

Scrutiny Committee, 28 July 2016

Information Bulletin

The Information Bulletin is a document that is made available to the public with the published agenda papers. It can include update information requested by the Committee as well as information that a service considers should be made known to the Committee.

This Information Bulletin covers the following items:

1. [Air Quality Management Areas](#)
2. [Update following Scrutiny of the implications of changes in adult care legislation and case law on 2 July 2015](#)
3. [Working with the Voluntary and Community Sector \(VCS\)](#)

1. Air Quality Management Areas

- 1.1 On 7 June 2016, the Scrutiny Committee requested an information bulletin item on Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs). The Committee wished to be informed about areas of the County where there were concerns about air quality.
- 1.2 Unless determining a planning application (e.g. minerals, waste, road or school), the County Council's obligations tend to reflect its roles in relation to transport, as traffic emissions are the main cause of poor air quality. The County Council must also consider the Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy and Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA). Through the 2011 State of Suffolk Report, the JSNA recognises the current position of AQMAs.
- 1.3 The [Local Air Quality Management, Policy Guidance \(PG16\), 2016](#) is statutory and all relevant Local Authorities (both district and county level) should have regard to it. The guidance applies local authority action using available levers including planning, public health and transport to maximise the public health benefits with particular regard to priority pollutants such as NO₂ and Particulate Matter (PM₁₀/PM_{2.5}). The guidance streamlines the Local Air Quality Management (LAQM) process so that while the quality of information is retained, the requirements are more consistent and less burdensome and enable local authorities to clearly point to the actions that are being or will be taken.
- 1.4 Through the LAQM system, local authorities are required to assess air quality in their area and designate Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs) if improvements are necessary. Where an AQMA is designated, all relevant local authorities are required to produce an air quality Action Plan describing the pollution reduction measures it will put in place.

- 1.5 Currently, over 700 active AQMAs have been designated across UK local authorities, mostly for Nitrogen Dioxide (NO₂). England accounts for nearly 600 AQMAs. Action Plans have been put in place to address air quality, including any exceedances.

Suffolk AQMAs

- 1.6 An interactive map providing details the locations of the AQMAs in Suffolk, pollutants and action plans can be found at: <https://uk-air.defra.gov.uk/aqma/maps>. There are nine AQMAs in Suffolk. These are in Babergh (Sudbury), Ipswich (4 areas), Forest Heath (Newmarket) and Suffolk Coastal (3 areas).

Air quality in Suffolk

- 1.7 Exposure to air pollution has both short and long term adverse effects on people's health, especially for example people with heart or lung conditions or breathing problems. The evidence associating air pollutants such as NO₂ and PM_{2.5} with health effects has strengthened substantially in recent years; these pollutants are estimated to result in mortality equivalent to nearly 24,000 and 29,000 deaths respectively in the UK. The combined impact of these two pollutants represents a significant public health challenge.
- 1.8 For two-tier and unitary authorities, the Secretary of State for the Environment and Rural Affairs expects that all departments across the authority/ies should work together to identify suitable measures to address air quality and, with respect to Action Plans, ensure that all necessary measures to address air pollution in their local area are included. This includes measures in relation to local transport, highways, land use planning, environmental health and public health

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2. Update following Scrutiny of the implications of changes in adult care legislation and case law on 2 July 2015

- 2.1 At its meeting on the 2 July 2015, the Committee asked for an update on key aspects of the Care Act 2014 to be presented in 12 months (July 2016). The Committee has already had an update on five of its recommendations at previous meetings. The Committee received an update on the Adult and Community Services (ACS) People Plan at on 29 October 2015 (Recommendations D, F, G, H and I) (see: <http://tinyurl.com/jeawuax>). This bulletin therefore provides information relating to the remaining four items which focussed on the implications for the Council of Part Two of the Care Act.

- 2.2 At its meeting on 2 July 2015 the Committee heard concerns about how the remaining Care Act changes would be implemented and funded. Part Two of the Act would have placed a duty on the Council to have assessed 50% of self funders and set them up with a care account by April 2016. Officers expressed concerns both about the level of funding available to undertake this work as well as the timescales for completion; particularly given statutory guidance outlining the detail of the requirements was not due for publication until October 2015. The Committee made a range of recommendations relating to these concerns including urging the Cabinet Member and Director to work with the Local Government Association and County Council's network to lobby for greater clarity and resources.
- 2.3 In July 2015 the Government announced at its budget that it was deferring implementation of Part Two of the Act until 2020. This was in large part due to the financial modelling undertaken by councils which highlighted both an affordability and capacity gap. In light of this the Council has put on hold all plans to commence the work and will await further guidance from central government on its intentions.
- 2.4 As reported to the Committee on 2 July 2015, the social care reforms of the Care Act enshrined in Part One of the Act took effect in April 2015 and continue to be embedded within Adult and Community Services. The Act forms the legal framework underpinning our operating model 'Supporting Lives, Connecting Communities' and provides the statutory basis for a wide range of both commissioning and social work activity such as; eligibility criteria for services, carers assessments, access to advocacy, entitlement to direct payments, market development and the thresholds for adult safeguarding. A range of methods are employed to ensure the workforce has a full understanding of these requirements and adherence to the legislation is quality assured via case audit, practice supervision and managerial oversight.
- 2.5 As recommended by the Committee, Adult and Community Services has continued to work closely with the voluntary sector on both our Trusted Advisor and Trusted Provider programmes. An update on the evaluation of the Waveney Trusted Advice Service was provided to the Committee at its last meeting on 29 June 2016 (see: <http://tinyurl.com/h7ozpl3> and <http://tinyurl.com/gqbp37r>). The former project works with the voluntary sector to enhance our information and advice offer about care and support and the latter provides external agencies with the skills to undertake formal reviews of people's care and support plans on the Council's behalf. Building up confidence between all parties and ensuring the smooth transfer of information between the Council and those agencies is critical. We have developed a particularly successful partnership with Suffolk Family Carers who undertake these functions on our behalf with family carers using an approach which has been co-designed and co-produced throughout.

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3. Working with the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS)

Context

- 3.1 On 29 November 2015, the Scrutiny Committee considered the County Council's budget setting process for 2016/17. One of the recommendations made by the Committee was to request information about "how the County Council is working to engage with and support Suffolk's voluntary and community sector and to encourage volunteering".
- 3.2 The Committee agreed it would be useful to receive regular updates on work being done to engage with and support Suffolk's voluntary and community sector and to encourage volunteering, because members recognised the valuable contribution made by volunteers, and wished to see volunteering fostered.
- 3.3 Suffolk County Council has a multitude of relationships with the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) in Suffolk and across the country. The Council has direct financial relationships: where it commissions services from and/or grant funds organisations, it also provides in-kind support to some organisations through no-cost and low-cost accommodation and other back office support. This has reduced in recent years due to changes in back office functions and our aim to maximise the benefits of the property portfolio. The Council also has relationships where we work together both formally and informally with many VCS organisations and there is ongoing work around how organisations of all sizes can influence the Council's policy, strategy and service design as well as how the Council can influence organisations from the VCS.

Financial relationships

- 3.4 In terms of the Council's direct financial relationships with the VCS; the total expenditure in financial year 2014/15 with the voluntary, community and social enterprise sector was just under £149 million. The bulk of this funding is procured services that, if the County Council did not buy, it would need to deliver. Around £10 million of this money is grants. This includes councillor locality budgets.
- 3.5 This money was spent with 1991 different organisations/groups. 69% of the organisations the Council supports financially or buys services from receive under £10,000. This money is likely to help some of the grass roots communities to deliver real value in their community. On the other side of the scale the Council has five organisations who we spend more than £5 million with and 27 organisations that receive more than £1 million in contract and grant monies these are to deliver large volumes of services to individuals and communities.

The range and size of organisations

- 3.6 The Council has direct financial relationships with very large national charities, regional charities, divested services, countywide organisations, through to tiny, completely volunteer-led groups based in a town or village. 1810 of the organisations have their headquarters based in Suffolk, whilst the rest are based in other parts of the country. The bulk of the funding is spent with Suffolk based organisations. However, if the divested services are excluded more money is spent with organisations outside of the county.

3.7 The range of support and services provided is vast and includes: adult social care, homelessness support, drug and alcohol support, healthy living support and advice, mental health support, pre-school education, culture, sport and leisure activities, fostering and adoption support, library services, community transport, hire and use of community facilities such as village halls and organisation memberships such as the Local Government Association.

Governance/financial management

3.8 This expenditure is managed through normal contract management procedures. It is not encouraged that Council officers who commission services from VCS organisations take up places on boards of trustees/directors as a method of safeguarding the investment in the organisation. When a person sits on the board of a charity they have a fiduciary duty, i.e. the duty to act in the best interest of the charity and this can cause a conflict with their role as a commissioner of the service.

3.9 Graphs highlighting the key features of the Council's expenditure with the Voluntary and Community Sector are attached as Appendix 1.

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