

COUNCIL MEETING

22 APRIL 2021-7.30pm

QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC UNDER STANDING ORDER 12

Question from Steve Ringham, a local resident:

Air pollution in the UK is a major cause of diseases such as asthma, lung disease, stroke, and heart disease, and is estimated to cause forty thousand premature deaths each year, which is about 8.3% of deaths, while costing around £40 billion each year.

Other statistics published elsewhere, show that around 6% of deaths in Runnymede are due to air pollution. That's approximately 50-60 deaths a year in the borough. And that is despite Runnymede having over 75% of its land designated as Green Belt. The borough also has the dubious distinction of hosting not one but two AQMAs - Air Quality Management Areas. The M25 AQMA, declared in 2001, extends approximately 70mtr either side of the M25 between Junctions 11 and 13. It was updated in 2015 to include the area around the level crossing at Vicarage Road underneath the M25. The second area is the Addlestone AQMA, in Addlestone town centre and covers parts of High Street, Station Road, Brighton Road and Church Road. That second description comes from the Defra website but there is no map provided. So it is not clear to the full extent of the Addlestone AQMA. This area was declared in 2008. Both of these AQMAs seriously affect the air quality for residents in Addlestone, Runnymede's most populous town, more than any other area in the borough. Link to RBC Defra Air Quality page: https://uk-air.defra.gov.uk/aqma/local-authorities?la_id=215

In 2014, RBC published an AQAP - Air Quality Action Plan, also available via the Defra Website as above. As an aside, it appears that the first draft of the AQAP was done in 2008. Unless those dates are wrong, I find it incredible that progress on this plan (let alone any action) was so painfully slow, given the impact of the problem on the our population. Section 6 of the plan lists a number of ideas and measures on how to improve air quality, as well as promoting awareness of air quality to residents and how they can help.

My question is therefore this: Having a plan is all well and good, but if there is no action, no review and no measurement of that action, then the plan is pointless. However, the Air Quality Action Plan does not appear to have been publicly reviewed or updated since it was published in 2014. Has any measurement, metrics and subsequent review been carried out on the progress and effectiveness of the action plan since 2014, particularly if that review should lead to a revision or update to the plan with respect to it's current fitness for purpose, in terms of pollution reduction, cost effectiveness and possible new anti-pollution measures that were not available in 2014?

Question from Adrian Elston, a local resident:

Does the Leader of the Council think it's acceptable that his administration lost £2.1 million which could have been used to build the council homes we so desperately need in Addlestone. Will he or the Chair of Housing Committee be resigning to take responsibility for this disgraceful mismanagement?