Item 1

11th April 2023

Glasgow City Council

Net Zero and Climate Progress Monitoring City Policy Committee

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AIR QUALITY ACTION PLAN (AQAP) - UPDATE

Purpose of Report:

To provide Committee details of Glasgow's previous Air Quality Action Plans (AQAP) and the new draft AQAP, the amendments required following the Environmental Standards Scotland investigation recommendations, and the approach to completing and adopting a new AQAP.

Recommendations:

It is recommended that Committee;

1) Notes the contents of this report;
2) Notes the previous AQAPs and the progress towards producing an updated Plan;
3) Notes the changing regulatory framework proposed for the production of AQAPs and;
4) Notes the future actions in respect of finalising the AQAP for formal adoption.

Ward No(s): Citywide: ✓

Local member(s) advised: Yes ☐ No ☐ consulted: Yes ☐ No ☐

1 Glasgow's Air Quality Action Plans– Background

1.1 Every local authority that has an active Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) is required under Part IV of the Environment Act 1995 to provide an Air Quality Action Plan (AQAP). The emphasis within AQAPs should be two-fold:

- Develop measures that will provide emissions reductions to achieve the air quality objectives; and

- Act as a live document which is continually reviewed and developed, to ensure measures are progressing and new measures are introduced.

1.2 In response to the implementation of the AQMA's in the city, Glasgow City Council produced Air Quality Action Plans (AQAP) in 2004 and 2009 introducing a range of measures aimed at reducing pollution in the city. The AQAP is an evolving project with several measures such as vehicle idling enforcement, vehicle emission testing, and initiatives towards cleaner vehicles. Other measures such as the city car club and electric vehicle charging infrastructure continue to evolve.

1.3 Progress is reported on an annual basis within the Air Quality Progress Reports (APR). The most recent APR was reported to the Net Zero and Climate Progress Monitoring City Policy on 8 November 2022. Additional actions have been incorporated into the AQAP reporting section of the APR since the last plan was produced, most notably the introduction of the Glasgow Low Emission Zone (LEZ).

2 Draft Air Quality Action Plan

2.1 A draft AQAP was produced in 2021 with Air Quality Consultants (AQC) Ltd. The plan was prepared in collaboration with NRS Sustainability and in collaboration with departments across Glasgow City Council, as well as Transport Scotland, SEPA and Strathclyde Partnership for Transport were also significant contributors to the process.

2.2 A steering group was formed ensuring stakeholder input and insight into existing and future policy measures. Discussions have included evaluation of the measures included in the plan, planning, taxi licensing, and climate emergency work.

2.3 The draft plan sets out the context of the approach to air quality in relation to public health, planning and policy at a UK, Scottish and local level. Following appraisal of groups of measures, as outlined by Defra and the Scottish Government and categorised for reporting to the EU, key priority areas were identified and the plan set out actions that can be considered under seven broad topics:

- Implement Low Emission Zone and Mitigation Measures
- Support and Implement Strategic Transport Improvements

- Promote Behaviour Change to Reduce Single Occupancy Private Vehicle Use
- Promote the use of Alternatively Fuelled Vehicles
- Support Actions recommended by the Council's Climate Plan
- Develop Policies to Support Better Air Quality
- Control Domestic Emissions

2.4 The draft plan sets out a high-level appraisal of each of the action topics above and the potential for these to be advanced to the final plan following statutory consultation. It considered a number of factors in relation to each action including the potential pollution reduction levels achievable. However, with the exception of the implementation of the LEZ, these can be difficult to quantify.

2.5 Following further development of the plan and action appraisal, the plan was due to be subject to statutory public consultation, approval and adoption. However, due to the critical nature of the development of the LEZ the AQAP was paused, with the approval of the Scottish Government's Air Quality Team.

3 Changes to the AQAP Process

3.1 Environmental Standards Scotland (ESS) is a public sector body, set up as a non-ministerial office, independent of Scottish Government, accountable to the Scottish Parliament. In 2021, ESS launched an investigation into the Scottish Government's plans and approach to ensuring future compliance with legal limits on NO_2 levels. In depth research was carried out on the present state of air quality in Scotland, including the systems in place to regulate this. Information was also sought from a number of public authorities, including submissions from Glasgow City Council.

3.2 ESS identified weaknesses in the current operational and governance arrangements to improve local air quality and ensure future compliance with NO_2 limit values. The ESS report includes six key recommendations for improvement. In relation to the AQAP process, the most relevant are:

- The introduction of the requirement for local authorities to complete and publish AQAPs within a specified target date following the declaration of an AQMA, which must be within as short a time as possible
- The introduction of the requirement for local authorities to achieve AQMA and AQAP objectives within a specified target date, which must be within as short a time as possible.
- The introduction of the requirement for local authorities to review and, where necessary, update AQAPs. The targets for any such review and update must be consistent with the principle of as short a time as possible.

3.3 In response, the Scottish Government's Air Quality Team established a working group to revise the AQAP process. This included representation from GCC. Recommendations being taken forward include:

- The establishment of a mandatory template approach for Scottish AQAPs
- Requirement to detail specific measures to improve air quality and quantifying their impact in reducing contributions to air pollution over time. This provides the opportunity for Glasgow City Council to explore innovative actions within the AQAP such as promotion of green walls, tree planting, and other built environment interventions with environmental co-benefits; use of restrictions favouring public and multiple-occupant vehicle transport and enhancing vehicle idling action; actions to reduce commuter traffic such as the Workplace Parking Levy and actions around domestic emissions where there are synergies with the Glasgow Climate Plan such as development of the Local Heat and Energy Efficiency Strategy (LHEES).
- The AQAP should have a timescale for completion and for revocation of the AQMA.
- Updates of existing AQAPs must be completed within 12 months of the date of issuing of the revised guidance (not yet issued).
- Revision of the annual progress report template to reflect the different approach to reporting on progress of actions.
- New guidance and template approach to revocations of AQMAs

4 Next Steps

4.1 Accordingly, the draft AQAP and actions require further review to ensure consistency with the process changes detailed, including potential new changes as the recommendations of the Scottish Government's working group are confirmed.

4.2 A new template format will be followed in respect of the AQAP. Whilst this template will focus on achieving compliance with the Scottish air quality objectives, the aim of reducing air pollution to as low a level as possible will be paramount. This will include reference to non-statutory objectives such as the World Health Organisation (WHO) guidelines and interim targets. The targets set out by the WHO will be the highest level of ambition for the Council with all efforts being made to not just meet to but exceed Scottish air quality objectives.

4.3 The 2022 APR committed to adoption of a new AQAP within 2023. This timescale still applies but is dependent on final guidance being issued by the Scottish Government.

4.4 A review of the draft AQAP is being conducted by the original AQAP Working Group before confirmation of a consultation draft. This draft will be submitted to Committee post-recess prior to the consultation period.

5 Policy and Resource Implications

Resource Implications:

Financial:	Grant funding for the AQAP and associated projects is provided by the Scottish Government.
Legal:	AQAPs are required from local authorities under Part IV of the Environment Act 1995.
Personnel:	AQAPs are managed within existing resource in the Sustainability team.
Procurement:	No procurement issues at present.

Council Strategic Plan: Specify which Grand Challenge (s) and Mission (s) the proposal supports. Where appropriate the relevant Commitment can also be listed.

The plan supports Grand challenge 3: Fight Climate Emergency in a Just Transition to Net Zero; Mission 2, Become a Net Zero Carbon City by 2030.

Equality and Socio-Economic Impacts:

Does the proposal support the Council's Equality Outcomes 2021-25? Please specify.	Not applicable to this report.
What are the potential equality impacts as a result of this report?	None
Please highlight if the policy/proposal will help address socio-economic disadvantage.	Poor air quality has been found to disproportionately affect those at socio-economic disadvantage, increasing inequality.

Climate Impacts:

Does the proposal support any Climate Plan actions? Please specify:	Development of the AQAP contributes towards actions 6, 8, 22, 25, 26, 33, and 51-56 of the Climate Plan.
What are the potential climate impacts as a result of this proposal?	Many air quality actions have co-benefits in respect of climate emissions.
Will the proposal contribute to Glasgow's net zero carbon target?	The impacts of the AQAP are therefore expected to reduce carbon emissions.
Privacy and Data Protection Impacts:	None

6 Recommendations

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