

**MINUTES OF THE SCRUTINY TASK & FINISH GROUP:  
LONDON LUTON AIRPORT AIR QUALITY IMPACT**

**THURSDAY 15<sup>TH</sup> AUGUST 2019 AT 6.00 PM**

**PRESENT: COUNCILLORS; FRANKS, KEENS, MOLES, PETTS, TAYLOR, WAHEED  
AND WYNN**

**SUPPORT OFFICERS / ADVISORS:**

- Eunice Lewis – Democracy and Scrutiny Officer
- Andrew Loosley – Technical Officer - Environmental Protection / Air Quality
- Lisa Hudson - Public Health Development Officer
- Antony Aldridge - Strategic Development Manager LLAL

		ACTION
04.	<b>ELECTION OF CHAIR (REF: 1)</b>	
	<b>Resolved:</b> That Councillor Keens be elected Chair of the London Luton Airport Air Quality Impact Scrutiny Task & Finish Group for the duration of the review.	
05.	<b>MINUTES FROM 12<sup>TH</sup> MARCH 2019 (REF: 3)</b>	
	<b>Resolved:</b> That the minutes of the meeting held on 12 <sup>th</sup> March 2019 be agreed and taken as a correct record and the Chair be authorised to sign them.	
06.	<b>REVISED MEMBERSHIP AND SCOPE OF LONDON LUTON AIRPORT AIRQUALITY IMPACT TFG – (REF: 6)</b>	
	<p>The Democracy and Scrutiny Officer introduced the report Ref: 6, regarding the Revised Membership including Draft Project Scope and Outline Project Plan in respect of the TFG.</p> <p>The scope was before members of the TFG for consideration and approval.</p> <p>Members attention was drawn to some of the key areas of the review including the outline project plan which highlighted some provisional meeting dates for discussions by members.</p>	

	<p>Following brief discussions members agreed the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Visit to the Monitoring Stations around the Airport – to be arranged as part of the evidence gathering process.</li> <li>• Comparative Data on the long term impact of pollutants in relation to the hospital/trends of air pollutants (focus on the airport area)</li> <li>• Available Data/framework outcomes and model of PM2.5/Mortality rates of deaths attributed to PM2.5 – identify trends and impact on health/Asthma admissions/low birth rate in Luton/Breakdown of demographics/children/adults, etc.</li> </ul> <p>Members further resolved that expert witness be sought from relevant people and organisations as part of the evidence gathering process.</p> <p><b>Resolved:</b> (i) That the Report (Ref: 6) be noted.</p> <p>(i) Note the Revised Outline Project Plan and Outline Project Scope attached at Appendices A and B to the report.</p> <p>(ii) Note the 6 months' timeline period for the review as agreed by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 5<sup>th</sup> August 2019.</p> <p>(iii) Note that the Chair and Vice Chair of OSC had been delegated authority to endorse any future request in respect of the extension of the timeline where required.</p> <p>(iv) That the Democracy and Scrutiny Officer be delegated the responsibility to make necessary amendments to the work programme in line with the items requested by the review group as listed below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Comparative Data on the long term impact of pollutants in relation to the hospital/trends of air pollutants (focus on the airport area) – Chill Study Report by the University of Bedfordshire.</li> <li>• Available Data/framework outcomes and model of PM2.5/Mortality rates of death attributed to PM2.5 – whether it was a trend that was increasing/Asthma admission/low birth rate in Luton/Breakdown of demographics/children/adults, etc.</li> <li>• Air Quality Monitoring Annual Report – 2018.</li> </ul>	
<b>07.</b>	<b>PUBLIC HEALTH RESPONSES TO MEMBER QUESTIONS ON AIR POLLUTION – (REF: 7)</b>	
	<p>The Public Health Development Officer submitted the report on Public Health Responses to Member Questions on Air Pollution Ref: 7. She explained how air pollution affected the body and types of pollution which were most harmful to the human body. She also provided responses to some of the questions which had previously being raised by Members of the review as follows:</p>	

In relation to the causes and impact of air pollution; understanding particulate and gaseous airborne pollution, the Public Health Development Officer explained that nitrogen dioxide pollution was mostly as a consequence of emissions from diesel cars and vans and particulate matter from exhausts including car brakes, tyre wear, and road surface abrasion with highest concentrations along urban busy roads, etc.

She stated that road vehicles were the main pollution source that people in urban environments, like Luton were mostly exposed to and the pollutants mentioned, NO<sub>2</sub> and PM had the greatest impacts on human health. Exposure to air pollution inside vehicles could be as high, or higher, particularly in slow moving traffic. She stated that currently strategies that encouraged active travel and low or zero pollution modes of travel like sustainable public transport and schemes such as park and ride type schemes that especially reduce traffic flow and congestion into a busy town centre would be preferred actions to reduce air pollution.

Responding to questions about the impact of sunshine and trees, she highlighted that there were some evidence highlighting the benefits of green infrastructure but caution was needed to be used as use of green structure could also exacerbate poor air quality. For example tree canopies that trap air pollution instead of allowing it to disperse. She stated that research had shown that there could be mitigating effect of trees particularly in building hedge rows between source of pollutant and where people live/cycle/ and walk.

In answer to the question of heat and air pollution, she cited that heatwaves of 2003 saw mortality increase by 17% across England & Wales and by 40% in London from the exacerbating effects of high temperatures on poor quality air. She mentioned **Delhi incidence in June 2018 where 'off the chart' levels of PM<sub>10</sub> were recorded and mentioned that in July 2017 the NHS was on the verge of announcing a summer crisis with record number of accident and emergency admissions mostly for respiratory exacerbations due to the high temperatures.**

Potentially dangerous concentrations and Where From? - Sources of air pollution and pollutants of health concern – The report highlighted the main sources of air pollution with an illustration and mentioned that the main sources in Luton, like in other urban areas was likely from road traffic. It was noted that there were three air quality monitoring areas identified in Luton around the M1 motorway and Dunstable Road through to Stuart Street, including Telford Way and Castle Street.

The Public Health Development Officer explained the need to understand the causes of air pollution and identifying what actions local authorities could take through their decision making process to improve air quality. Some of those interventions could include:

- traffic and parking management, including ability to influence 'no-idling' of vehicles

- street design and road layouts
- planning
- public and school transport policies
- restricting access to the highest risk areas of the dirtiest vehicles
- favouring clean vehicle technologies (e.g. EV) over diesel and bio-diesel
- reducing polluting emissions through freight consolidation, delivery management and low or zero emission last mile services
- fleet management and car clubs
- installation and maintenance of electric vehicle charging points
- vehicle and building air conditioning
- building energy efficiency
- permitting and regulation of certain types of industrial processes, factories and other activities that can cause pollution (Environmental Permitting)
- Location and enforcement of Smoke Control Areas (SCA).

These actions would help improve air quality by reducing emissions and decreasing public exposure to pollution.

A member commented that the issue of Delhi was devastating and everything should be done to avoid that sort of situation. He said thousands of pedestrians were killed on the streets of Delhi as drivers could hardly see through to the fog. The Officer confirmed that the first ever Clean Air Act came about in this country as a result of the devastating impacts of smog that was visibly seen across the capital.

The member commended the Officer for responses to many of the questions. The Chair advised that members should keep those responses handy to every meeting of the review.

Another member stated that in London one of the major pollutants was from log burners which nullifies all the work done in clean air zones. He asked if it was legal to burn logs in a domestic setting. In response, the Officer advised that a new legislation was expected to introduce greater quality standards of domestic log burners. It was confirmed that a free smoke zone was in operation in Luton.

A lot of people burn logs from building sites which emitted pollution. Members agreed that there was need to raise awareness in regards to the clean air zone areas.

The Public Health Development Officer explained that one key aspiration of Public Health was that there should be greener infrastructure in the Town. But while green infrastructure may support better air quality in some instances it should be as part of a multi initiative approach, and reducing the vehicles and congestion on Luton roads for more sustainable travel modes such as cycling and walking and good green public transport were real solutions to making a difference to air quality.

	<p>Members resolved that the committee's thanks to the officer be recorded as the report gave clarity in relation to initial concerns expressed by members.</p> <p>Resolved: (i) That the Report (Ref: 7) be noted.</p> <p>(ii) That members thanks to the Public Health Development Officer be recorded.</p> <p>(iii) That further information regarding trends and monitoring of the impact of air pollution, i.e., deaths and diseases attributed to air pollution and Hospital data be reported to a future meeting of the task and finish group.</p>	
<b>08.</b>	<p><b>INTRODUCTION TO AIR QUALITY – AIR QUALITY AND AIR POLLUTION IMPACT OVERVIEW AND RESPONSES TO MEMBER QUESTIONS POLLUTION IMPACT (REF: 8)</b></p>	
	<p>The Technical Officer (Environmental Protection and Air Quality), presented the PowerPoint presentation and gave an overview of, and introduction to, air quality.</p> <p>He explained that it was essential to ensure good quality of air around as the air we breathe in is a basic human need, essential for life just as food and water. Additionally, as a result of the large amount of air we breathe in it is vital to ensure that levels of potentially harmful air pollutants are kept to a minimum. He stated that air pollutant concentrations were typically quoted in micrograms per cubic meter.</p> <p>Air pollution was defined as a mixture of components and gases. The mixture of other gases is quite variable in terms of concentration, however when present at elevated levels they could have a detrimental effect on human health. The World Health Organisation defines air pollution as: "Contamination of the indoor or outdoor environment by any chemical, physical or biological agent that modifies the natural characteristics of the atmosphere".</p> <p>A wide variety of air pollutants exist some of which would have both natural and man-made sources as well as different environmental fates, effects and spatial distribution. Members heard that more significant air pollutants were made subject of Air Quality Standards.</p> <p>A member asked what equipment were available in Luton to test air pollution and where those equipment were located. In response the Officer affirmed that there were now four automatic monitoring sites within the borough (one on Stuart Street (NO<sub>2</sub> &amp; PM<sub>10</sub> /2.5); one on the Dustainable Road near Leicester Road (NO<sub>2</sub>); one at the airport (PM<sub>10</sub>); and the new "supersite" in Wigmore Park) . Members were further informed that LBC were now operating 42 NO<sub>2</sub> diffusion tube sites across the borough, with LAOL operating a further 18 sites around the airport and under the flightpath. The new LLAL Airport</p>	

monitoring "supersite" commenced towards the end of June 2019 and was on for 24/7.

In terms of required action when the air quality becomes unacceptable, the Officer stated that the Council as a local authority had a legal duty to declare air quality management area where air pollution was identified and was expected to develop an action plan within 18 months mapping out how the level of pollution is to be reduced. The Stuart Street air quality action plan has been approved by the Council's Executive and has been submitted to Defra for their approval.

The Public Health Development Officer stated that although the Council had a legal standard which it was required to meet, it does not mean that once the standard was met that air pollution was ruled out or that the air quality was at a safe level. The Government standard requirement meant that the Council was compliant but not necessarily removing the health hazards and does not mean that the air was safe to breathe in.

In terms of required air quality standards for local authorities, Defra defined air quality standards as; "Concentrations recorded over a given time period, were considered to be acceptable in terms of what was scientifically known about the effects of each pollutant on health and the environment. They can also be used as a benchmark to indicate whether air pollution was getting better or worse".

Following member questions, statements and comments, the Technical Officer (Environmental Protection and Air Quality), proceeded to summarise the relevant legislation and air quality objectives; the scope of the current air quality monitoring programme; the cost and resource implications of different monitoring techniques; and the effect of weather and topography on air pollution.

There was currently criticism that rather than identifying what the healthy option should be, the government was too focused on standards. The legislation on air quality standards may need to change to ensure a more robust and reasonable target on the national agenda.

A member stated that the concentration on the targets almost gave the impression that people were safe once the target had been met, but this was not necessarily the case.

In terms of restriction on aircraft, this was a bit of an anomaly with aviation and become very complicated as there was no requirement for the payment of tax on aviation fuel.

**Resolved:** That the Power Point presentation Ref: 8 be noted and that the Committee's thanks to the Technical Officer (Environmental Protection and Air Quality) for a well-informed presentation be recorded.

	(NOTE: The meeting ended at 20.15)	
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