



Department
for Environment
Food & Rural Affairs

Dr Thérèse Coffey MP
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State
for the Environment

Nobel House
17 Smith Square
London SW1P 3JR

T 03459 335577
defra.helpline@defra.gsi.gov.uk
www.gov.uk/defra

Cllr Ian Ward
Leader, Birmingham City Council
Council House
Victoria Square
Birmingham
B1 1BB

19 February 2018

Dear Cllr Ward,

I met Cllr Trickett, Stella Manzie and Dr Phillips on 23 January to discuss Birmingham City Council's plans for improving air quality – and in particular, your plans to deliver compliance with statutory nitrogen dioxide concentration limits in the shortest possible time.

While they reassured me that the council remains committed to deliver a local scheme by the end of 2019, I was disappointed to hear from Cllr Trickett that the council would not provide a preferred option, with supporting evidence, as had originally been requested for 27 October 2017, and had again been requested by the end of this month in Shaun Gallagher's letter of 12 December 2017.

As you are aware, your local authority received a ministerial direction requiring it to provide a Full Business Case for its plans by 15 September 2018. Cllr Trickett undertook to provide us with a timeline that would give us reassurance that this legal deadline will be met. I understand from officials that this information has not yet been provided. I find this very concerning, especially considering the level of funding and support the government is giving to Birmingham City Council to accelerate your plans to improve air quality. It would appear that the council is not giving this matter the urgency it requires and is delaying making the decisions necessary to ensure action can be taken as quickly as possible. I do appreciate that Birmingham City Council is holding elections this year and that creates a sense of nervousness about proposals being laid out, but I point out the positive reaction to the approach taken by Leeds City Council. I ask that you ensure that this revised timeline is provided to Defra before the end of February.

From my discussions with your colleagues last month, and based on our experiences with other authorities who are ahead of you, I think that there are actions the council can take to ensure all relevant deadlines are met, so that negative impacts on the health of those living and working in Birmingham can be addressed as soon as possible.

I have advised my officials in the Joint Air Quality Unit that I wish to be kept closely informed of your progress and, as ever, they stand ready to help and provide support. I look forward to seeing your revised plans in the very near future.

Given the public interest in improving air quality, I will be publishing this letter on gov.uk and copying it to the Mayor for the West Midlands (and the people named within the letter).

Yours sincerely,

DR THERESE COFFEY MP

