

**Report to OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD**

## **Clean Air Plan – Outline Business Case**

**Portfolio Holder:**

Councillor Shah, Cabinet Member – Neighbourhoods

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**Purpose  
of the**

**Report**

As directed by Central Government, the Greater Manchester Local Authorities are being asked to endorse the Outline Business case (OBC) for the Greater Manchester Clean Air Plan as part of the feasibility study being carried out on their behalf by Transport for Greater Manchester (TfGM). The OBC will be presented in detail at the Overview and scrutiny meeting for consideration

**Recommendations**

That the Overview and Scrutiny board endorse the Clean Air Plan OBC as presented and recommend it for approval.

## Clean Air Plan – Outline Business Case

### 1 Background

1.1 Poor air quality is the largest environmental risk to public health in the UK. It:

- Contributes to the equivalent of 1,200 deaths a year in Greater Manchester.
- Plays a part in breathing illnesses, heart disease, stroke, and even some cancers.
- Particularly affects the vulnerable including the elderly, sick, poor and children.
- Reduces everyone's life expectancy by an average of six months.

In Greater Manchester, air quality is improving but:

- We exceed legal annual limits for harmful nitrogen dioxide (NO<sub>2</sub>) levels in many areas.
- Road transport is responsible for 80% of NO<sub>2</sub> pollution at the roadside, where it is most damaging to health.
- Diesel vehicles are the largest source, particularly HGVs and buses.

### 2 Current Position

2.1 In response to the air pollution crisis that faces the country, Central Government have placed a legal responsibility on a large number of Local Authorities across the country to develop Clean Air Plans. Central Government have also:-

- Set up a Joint Air Quality Unit (JAQU) to deliver national plans to improve air quality;
- Placed legal responsibility for complying with air pollution limits with local authorities;
- Set out a process for more than 60 local authorities to produce and implement Clean Air Plans to bring NO<sub>2</sub> levels within legal limits in "the shortest possible time", informed by national air pollution modelling;
- Identified Clean Air Zones (where those driving the most polluting vehicles would pay a penalty to enter a designated area) as the benchmark measure that will bring levels of roadside NO<sub>2</sub> within legal limits most quickly, thereby requiring local authorities to bring forward such schemes unless they can prove compliance through alternative routes to the same timescale.

2.2 Taking action on air quality is not optional. The severe and long lasting health implications of poor air quality as well as the legal obligations require decisive and swift action to reduce harmful air pollution. The 10 Greater Manchester local authorities are working with the Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA) and Transport for Greater Manchester (TfGM) to produce a single Clean Air Plan, liaising with JAQU. This approach aims to:

- Avoid displacing NO<sub>2</sub> pollution to other areas;
- Make sure the plan works alongside existing Greater Manchester-wide strategies;
- Reduce emissions in the most effective way across the whole of the city-region.

2.3 In developing a Clean Air Plan, so far we have completed detailed modelling which has identified 250 points of exceedance on 152 stretches of road (across all 10 local authority areas) predicted to have concentrations of harmful NO<sub>2</sub> beyond 2020 if no action is taken.

2.4 TfGM, on behalf of the 10 LAs have also considered a wide range of potential measures to tackle NO<sub>2</sub> levels as well as run detailed modelling to help develop a range of options that combine the measures in different ways. This will help us understand the type and

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scale of action needed to bring NO2 levels within legal limits and identify a ‘preferred option’.

- 2.5 No decision has yet been taken on which of these measures will be included in the final Greater Manchester Clean Air Plan. Government requires local authorities to consider implementing a Clean Air Zone unless they can identify alternative measures which are as effective in reducing NO2 air pollution at least as quickly.
- 2.6 The work undertaken in Greater Manchester so far indicates that a package of measures that includes some form of Clean Air Zone is highly likely to be necessary to comply with government guidance and legal rulings to reduce NO2 in the “shortest possible time”.
- 2.7 All 10 local authorities will be asked to approve the Outline Business Case that will be presented at the meeting before a final version is submitted to government at the end of March 2019. There will then be an opportunity for the public to give feedback, which local authorities and TfGM will consider while continuing to develop the Full Business Case which is due for submission at the end of November 2019.

### 3 **Key Issues for Overview and Scrutiny to Discuss**

- 3.1 Oldham’s commitment to improving air quality in the context of the Council motion supported at a meeting held on 12 December:

“This Council notes that air quality remains a significant issue affecting the life quality of the residents of Oldham, with levels of nitrogen dioxide (NO2) driven up primarily by road transport. Local modelling has identified a number of stretches of road in the borough where NO2 levels are expected to exceed legal limits beyond 2020, mainly on major roads near our town centres.

Air pollution recognises no boundaries, so a response is needed from individuals, from local governments and from national government. This council notes the important work ongoing across Greater Manchester to campaign for clean air, and welcomes the commitment of the Combined Authority to hit World Health Organisation targets for air quality by 2030 as part of being a WHO Breathelife City. Greater Manchester councils have also pledged to be 100% fossil fuel free by 2050.

Given the scale of the challenge, this council notes with concern that national government has recently removed grants to encourage the take up of electric vehicles, and acknowledges the criticism of this decision by the Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy Select Committee.

This council resolves:

- 1) To work closely with the GMCA to deliver the Clean Air Plan, and to continue to promote the GM Clean Air campaign to encourage residents to think about how they can do their bit to reduce air pollution.
- 2) To ask the Chief Executive to seek immediate clarification from the Secretary of State on how national government will support Oldham’s ambitions to improve air quality, particularly given recent decisions to cut grants for electric vehicles.
- 3) To seek new opportunities to further establish Oldham as the region’s greenest borough and improve the life chances of residents and particularly young people beyond the Clean Air Plan, including:
  - a. Reducing air pollution cause by vehicle use around schools at the start and end of the school day.
  - b. Incentivising the use of electric vehicles through improved access to charging points and other preferential schemes, preparing the borough for a future where 3 million charging points will be needed nationally by 2040.

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- c. Growing trees in key sites in the borough to dampen pollution effects and make more liveable places.”

#### 4 **Key Questions for Overview and Scrutiny to Consider**

4.1 Health consequences of poor air quality

4.2 Consultation to follow submission of outline business case to Government request  
Input re Key local stateholders

#### 5. **Links to Corporate Outcomes**

5.1 A Thriving Economy.

#### 6 **Additional Supporting Information**

6.1 Combined authority report on the outline business case will be available following a report to be tabled on the 1 March 2019.

#### 7 **Consultation**

7.1 Health Scrutiny have been advised and consulted on this work.