Defra comments have been received. It will then be put out for consultation after which any relevant changes made before a final version is produced, submitted to Defra, and published. We expect this process to be completed by May 2024.

## **12. Background papers**

- 12.1 The most recent 2022 ASR report is at Appendix B and available in the Member's Room and online at <https://www.runnymede.gov.uk/airquality>

## **13. Appendices**

- 13.1 Draft AQAP  
RBC 2023 ASR