City of London Corporation Committee Report

Committee(s): Port Health and Environmental Services Committee – For information Health and Wellbeing Board – For information	**Dated:** 22/07/2025 19/09/2025
Subject: Air Quality Annual Status Report for 2024	**Public report:** For Information
This proposal: • **Delivers Corporate Plan 2024-29 outcomes** • **Provides statutory duties**	Leading Sustainable Environment. Providing Excellent Services. Diverse Engaged Communities.
Does this proposal require extra revenue and/or capital spending?	No
If so, how much?	N/A
What is the source of Funding?	N/A
Has this Funding Source been agreed with the Chamberlain's Department?	N/A
Report of:	Katie Stewart, Executive Director, Environment
Report author:	Paul Bentley, Air Quality Officer

Summary

As part of its statutory duties for London Local Air Quality Management, the City of London Corporation is required to produce an Annual Status Report and submit the report to the Greater London Authority. The report is designed to detail the progress with actions contained within the City Corporation Air Quality Strategy and to present air quality monitoring data. A copy of the full report, which is produced using a prescribed template, will be made available on the City Corporation web site following Greater London Authority approval.

The City Corporation runs a dense and comprehensive air quality monitoring network. In 2024, data was collected using three nitrogen dioxide (NO_2) continuous monitors, three particulate PM_{10} monitors, two particulate $PM_{2.5}$ monitors and one ozone monitor. Nitrogen dioxide was also monitored at 85 additional locations in 2024 across the Square Mile using low-cost diffusion tubes.

Over the past five years there has been a levelling out in annual mean concentrations of NO_2, following a significant reduction between 2019 and 2020. In

2024, 95% of the locations measured met the national standard of 40µg/m^3 and 51% met the CoL 2030 Air Quality Strategy aim of 30µg/m^3.

Particulate matter, presented as PM_{10} or $PM_{2.5}$, is made up of many sources, local, national and international. All three PM_{10} monitoring sites have complied with the national standard for the past eight years. In 2024, $PM_{2.5}$ concentrations at Farringdon Street and The Aldgate School continued to meet the new national standard of 10µg/m^3. This is ahead of the 2040 UK deadline.

A new five-year Air Quality Strategy was adopted in January 2025 with the aim to go beyond our statutory obligation and continue to take action to improve air quality in pursuit of the 2021 World Health Organisation Air Quality Guidelines. The World Health Organisation Air Quality Guidelines are significantly tighter than current national standards. The actions outlined in the Air Quality Strategy will deliver better health outcomes for our communities.

Recommendation

Members are asked to:

- Note the contents of the Air Quality Annual Status Report for 2024.

Main Report

Background

1. The City of London Corporation has a statutory duty to assist the Mayor of London and the UK Government in taking action to reduce levels of air pollution so that concentrations of pollutants meet health-based standards. The City Corporation also has a responsibility to protect public health.

2. A new five-year Air Quality Strategy, 2025-2030, was adopted in January 2025. This outlines actions that will be taken to fulfil the City of London Corporation's statutory responsibility under the London Local Air Quality Management framework, and for reducing the health impact of air pollution within the Square Mile.

3. As part of the London Local Air Quality Management framework, an Annual Status Report is submitted to the Mayor of London. The report outlines progress towards actions in the City Corporation Air Quality Strategy and provides the results of air quality monitoring undertaken over a seven-year period. A copy of the full report, which is produced using a prescribed template, is available in the Members Room and can be obtained by emailing the report author.

Air Quality Data

4. In 2024, monitoring data was collected using continuous monitors at:
   - Three nitrogen dioxide (NO_2) sites
   - One ozone site
   - Three particulate matter (PM_{10}) sites
   - Two particulate matter ($PM_{2.5}$) sites

5. These monitors provide hourly readings with near real-time data made available to the public via two websites; Air Quality in England and Air-Aware. The data is presented in Table 1.

6. Concentrations of air pollution are compared to health-based standards. The national standards for nitrogen dioxide and fine particles are taken from those originally laid down by the European Union. These standards were based on 2005 World Health Organisation Air Quality Guidelines. The Guidelines were updated in 2021 and, in most cases, tightened. The new Guidelines have not resulted in changes in domestic legislation, but they have been used to inform the aims of the City Corporation Air Quality Strategy.

7. The data is presented alongside the national standards and the City Corporation Air Quality Strategy (AQS) aims for comparison. The existing annual average national standard for $PM_{2.5}$ is 20µg/m^3. Given the health impact of $PM_{2.5}$, the UK government adopted a new $PM_{2.5}$ standard of 10µg/m^3 to be achieved by 2040.

Table 1: Air Pollution Monitoring Data, values expressed as annual averages and in µg/m^3

Location	Pollutant	National Standard	AQS Aim	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
The Aldgate School	NO_2	40	30	32	33	22	23	23	22	20
The Aldgate School	PM_{10}	40	15	21	19	16	16	17	15	16
The Aldgate School	$PM_{2.5}$	10	10	12	12	12	11	12	10	9
Upper Thames St.*	NO_2	40	30	87	74	45	46	52	-	-
Upper Thames St.*	PM_{10}	40	15	32	27	24	19	-	-	-
Bell Wharf Lane	NO_2	40	30			-	-	-	32	30
Bell Wharf Lane	PM_{10}	40	15			-	-	20	17	16
Beech Street	NO_2	40	30	69	62	29	31	41	36	37
Beech Street	PM_{10}	40	15	24	22	18	15	17	15	15
Farringdon Street	$PM_{2.5}$	10	10	12	12	12	11	13	10	9

* The Upper Thames Street monitors were relocated to Bell Wharf Lane due to changes to office accommodation and an issue with electricity supply.

8. Over the past 20 years, there has been a long-term decline in air pollution in the Square Mile. There was a significant drop in concentrations of nitrogen dioxide between 2019 and 2020/21 due to the impact of the country's response to the COVID 19 pandemic. In 2022 a rebound in concentrations at roadside monitoring sites was experienced, but not to pre-pandemic levels. In 2023 and 2024 all three monitoring sites met the national standard of 40µg/m^3.

9. PM_{10} concentrations continue to meet the national standard of 40µg/m^3 at each of the three monitoring sites. Concentrations of $PM_{2.5}$ met the national standard of 10µg/m^3 to be achieved by 2040 in both 2023 and 2024.

10. Within the London Local Air Quality Management framework, Local Authorities are not required to report on or take direct action relating to the national standard for ozone, this is undertaken by UK Government. The national standard for ozone is 100µg/m^3 expressed as an 8-hour average, not to be exceeded more than ten times a year. In 2024 there were 25 8-hour periods greater than 100µg/m^3, therefore the national standard was exceeded.

11. In addition to the three continuous monitors, nitrogen dioxide is also monitored at 85 additional locations in the Square Mile using low-cost diffusion tubes. In 2024 95% of the sites monitored met the national standard of 40µg/m^3. The following four monitoring sites exceeded the national standard:

    - Old Bailey, junction of Old Bailey and Newgate Street.
    - Upper Thames Street, outside Walbrook Wharf.
    - Cannon Street, opposite the main entrance to Cannon Street station.
    - Gracechurch Street, at Corbet Court.

12. The data for all locations is presented in the Annual Status Report and summarised in Appendix 1.

13. An aim of the 2019 - 2024 Air Quality Strategy was for over 90% of the Square Mile to meet the national standard for nitrogen dioxide by 2025. An area compliance assessment is completed each year with 2023 being the most recent assessment completed. Compliance with the national standard in 2023 was 94%. This is a significant improvement from 30% in 2018 when the assessment was completed for the first time.

Progress with Actions

14. The Air Quality Annual Status Report includes a brief update, where relevant, on each action in the City Corporation Air Quality Strategy. Examples of actions taken during 2024 are as follows:

    - The nitrogen dioxide monitoring network was reviewed, with new monitoring sites established with the City Bridge Foundation and in partnership with the Port of London Authority.
    - Annual monitoring reports were produced for each school and nursery within the Square Mile.
    - Completed a project tailored to bolster the confidence of healthcare professionals in advising patients on how to minimise exposure to air pollution.
    - Installed touch screens at Artizan and Barbican Libraries to allow residents to interact and explore a new Air-Aware webtool. Monthly drop-in sessions were held.
    - Chaired both the Environmental Policy Implementation Community (EPIC), which is part of the Institution of Environmental Sciences, and the London Air Quality Steering Group.
    - Secured funding for:
        - A continuation of the pan-London Idling Action London project to reduce commercial sector vehicle engine idling.
        - The Zero Emissions Network, set up to help businesses save money, reduce emissions and improve air quality by making changes in transport and building use and adopting more sustainable business practices.
    - Conducted 42 audits of construction sites to ensure compliance with the London low emission zone for non-road mobile machinery.

- Assessed all major planning applications for air quality impact.
- Inspected all relevant retail premises to ensure any wood sold complied with current solid fuel regulations.
- Provided advice for restaurants on their responsibilities for complying with local smoke control regulations.
- Completed an assessment of the impact of standby generator use on local air quality.

Corporate & Strategic Implications

Strategic implications

15. Air quality policy and action is framed in the City of London Corporation Air Quality Strategy 2025 – 2030. It is supported by the Climate Action Strategy, Transport Strategy, Procurement Strategy, and draft City Plan.

16. The work on air quality supports the following Corporate Plan Outcomes:

- Leading Sustainable Environment
- Providing Excellent Services
- Diverse Engaged Communities

Financial implications

17. None

Resource implications

18. None

Legal implications

19. None

Risk implications

20. Air quality is listed as a departmental risk. Department risks are reviewed quarterly by the Environment Department Senior Leadership Team. Quarterly risk management update reports are presented to the PHES committee.

Equalities implications

21. Action to improve air quality has a positive impact on all sections of the population. The benefit is greatest for children and the elderly as they are more susceptible to the health impacts of air pollution. There is also a positive impact on individuals whose lives are affected by asthma and other respiratory and/or cardiovascular conditions.

Climate implications

22. There are a high number of synergies between reducing emissions of carbon and air pollutants. The implementation of the Air Quality Strategy will have a positive impact upon the climate in terms of reducing carbon emissions within the Square

Mile. The Air Quality Team liaise with the Climate Action Strategy team to advise upon air quality implications, both positive and negative, of relevant projects.

Security implications

23. None

Conclusion

24. The City Corporation has completed its 2024 Air Quality Annual Status Report and submitted it to the Greater London Authority for approval. This fulfils part of the City of London Corporation's statutory obligations for London Local Air Quality Management.

25. In 2024, the national standards for particulate matter, both PM_{10} and $PM_{2.5}$, were met at all monitoring sites. Of 88 locations monitored for nitrogen dioxide, four were above the national standard of 40µg/m^3. A review is underway to assess the sources of nitrogen dioxide at the few remaining sites that exceed the national standard. This will inform the specific actions required to reduce concentrations at these sites.

26. Action to improve air quality is strongly supported across the organisation by a wide range of policies and strategies. This is most notable in planning policy, the Transport Strategy, and the Climate Action Strategy. The newly adopted Air Quality Strategy runs up to 2030, and within the five-year strategy cycle ambitious aims have been adopted to continue to reduce air pollutant across the Square Mile and improve the health of our communities.

Appendices

27. Appendix 1 – Air Quality Annual Status Summary Report for 2024

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