Air Quality Action Plan – Update noted etc.

6 There was submitted a report by the Executive Director of Neighbourhoods, Regeneration and Sustainability regarding a new draft Air Quality Action Plan (AQAP), advising

(1) that the statutory Local Air Quality Action Management (LAQM) process required local authorities to regularly review and assess air quality in their areas and where an exceedance was considered likely, the local authority must declare an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) and prepare an AQAP setting out the measures it intended to put in place in pursuit of objectives;

(2) that the Council had prepared 2 previous AQAP's in 2004 and 2009 and since then updates on the actions within those plans had been included in the Air Quality Annual Reports (APRs) and that actions within those plans had been adapted over time and APRs had increasingly included progress updates on actions not considered within the original AQAPs;

(3) that in November 2021, Environmental Standards Scotland (ESS) announced that its first investigation would consider air quality, specifically focusing on compliance with the NO_2 limit value set in Directive 2008/50/EC on ambient air quality and cleaner air for Europe, which formed part of retained law following the UK's exit from the European Union;

(4) that after taking evidence from the Scottish Government, the Scottish Environment Protection Agency and local authorities, ESS published its conclusions and recommendations in the form of an improvement report in September 2022 and the recommendations were accepted by the Scottish Government with updated policy guidance being produced in March 2023, which set out what a local authority must include in an AQAP;

(5) that the revised LAQM policy guidance specified that current AQAPs should be reviewed and, where necessary, updated within 1 year of the revised guidance being published, and every 5 years;

(6) that the draft AQAP update outlined the actions that the Council would deliver between 2024-29 to reduce concentrations of air pollutants and exposure to air pollution;

(7) that whilst the focus remained upon the City Centre AQMA, which was currently the last AQMA not scheduled for revocation and where exceedances of the air quality objectives continued to be observed, this AQAP adopted a holistic and city-wide approach to reducing emissions and improving air quality across the Council area;

(8) that the actions within this AQAP, most notably the full implementation of the Low Emission Zone, should lead to the revocation of the City Centre AQMA, targeted to be no later than 2029;

(9) of the 7 priorities of the AQAP, as detailed in the report; and

(10) of the next steps in the process of the draft AQAP, as detailed in the report.

After consideration, the committee

(a) noted the update of the Draft Air Quality Action Plan together with the next steps; and

(b) agreed that the final Air Quality Action Plan would be submitted to this committee before being submitted to the City Administration Committee for approval.