

Morning – the update below is sent to all town and parish councils in West Suffolk on behalf of West Suffolk Council Cabinet Member Cllr Gerald Kelly.

Good morning,

I am writing to update you about the findings of our Air Quality Annual Status Report (ASR).

Air pollution impacts on people's health and Public Health England said the health and social care costs to taxpayers for 2017 alone was £157 million.

West Suffolk Council has a legal duty under the Environment Act 1995 to monitor air pollution and to take action where pollutants exceed nationally set levels. We monitor nitrogen dioxide, which is the main pollutant from vehicles, at 80 locations across West Suffolk. Nitrogen dioxide is linked to respiratory diseases. Levels are required to be below 40 micrograms of nitrogen dioxide per each cubic metre of air.

We publish our findings each year in an Air Quality Annual Status Report (ASR).

The latest report to 1st January 2024, highlights that nitrogen dioxide levels across all sites in West Suffolk are below national thresholds, below pre-pandemic levels and are down on the previous year.

We remain committed to monitoring and reducing pollution throughout West Suffolk for the benefit of residents and their health.

Helping change behaviours

Some of this fall in nitrogen dioxide levels is down to changes in car manufacturing including electric vehicles (EV) which do not produce exhaust emissions. West Suffolk Council is improving EV charging infrastructure. Our public EV charging points, can recharge 70 vehicles at a time, and powered 421,490 EV miles in 2023 /24. According to Government figures, this increase in charging points has coincided with a 692 per cent increase in EV ownership in West Suffolk between 2018 and 2023.

The council also encourages people to walk or cycle where they can, and for companies and organisations to set up their own Green Travel Plan to reduce vehicle use including people car sharing to save money and reduce emissions.

West Suffolk Council also works to educate and encourage motorists not to leave their engines running while parked. This includes outside schools where long term exposure to harmful toxic fumes can cause asthma in children, stunt their lung growth, and impact on their health for the rest of their lives.

These actions and the air quality improvements they are helping to deliver, show why our strategic priority for Environmental Resilience is so important to supporting Thriving Communities and the Sustainable Growth of West Suffolk.

We will shortly be publicising the report through a press release and a short animation to social media which you can see at <https://youtu.be/UzJOv8Wh0oc>

You can read the Air Quality Annual Status Report at www.westsuffolk.gov.uk/environment/environmental-services/upload/Local-Air-Quality-Management-Annual-Status-Report-2024.pdf

With best wishes

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of several loops and a long horizontal stroke, positioned in the center of the page.

Cllr Gerald Kelly
Cabinet Member for Governance, Regulatory and Environment
West Suffolk Council