

Health and Wellbeing Board 18 April 2024

Public question received from Mike Richardson, Shrewsbury Friends of the Earth

I would like to submit the following question to the next board meeting.

I would like to have it read to the committee.

At the last meeting on Nov 16th 2023 we asked, "When will the Board demand decisive action with targeted dates (on Air Quality Problems)?"

Although this question was asked of the Board, the response which was read out was received from the Public Protection Officer stating that work was 'developing rapidly' on measures and an Air Quality Action Plan was to be expected in 'early 2024'. The AQAP is itself well overdue, a report to the board in September 2021 confirmed the need to update the 2008 plan.

We are now 5 months on and there is no AQAP, no report from the PPO and no demand from the Board for progress.

By the time of the next meeting in June, it will be 7 months.

In addition, the Board received a 2022/2023 Public Health Report at the last meeting which made one minor reference to Air Quality (within Living Conditions) with no further detail, which we need to remind you is one of the Board's Priorities.

Once again, we would remind you that Shrewsbury and Bridgnorth have had illegal pollution within UK law since 2010. In that time, although UK limits have not been changed, the WHO have drastically reduced their recommended limits in recognition of the harm caused.

So, we need to ask again that the Board responds.

When will you be taking this issue seriously, pushing for action and demanding deadlines?

Response from Rachel Robinson , Executive Director for Health

We appreciate the public's concern and interest in the air quality of Shropshire. We are pleased to report that significant strides have been made in developing comprehensive Air Quality Action Plans (AQAPs) for both Bridgnorth and Shrewsbury. These draft plans have now been submitted to DEFRA for feedback and demonstrate our commitment to improving air quality and public health. Whilst the AQAPs are statutory documents aimed at meeting current UK objective levels, Shropshire Council is seeking to ensure the proposed measures will generate reductions to both current objective levels, and work towards further improvement beyond-this wherever feasible within constraints.

Bridgnorth Air Quality Action Plan

The draft Bridgnorth AQAP outlines a series of measures aimed at reducing air pollution and improving the health and quality of life for residents and visitors. Key priorities include improving traffic flow, managing traffic within the Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) through the use of Variable Messaging Signs (VMS), and working with local schools to develop School Travel Plans. These initiatives are expected to significantly contribute to the reduction of nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) levels, particularly from diesel vehicles which have been identified as the predominant source of emissions within the AQMA.

Shrewsbury Air Quality Action Plan

For Shrewsbury, the AQAP includes a range of measures, both future ambitions, and those that are already funded and progressing through to development. A key measure in Shrewsbury is the Levelling Up Fund 2 / Gyrary Scheme which is proposed to introduce new active travel corridors, cycleways and redistribute the road network in the primary 'hotspot' of the AQMA. These works have currently been modelled to significantly reduce concentrations within the AQMA once the LUF2/Gyrary works are complete.

The plan emphasizes sustainable transport, the promotion of electric vehicles, and the enhancement of cycling and walking infrastructure. These measures are not only aimed at meeting current legal requirements, but also at exceeding them across the wider town centre area to ensure the health and well-being of our community.

Consultation and Next Steps

Both AQAPs are set to go out for public consultation within the next few weeks. We encourage public participation in this process as community input is invaluable to the success of these plans. The feedback received will be carefully considered and integrated into the final versions of the AQAPs. We have already met with a number of local residents, councillors and business groups in our AQMAs, and recently received positive appraisal feedback from DEFRA on the content and direction of both AQAP draft documents.

We understand the urgency of this matter and assure you that Shropshire Council is taking action. The forthcoming consultations and the detailed measures within the AQAPs are clear indicators of our ongoing approach to addressing air quality concerns in Shropshire. The draft documents are currently being revised to take account of DEFRA's feedback, and we hope to publish them for consultation in the coming weeks. As soon as a firm timescale for consultation is clear, these will be advertised via our usual communications channels including social media, and our website, and we would encourage the input from the HWBB (Health and Wellbeing

Board) and all interested parties in this process. We look forward to your continued engagement and support as we work together to improve air quality in our region.