

Cllr Joe Hale
Convener, Air & Noise Quality Scrutiny
Working Group

Please ask for: Councillor Mark Thomas
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Our Ref: MT/HS
Your Ref:
Date: 28 November 2018

BY EMAIL

Dear Cllr Hale

Air & Noise Pollution Scrutiny Working Group on 6 November 2018

Thank you for your letter, dated 19th November 2018, regarding officers attendance at the Air & Noise Pollution Scrutiny Working Group. Please find the responses to the issues you raised below: -

1. *We felt that this is an important public health issue which should be given a greater public profile, and that awareness should be raised more widely. This should be done in conjunction with health colleagues.*

Air Quality and its Public Health significance is well reported, leading to its prominent position on the current public health agenda. The Housing and Public Health Service is committed to carrying out its responsibilities within the current Local Air Quality Management (LAQM) regime. The Future Wellbeing and Generations Act 2015 enables the service to ensure that actions taken forward, via LAQM, including collaboration with Academic and Health colleagues. This enables work towards undertaking specific Air Quality Research Projects aimed at engaging with members of the public and achieving compliance with Objective concentrations and further reducing exposure to pollutants in specific areas of the city to be carried out.

2. *We would like to see the noise control service continue to be 24 hour.*

The Pollution Control Division has operated the 'Out of Hours' service for over twenty five years and it has enabled officers to gather the relevant evidence required to serve Abatement Notices for Statutory Noise Nuisance as well as providing expert response and advice in emergency situations. The provision of this service is important in ensuring a robust evidence base for formal action however, the service will continue to be assessed and seek efficiencies during these times of austerity to enable its continued delivery.

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3. *We would like to see air the air pollution webpages tailored to make information more accessible to the public.*

The current 'air pollution webpage' <http://swansea.airqualitydata.com/> was developed several years ago and was rated very highly for its content etc. However, it is agreed that over time the site has become 'dated' in its presentation of content. The Pollution Control Division are currently looking at ways to reinvigorate the presentation of data and will be working with colleagues in the IT Department to redesign the site in order to engage members of the public with its content and how the existing Nowcaster System can be integrated within the site. This is likely to include a series of IT projects that will be worked upon in 2019 and will be part of the continually evolving Air Quality Action Plan (AQAP).

4. *Can you provide us with more information about how pollution around schools affecting children is being dealt with and how it is feeding into being addressed through council policies and strategies?*

As referred to in response to question 1; the Pollution Control Team currently assesses areas of the Local Authority, in line with Technical Guidance prepared by DEFRA and the Devolved Administrations, for their compliance with the Air Quality Objective Concentrations set out in the legislation. Over the years the team has used Nitrogen Dioxide (NO₂) diffusion tubes so that they can quantify concentrations in many areas. Currently, there are three diffusion tube sites specifically monitoring at the boundary of primary schools however, the evidence gathered to date indicates that the schools themselves are compliant with the Objective Concentrations, as they are an annual mean and hourly objectives. The Pollution Control Team believes that the routes taken to school and the behaviour of parents bringing children to schools are an important part of the position experience at schools within the urban environment. The AQAP is intending to investigate these factors with the aim of creating and testing an 'intervention', in collaboration with schools and active travel coordinators, to enable behavioural change and reduction in pollutant concentration through the use of technological platforms, such as 'apps' for members of the community to use.

The Authority's LDP is currently going through Independent Examination and within it are policies to enable Air Quality and Noise to be addressed at the planning stage; this will enable officers to require Air Quality Assessments for individual applications they perceive warrant detailed information. Also, within the Council's Corporate Plan 2018/22 are the well-being objectives:

- Transforming our Economy & Infrastructure
- 'Maintaining and enhancing Swansea's Natural Resources and Biodiversity'

The well-being objectives have been developed in line with the requirements of the Future Generations and Well-Being Act 2015 and set out the steps intended to be taken to meet these objectives.

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5. *Develop a clear vision and strategy for addressing and mitigating the effects of air pollution that involves not only the council but partner organisation, the university, schools and the public more widely.*

The Welsh Government 'Local Air Quality Management in Wales Policy Guidance' Published in 2017 incorporates the requirements of the Future Generations and Wellbeing Act 2015 and encourages collaboration with organisations. As mentioned in the scrutiny working group, the Local Authority is already working with colleagues in the School of Management and Institute of Life Science in Swansea University investigating several work themes around the subject of Air Quality and Public Health. Within the local authority the Wellbeing Objectives provide an excellent platform for partnership working across departments, for example, a green infrastructure proposal has recently been incorporated within a wider grant application that colleagues from the Nature Conservation Team are shortly submitting to Welsh Government.

As referred to previously the ongoing LAQM work and evolving nature of the AQAP will include the publishing of data and documents and provide opportunities for consultation for members of the public.

6. *Look into more innovative nature based solutions to air quality issues like for example planting trees that absorb CO2 like Birch trees, more green space planting in urban area as exemplified by roof gardens and living walls.*

As the peer reviewed evidence grows and collaborations progress, the intention is to look at innovative solutions as part of the AQAP process to work towards compliance with the Objective Concentrations and further reduce exposure, as required by Welsh Government policy. If we are able to establish a local evidence base through collaborative partnerships the Local Authority will be in a better position to look at 'Green Infrastructure' solutions as part of future developments and strategies.

I trust this response is of use for your purposes.

Yours sincerely



COUNCILLOR MARK THOMAS
CABINET MEMBER FOR ENVIRONMENT & INFRASTRUCTURE MANAGEMENT