



Northamptonshire County Council

7th February 2017

Dear Scrutiny Panel,

RE: Response to the the Scrutiny Panel 4 – Emissions Strategy (Action Plan)

This letter establishes Northamptonshire County Council's overarching response to the the Scrutiny Panel 4 – Emissions Strategy (Action Plan), Core Questions – Expert Advisors.

In order to provide a complete and holistic representation of Northamptonshire County Council's response, the feedback provided within this letter has been put together in discussion with a number of departments with a vested interest in air quality, emissions and climate change. I.e. Northamptonshire Highways, Transport Planning, Public Health, Energy and Carbon Management and Environment Management. As the Council does not have one single department or authority most suited to comment on the Core Questions this is deemed to be the most appropriate form of response. Please note, the Council's Public Health Team have also provided an independent response to the key lines of inquiry.

Overall, the broad consensus is that the actions detailed within the Action Plan need to constitute meaningful activities which will reduce emissions and improve air quality. Key areas for consideration could include:

- Clear demonstration and publicity of Northampton Borough Council's own organisation-wide and operational actions (e.g. Northamptonshire County Council is committed to continually improve its energy management practices through the ISO50001:2011 certification; this may be something that Northampton Borough Council wish to consider);
- Mapping and review of active local measures which are already taking place that could be supported and enhanced by NBC (Northamptonshire County Council is also proactively identifying priority locations within the Nene Valley which provide opportunities for habitat restoration and enhancement, through an opportunity mapping exercise);
- Recognising the importance of engaging with the broader public health agenda; and

- A prioritisation list of large-scale measures which, even if aspirational, could be implemented directly by NBC in the medium/long-term (e.g. trams, park and ride, parks and green spaces, electric vehicles and electric vehicle infrastructure, etc.).

It is important to recognise that not all of the measures will create new costs for NBC, e.g. NBC staff are already able to use electric vehicles provided by a company called E-Car who already have several electric vehicle hubs located within the Borough. Utilisation could provide an effective means of lowering NBC costs and emissions if used by staff for work based travel. Furthermore, electric vehicle infrastructure can be provided now by companies who are willing to pay for the privilege, e.g. a company called Instavolt will pay £1,000 a year to install a charging point. Therefore, providing new income for the Council and new services for the public.

Northampton Borough Council may also wish to be mindful that the strategy and its Action Plan are the responsibility of Northampton Borough Council only, as at present the strategy does not give this impression. Of course, NCC will always try and be supportive of this extremely important initiative.

Please find below Northamptonshire County Council's input into the Scrutiny Panel 4 – Emissions Strategy (Action Plan), Core Questions – Expert Advisors.

Please note, the following NCC key documents are referenced within our response to the Core Questions and can be accessed online:

- NCC's Local Transport Plan
- NCC's Northamptonshire Climate Change Strategy 2014-17
- NCC's Northamptonshire Highway Air Quality Strategy

a) Please can you give your views and suggestions on how you think Councillor and public understanding of air quality issues in Northampton can be increased?

Publication of the Borough Council's emission statistics may be a pertinent exercise to better understand what actions need to be taken at the Council level to positively contribute towards reducing air pollution. The strategy acknowledges the need to encourage the Council to implement policies which incentivise the uptake of Low Emission Vehicles but it does not determine the scale or criticalness of this need. A recent study undertaken by NCC's Energy and Carbon Management Team, based on data which has been externally audited (against the ISO50001:2011 standard), found that in 2015/16, the carbon emissions associated with NCC's business travel decreased by 46% compared to

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2012/13. This resulted in a decrease of carbon emissions of 892tCO₂ compared to 2012/13.

The Strategy recognises the need to build “our air quality monitoring and modelling capability to inform evidence-based decision-making”. Air quality monitoring may also be of interest to the public and Councillors, and may assist in developing their understanding of air quality issues, particularly if the area/constituency in which they live has poor air quality (people may be more likely to want to do something about a problem if there is evidence that the problem exists and it is personal to them). Critical to this however is making this data widely available and accessible, and currently it is not. A starting point may be the use of data compiled by Defra, plus utilisation of their document ‘What are the Causes of Air Pollution’ which could be adapted for local use. In the longer term, a real time emissions reporting system may be of consideration.

Additionally, research studies and news articles can also help to engage Councillors and the public. Consider collaboration with the University of Northampton, or other research establishments, and disseminating the results of any studies broadly within appropriate media channels. There may be a number of local students interested in undertaking empirical research in this field for relatively low cost.

b) Are you aware of the causes and impact of air pollution? Please explain.

Some of the causes and impacts of air pollution in Northampton are identified within NCC’s Northamptonshire Climate Change Strategy 2014-17 and NCC’s Northamptonshire Highway Air Quality Strategy.

c) Are you aware of and do you understand the actions being taken to reduce air pollution in Northampton? Please provide suggestions of how these actions can be publicised wider.

Without review of the LES it is only the actions that NCC and partner organisations – as captured within the Northamptonshire Climate Change Officers Group Action Plan – are taking within Northampton which are known in any detail for comment.

Regarding wider publicity of actions being taken by the Borough Council to reduce air pollution, it may be that a concerted message is one which would be better received. It is clear that Northampton is targeting growth and economic development, and that much of this is targeted in the town centre, where the air quality is poorest. Thus, is there an opportunity to strengthen the focus placed upon achieving both economic growth and significant improvements in air quality?

d) The themes of the draft Northampton Low Emissions Strategy are Evidence for Change, Creating a Low Emissions Future and Reducing Vehicle Emissions, please provide details of how the actions taken by your organisation contribute to

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these themes and would your organisation be prepared to fund / contribute to the funding of measures that benefit you / your organisation.

NCC's Northamptonshire Climate Change Strategy 2014-17, Northamptonshire Highway Air Quality Strategy and Local Transport Plan detail the actions planned by NCC pertaining to the three themes of the Northampton Low Emissions Strategy.

Specifically, the works being undertaken by the NCC in highways transport have concentrated on the dual themes of freeing up congestion at key junctions, e.g. Gas Street roundabout, Victoria Promenade/Bedford Road, and also encouraging other modes of travel through initiatives such as the introduction of the Cycle Connect scheme (joint with NBC) and our Smart Corridor/Commuting initiative on which work has recently started at St James, with further works to follow on the Kingsthorpe and Kettering Road corridors.

NCC has also consulted with all staff during the development of a new staff Travel Plan, which establishes travel policy and guidance in light of the County Council's move to One Angel Square in Northampton over the next few months. There are highly innovative low emission approaches being followed including minimal staff car parking, park and ride, Faxi app (tailor made personal commuting options for staff), pool vehicles, etc.

NCC is willing to consider funding, supporting and/or contributing towards measures if it is recognised that they will provide a discernible benefit and also demonstrate that they can save the Council money.

e) Do you have any other information you are able to provide in relation to the Emissions Strategy?

Publication of current low carbon travel initiatives within the area may help to encourage more people to engage with the low carbon transport agenda but details are important. E.g. Figure 7 of the LES does show an E-Car Club Hub which is no longer in use but it is not named. So, it does little to facilitate public accessibility to electric vehicles. If not within the Strategy itself, is the Action Plan considered an appropriate place to reference specific initiatives? If so, community car clubs and the Cycle Connect scheme could be highlighted as a minimum. Furthermore, with NCC's move to One Angel Square, and the forthcoming new University campus becoming operational, there will be new challenges and opportunities that will need to be considered.

Thank you for consulting Northamptonshire County Council in this exercise.

Sincerely,



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