

Overview and Scrutiny Committee



Forest Heath
District Council

Title of Report:	Local Air Quality Strategy – Progress Report 2014 - 2015	
Report No:	OAS/FH/15/009	
Report to and date:	Overview and Scrutiny Committee	10 September 2015
Portfolio holder:	James Waters Planning and Growth - Environment Tel: 0771 621038 Email: james.waters@forest-heath.gov.uk	
Lead officer:	Peter Gudde Service Manager (Environment and Regulation) Tel: 01284 757042 Email: peter.gudde@westsuffolk.gov.uk	
Purpose of report:	To report the work undertaken during 2014-2015 to meet Local Air Quality Regulations across the District.	
Recommendation:	It is <u>RECOMMENDED</u> that, the Committee is asked to <u>note</u> the work undertaken in order to improve local air quality in West Suffolk.	
Key Decision: <i>(Check the appropriate box and delete all those that do not apply.)</i>	<i>Is this a Key Decision and, if so, under which definition?</i> Yes, it is a Key Decision - <input type="checkbox"/> No, it is not a Key Decision - <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Consultation:	•	
Alternative option(s):	•	
Implications:		
<i>Are there any financial implications? If yes, please give details</i>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<i>Are there any staffing implications? If yes, please give details</i>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<i>Are there any ICT implications? If yes, please give details</i>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

<i>Are there any legal and/or policy implications? If yes, please give details</i>		Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> •	
<i>Are there any equality implications? If yes, please give details</i>		Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> •	
Risk/opportunity assessment:		<i>(potential hazards or opportunities affecting corporate, service or project objectives)</i>	
Risk area	Inherent level of risk (before controls)	Controls	Residual risk (after controls)
Statutory Responsibilities	Medium	Delivering the statutory responsibilities will help reduce the inherent level of risk.	Low
Reputational	Medium m	The Councils' work will help achieve a credible pathway to improving air quality.	Low
Financial	Low	Cost-benefit of key work will continue to be reviewed and adjusted.	Low
Statutory Responsibilities	Medium	Delivering the statutory responsibilities will help reduce the inherent level of risk.	Low
Ward(s) affected:		Even though local air quality across West Suffolk is generally good, there are specific locations that have been identified as having a greater need for monitoring and improvement. These areas are detailed within the relevant Council's annual progress reports and in Forest Heath's Air Quality Strategy. By continuing to meet our statutory obligations, the Council is endeavouring to make improvements where needed and appropriate to do so.	
Background papers: <i>(all background papers are to be published on the website and a link included)</i>		The report for 2014 submitted to Defra can be found at: http://www.westsuffolk.gov.uk/environment/pollution-control.cfm?aud=resident	
Documents attached:		None	

1. Key issues and reasons for recommendation

1.1 Background

- 1.1.1 Air quality has direct implications for human health. Research shows that poor air quality can reduce the quality of life by causing health problems, especially in those who are more vulnerable such as children, the elderly and those with pre-existing health conditions. There is considerable research showing a link between exposure to air pollution and effects on health.
- 1.1.2 The Public Health Outcome Framework includes an indicator for air quality against which local authorities are expected to show progress. Improving air quality through, for example, traffic congestion reduction, will directly affect health outcomes by reducing health risk.
- 1.1.3 The Air Quality Regulations 2000 require all local authorities in the UK to review and assess air quality within their area. The West Suffolk Councils are the lead regulators within their administrative areas with respect to the management of local air quality. Officers in Planning and Growth carry out various activities to fulfil these responsibilities. This includes monitoring local air quality for the key pollutant of concern locally, nitrogen dioxide, which is primarily caused by emissions from vehicle exhausts for which the national objective (threshold) is 40 microgrammes per metre cubed. Currently, there are 39 monitoring sites within Forest Heath.
- 1.1.4 Road transport is a major source of air pollution both nationally and locally. The Councils work with other organisations to maintain and monitor the quality of air in the locality. Suffolk County Council and the Highways Agency are key partners and work with Council Officers to secure good air quality.
- 1.1.5 In a wider perspective, air quality and climate change are fundamentally interrelated. A warming climate threatens to make air quality worse, with the prevalence of harmful photochemical smogs. Many common pollutants, termed greenhouse gases, also contribute to climate change and reducing these emissions will lessen the local contribution. Nitrogen dioxide plays a part in smog formation and can be associated with other pollutants which are greenhouse gases. However, it should be noted that concerns with regards to odour and bonfires are covered by separate legislation as they are deemed to be a statutory nuisance.

1.2 Outcomes for 2014-2015

- 1.2.1 Both Councils continue to satisfy the requirements of the Regulations and, for the most part, air quality in West Suffolk is good. Under the Public Health Outcome Framework air quality indicator, West Suffolk has better air quality compared both to the rest of the East of England and the English average. With regard to the key pollutant of concern, nitrogen dioxide, monitoring confirms that levels are generally dropping across the West Suffolk over time.
- 1.2.2 During 2014 in Brandon, there were no exceedences of the Annual Mean Objective level of 40 microgrammes per cubic metre for nitrogen dioxide. Research has predicted that now the major project to dual the A11 from the Fiveways Roundabout in Barton Mills to Thetford has been completed, the

levels will reduce. With traffic being signposted to avoid travelling through Brandon, the expectation is that the air quality in the town will improve. Monitoring will continue throughout 2015 to evaluate the impact on air quality locally. Additionally, monitoring prior to the commencement of this project at Elveden revealed elevated levels of nitrogen dioxide. Monitoring was suspended while the project was undertaken, but re-started on completion, and it is expected that a further 12 months of monitoring will demonstrate that the levels of nitrogen dioxide at Elveden will be below the Annual Mean Objective.

- 1.2.3 Only one slight exceedance of the Air Quality Objective was found in the District, which was within the Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) in Newmarket with a value of 42.9 microgrammes per cubic metre; however, monitoring indicates that the levels of nitrogen dioxide have been falling over the last several years. Thorough monitoring will continue and efforts continue to work with taxi drivers to demonstrate that impacts on the local air quality can be reduced by shrewd driving practise. FHDC also continues to work on the Air Quality Action Plan focusing on the improvement of the air quality in Newmarket and works closely with the Transport and Highways Delivery Group of the Newmarket Vision Steering Group to improve traffic flow through the town and ultimately the air quality. Suffolk County Council, FHDC, the Jockey Club and other agencies are all represented on the group.
- 1.2.4 Although there have been no complaints within Forest Heath with regards to the Local Air Quality, officers continue to monitor planning applications which may have an impact, such as the cumulative impact of the several applications submitted for Lakenheath.
- 1.2.5 The Councils also continue to lobby Suffolk County Council for action in relation to highways improvements within the locations where NO₂ levels approach or slightly exceed the National Air Quality Objective.
- 1.2.6 In view of a recent consultation with the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra), both Councils are currently reviewing how the Local Air Quality is managed, which may change on the anticipation of changes to the statutory guidance which is expected to be published towards the end of the year.