

SHEFFIELD CITY COUNCIL

Economic and Environmental Wellbeing Scrutiny and Policy Development Committee

Meeting held 18 February 2015

PRESENT: Councillors Cate McDonald (Chair), Ian Auckland (Deputy Chair), Neale Gibson, Ibrar Hussain, Steve Jones, Helen Mirfin-Boukouris, Robert Murphy, Joe Otten, Tim Rippon, Steve Wilson, Paul Wood and Diana Stimely

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1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

- 1.1 An apology for absence was received from Councillor Martin Smith, and Councillor Diana Stimely attended as his duly appointed substitute.

2. EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS

- 2.1 No items were identified where resolutions may be moved to exclude the public and press.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

- 3.1 Councillor Ibrar Hussain declared a personal interest in item 7 (Air Quality in Sheffield) as a taxi driver in the City.

4. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

- 4.1 The minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 10th December 2014, were approved as a correct record and, arising therefrom, Matthew Borland, Policy and Improvement Officer, reported that he had still not received feedback from the Head of Libraries and Community Services following the Committee's request that steps be taken to ensure that the issues regarding the leases to be offered to voluntary groups be progressed at the earliest opportunity, and that he would forward the information to Members when it was received.

5. PUBLIC QUESTIONS AND PETITIONS

- 5.1 There were no questions raised by members of the public.
- 5.2 The Committee received an electronic petition from Nick Williams, containing 347 signatures, requesting that Graves Park, which was given to the people of Sheffield to enjoy forever, should be protected, and opposing any plans by the Council to sell off Cobnar Cottage.
- 5.3 It was agreed that the petition should be referred to Councillor Isobel Bowler, Cabinet Member for Culture, Sport and Leisure, who would be requested to provide a written response to Mr Williams, at the earliest possible opportunity.

6. AIR QUALITY IN SHEFFIELD

- 6.1 The Committee considered a briefing note prepared by Ogo Osammor, Air Quality Officer, which contained information on the Air Quality Review and Assessment, the Air Quality Action Plan (AQAP) for Sheffield 2015, the Sheffield Low Emission Zone (LEZ) Feasibility Study and the implementation of the Sheffield Low Emission Zone (LEZ) Strategy. The report also contained, as appendices, a summary of the progress made in terms of the schemes and initiatives undertaken to reduce air pollution levels in the City, recommendations in respect of the Sheffield LEZ Strategy, fleet contributions to pollution levels and details of the various Task and Finish work packages, established or still to be established, relating to the Sheffield LEZ.
- 6.2 In addition to the nominated representatives making the presentations, also present at the meeting were Councillor Jayne Dunn, Cabinet Member for Environment, Recycling and Streetscene and Moaz Khan, Interim Head of Transport, Traffic and Parking Services.
- 6.3 The Committee received brief presentations from a number of nominated representatives, as follows:-
- 6.4 *Dr Jeremy Wight, Director of Public Health*
- 6.4.1 Dr Wight reported that air quality in Sheffield was a major problem, as it was in a number of other large cities, and the effects of poor air quality accounted for up to 500 premature deaths per year in Sheffield, with health costs of around £160 million per year. Whilst poor air quality had an effect on people's health, it was not possible to confirm it was the cause of any one individual person's death as they often died from diseases similar to those that many other people die from, such as heart attacks, strokes and bronchitis. Poor air quality also caused major trans-generational and health inequality issues.
- 6.4.2 Dr Wight stated that air quality varied widely across the City, with young and old people being the most vulnerable. Poor air quality was caused predominantly by road traffic and in some areas of the City, emissions from vehicles accounted for up to 90% of air pollutants. Other external pollutants included industrial emissions, although these were highly regulated. Indoor pollution, of which the most important cause was tobacco smoke, also had an adverse effect on people's health.
- 6.4.3 In terms of what action the Council could take, Dr Wight stated that when a population was exposed to a pollutant, the most obvious solution would be to reduce the amount of pollutant or take measures to reduce people's exposure to the pollutants. He stressed however, that in order to manage the problem, there was a need to measure levels of pollutants, and he made reference to the Air Quality Action Plan (AQAP), indicating that there were a number of measures included in the Plan which would help to improve air quality. He stressed that there was a need to do more to promote the benefits of walking, cycling and 20

mph zones. He concluded by stating that both officers and Members could be more mindful of the adverse effects of poor air quality on people's health when determining planning applications.

6.4.4 Members of the Committee raised questions and the following responses were provided:-

- The areas in the City with the highest levels of pollution were the City Centre and the Lower Don Valley, particularly Tinsley, near the motorway. Levels were also very high in and around the main arterial roads in the City, including Abbeydale Road, Ecclesall Road, Western Bank/Whitham Road and Penistone Road.
- There were a number of aspects of traffic that contributed to increased pollution levels, regardless of the volume of traffic. If the traffic was free-flowing, there would be less pollution than if the roads were congested. The nature of vehicles travelling on the roads also had an effect, mainly due to different emissions generated by different types of motors and fuels. As a result of this, there was a need to look at modal shift and, whilst considerable progress had been made on this issue over the last few years, there was still more work to be done in terms of education and encouragement. The biggest contributor to poor air quality was diesel, and considerable work had been, and continued to be, undertaken in order to move to low emission fuels.
- It was believed that more work could have been undertaken, particularly with regard to analysis, if vacant specialist Public Health posts in the Council were filled.
- It was accepted that the excessive pollution levels in the Tinsley area, near to the M1, was a major problem for the City. The Council however, had some level of influence in connection with traffic management in this area.
- Air quality monitoring was undertaken in some parts of the City.
- As part of the steps required to move away from diesel, it had been identified that there was a need to open up dialogue with the Sheffield Taxi Trade Association.
- It was more a case of removing those vehicles that created higher levels of pollution than simply removing more vehicles from the City's roads. If more people were encouraged to move to more environmentally-friendly means of transport, this would then have the knock-on effect of freeing up roads, and thereby reducing congestion levels.
- It was difficult to demonstrate that poor air quality had a direct effect on any one individual person's health, even though, at a population level, the impact was very clear. If someone had an underlying health problem, such as suffering a heart attack or a stroke, or having bronchitis, poor air quality was

likely to have a further damaging effect on their health. If the quality of the air was improved, it would help the person's health in the long run, but was not likely to clear up their underlying health problems. It was believed, and there was continuing medical research being undertaken on this issue, that if a child had been exposed to poor air quality from a young age, it could have a long-term adverse effect on their health.

6.5 Ogo Osammor, Air Quality Officer

6.5.1 Ogo Osammor referred to the report submitted as part of the agenda, stating that, as at 1st January 2015, the City had not been compliant with the NO₂ EU Limit Values, and was not likely to be in the short to medium term, unless there was a major shift away from the use of diesel fuel in the City's urban area. He stressed that the Council and its partners were committed to improving the health and wellbeing of the City's residents by improving air quality, referring specifically to the need to reduce traffic emissions by 30% in order to meet compliance.

6.5.2 Dr Osammor referred to the Air Quality Action Plan (AQAP) for Sheffield 2015, which had been approved by the Cabinet in July 2012, and which contained seven key actions, which were set out in the report. He stated that road transport was the biggest single contributor to NO₂ emissions, and was also the least regulated, and referred to a feasibility study – The Sheffield LEZ Study – which had been undertaken to understand the level of emissions from different types of vehicles. Reference was also made to the City Bid, where the Government would provide funding for four cities to demonstrate how they could introduce low-emission vehicles, and the Council was to submit an expression of interest by 20th February, 2015.

6.5.3 Dr Osammor concluded by referring to a number of ongoing initiatives which would help reduce air pollution levels, including the Air Aware campaign, working closely with the Highways Agency in connection with reducing air pollution levels on motorways and plans to erect a six metre high barrier on the slip-road at Junction 34 South of the M1 in Tinsley.

6.5.4 Members of the Committee raised questions and the following responses were provided:-

- The main reason as to why the targets in the AQAP had not been met was mainly due to a lack of resources. Considerable effort had been made in order to improve air quality in the City, and the resources and effort put in so far had not been sufficient, and further funding was required. A number of the other core cities were in a similar position. Officers across the Council would continue to work together to see what could be done.
- Whilst drivers could not be forced to move from diesel to petrol, or even to alternative, low emission fuels, such as liquid petroleum gas and electric, the Council had some opportunities through the planning process, such as placing conditions on planning applications, where new developments using new vehicles could only use low emission fuels. The Council was also

looking to introduce a Commercial Advisory Notice to ensure that, in the future, air quality issues were fully taken into account when the Council procured any goods and services, whether transport related or not, as well as continuing with the Air Aware campaign, subject to securing funding. The alternative course of action if the required funding was not received from the Government would ultimately be the decision of Members and senior officers of the Council.

- As part of the Sheffield LEZ Feasibility Study, the monitoring of fleet contributions to air pollution levels have been undertaken by independent consultants, and the figures produced were based solely on the vehicles travelling on Sheffield roads, and with no regard to the number of passengers in such vehicles.
- Monitoring of air pollution levels on the M1 corridor at J34 was ongoing and 50 mph was the observed average speed on the viaduct. A Smart Motorway System was currently under construction, with the possibility of reducing speeds on motorways, using variable message signs.
- A number of national bodies were presently working to try and encourage the Government to establish a network of Low Emission Zones and, subject to relevant funding being obtained, the Council welcomed this approach.
- As a further way of improving air pollution levels, as well as generating further income which could be used towards initiatives to reduce air pollution in the future, some local authorities, including London, were charging drivers of vehicles using diesel more to park. It would be very costly, both in terms of equipment and enforcement, to operate such a scheme.
- The NOx emissions in terms of the Euro 4 and 5 bus models were higher than anticipated due to the low driving speeds. Retrofitting, using Thermal Management Technology would help to raise the exhaust temperature, which meant that the temperature of the catalytic box would be high enough to operate at its optimum level, which would result in an expected 40% reduction in NOx emissions. This technology would be used on the Euro 4 and 5 bus models, and all bus operators would be encouraged to use such technology.

6.6 Neil Parry, East End Quality of Life Initiative

- 6.6.1 Mr Parry referred to the recent House of Commons Environment Audit Report – ‘Action on Air Quality’ which concluded that ‘air pollution is an invisible killer and a public health imperative’. He considered that, in his opinion, despite this finding, there was a reluctance and resistance to moving forward the Sheffield Air Quality Action Plan and the recommendations arising from the Sheffield LEZ Feasibility Study. He also referred to the response sent by Transport, Traffic and Parking Services, as part of the Highways Agency consultation on speed management on the M1, indicating that there appeared to be some discrepancy in terms of the Council’s policy with regard to speed limits. He also stated that, in his opinion,

there appeared to be an apparent reluctance on behalf of relevant Cabinet Members and senior Council officers to move forward on this issue. Mr Parry referred to Appendix 'D' to the report now submitted – Sheffield LEZ Work Package Leads, indicating that the bodies to be established to undertake task and finish work regarding reducing taxi emissions and reducing commercial/goods vehicle emissions, i.e. Sheffield Taxi Partnership and Sheffield Freight Quality Partnership respectively, had not yet been set up. He also expressed a wish to ask how the Executive Director, Place, the Champion for delivery of the AQAP, was championing its delivery.

6.6.2 Mr Parry made reference to the powers that the Council had, specifically relating to the need for Members to resist planning developments that led to the worsening of air quality. He believed that the Members on the Planning and Highways Committee should have a better understanding of air quality and health issues, and referred to particular example of this when the Committee considered the IKEA planning application. Mr Parry concluded by referring to the fact that no Members from the Planning and Highways Committee attended the Air Quality and Health in Sheffield Conference held in October 2014, despite repeated invitations and questioned what would happen with regard to the important area of awareness raising and communications after the Air Aware Campaign finishes in March 2015.

6.6.3 Councillor Jayne Dunn, Cabinet Member for Environment, Recycling and Street Scene, stated that the Council would be doing everything possible to seek further funding in respect of the Air Aware Campaign and that the Green Commission, a body established to create a vision and blueprint regarding the City's environmental strengths, opportunities and challenges, particular in the wider contexts of improving health and wellbeing, and improving economic wellbeing, was looking at modal shift and air quality as part of its remit. Councillor Dunn also confirmed that discussions had commenced in connection with the planned establishment of a Sheffield Taxi Partnership.

6.7 *John Young, Commercial Director, Stagecoach Yorkshire*

6.7.1 John Young stated that air quality was viewed as a very important issue by Stagecoach Yorkshire, and the Company recognised the part that bus operators played in improving air quality. Stagecoach was always looking to use alternative, low emission fuels, and had a strong track-record in terms of fleet investment. This included use of the new Euro 5 and Euro 6 vehicles, which both had lower levels of NOx emissions and bio diesel.

6.6.2 Mr Young referred to the Sheffield Bus Partnership, indicating that it had proved to be a success, and that the bus companies signed up to it had all agreed to meet various targets, including average fleet age and emission levels of their vehicles. As part of Stagecoach's efforts and contribution to improve air quality in the City, it presently had 40 diesel/electric hybrid buses, which equated to 22% of its total Sheffield fleet, which had been purchased with assistance from the Government's Green Bus Fund. The Company always aimed to use its most fuel-efficient vehicles where possible, for example maximising their use in the evenings and on

Sundays, all its buses were fitted with the Green Road eco-driver system, which monitored driving style in an attempt to conserve fuel and reduce emissions and there were plans to fit some vehicles with fluid, fly-wheel technology in a further attempt to improve fuel efficiency. Another Sheffield Partnership initiative was a plan to convert some of First's Euro 3 fleet to Euro 5 standard, financed through the Clean Vehicle Technology Fund. Stagecoach had installed engine cut-outs so that drivers were not able to leave buses running unnecessarily and they used Envirox, a fuel additive, which helped to improve fuel economy. In terms of the move to low emission fuels, including electric, gas/bio gas and hydrogen, Mr Young stated that there were 40 Stagecoach buses running on gas in Sunderland and a number of electric and hydrogen vehicles operating in York (run by First) and Aberdeen (run by both Stagecoach and First), respectively.

- 6.7.3 Mr Young reported on other measures being taken by Stagecoach, indicating that considerable progress had been made in encouraging more people to use buses, whilst accepting that more work in this area was required. He welcomed the Council's plans to continue monitoring congestion levels in the City, particularly looking at the implementation of further bus priority measures. He made the point that if there was less congestion on the roads, the buses would run on time, which would mean improved reliability and hopefully, more people would be encouraged to use them.
- 6.7.4 Mr Young stated that buses were part of the solution, rather than part of the problem and whilst, by their very nature, buses tended to stop frequently and travel at relatively low average speeds, help in addressing congested hotspots would help to reduce congestion and delay, reduce bus journey time variability and provide more attractive service offer, less air pollution and improved fleet utilisation. As already recognised by Members, there remained significant potential to achieve further modal shift in Sheffield, which would deliver real tangible benefits in terms of improved air quality.
- 6.7.5 Members of the Committee raised questions and the following responses were provided:-
- As at October 2014, the average age of Stagecoach Sheffield's bus fleet was 5.5 years old – better than the Government target of eight years, with 22% of its fleet being hybrid double-deckers.
 - Stagecoach and the Sheffield Bus Partnership had undertaken marketing activity in terms of promoting the benefits of using the bus. It was accepted however, that more work needed to be undertaken in connection with the air quality issue.
 - Regarding the cost of multi-operator tickets, as part of a review, the bus operators were keen to revisit this issue to see how the current offer could be improved.
 - The initial tests with regard to the environmental benefits of the Euro 6 vehicle looked very promising.

- Stagecoach was unlikely to use trolley buses locally as they were not considered flexible enough.
- Although hybrids, gas, electric and hydrogen buses were all being used in different parts of the UK by various operators, it was difficult to predict which would prove to be the most beneficial or successful, and what further advances in technology would be made. It was not the case that Stagecoach required targets in terms of future investment, as the Company already had a good track record in this area and the Sheffield Bus Partnership agreement already had clearly defined targets which the operators had signed up to and were meeting. The Company would obviously have to give consideration as to whether any future advances in technology were affordable and achievable.
- As Supertram was a separate company, the request as to whether that Company could give consideration to operating an off-peak trial, where people could take bicycles on trams, would be referred to the company for its comments.
- The Council was working with Supertram in connection with the possible expansion of the network, with the Lower Don Valley area being a possibility.
- It was accepted that pollution levels were particularly high in the Abbeydale Road area, which was mainly due to it being a very busy transport route, and one which was used by a number of buses, which added to the problems by idling.
- Details of how local residents and representatives of community fora could test air pollution levels, as part of the Community Air Quality Monitoring Project, would be forwarded by Neil Parry.

6.8 RESOLVED: That the Committee:-

- (a) notes the contents of the report now submitted, the information reported as part of the presentations now made and the responses provided to the question raised;
- (b) expresses its thanks to Ogo Osammor, Dr Jeremy Wight, Moaz Khan, Neil Parry and John Young for attending the meeting, and providing their views on what they consider should be done to improve air quality in the City; and
- (c) requests that the following action be undertaken:-
 - (i) the Council's Cycling Action Plan is monitored;
 - (ii) with regard to the Air Quality Action Plan, (A) the Plan is updated to reflect any successful Ultra Low Emission Vehicle funding bids and (B) steps be taken to ensure that the Sheffield Taxi Partnership and

the Sheffield Freight Quality Partnership are established and become active at the earliest possible opportunity in order for relevant task and finish work to be undertaken in respect of reducing taxi emissions and reducing commercial/goods vehicle emissions, respectively;

- (iii) Members of the Planning and Highways Committee receive appropriate training in connection with decision-making on large-scale developments which could have an adverse effect on air quality in the City;
- (iv) as part of the work of the Sheffield Bus Partnership, all partners should focus on air quality issues and specifically, look at improving its communication methods in terms of educating residents on the benefits of travelling by bus;
- (v) look again at the adverse health effects of poor air quality in the Tinsley area, near the M1 motorway, and consideration be given to undertaking a cost-benefit analysis of potential actions;
- (vi) Supertram give further consideration to operating a trial where cyclists could take their bikes on the tram at off-peak travel times; and
- (vii) Ogo Osammor to give consideration to how members of the public could report vehicles with poor emissions to the Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency.

7. WORK PROGRAMME 2014/15

- 7.1 The Committee received and noted a report of the Policy and Improvement Officer, providing details of the Committee's Work Programme for 2014/15.

8. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

- 8.1 It was noted that the next meeting of the Committee would be held on Wednesday, 8th April 2015, at 4.30 pm, in the Town Hall.