

Meeting Name:	Health and Wellbeing Board
Date:	14 November 2024
Report title:	Air Quality Annual Status Report 2023
Ward(s) or groups affected:	All
Classification:	Open
Reason for lateness (if applicable):	Not applicable
From:	Head of Regulatory Services

RECOMMENDATION(S)

1. That the Health and Wellbeing Board note the contents of the Southwark Annual Status Report 2023 (ASR 2023), presented as Appendix 1.
2. That the Health and Wellbeing Board has oversight of the Air Quality Action Plan, through the Director of Public Health and the Air Quality Delivery Board. This enables policies and plans that impact on air quality, to be considered by the Board's membership ensuring a comprehensive strategic approach to air quality in Southwark.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

3. The Environment Act 1995 required the UK Government to produce a national air quality strategy containing standards and objectives for improving air quality. The first national strategy was published in 1997.
4. The government last revised the national air quality strategy in January 2019. This revised the framework for achieving improvement in ambient air quality in the UK. It set UK air quality standards for 8 atmospheric pollutants with short and medium term objective levels. The national strategy identified actions at local, national and international level to improve air quality; this includes actions for local government.
5. The Environment Act 1995 introduced local authority duties for Local Air Quality Management (LAQM). Southwark completed the initial review and assessment and concluded the air quality objectives for large Particulates (PM₁₀), Nitrogen Dioxide (NO₂), and Benzene would not be met in the borough by the respective compliance dates of 2004 and 2010 without the creation of an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA).

6. An AQMA was formally declared in Southwark in January 2003 for large Particulates (PM₁₀), and Nitrogen Dioxide (NO₂) in the whole of Southwark apart from the then College ward. A further assessment showed that Southwark was compliant for Benzene by this time. The AQMA was since expanded 1 January 2023 to include the whole borough.
7. With a declared AQMA, Southwark is legally required to produce an Air Quality Strategy (AQS) and a five-yearly Air Quality Action Plan (AQAP). The latest version of the AQAP is for the five years 2022 - 2027. That plan commits the Council to 65 initial actions to improve local air quality and work towards meeting all the national air quality objectives in Southwark.
8. As Southwark is declared an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA), the authority is required to produce an Annual Status Review (ASR) of air quality each year. This report includes the air quality monitoring data for the previous year and details of our progress against the AQAP commitments. Air quality improvement policy ideas and technological advances evolve rapidly, the ASR is an opportunity to add new actions to the AQAP and include actions that have been developed and/or delivered over the last year that were not listed in the original AQAP.
9. The ASR 2023 was submitted to the Greater London Authority (GLA) and the Department for the Environment Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) for their information and comment (Appendix 2). The report was approved with minor changes.
10. Southwark's AQS & AQAP contribute to the Council's objectives of making Southwark safer, cleaner and greener and to improving the health of the borough.
11. Southwark currently meets the national air quality objectives for all pollutants listed by the government with the exception of Nitrogen Dioxide (NO₂) at certain hotspots in Southwark. This is invariably along busy roads in the borough, however, levels of Nitrogen Dioxide have improved over the last decade and more so in the past year since the extension of the Ultra Low Emission Zone (ULEZ) in London. The highest concentration of Nitrogen Dioxide was recorded at the Tower Bridge Road monitoring site (SDT18), with an annual mean concentration of 41.6 µg/m³. Except for the Tower Bridge site, the national objectives for NO₂ were generally met (40µg/m³). However, the more ambitious World Health Organisation (WHO) guideline of 10 µg/m³ was exceeded at many monitoring locations across Southwark.
12. It is a similar position with concentrations of Particulate Matter (PM). Measurements at all (six continuous monitoring) sites complied with the national air quality objective of 40 µg/m³ for large particulate matter (PM₁₀) in 2023. However, most of these sites exceeded the WHO guideline of 15 µg/m³ annual average.
13. Regarding smaller particulate matter (PM_{2.5}) the levels have remained stable over the monitoring period. The annual average levels monitored at

all six locations in Southwark complied with the national air quality objective of 20 µg/m³ in 2023 and the London's target of 10 µg/m³. It should be noted that the London target of 10 µg/m³ is the target level to be achieved by 2030. Southwark is therefore well ahead of expectation in this area.

However, all sites exceeded the WHO guideline of 5 µg/m³ for annual average of small particulate matter. The highest average recording over the year was at the Vicarage Grove site and the second highest was the Old Kent Road site.

14. Although not a regulated pollutant, Ozone (O₃) has adverse effects on health therefore, it is included in the national Air Quality Strategy with a limit of 100 mg/m³ not to be exceeded more than 10 times a year for the average recordings over an 8 hourly running period. Ozone levels have been monitored at the Elephant and Castle monitoring site and there has been a notable increase in concentrations in the recent years. In 2023, monitoring records show the acceptable level was exceeded on 19 occasions.

KEY ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

15. The levels of Nitrogen Dioxide (NO₂) are gradually falling across the borough as shown in the results for the automatic monitoring stations and at the diffusion tube locations. This trend is mirrored by a slow downwards trend in measurements from across London. Exceedance of the national air quality objective for NO₂ is still commonly found on busy road corridors in Southwark.
16. In Southwark, the levels of PM₁₀ are well below the national air quality objective and are gradually falling across the borough as shown in the results for the automatic monitoring stations. Long-term trend is decreasing, whilst the short-term trend for the last three years remains unclear for some roadside sites, including Old Kent Road (SK5), Lower Road (SKA), and Vicarage Grove (SKB) where the levels appear to have remained stable. This trend is mirrored by a slow downwards trend in measurements from across London.
17. Southwark commenced monitoring PM_{2.5} for the first time in 2020. This is a small fraction of particle known to adversely impact health. The national Air Objective for PM_{2.5} is a target of 15% reduction in concentrations at urban backgrounds to be achieved between 2010 and 2020 and to be maintained thereafter. This target reduction has been achieved at the Elephant and Castle monitoring site. The London local target for the level of small particulate matter is an annual limit of 10 mg/m³ which is the same as the World Health Organisation (WHO) recommended guideline. Southwark Air Quality Strategy will monitor compliance with the local and WHO recommended guideline. All monitoring sites showed that measurements for this pollutant were generally below 10mg/m³, although compliance at one site, Vicarage Grove was marginal, with a result of 9.9mg/m³.

18. Southwark does not monitor for Sulphur Dioxide (SO₂) but modelling and measured levels from elsewhere in the capital indicate that levels in Southwark are well below the national air quality objectives.
19. The majority of actions due in 2023 were delivered on target. Key actions met in 2023 include:
 - Adopted Southwark's 2023-2027 Air Quality Action Plan.
 - Expanded the monitoring network with new sensor sites.
 - Continued working with the Climate Change Team to link the local air quality with the Borough's Climate Carbon Reduction programme.
 - Continued working with the authority's Highways Service to monitor air quality in the Low Traffic Neighbourhoods that were introduced during the Covid-19 lockdown to facilitate walking and cycling.
 - Completed a further discovery research on the airText project to increase the uptake of the airText app amongst vulnerable persons and those from black and minority ethnic communities. Engagement with the community then commenced earlier this year.
 - Expanded the "OurBike" scheme to four cargo bikes available to local businesses and residents to hire. There were previously two bikes available for hire.
 - A substantial increase in Electric Vehicle Charging Points in the Borough.
20. Outside of Regulatory Services there has been good liaison with other service areas with the responsibility for delivery of AQAP actions. In particular, Public Health, Parking, Highways and Transport Planning have all increased their active involvement in delivery of the AQAP actions.
21. Some actions are not yet achieved. They include:
 - Decision on civil enforcement of idling vehicles. A London-wide joint working group is seeking a clarification on enforcement approach.
 - Civil enforcement of the Smoke Control Area.
 - Development of an air quality monitoring data dashboard.
 - Air quality action plan dashboard and tracker.
22. For the purposes of air quality monitoring and assessment of compliance with national-level objectives, the UK is divided into 43 zones. In 2023 the UK met the limit value for the hourly mean Nitrogen Dioxide (NO₂) in all zones. 34 zones met the limit value for annual mean NO₂, with nine zones exceeding. The exceeding zones include Greater London, which is expected to be the last region to meet the current air quality objectives. Overall, there has been a significant reduction of NO₂ levels in Southwark recorded over the recent years, but the recommendation remains to achieve all the actions in the AQAP to ensure all areas become and remain compliant with the annual air quality objective for NO₂.

23. Progress on delivery of the current AQAP is good. Many actions are being delivered on target, with only a few complex actions delayed in their delivery e.g., those involving planning policy and district heating. The intention to deliver these actions in the future remains.

Policy implications

24. The AQAP was devised to be a living document, updated each year by the outcomes of the air quality annual status reviews (ASRs). This ensures the AQAP remains relevant and up to date over its 5-year lifespan by ensuring:
- All actions of significance are captured, including actions undertaken that were not originally in the action plan.
 - As actions are achieved or become outdated, their targets can be revised.
 - If Southwark becomes aware of new ideas, knowledge or initiatives they can be considered for incorporation.

Community impact statement

25. All sectors of the community are affected by local air quality. A report by the Environment Agency found that areas of poor air quality significantly correlate with areas of deprivation. There are a number of deprived wards within Southwark that are areas of deprivation, as defined by the Government. (Source - Official National Statistics).
26. PM_{2.5} levels are used to calculate an indicator in the Public Health Outcomes Framework (PHOF) – Fraction of Mortality Attributable to Particulate Matter Pollution. This indicator is calculated for each local authority in England, and it intended to enable Directors of Public Health to prioritise action on air quality in their local area. The estimated fraction of mortality attributable to long-term exposure to current (2022) levels of anthropogenic PM_{2.5} is higher in Southwark than the average for London or England, accounting for 7.6% of all deaths in 2022¹. The London Value is 7.1% and England the value is 5.8%
27. In 2023 – 2024, 16,314 Southwark patients (over 6 years old) have an asthma diagnosis and 4,570 patients (all ages) have a diagnosis of chronic obstructive pulmonary disorder². There is evidence that exposure to air pollution exacerbates long term health conditions among health vulnerable people.

¹ Public Health England website:

<https://fingertips.phe.org.uk/search/fraction%20of%20mortality%20due%20to%20particulate%20air%20pollution#page/1/gid/1/ati/501/iid/30101/age/230/sex/4/cat/-1/ctp/-1/yr/1/cid/4/tbm/1>

² <https://fingertips.phe.org.uk/respiratory-disease#page/1/gid/8000003/pat/6/ati/501/are/E09000028/iid/93963/age/1/sex/4/cat/-1/ctp/-1/yr/3/cid/4/tbm/1>

Consultation

28. The 2023 Annual Summary Report (ASR) was compiled with information from all departments and service areas responsible for the delivery of actions, and from Southwark's air quality monitoring data, with further supporting data from the London Air Quality Network.
29. Data from the Annual Status Report on air quality inform the development and review of the Air Quality Action Plan which involves the input of colleagues from a number of different services across the council.

SUPPLEMENTARY ADVICE FROM OTHER OFFICERS

Assistant Chief Executive, Governance and Assurance

30. None sought

Strategic Director of Resources

31. None sought

Other officers

32. This report is for noting, and no advice has been sought from other officers.

APPENDICES

No.	Title
Appendix 1	Air Quality Annual Status Report 2023
Appendix 2	GLA comments on ASR 2023

AUDIT TRAIL

Lead Officer	Head of Regulatory Services	
Report Author	Paul Newman, Environmental Protection Team Leader	
Version	Final	
Dated	29/10/2024	
Key Decision?	No	
CONSULTATION WITH OTHER OFFICERS / DIRECTORATES / CABINET MEMBER		
Officer Title	Comments Sought	Comments Included
Assistant Chief Executive, Governance and Assurance	No	No
Strategic Director of Resources	No	No
Cabinet Member	No	No
Date final report sent to Constitutional Team	31 October 2024	