

Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee

Meeting held 4 November 2021

**PRESENT:** Councillors Denise Fox (Chair), Joe Otten (Deputy Chair), Angela Argenzio, Ian Auckland, Steve Ayriss, Dawn Dale, Mark Jones, Mike Levery, Bryan Lodge, Martin Phipps, Dianne Hurst (Substitute Member) and Sioned-Mair Richards (Substitute Member)

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**1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

1.1 Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Zahira Naz and Mick Rooney, with Councillors Dianne Hurst and Sioned-Mair Richards attending as their respective substitutes.

**2. EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS**

2.1 No items were identified where resolutions may be moved to exclude the public and press.

**3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

3.1 There were no declarations of interest.

**4. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

4.1 The minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 16th September 2021, were approved as a correct record and, arising therefrom, further to a query raised by the Chair, the Policy and Improvement Officer (Deborah Glen) stated that there had been a delay in sending written responses to those members of the public who had raised questions at the meeting, and where responses had not been provided at the meeting. She added that she was liaising with Matt Reynolds (Transport Planning and Infrastructure Manager) in terms of arranging for such written responses to be sent as soon as possible.

**5. PUBLIC QUESTIONS AND PETITIONS**

5.1 There were no questions raised or petitions submitted by members of the public.

**6. CLEAN AIR PLAN**

6.1 The Committee received a report of the Executive Director, Place, attaching the report of the Executive Director which had been submitted to the Co-operative Executive at its meeting held on 26th October 2021. The report provided an

update on the development of the Sheffield and Rotherham Clean Air Plan (CAP) to tackle nitrogen dioxide (NO<sub>2</sub>) incidences, and set out actions required to achieve compliance with the Council's direction by Government to reach legally compliant annual average levels of NO<sub>2</sub>.

6.2 In attendance for this item were Eugene Walker (Executive Director, Resources) and Tom Finnegan-Smith (Head of Strategic Transport, Sustainability and Infrastructure).

6.3 Members of the Committee raised questions, and the following responses were provided:-

- The charging Clean Air Zone (CAZ) was only one part of the overall CAP, and it was a joint initiative between Sheffield and Rotherham, with the boundaries in respect of the CAP comprising both local authority areas. There was a need, in terms of the schemes to be delivered, to ensure that there was compliance across the whole area. Whilst the CAZ was focused around Sheffield City Centre, the implications of improving the emissions of buses, heavy goods vehicles (HGVs) and other transport fleets that moved across the boundary into Rotherham was a key part in achieving compliance across the whole area. There were some other schemes included as part of the overall package, which included the financial support measures and other delivery measures focussed in Sheffield City Centre, including bus gates on Arundel Gate and action on bus idling. There were traffic management schemes in three specific locations in Rotherham, which included HGV restrictions, changes to the road network and bus priority measures. Other wider complementary measures included schemes funded through the Connecting Sheffield programme which related specifically to cycling, walking and public transport.
- It was believed that implementing a category C charging zone would be the best way to achieve compliance in terms of air quality targets within the shortest possible timescale. There was now no need to move towards the original category C+ target, which would have required taxi drivers to move to either electric or ultra-low emission vehicles when the zone became live. The standard had now been reduced to the national standard which, it was expected, would achieve compliance in the shortest possible timescale, and which would now mean that taxi drivers could move to Euro 6 diesel or Euro 4 petrol standard vehicles as a minimum threshold of compliance.
- Any zonal measure, whether a parking or charging-type mechanism, would result in displacement of traffic, and this had been reviewed as part of the scheme. There would be a continuous monitoring regime, with the results being reported to the Government as part of the final plans. It was important that the Council understood the implications of the CAZ, and take actions, where required. If adverse implications were identified, and required further action, as part of the category C proposals, the Council was aware that there would be surplus income as part of the scheme, which would be used to implement any required measures. There were currently two programmes - Modeshift and School Streets, financed through other Department for

Transport funding, and there would be an opportunity to progress the work undertaken under these programmes going forward. As the scheme does not affect private cars, there would be no issues regarding displacement of such vehicles in areas with high levels of air pollution.

- Apart from the additional measures referred to there were no other specific wider traffic management measures proposed as part of the scheme. There was a broader parking programme, which would include a number of priority areas, such as Kelham, Neepsend, Park Hill and St. Vincent's, and would hopefully address specific parking problems in these local communities.
- As part of the monitoring and evaluation, the Council would not just be looking at air quality levels across the city but, based on the appraisal undertaken, there would be implications with regard to the redistribution of traffic. As Sheffield did not have a complete outer ring road, drivers often had to use the Inner Ring Road to access other areas of the city, and if any action was required with regard to problems of displaced traffic, this would be reviewed. The Council would set out a programme as to what activities the projected surplus income from the CAZ could be allocated to. Whilst there were requirements as to what this surplus could be used for, it was generally used for transport measures to improve the transport network and air quality in the city.
- In terms of the remodelling of the scheme, the Council had been directed to take action on NO<sub>2</sub> emissions from road transport. There was a three-stage modelled process, the first stage of which comprised a city-wide transport model, which enabled the Council to know where traffic was going. This then informed the second stage, which allowed the Council to assess NO<sub>2</sub> emissions linked to such traffic flow. This information was then translated into an air quality model, which used the transport emissions, together with wider background or industry emissions, to inform the overall picture with regard to air quality in the city. There were still a number of areas in the city, mainly located in and around the city centre, where air pollution exceeded the baseline figure, and the CAZ would achieve compliance across all these areas. It was planned that the scheme would become live in Autumn 2022.
- It was acknowledged that redistributed traffic could be an issue, and that some areas of the city would be adversely affected by this. It had been found with other similar schemes that had already gone live, such as Birmingham and Bath, that vehicles were becoming compliant quicker than originally forecast. It was therefore not expected that the effects of redistributed traffic and the rate of compliance would become apparent until such time the scheme went live.
- As part of the reviews undertaken on the economic impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, officers had spoken to representatives of those transport fleets to be affected by the CAZ, including coach firms and the taxi trades, and which had already both been heavily impacted by the lockdowns. As part of the consultation on the scheme, focused engagement would also be held with the taxi trades. The trades, particularly Hackney Carriage drivers, had

expressed concerns, as part of the initial consultation, regarding the costs of moving towards electric or ultra-low emission vehicles. The requirement to move to Euro 6 diesel and Euro 4 petrol had been viewed as much more achievable. There would be financial support available to the taxi trades, in the form of grants of up to £5,000 to achieve minimum compliance and £10,000 for drivers wishing to move to electric or ultra-low emission vehicles.

- As part of the full business case, there was an opportunity for the Council to present details of the developed costs of the scheme to the Government, which would be predominantly in connection with the infrastructure costs associated with the scheme. In the light of the discussions held with the Government to date, there was a confidence that it would cover any additional costs required.
- It was acknowledged that the traffic on the Inner Ring Road was a major cause of the air quality issues in the city, and the Council's appraisal had indicated that it could not be excluded from the scheme. All locations across the city had been reviewed as part of the assessment to ensure that they were compliant in terms of air quality. Early on in the process, and following discussions with the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) and the Government's Joint Air Quality Unit (JAQU), it had been confirmed that Midland Station had not been included within the compliance assessment on the basis that it was not in close proximity to the highway. It was acknowledged, however, that the Station still represented an issue in terms of air quality, and it was hoped that following the implementation of the CAZ, there would be improvements in terms of NO<sub>2</sub> emissions from the taxi rank. It was also acknowledged that there were still challenges in terms of emissions from diesel trains.
- The signage being provided as part of the scheme would inform drivers of the presence of the charging zone, and such signage would be visible on all approaches to the zone. Whilst there would be advanced signage, the Council would not pro-actively be signing diversions away from the zone, mainly due to the fact that not all vehicles would be charged. The primary aim of the CAP nationally was to use the charging mechanisms as a push for a change in transport fleets.
- As part of the scheme, there would be a clear charging order, which would set out all the specifics, including details of the exemptions. In terms of how the scheme moved forward after implementation, the Council has held discussions with the JAQU in connection with compliance, and whether or not the charging zone could be switched off or not. The term of compliance would be for 12 months, where the NO<sub>2</sub> emissions had not exceeded the required levels.
- Since 2010, there had been a national requirement in terms of achieving compliance regarding air quality. Since 2017, Sheffield and Rotherham had received a legal mandate from the Government to take specific action.
- There would be specific engagement with the taxi trades in connection with

the minimum compliance requirements in terms of vehicle emissions. The new requirements, under the proposed scheme, would be clearly communicated to all taxi drivers. It was still the intention to try and encourage drivers to move to electric or ultra-low emission vehicles. It was believed that the majority of taxi drivers were now aware of the requirements of the scheme.

- In terms of funding, the expectations around the category C charging zone were that the income would firstly have to be managed in respect of the costs of the scheme. It was anticipated that there could be a fairly significant surplus, and this would need to be managed as a programme, and decisions would have to be made as to what the funding could be used for. The initial forecasted surplus was expected to be around £2.5m during Year 1 and, subject to compliance rates, this amount could reduce to around £1m in Year 4. Any surplus income would be ring-fenced to fund various traffic management schemes.
- There was a statutory process for the Council to follow in terms of implementing the category C charging zone, and there was no intention to change this. There could, however, be a change nationally to the compliance standards for success or changes made to the scheme at localised hotspots, if required.
- It was accepted that traffic levels were currently reaching pre-pandemic levels, with particular issues being faced during the usual morning and evening peak times. Public transport patronage had not recovered as fast as expected, and it was anticipated that by March 2022, such patronage would have increased to around 80% of pre-pandemic levels. Efforts would still be made to encourage more people to travel by public transport.
- There had been a number of positive improvements in terms of air quality, including the retrofitting of the region's bus fleet, through the Clean Bus Technology Fund, to meet the Euro 6 standard. It was forecast that if no action was taken, and if transport fleets were naturally improved overtime, it would take until 2024 to reach compliance in terms of NO<sub>2</sub> emissions.
- The Council's assessment had showed that the category C charging zone would be required to achieve compliance by autumn 2022. Monitoring of the movement of the transport fleet across the city would continue. It was expected that the zone would need to go live in autumn 2022 in order to achieve compliance. The Council would have to prove to the JAQU, through the use of monitored data, that compliance had been achieved, as well as providing proof of compliance after the zone had been switched off.
- The Council would continue to encourage people to travel to the city centre by public transport, or walk or cycle if possible.
- The Council was well aware of problems of air quality in some areas of the city. HGVs, delivery vans and taxis operated in different areas of the city, as well as in other towns and cities, whilst the CAZ only related to the city

centre. The fact that such transport fleets were being improved would therefore have a positive impact on air quality in other areas of the city, and also in other towns and cities.

- The Council was working closely with the bus operators in the city to help bring all the fleet to a better standard in terms of emissions. The area around the M1 south- bound on-road, adjacent to Tinsley, had been identified as a specific hotspot following Highways England monitoring. As a result, speed reduction measures had been introduced in this area in order to reduce emission levels. Also, from monitoring, the Council was aware that HGVs were far cleaner than they had been before, which would have a positive impact on air quality.

6.4 RESOLVED: That the Committee:

- (a) notes the contents of the report now submitted, together with the comments now made and the responses to the questions raised; and
- (b) thanks Eugene Walker, Mick Crofts and Tom Finnegan- Smith for attending the meeting and responding to the questions raised.

## **7. DRAFT WORK PROGRAMME 2021/22**

7.1 The Policy and Improvement Officer (Deborah Glen) submitted a report containing the Committee's draft Work Programme for 2021/22.

7.2 Ms Glen made reference to the fact that the Equalities Annual Report had not been included on the agenda for this meeting, as originally planned, and apologised to Members for this. She stated that there had been a delay in the preparation of the report, and that the report may not be prepared in time for the meeting to be held on 2nd December and, therefore, welcomed any suggestions for items to be considered at that meeting. She added that the Council's capital and Revenue Budget would now be considered at the meeting to be held on 10th February 2022, and that the review of the Community Safety Strategy would be considered at the meeting to be held on 17th March 2022.

7.3 Members raised a number of suggested items for future meetings, which included a review of the Clean Air Zone, a review of the Sheffield City Trust, the peer review of the Council and an update on the Repairs and Maintenance Service.

7.4 RESOLVED: That the Committee:-

- (a) notes the contents of the report now submitted and the comments and suggestions now made;
- (b) approves the draft Work Programme for 2021/22; and
- (b) requests the Policy and Improvement Officer to liaise with the Chair and relevant officers in connection with the allocation of items at future

meetings.

**8. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

- 8.1 It was noted that the next meeting of the Committee would be held on Thursday 2nd December 2021, at 1.00 pm, in the Town Hall.

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