

Committee:	Cabinet	Date: Tuesday, 16 December 2025
Title:	Essex Air Quality Strategy	
Portfolio Holder:	Councillor Neil Reeve- Portfolio for Environment and Climate Change	
Report Author:	Marcus Watts – Environmental Health Manager (Protection) mwatts@uttlesford.gov.uk	Key decision: No

Summary

1. The Greater Essex Air Quality Strategy has been finalised following public consultation and is now ready for adoption. The Strategy represents a collaborative effort across Greater Essex Council's to tackle key sources of air pollution and raise public awareness. Adoption of this Strategy will support healthier living environments and contribute to long-term public health improvements.

Recommendations

2. Agree to adopt and formally publish the Essex Air Quality Strategy, the action plan and Supporting Information Document, as appended to this report.
3. Note that the action plan deliverables will be dependent on the work of the Essex Air Quality Consortium and will have no direct financial implications.

Financial Implications

4. The Environmental Health (Protection) Service holds a small budget primarily for servicing, repair and subscriptions of equipment and materials to monitor Air Quality within the district. The adoption of the Strategy does not commit the Council to any further direct expenditure.
5. Any costs associated with the delivery of the action plan will be taken from existing resource unless specific capital applications are considered appropriate. In this case, the usual scrutiny over capital application bids will apply.

Background Papers

6. The following papers were referred to by the author in the preparation of this report and are available for inspection from the author of the report.

- The air quality Strategy for England ([The air quality strategy for England - GOV.UK](#))

Impact

7.

Communication/Consultation	The draft AQ strategy was subject to consultation across Essex between 20 Jan and 2 nd March 2025
Community Safety	No direct impact
Equalities	The Councils efforts to improve AQ are likely to benefit all groups but particularly those who are most vulnerable and with existing respiratory conditions.
Health and Safety	No direct impact
Human Rights/Legal Implications	All local authorities must have regards to the National Air Quality Strategy for England
Sustainability	Measures outlined within the Strategy Action Plan directly align with sustainability and go hand in glove with reduction in climate change emissions
Ward-specific impacts	None
Workforce/Workplace	The Council will commit time to attend meetings, workshops and deliver campaigns.

Situation

8. Under the Environment Act 1995, all lower tier local authorities are obliged to review and assess air quality in line with the Government's Air Quality Strategy. The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) has the national lead, and closely supervises the work of local authorities in relation to their air quality duties.
9. There are various legislative targets relating to outdoor air pollutants that are relevant to local authority responsibilities on air quality. The [Air Quality Standards Regulations 2010](#) (as amended) set limits for ambient air quality (the air that surrounds us). Limit values are legally binding parameters that

must not be exceeded. The regulations set limit values for several pollutants, including nitrogen dioxide (NO₂), particulate matter and ozone.

10. The national Air Quality Strategy which was published in April 2023 and which covers a five-year period to 2028 requires that all local authorities in England, including upper tier authorities, must have regard to this document and in doing so should publish a strategy.
11. The Council, alongside Essex County Council and all principal Councils in Greater Essex has sought to collaborate to develop a strategy that fulfils our statutory obligation and supports improved public health and environmental outcomes across Essex.
12. Whilst a collaborative approach has been taken between districts, Essex County Council has championed the delivery of the Strategy, generating links with local NHS trusts, Universities and Emergency Services.
13. Above all, the Strategy seeks to promote shared resources, best practice and joint action and would help further strengthen the existing partnership working already taking place through the Essex Air Quality Consortium. Air pollution crosses respect local authority boundaries, so working together in this way is vitally important in tackling the issue of air quality.
14. Members involved in the development and implementation of the Essex Air Quality Strategy are not required to provide additional funding for air quality measures. Our commitment is to work with the consortium, sharing our understanding of air quality issues, best practice, pool resources and agree areas of focus to help achieve the best outcomes. The Strategy seeks to maximise the collective resources available across the councils and increase the likelihood of being awarded grant funding for air quality initiatives.
15. A full public consultation was undertaken on the draft Air Quality Strategy and supporting documents. This ran from Monday 20 January to Sunday 2 March 2025. The consultation was run by ECC on behalf of the Essex Air Quality Consortium, with the main consultation landing page being hosted on the EssexAir website (<https://essexair.org.uk/strategy>). A video was also created to explain the background to the Strategy, why it is needed and how it will improve air quality in Essex. A consultation survey was created and made available with the draft Strategy documents in Essex, Southend and Thurrock libraries.
16. There were almost 10,000 page views of the EssexAir website and the consultation reached more than 286,000 people on social media. The public consultation showed a very strong level of support. The full consultation report which details the responses can be found as Appendix 1.
17. Public input alongside that provided by local authorities (district & unitary) and partner agencies was instrumental in the development of the final Strategy, helping to align it with community needs and expectations. The Strategy was written in collaboration with all the local authorities in Essex. Lead and

specialist technical input to the Strategy was provided by Jacobs, as an ECC framework supplier.

18. The Strategy has now been finalised and is ready for publication (See Appendix 2). In doing so, it not only meets Essex County Councils ambitions set out in Everyone's Essex, but also accord with the Uttlesford's corporate plan objective to protect and improve the environment.

19. In summary, the strategic aims include:

- Do what is within our power as local authorities to improve air quality in Essex
- Limit the negative impacts of new developments on air quality in Essex and reduce exposure to air pollution
- Work closely with a range of partners and stakeholders to improve air quality
- Raise awareness about air quality in our communities and encourage behaviour change, including measures to improve indoor air quality

20. In addition to the strategy, a supporting information document has been developed which provides additional background information, describes the current air quality situation in Essex and how air quality is expected to change in the future. It also identifies potential opportunities to improve air quality (See Appendix 3). This document is more technical than the strategy and intended for those who want to know about air quality in Essex in greater detail. Finally, a more detailed action plan has also been produced. (See Appendix 4) This outlines the actions and tasks which local authorities in Essex propose to take to improve air quality in Essex and how progress will be measured.

21. The Strategy does not have a specified end date, with the intention being that it will be reviewed regularly and the action plan updated on a bi-annual basis. Working groups are proposed to be formed from Essex Air Quality Consortium members, relating to individual priority actions. It is planned that quarterly (internal) and annual (external) reports will be produced, summarising activities Essex Air Quality Strategy undertaken and progress made against actions.

22. Overseeing the work will be a dedicated Essex Air Quality Coordinator (to be appointed by Essex County Council) who will manage the programme, coordinate meetings, and ensure progress against targets. The Co-ordinator will also seek funding opportunities, liaise with businesses, provide technical support including support for shared projects. Annual reports will be provided to the three Health & Wellbeing Boards in Greater Essex and all updates and key information will be made available on the Essex Air website ([Essex Air](#))

23. While devolution and local government reorganisation in Essex will result in significant changes to the local government structure within the next few years, we believe there is still a clear benefit in progressing a joint Strategy now

which covers the whole of Greater Essex. There is significant support for an Essex Air Quality Strategy and there will still be a need for local authorities in Essex to work collaboratively on-air quality matters to ensure maximum impact and make best use of the collective resources available. In time, the Greater Essex Mayoral Combined County Authority could be well placed to 'own' the Strategy once established, as is the case elsewhere, in partnership with the new unitary authorities.

List of Appendices

Appendix 1: Consultation report,

Appendix 2: Final Essex Air Quality

Appendix 3: Strategy Supporting information

Appendix 4: Action plan

24. Risk Analysis

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigating actions
There is little risk associated with the adoption of the Strategy, but it does give a commitment of working with other members of the consortium to deliver improvements	Low likelihood of adverse impact from measures	Low impact on council services	None required

1 = Little or no risk or impact

2 = Some risk or impact – action may be necessary.

3 = Significant risk or impact – action required

4 = Near certainty of risk occurring, catastrophic effect or failure of project.