

Report for: Scrutiny

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| Date of Meeting: | 9 th September 2024 |
| Subject: | Air Management Control in Cullompton and beyond |
| Cabinet Member: | Councillor Steve Keable, Cabinet Member for Planning and Economic Regeneration |
| Responsible Officer: | Richard Marsh, Director of Place and Economy |
| Exempt: | Not Applicable |
| Wards Affected: | All |
| Enclosures: | N/A |

Section 1 – Summary and Recommendation

This report seeks to provide Members with an update in relation to Air Quality matters in Cullompton and Cridton (as identified Air Quality Management Areas (AQMQs) within Mid Devon.)

Recommendations:

1. That Members note the report.

Section 2 – Report

1. Background

1.1. There are two identified Air Quality Management Areas (AQMQs) within Mid Devon: one in Cullompton (designated in 2006) and one in Cridton (designated in 2004). These are predominantly focused in the town centre areas and were identified owing to the significant pollution levels in the town centres. This pollution predominantly arises as a consequence of congestion within the town centres which, in turn, creates high levels of vehicle emissions, resulting in poor air quality.

- 1.2. The associated Air Quality Action Plans identify a wide range of measures for addressing air quality issues, of which key infrastructure interventions deliver the most direct and positive impacts within the towns. These interventions are therefore the focus of this report.

Updates on Air Quality Management in Cullompton and Crediton:

2. Overall Air Quality Management:

- 2.1. Generally speaking, there has been a long-term downward trend in air pollutants within Mid Devon as a whole – meaning that there has been an improvement in air quality. This is reflected within the two AQMAs where air quality improvements (especially in relation to NO₂) have also been recorded. However, despite this, the AQMAs remain in place. In the case of Cullompton, this is particularly because the Council is conscious of significant short-term development proposals within the town which could generate additional traffic and pollution, unless appropriate supporting infrastructure is also delivered to support this growth and mitigate the impacts of additional traffic (especially in terms of pollution) as well as in addressing historic issues of congestion.
- 2.2. With this in mind, MDDC internal approval has recently been secured to replace air quality monitoring equipment in both Cullompton and Crediton which had been decommissioned owing to it having reached the end of its serviceable life. Replacement of this equipment is being funded by S106 receipts secured by the Council for works focused upon the AQMAs within the two towns. This will allow the Council to continue to monitor air quality. This will be helpful both in terms of keeping the AQMAs under review (as required by Government), but it is also expected to support the Council in demonstrating the ongoing need for investment in to infrastructure to mitigate any negative effects of growth upon the towns and monitor any positive impacts of new infrastructure and other environmental initiatives.
- 2.3. The data is also likely to be relevant and helpful as the Council also considers future growth within the District – linked to the development of the new Local Plan.
- 2.4. Turning specifically to the two towns covered by the AQMAs, the report now goes on to set out some wider relevant information around what the Council is currently doing to seek to address air pollution within the towns.

3. Cullompton:

- 3.1. Relief Road: As members will be aware, traffic and congestion within Cullompton town centre (arising from a lack of highways capacity and volume of traffic) is currently a root cause of pollution within the town centre. The Cullompton Town Centre Relief Road (CTCRR) is a key planned highways intervention which seeks to address traffic congestion within the town centre by creating additional highway capacity and improving the flow of traffic through the town. With this, it is expected that this will both release future growth planned within and around

the town, but also address the existing air pollution issues which exist. The road will also deliver additional sustainable and active travel options to the town which it is hoped will support and encourage modal shift and reduce the reliance upon private car ownership. The Council continues to seek funding to deliver the relief road and remains committed to its delivery – not least as a key mechanism to reduce air quality issues within the town centre.

- 3.2. Junction 28: In addition to the relief road, the Council also continues to seek to secure funding for a strategic upgrade to Junction 28 of the M5 motorway. Although not directly within the AQMA zone, it is expected that junction upgrades will also support future planned growth within the town, but that it will also address legacy issues around traffic and congestion arising from limited capacity at the junction – to the benefit of the town centre and wider town. A bid is currently with the Department for Transport (DfT) to secure further funding to progress towards delivery of this project and Members will be kept informed of its progress.

4. Crediton:

- 4.1. Crediton masterplan: This is due to be presented to full Council for adoption at the 4th September meeting. The geographical focus of this masterplan has been on the town centre of Crediton (extending to the train station) and a key aim of the work has been to consider interventions which may improve the high street – including by reducing highways dominance and the negative effects of traffic within the high street. As such, the masterplan does seek to identify interventions which can improve the current environment and mitigate negative impacts and it is hoped that the masterplan can become a platform for other positive interventions to come forwards within the town. Following the expected adoption of the masterplan, officers will continue to work with key stakeholders and interest groups in order to seek to progress and deliver key projects within the town – including those which offer the scope to have a positive impact upon air quality.
- 4.2. It should also be noted that the Council is also proactively progressing and exploring other opportunities within the town which can support air quality improvements – including exploring options with GWR for enhancements to walking and cycling links between the station and the town centre.
- 4.3. A review of the Crediton AQMA will soon be required and will be led by the public health team – but this will be considered in the round by officers and discussed with Members at the appropriate points in time.

5. Conclusion

- 5.1. Although this is a high-level report, it is hoped that Members can see that significant efforts are continuing to seek to improve air quality throughout the district and within Cullompton and Crediton in particular (these being the towns currently subject to AQMAs).

Financial Implications

There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

Legal Implications

No direct legal implications arise from this report.

Risk Assessment

No specific risks are considered to arise from this report.

Impact on Climate Change

No direct implications arise from this report but the interface between air pollution and vehicles should be noted along with the positive steps discussed within this report about seeking to make improvements to air quality and the wider environment.

Equalities Impact Assessment

Not applicable

Relationship to Corporate Plan

Improvements to Air Quality and to the living and working conditions of residents are intrinsic to the Corporate Plan. The proposals therefore support the delivery of Corporate Plan objectives.

Section 3 – Statutory Officer sign-off/mandatory checks

Statutory Officer: Andrew Jarrett

Agreed by or on behalf of the Section 151

Date: 30 August 2024

Statutory Officer: Maria de Leburne

Agreed on behalf of the Monitoring Officer

Date: 30 August 2024

Chief Officer: Richard Marsh, Director of Place and Economy

Agreed by or on behalf of the Chief Executive/Corporate Director

Date: 29 August 2024.

Performance and risk: Steve Carr

Agreed on behalf of the Corporate Performance & Improvement Manager

Date: 30 August 2024

Cabinet member notified: Yes

Section 4 - Contact Details and Background Papers

Contact: Richard Marsh, Director of Place and Economy. rmarsh@middevon.gov.uk

Background information