

General Licensing Committee Report



Report of Head of Corporate Strategy

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To: Licensing Committee

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Low Emission Strategy

Recommendation

That the committee agrees to go out to consultation on the draft low emissions strategy.

Purpose of Report

1. For committee to agree to a consultation on the draft Low Emission Strategy for South Oxfordshire (LES).

Strategic Objectives

2. Air quality is not a strategic objective. We have a statutory duty to monitor air quality and where it is exceeding acceptable levels, we must declare an air quality management area and then produce plans to improve it.

Background

3. The Environment Act 1995 places a statutory duty on local authorities to review and assess local air quality. It includes a requirement to prepare and implement an air quality action plan (AQAP) where air quality objectives are not being met.
4. The council adopted it's AQAP in February of 2015. One of the actions included in the plan is the development of a LES and a low emission zone feasibility study.
5. The council commissioned Ricardo-AEA to prepare the draft strategy and complete the feasibility studies. The work was paid for by government funding. The report

we commissioned is a technical appraisal of the recommendations for our LES and is included in appendix one.

6. The LES covers the whole of the district and it proposes actions that will improve air quality across South Oxfordshire. The low emission zone feasibility studies relate to Watlington, Wallingford and Henley as these towns have air quality management areas (AQMA) in place due to their specific air quality problems. The LES incorporates the findings of the feasibility studies.
7. The Strategy includes some actions that are already in our AQAP these are:
 - provision of electric vehicle recharging points
 - consider a reduction in car park fees for low emission vehicles
 - consider updating the councils procurement policy to make it greener
 - the inclusion of air quality requirements in planning policies
 - promoting the uptake of low emission vehicles
 - promoting and supporting behavioural change
 - investigate the potential for a freight clearway in Watlington.

It also proposes some new actions and one new target:

- a low emission bus strategy
 - a low emission freight strategy
 - two per cent of cars and small vans to be electric by 2020 and five per cent by 2025.
8. There are two key actions that are likely to attract local comment. These are investigating the removal of on street parking in areas of Watlington and investigating the options relating to bus only use of the Wallingford bridge. These two actions could solve the air quality problems in these towns and the AQMAs could be revoked.
 9. The report has been prepared on behalf of the council and if the committee agrees with the recommendations we will consult on the document as our draft LES. If the committee wants to remove any of the recommendations before consultation we will need to set out the rationale for that decision.
 10. While the committee can decide to remove recommendations from the report, officers recommend that we consult on the document as is, to gauge public opinion on all of the options available. If the committee decides to consult as is, the attached report will become our draft LES; if it decides to remove any actions we will submit the attached to DEFRA as our technical appraisal and consult on an amended document which will be our draft LES.

Financial Implications

11. There are no direct financial implications in the adoption of this report. If we decide to undertake works we will seek external funding such as grant monies or section 106 agreements.

Legal Implications

12. There are legal implications to some of the actions. Location of charging points for electric vehicles require planning permission. Changes to the road network will need traffic orders.

Risks

13. Residents, local media and local interest groups are aware that this report has been commissioned, so if we do not consult on it, there is a reputational risk to the council.

Other Implications

14. None

Conclusion

15. The technical appraisal sets out potential solutions to improve the district's air quality.
16. It makes recommendations that could resolve the air quality issues in Wallingford and Watlington. If all of the measures are implemented the AQMA's in those towns could be revoked.
17. The recommendations if implemented will improve the air quality in Henley but it will only be fully resolved with the ongoing introduction of lower emission vehicles.
18. Officers recommend committee go out to consultation on the report in its entirety.

Background Papers

- No additional papers to the strategy.

