

Report title	Runnymede Borough Council Air Quality Action Plan 2024
Report author	Lucy Hawkings/ Helen Clark
Department	Environmental Services
Exempt?	No

Purpose of report:

To resolve

Synopsis of report:

The draft AQAP has been submitted to DEFRA and published for consultation by the public and stakeholders in the steering group.

In this revised draft AQAP, comments from DEFRA and feedback from the consultation have been incorporated in the final version. The final version will be resubmitted in final format to DEFRA following Committee approval.

To inform Members of the planned actions proposed in line with the action table within the RBC AQAP 2024 for information.

Recommendation(s):

Officer recommendation is that;

- i) the Committee notes the response to the consultation; and**
- ii) the Committee approves the revised AQAP for publication.**

1. Context and background of report

- 1.1 The major source of air pollution affecting the RBC area is road traffic. An air quality management area (AQMA) covering the route of the M25 through the borough was declared in 2001. A second 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 (NO₂).
- 1.2 Section 83A(2) of the Environment Act 1995 requires local authorities with an AQMA to prepare an Action Plan to achieve air quality objectives in AQMAs. The Action Plan is reviewed every five years to update progress on measures set out within the Plan. Progress is also to be reported annually within Runnymede Borough Council's air quality annual status report (ASR).
- 1.3 Data since 2019 indicates that air quality is improving and that both AQMAs could be revoked before the next AQAP revision in 2029. 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 other potential pollution hotspots covered by existing diffusion tube network.

- 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 where the data continues to show this, the Council will work towards revoking the AQMAs in the coming years.
- 1.5 The Environment and Sustainability Committee was advised in March that the draft RBC AQAP 2024 had been submitted to DEFRA in February 2024. This report is to advise the committee of actions since that submission, to note the consultation responses and to seek committee approval of the final draft.
- 1.6 The report provides Members with finalised proposed actions in line with the 2024 Air Quality Action Plan (AQAP).

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

- 2.1 The draft 2024 AQAP at appendix A incorporates feedback from DEFRA via their partner organisation, Bureau Veritas and the wider steering group and public consultation exercise which took place in July and August 2023. The plan outlines how RBC proposes to work in conjunction with partner organisations to implement the AQAP and develop timescales for AQAP implementation and an impact assessment of the proposed measures.
- 2.2 The AQAP action table (included in the AQAP report in Appendix A) details how RBC plans to address improving air quality in the borough. Due to the majority of actions required to reduce air pollution having been identified as highways related, the table features mostly soft measures for RBC's action. In summary the following main RBC soft measures points will be actioned:
 - Public information campaigns including Clean Air week and night, informing of the importance of cleaner fuels for personal use - ongoing however twice yearly for main events.
 - Encouragement of Air Alert tool take up via community engagement including vulnerable resident groups – ongoing beginning 2025.
 - Continuation of collaboration with Surrey Air Alliance on school education projects – ongoing.
 - An ongoing incorporation of measures via RBC planning to ensure developments have consultation for Air Quality at relevant points.
- 2.3 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.
- 2.4 The final steering group meeting to discuss the feedback from the consultation was undertaken on 13 August 2023.
 - Consultees included:
 - All neighbouring authorities
 - All Committee members
 - All Councillors
 - SCC – Public Health, Transport Policy, Highways
 - National Highways

- Borough residents
- 2.5 Consultation feedback was received from two residents mentioning idling of stationary vehicles. The comments and responses appear in appendix B.
 - 2.6 Defra feedback was positive with no marked amendment, the full appraisal report carried out by Bureau Veritas (the DEFRA contracted appraisers) can be found in Appendix C.
 - 2.7 It should be noted that enforcement of idling has in the past been considered by RBC. The process required to enforce the legislation available is that the idling must be witnessed by an officer, and the person be given an opportunity to turn off their engine. In trial periods, on approach, those idling, switched off their engines.
 - 2.8 At junctions and railway level crossings enforcement would require assistance of the police to stop or direct traffic and requires careful consideration of where vehicles would be able to safely pull out of moving traffic when the lights change or level crossings open.
 - 2.9 This informed RBC that in the busy traffic of AQMA's it would be impractical to carry out enforcement. Signage has been installed at level crossings to further inform the public of the effects for idling as well as anti-idling campaign to highlight the nuisance that unnecessary idling presents ([On the move – Runnymede Borough Council](#)).

3. Policy framework implications

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

4. Resource implications/Value for Money

- 4.1 The present air quality service is delivered by the Environmental Health team. No additional resources will be required to deliver the draft Air Quality Action Plan.

5. Legal implications

- 5.1 Under Part 3a of the Constitution, the Environment & Sustainability Committee has delegated authority for all matters dealing with pollution control, environmental protection and statutory nuisances, hence this report being brought to this committee for decision.
- 5.2 In relation to air quality, 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). RBC designated its two AQMAs in 2001 and 2008.
- 5.3 The order can be varied or revoked under s83(2) of the Act following successful further air quality reviews. This is now being considered for this council where this continues to be supported by the evidence from air quality monitoring data.
- 5.4 Section 83A(2) requires local authorities with an AQMA to prepare an Action Plan to achieve air quality in the AQMA, to be reviewed every five years at the most 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)

6. Equality implications

- 6.1 The final AQAP document has been screened through the RBC Equalities Group. No EIA was deemed to be required.
- 6.2 Positive action on air quality will have a beneficial action on people with respiratory conditions, young people and the wider population.

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, that modest improvements will take place with pollution levels from road traffic falling.

8. Risk Implications

- 8.1 In the Local Air Quality Management Policy Guidance, updated in August 2022, a new reminder and warning system for local authorities behind on their reporting duties was introduced, culminating in a Secretary of State direction under section 85 of the Environment Act 1995 to the relevant Chief Executive.

9. Other implications

- 9.1 The Air Quality Action Plan 2024 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 following approval and continue with annual review, though the production of the Annual Status report each June. A revision of the AQAP will be required by 2029. Based on current evidence -it is likely to be appropriate to suggest the revocation of both AQMAs before 2029.

11. Conclusions

- 11.1 The draft 2024 AQAP has been finalised incorporating Defra feedback and comments received during the consultation process. The final version requires approval before publication and resubmission to DEFRA.

12. Background papers

2023 ASR <https://www.runnymede.gov.uk/downloads/file/2298/asr-2023>

13. Appendices

Appendix A Committee Draft RBC AQAP 2024

Appendix B Resident consultation response

Appendix C DEFRA appraisal feedback report