



**OFFICER REPORT TO LOCAL COMMITTEE
(WAVERLEY)**

FARNHAM AIR QUALITY IMPROVEMENTS PROJECT

17 SEPTEMBER 2010

KEY ISSUE

To approve the measures and implementation timetable that are proposed as a transport based strategy to help mitigate air pollution in the Farnham Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) and to respond to a number of transport problems in and around the town.

SUMMARY

Waverley Borough Council has a statutory duty under the 1995 Environmental Act to monitor air quality across the borough by measuring levels of a range of pollutants including those that are the result of road traffic emissions.

Monitoring has shown that the Government-set national air quality objective for the annual mean concentration of pollutant nitrogen dioxide has been exceeded. The main source of this pollutant is road traffic emissions. Waverley Borough Council has declared an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) along The Borough and surrounding streets in the centre of Farnham. The declaration of an AQMA means that the Borough Council is committed to taking action towards achieving the national air quality objective. The Air Quality Action Plan is now in place for Waverley, including the Farnham AQMA and gradual implementation of the measures should help to improve air quality.

Given that traffic emissions are the main source of nitrogen dioxide, Waverley Borough Council and Surrey County Council - in its role as the local highway authority - have met on a number of occasions to explore the best way of mitigating air pollution in the Farnham AQMA and responding to a number of transport problems in and around the town. The result of these meetings is

the development of a strategy to deal with air quality and transport problems in and around Farnham.

The Local Committee is asked to note the progress made and consider the short-, medium- and long-term actions contained in the strategy as described in section 2.

OFFICER RECOMMENDATIONS

The Local Committee (Waverley) is asked to agree the strategy comprising the proposed measures and implementation timetable set out in Section 2 of this report.

1 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 1.1 Waverley Borough Council has a statutory duty under Part IV of the Environment Act 1995 to monitor air quality across the borough by measuring levels of a range of pollutants including those that are the result of road traffic emissions. Where a pollutant is exceeding the national air quality objectives set by the Government the Borough Council must take action to reduce levels of this pollutant.
- 1.2 Waverley Borough Council has declared an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) along The Borough and surrounding streets in the centre of Farnham. Monitoring has shown that the Government-set national air quality objective for the annual mean concentration of pollutant nitrogen dioxide has been exceeded. The annual mean concentration permitted is 40 micrograms per cubic metre. The main source of this pollutant is road traffic emissions.
- 1.3 The declaration of an AQMA means that the Borough Council is committed to taking action towards achieving the national air quality objective. The County Council, as the local highway authority for the county road network, has a statutory duty to bring forward proposals to help meet the national air quality objectives in the AQMA.
- 1.4 The Air Quality Action Plan is now in place for Waverley, including the Farnham AQMA, and gradual implementation of the measures should help to improve the air quality. This was reported to the Waverley Borough Council Executive on 13 April 2010.
- 1.5 An initial meeting took place at County Hall on 8 September 2009 involving elected members and senior officers from both the Borough and County Councils. The key outcomes of the meeting were agreements to review our combined policy stance on transport issues to ensure the results fed into the third Local Transport Plan (LTP3) and Local Development Framework (LDF) and to explore the range of possible actions to mitigate the problems.

- 1.6 Work on the Local Transport Plan is progressing. However, because of the current funding position and the forthcoming Comprehensive Spending Review, it is unlikely that programmes and priorities will be agreed until the position becomes clear.
- 1.7 The two councils jointly held an air quality workshop at Farnham Maltings on 26 January 2010. Approximately 40 stakeholders including elected members attended the event in order to discuss the issues and potential solutions for the Farnham AQMA. The output from this workshop was used to progress a list of potential measures that could form a strategy to mitigate air pollution and respond to transport problems in Farnham.
- 1.8 Officers explored these ideas further and considered them alongside existing proposals for the town centre, which included those forming part of the East Street Section 106 Agreement. This assessment is shown at **Annex 1**.
- 1.9 This draft list was presented to the Borough Council's Environment and Leisure Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 15 March 2010 and a further joint meeting of the Borough and County Councils resulted in the refined list set out below in section 2.
- 1.10 Waverley Borough Council has also considered matters covered in this report at their Environment and Leisure Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 14 September 2010.
- 1.11 An officer-level meeting with Hampshire County Council has been held at which the potential impacts of the Whitehill Bordon Eco-town on Farnham were discussed. A member-level meeting has been arranged for November 2010.

2 SUGGESTED MEASURES AND POTENTIAL TIMETABLE FOR IMPLEMENTATION

- 2.1 **Traffic model update** - Although there is a Paramics traffic model for Farnham it is out of date. In order to quantify and consider the traffic and air quality impacts of the following measures properly, the Paramics model needs updating. This will consist of traffic and turning counts, plus a software update. The County Council has programmed this update for Autumn 2010. The model will be used to test options for alternative traffic routing in and around the town.
- 2.2 **Bus waiting improvements** - As part of the East Street section 278 agreement, improvements are due to be made to bus waiting areas. It is expected that these improvements will be in the form of new shelters and associated seating. The implementation date for these

improvements is dependent upon the commencement of the East Street development.

- 2.3 **Farnham Bypass, Wrecclesham Bypass and Hickley's Corner** - Any bypass for Farnham or Wrecclesham or a major upgrade of Hickley's Corner would be considered a major scheme. Previous attempts to get these schemes on the Department for Transport's major schemes list have been unsuccessful. Large scale cuts in public funding mean that it is unlikely that new projects will be added to the list in the immediate future, although the County Council will seek to bid again once the public finance situation improves.
- 2.4 **Electric car charging point** - Current technology and market conditions are not considered sufficiently progressed to give a standardised and resilient solution. This could be looked at again in the future jointly with other Surrey local authorities.
- 2.5 **Freight Quality Partnership** – The County Council has secured funding of approximately £5000 to explore freight deliveries, loading/unloading and routing into Farnham with the objective of improving traffic flows and reducing congestion. A business delivery survey with suppliers and retail outlets has been carried out to explore opportunities and challenges. A report on this assessment is also included on the agenda for this meeting.
- 2.6 Lorry directional signing was installed in spring 2010 to redirect lorry traffic which was using the A3016 Upper Hale Road back onto the A331 Blackwater Valley Route.
- 2.7 **Junction improvements and traffic control** - As part of a section 278 improvement related to the East Street development, Woolmead will be restored to two-way working and there will be two junction improvements on East Street to facilitate this. In addition, there is a possibility to review the traffic signal timings and junction control at the key junctions in Farnham, with the objective of reducing queues and idling time. It may be possible to install a linked traffic control network (e.g. SCOOT), which could actively manage the green time at junctions according to the volumes of traffic on each arm of the junction.
- 2.8 The Woolmead and junction changes will be tied into the commencement of the East Street development. However, the investigation into the traffic control improvements can commence once the traffic model has been updated.
- 2.9 No-idling zones have been implemented in the UK in and around schools, but to date, none have been set up at level crossings. There is an apparent reluctance within the Department for Transport to allow such a scheme because of the novel nature of the signage.

- 2.10 **Parking** - Off street parking is the responsibility of the Borough Council. On-street parking is the responsibility of the County Council.
- 2.11 The County Council is currently reviewing the policy for on-street parking. The consultation on the Draft Parking Strategy, which will form part of the third Local Transport Plan (LTP3), includes charging and enforcement options. It is recognised in Farnham there is some considerable opposition to charging for on-street parking on Castle Street (which is currently free), although cars circulate around the area waiting for a space to become free, which adds to congestion and air pollution.
- 2.12 **Variable Message Signs** - This scheme was intended to help drivers locate their local car park and display the number of spaces left in each car park, with the intention of reducing the number of cars circulating around Farnham looking for a central parking space when parking spaces are limited. A joint feasibility study was undertaken by the Borough and County Councils. However, currently this scheme is unlikely to be acceptable locally. Simpler directional signage is being looked at by the Borough Council.
- 2.13 **Park & stride** - Also as part of the East Street section 106 agreement, a Park & Stride facility is proposed for the car parks on the key routes into Farnham. This includes provision for a study into the traffic routing used to access the car parks. The associated footway improvements will be required between the Park & Stride sites and the town centre. As with all other schemes associated with the East Street development, the commencement date will dictate the implementation date of the measures.
- 2.14 **Public transport – Park & Ride** - In order for Park & Ride to be economic and effective, there needs to be a significant demand on a particular route into town, and significant enough advantages (in time or reduced financial outlay) to persuade people to use the service. It is doubtful that Farnham currently has this critical mass, let alone any potential new areas for a car park, although the new eco-town at Bordon may provide a long-term opportunity, which officers are currently exploring.
- 2.15 **Public Transport – Promotion of bus services** - The bus review currently being undertaken by the County Council may have an impact on bus service provision in Waverley. However, this could provide an opportunity to promote the Community Buses offered by Waverley Community Transport, who provide demand-responsive services in and around Farnham.
- 2.16 The table below summarises measures and timescales for implementation.

Summary of Measures and Timescales for Implementation

Short-term actions (up to end of 2010)	Resources
Business delivery survey and Freight Quality Partnership	£5k from SCC and joint SCC/WBC staff input
Traffic Model update, including testing of options	£5-10k required for data survey – to be provided from staff resources
Parking Strategy for on-street parking across the county	SCC currently reviewing the policy for on street parking countywide. The consultation on the Draft Parking Strategy, which will form part of the third Local Transport Plan (LTP3), includes charging and enforcement options.
Medium-term actions (2011-12)	
Off-street car parking strategy/review	Current WBC budget includes survey of vehicle-class use to incentivise lower emission categories
East Street Development Actions (expected 2011/12)	
Junction improvements, including possible UTC implementation	S278 works
Town Centre Traffic Reduction study	£25k study and up to £75k measures via S106
Bus waiting facilities	S278 works up to a value of £75k
Real time passenger information	S278 works up to a value of £120k
Park & Stride	£25k study and up to £250k measures via S106
Footway improvements - as part of Park & Stride	Included above.
Longer-term actions (2012+)	
Park & ride/bus route improvements to eco-town	Could tie in with S106 above but dependent mainly on Hampshire CC
By-passes	Dependant on future bids for Government funding
Hickley's Corner upgrade	
Non-programmable actions	
Variable Message Signs	Currently unlikely to be acceptable locally. Simpler directional signage is being looked at currently by WBC
Electric car charging point in Victoria Street Car Park	Current technology and market conditions are not sufficiently progressed to give a standardised and resilient solution. This could be looked at again in the future, jointly with other Surrey local authorities

3 FUNDING

- 3.1 As stated above, funding is a particular issue at the present time, especially for transport projects. There will be no capital allocation for integrated transport schemes, such as air quality measures, for 2010/11. Therefore funding will have to come from other sources, such as developer funding and bids to other funding streams.
- 3.2 The package of schemes related to the East Street development has already been identified. There is little or no scope to make changes to the section 106 or section 278 agreements unless significant changes are made to the planning permission.
- 3.3 Some of the less expensive measures could be funded using Local Committee funding or planning contributions from smaller developments in and around Farnham provided there is a direct link between the measure and the development.
- 3.4 Those measures that are major schemes can only be funded using regional/national grants. At this time the new government's policy on transport investment is not known. However, any opportunity to bid for funding for measures should be supported and explored.

4 CONSULTATIONS

- 4.1 Section 1 above summarises the involvement of members, officers and stakeholders in the process.

5 FINANCIAL AND VALUE FOR MONEY IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 Resources are set out in the summary of measures and timetable at para 2.16 above.

6 EQUALITIES AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 There are no specific adverse equalities and diversity implications for this report.
- 6.2 Improvements to air quality should benefit the health of those who live and work in the Farnham AQMA. Exposure to air pollution can have a long-term effect on health, associated in particular with premature mortality due to cardiopulmonary (heart and lung) effects. In the short-term, high pollution episodes can trigger increased admissions to hospital and contribute to the premature death of those people that are more vulnerable to daily changes in levels of air pollutants.

7 CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

7.1 There are no specific crime and disorder implications for this report.

8 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

8.1 The above measures in tandem with the existing Air Quality Action Plan should support improvements in air quality in Farnham. This joint approach between the County and Borough Councils ensures a joined-up approach and provides value for money to all participants.

8.2 Farnham's residents, business users and visitors will all benefit from the actions currently proposed; the summary measures and timetable at paragraph 2.16 above should be endorsed.

8.3 The Local Committee (Waverley) is asked to agree the strategy comprising the proposed measures and implementation timetable set out in Section 2 of this report.

9 WHAT HAPPENS NEXT

9.1 Short-term measures to be progressed as shown in Section 2 of this report.

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BACKGROUND PAPERS:	None