

Item 09 – Future of the Air Quality Monitoring Stations

The attached report was considered by the Cleaner & Greener Advisory Committee on 10 October 2023. The relevant Minute extract is below.

Cleaner & Greener Advisory Committee (10 October 2023, Minute 24)

The Chairman presented the report, which proposed changes to the Council's air quality monitoring arrangements in Bat & Ball and Greatness. The Air Quality Stations (AQS) in these locations were nearing the end of their operational lives, and would require considerable investment to maintain. The air quality in the district had been steadily improving, and the Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs had, in their response to Council's recent Air Quality Annual Status Report, advised the Council to consider removing its Air Quality Management Areas within 16 months. It was proposed that, unless a suitable management partner was found by April 2024, these stations be decommissioned and replaced with a network of portable AQS.

The Environmental Health Manager explained that the data analysis and operator duties costs for the sites had doubled, resulting in an in-year budget overspend. To keep the sites operational would incur significant immediate costs on top of this, as several analysers required replacing at once, and the shipping container which contained the Greatness site had deteriorated and needed replacing. Removing these stations would not impact the network of diffusion tubes which monitored nearly all of the district.

In response to questions, the officer explained that the portable AQS were indicative, and would not be the same standard as the sites they were replacing. Though this information would be less detailed, the sites would be easier to locate, and the data from them would be more easily shared with and understood by the public. These stations could be bought or leased as required.

The AQS at Greatness measured background levels of ozone, nitrous dioxide, and PM10, which allowed for more accurate readings at other sites, whereas the Bat & Ball AQS was a roadside measure. No sites were predicted to exceed the limit of 40 µg/m³, even in the worst case scenario that the AQS network measured.

Members discussed the impact of potential developments in the Greatness and Bat & Ball areas. They were advised that all planning applications were considered by the Environmental Health Team, during which they analysed the impact of the proposed development. Developers were expected to produce assessments of air quality impact for large developments, and could be

their impact before, during, and after construction. This would be facilitated by the proposed network of portable AQS. Conditions could also be imposed to mitigate the impact of new developments on air quality.

Public Sector Equality Duty

Members noted that consideration had been given to impacts under the Public Sector Equality Duty.

Resolved: That it be recommended to Cabinet:

- a) That Environmental Health seek a partner to take over the management and operating costs of the Air Quality Stations (Bat & Ball and/or Greatness Park) from 1st April 2024;

- b) If a suitable partner cannot be identified as above; that on the 1st April 2024 the Air Quality Monitoring Stations at Bat & Ball and Greatness Park are closed and decommissioned; and that

- c) In replacement of the two existing Air Quality Stations; that the District Council seek to develop a network of portable Air Quality Analysers to be sited strategically in areas of poorest air quality. The scale and extent of this network will be subject to technical constraints and available funding from within existing Environmental Health budgets and or additional grant (or similar) funding if/ when available.