



Suffolk
County Council

2023-24



ANNUAL PLAN



> CONTENTS

3-4 Forewords

5 Suffolk County Council in Numbers

6-7 Setting the Scene

8 Our Objectives: Delivering in 2023-24

9-11 Update on Major Programmes 2022-26

12 Our Objectives: Promoting and supporting the health and wellbeing of all people in Suffolk

13 Our Objectives: Strengthening our local economy

14 Our Objectives: Protecting and enhancing our environment

15 Our Objectives: Providing value for money for the Suffolk taxpayer

16-18 Our Finances

19-20 Suffolk County Council's Carbon Budget

21 Our People

22-25 Measuring Our Performance

> FOREWORD



Councillor Matthew Hicks
Leader of Suffolk County Council

The past few years have been times of great change and challenge and it is the role of influential organisations like Suffolk County Council to help steady the ship and lead us to better times, which we have done so well. Vulnerable people need our support, businesses need a thriving economy, we need to provide value for money for those hard-earned pounds while we reduce our carbon emissions.

My administration, and our staff who are so dedicated to improving the lives of people in Suffolk, share these ambitions - and it is these that form the backbone of the work we do every day.

There is certainly a lot of work to do, but we are ready for the challenge.

We are a very ambitious council, even if we don't shout about it all the time. We're building the Gull Wing bridge in Lowestoft, creating more school places for children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), delivering on our new housing joint venture, and investing in technology that gives people more independence in their lives. This is just the tip of the iceberg!

The Government recently recognised our level of ambition when, in December 2022, I had the honour of signing a provisional deal with the Government that would see £500 million transferred directly to Suffolk over a 30-year period – giving us greater powers over education, transport and housing in our area.

This is a long way from happening and is subject to public consultation and a vote by County Councillors. Other such county deals have followed since and others are queuing up, but I am pleased to say that Suffolk was first at the table.

This plan is important reading for anyone wanting to know more about Suffolk County Council's priorities, sensible financial management and commitments for the year ahead that promises to be as challenging as the past 12 months.

Despite the strain on public finances at a national and local level, we have developed a balanced budget that makes funding available to key public

services under our control – including care for vulnerable adults and children, roads, firefighting, the environment, infrastructure projects and the health and wellbeing of residents. These are just a few of the essential services that we are investing public money in – with many more detailed throughout this plan.

This is only achievable with a careful balance of funding from Government, residents and sound financial management that puts people first. This is what you get from Suffolk County Council.

The challenges in the year ahead do not daunt us, they strengthen our resolve to make a positive difference for Suffolk residents. We will continue to deliver public services despite a sharp increase in demand and higher costs due to inflation.

In 2023-24, we are investing an additional £47 million in services for vulnerable adults and children, including more money to support services for children with SEND. This is on top of an extra £1.1 million invested in 2022/23. We are investing more in the maintenance of roadside verges to protect wildlife. We are putting additional money into tree management and supporting services for people who need advice and support during the cost of living challenges currently standing in our way.

Plans must be flexible and, as we have shown over the past year, we are ready to adapt where needed. We will continue to listen to what residents think and, as always, will work to incorporate their priorities into our work. We are committed to continuing our wide programme of public consultations and engagement, including our Local Matters roadshow, so that we make important decisions about the future of our county together.

I would like to finish with a thank you to the 450 Suffolk households who have welcomed over 1100 Ukrainian refugees since Russia launched its illegal war on their country. Displaced people have needed support and I am proud to say that Suffolk has stepped up as it always does.

On behalf of everyone at Suffolk County Council, I share this plan with you.

> FOREWORD



Nicola Beach

Chief Executive of Suffolk County Council

I have said it many times before and I'll say it again: I am immensely proud to work with councillors, colleagues and partners who are so committed to supporting residents in Suffolk.

These are people with passion, expertise and ambitious ideas who I know strive for the very best for our great county. They regularly inspire me.

Working in local government has always required many skills, and overcoming obstacles is increasingly one of those. Many people will be well aware of the financial challenges facing public services, something that affects us here in Suffolk just as acutely as anywhere. A combination of strained public finances, alongside increasing demand for services and inflation driving up costs, is the reality before us.

Our role is to face up to those challenges and put first the best interests of our residents. Suffolk County Councillors clearly recognise this and have agreed much-needed funding for the 2023-24 financial year. Now my team can continue to deliver essential public services in Suffolk with more certainty.

No document can cover the breadth and depth of the work we do, but this Annual Plan is a good summary and demonstrates some of the important areas of work and projects that we will be focused on in the coming year. If you don't have a lot of time, page five is an excellent visual summary of the work we do and impact we have. In addition to the priorities highlighted by the Leader, I would encourage you to look at page nine which is a good overview of the major programmes we will be focusing additional attention on this year. This includes starting our new highways operating model, making further progress on our Net Zero by 2030 programme, and helping people to live more independent lives.

Every one of these important pieces of work underpins our agreed and published ambitions for Suffolk, which are promoting and supporting the health and wellbeing of all people in Suffolk; strengthening our local economy; protecting and enhancing our environment; and providing value for money for the Suffolk taxpayer.

We're making Suffolk a stronger, healthier, and greener place to live, work and invest.

All this – and much more – is made possible by funding from central government and local taxpayers; so, for that we say thank you. We know that the cost of living is increasing pressure on household budgets, so our promise is to make the best possible use of every pound.

Despite all this excellent work, I must be frank with you. Across local government, it is recognised that unless the true cost of providing local public services is recognised and provided for, the obstacles we face may well become insurmountable. This is of course the case in adult and children's services, but also throughout the broad range of services we deliver every day.

The Government has recognised this fact in our 2023-24 financial settlement, providing support to help with the cost of inflation and giving us an indication of funding for 2024-25 – so that we can plan further ahead. But this needs to become a permanent feature, so we will continue to make the case for public services and fairer funding for Suffolk.

I would like to finish by thanking all my colleagues for their continued commitment and service to the council. I thank our partners too. We do not work in isolation, so the strength of the Suffolk system is a key asset to support our communities.

I commend this plan to you and look forward to working with you as we deliver its outcomes for Suffolk.

SUFFOLK COUNTY COUNCIL IN NUMBERS



Suffolk
County Council

5,696

(Headcount) staff working for the council, excluding school staff (Nov 2022)



10%

Of the UK's planned energy Nationally Significant Infrastructure projects to be located across Suffolk



47%

Of total procurement spend with Suffolk suppliers (Q2, 2022-23)

91%

Customer satisfaction with council's customer services (Q2, 2022-23)



4,050

Marriage/civil partnership ceremonies held (12 months to Sep 2022)

7%

Annual reduction in cost of running Endeavour House per member of staff (2022-23)

Homes for Ukraine

1,100 guests / **450** hosts (as at Nov 2022)



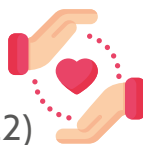
£1,167

Net current expenditure per head of Suffolk's resident population (2021-22)



973

Children in Care (Dec 2022)



3,850

Apprenticeship starts across Suffolk for all ages (Academic year 2021-22)



5,511

Fire incidents attended (2021-22)



36,257

Highways customer enquiries logged for further action (12 months to Sep 2022)



42.4%

Of household waste reused, recycled, or composted (Q1, 2022-23)



Carbon emissions across SCC buildings (tCO₂e) – 7,574 metric tonnes of Carbon Dioxide Equivalent (2021-22)

126,130

Customer contacts through our Contact Centre (12 months to Sep 2022)



3.8%

Of working days lost to council staff sickness (12 months to Sep 22)



£12.8m

'Invest to save' programme to decarbonise our buildings



98%

Of Suffolk premises with access to superfast broadband (Dec 2022)



£10.2m

Allocated to help households in Suffolk (Household Support Fund – April to Oct 2022)

6,847

Children with Education, Health & Care Plans (Sep 2022)



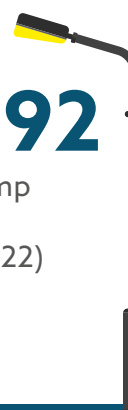
20%

Reduction in carbon footprint of largest five buildings on council's estate (2022)



40,692

LED streetlamp upgrades (as at Nov 2022)



445.2

Admissions to residential and nursing care homes, per 100,000 population age 65+ (2021-22)



> SETTING THE SCENE

2022 was a year of volatility. Globally, there was the illegal invasion of Ukraine, the energy crisis and economic uncertainty. In the UK, amidst a shifting political landscape, Rishi Sunak was appointed Prime Minister in October 2022. In November 2022, the UK's annual rate of inflation reached 10.7% – down from a 41-year high of 11.1% in October - driven by post-pandemic supply chain problems, the war in Ukraine, and rising petrol, food and energy prices worldwide.

Even with the significant energy support measures put in place by Government, the surging cost of living is squeezing budgets. Councils are at the frontline and are already leading the way in providing support to households and businesses, including through the Household Support Fund.

The dramatic increase in inflation has also impacted the finances of councils. In October 2022, new analysis from the County Council Network showed county authorities in England facing £1.73 billion in inflationary and demand costs in 2022-23. These pressures were predicted to rise to £1.78bn in 2023-24 – a combined £3.5bn over the two years.

The Autumn Statement 2022 committed to the same departmental budgets announced at Spending Review 2021. This, supported by an increase in core spending in the local government settlement for 2023-24, makes the financial outlook for county councils better than expected for this year. However, longer-term financial planning remains a concern. Councils will continue to face difficult decisions, with little resource available to deliver improvements to vital services, and a reduction in planned funding growth from 2025 could prove extremely difficult.

The Chancellor also announced in the Autumn Statement 2022 that local authorities will be given additional flexibility over the setting of council tax rates from April 2023. Local authorities will be able to raise core council tax by 3% without a referendum, with the social care precept limit rising to 2%. While council tax is an important funding stream, it is not the only solution to the long-term pressures facing councils, raising different amounts in different parts of the country - unrelated to need - and adding to the financial pressures facing households.

In December 2022, the proposed Suffolk Devolution Deal was published, with a 'minded to' signing from the Minister and County Council Leader. As part of its commitment to levelling up, Government wants to give more local areas greater power to drive local growth and tackle local challenges. It has committed to agreeing devolution deals with all areas in England that want one by 2030. Devolving investment and powers to local areas will be vital in improving the productivity of local economies in the long run. Suffolk's proposed Devolution Deal, if approved, will enable greater local decision making to better meet local need and unleash the potential of Suffolk residents and businesses. Worth nearly £500m over 30 years, the proposed Deal will provide freedoms, flexibilities and funding that will enable Suffolk to have more local control and certainty to navigate the challenges and uncertainty that lie ahead.

Pressure on the adult social care system remains constant with growing demand, concerns about the position and experience of unpaid carers, a fragile provider market, reductions in quality and choice within local care markets, and difficulty in recruiting and retaining care workers. It is also a time of change in the adult social care sector, with a new Care Quality Commission assurance framework being introduced no sooner than April 2023 to assess the performance of local authorities in delivering their adult social care functions. Integration with health services is also under way in Integrated Care Systems, which began operating as statutory bodies in July 2022.



> SETTING THE SCENE

Recognising the pressures on adult social care, the Chancellor announced in the Autumn Statement 2022 that the planned social care charging reforms, including a cap on the cost of care and a more generous means test, would be delayed from October 2023 to October 2025. This provides the opportunity for councils to work with Government on how to sustainably implement this significant change in provision, particularly given the existing pressures on the care workforce and markets.

Children's social care services remain under pressure too. In November 2022, the Association of Directors of Children's Services latest safeguarding report found there is "no more fat to trim" in children's services budgets, which require £778m just to "stay still" amid soaring demand.

Councils also face ongoing demand in supporting pupils with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). Nationally, Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission (CQC) are introducing a new joint framework for inspecting provision for children and young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) within a local area. The framework is being introduced at a time when virtually every aspect of the SEND system is facing reform. Government is still reviewing the responses to the SEND and Alternative Provision Green Paper, and the sector awaits Government's full response to the final report of the Independent Review of Children's Social Care, published in May 2022.



School funding did receive a welcome boost in the Autumn Statement 2022, with a real-terms increase in per pupil funding from that committed at Spending Review 2021. The core schools budget in England will receive £2.3 billion of additional funding in each of 2023-24 and 2024-25.

The environment remains a top priority for Government. In November 2022, at the 27th United Nations Climate Change Conference of the Parties (COP27), the Prime Minister pledged that the UK would fulfil our ambitious commitment to reduce emissions by at least 68% by 2030. Suffolk County Council too is moving ahead with its ambition to be net zero by 2030. In 2022, the council published its first Net Zero Carbon Budget for its own operations.

In a statement to the House of Commons on COP27, the Prime Minister urged that we need to move further and faster to transition to renewable energy and make this country a clean energy superpower. Government aims to accelerate our transition to renewables and create more high-wage, high-skill jobs across the UK in the industries of the future. Government will also invest in building new nuclear power stations for the first time since the 1990s, with the Autumn Statement 2022 confirming that Sizewell C in Suffolk will go ahead. The move to clean renewables and nuclear will support Government's commitment to reduce emissions, decarbonise the power system by 2035 (subject to security of supply) and reach net zero by 2050. Enhanced by its proposed Devolution Deal, Suffolk has enormous potential to contribute to clean and secure energy for the UK. However, the council is clear that this must have the least possible impact on Suffolk's communities and unique natural environment, while maximising the economic opportunities for our county.

The UK Government's latest Nationally Determined Contribution on how it will honour international agreements to reduce carbon emissions recognises that local authorities play an essential role in driving action to tackle climate change with significant influence in energy, housing and transport. Tackling climate change is also a massive economic development opportunity that could benefit local economies across the board. Energy efficiency measures and locally-led investment in skills and employment can make a long-term difference to those on the edge of poverty.

In 2023-24, Suffolk County Council will continue to work with partners, local communities, and through its proposed Devolution Deal, if approved, to ensure we achieve the best possible outcomes for the people of Suffolk.



> OUR OBJECTIVES

Delivering in 2023-24

This document is the second Annual Plan based on our Corporate Strategy 2022-26.

The Plan has a clear focus on the following four objectives:



Promoting and supporting the health and wellbeing of all people in Suffolk.



Strengthening our local economy.



Protecting and enhancing our environment.



Providing value for money for the Suffolk taxpayer.

Suffolk County Council is responsible for major services which are provided countywide, including:

- Social care for older people who are physically or mentally vulnerable, or have a mental health disorder, those with physical or learning disabilities, and children and families who need protection and support.
- Public Health, including the delivery or commissioning of health services such as drug and alcohol services, sexual health services, health visiting, school nursing, domestic abuse services, and services to support health behaviours including stopping smoking and maintaining a healthy weight.
- Education and learning, including supporting schools to deliver education and delivering The Adult Learning Service.
- Supporting children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).
- Environment, including net zero, conservation of the countryside and public access to it, waste disposal, waste reduction and recycling, and archaeological services.
- Roads and transport, including maintaining and improving Suffolk's roads, footpaths and public rights of way; road safety; making it safer, easier and more enjoyable for everyone to walk, cycle and wheel in and around the county; and public transport coordination.
- Fire & Rescue Service and emergency planning.
- Trading Standards support and assistance to both consumers and businesses. Trading Standards advise on and enforce laws that govern the way we buy, sell, rent and hire goods and services, including tackling rogue traders and protecting people from damaging scams and fraud.
- Registration of births and deaths, the Coroner service, marriages, civil partnerships, citizenships and certificates.
- Culture, heritage and leisure, including archives, libraries and support for arts and museums.

Efficient and effective delivery of these services is key, and we will ensure their delivery supports the delivery of our four objectives.

> UPDATE ON MAJOR PROGRAMMES 2022-26

In 2022, the council set out its major programmes for the next four years. These aim to mitigate the demand and pressures we face and to improve services. The programmes are underpinned by a range of financial, improvement, policy and infrastructure drivers.

Our major programmes for 2022-26 are:

Promoting and supporting the health and wellbeing of all people in Suffolk

- People First
- Independent Lives
- SEND
(special educational needs and disabilities)

Protecting and enhancing our environment

- Net Zero By 2030 Implementation Plan
- Suffolk Climate Emergency Plan
- Growing Biodiversity in Suffolk

Strengthening our local economy

- Lowestoft Gull Wing Bridge
- Strategic Rail and Route Campaigns and Business Cases
- Housing Joint Venture

Providing value for money for the Suffolk taxpayer

- School Travel
- Highways New Operating Model
- Ways We Work
- Investment in footpaths and drainage

During the first 12 months a new Transformation Board has been set up to provide oversight of the major programmes. The Transformation Board regularly considers the performance indicators and milestone plans for each of the programmes and seeks assurance that they will deliver the required outcomes and impact. Performance for each of the programmes is reported through the council's dashboard-based corporate performance report. See the next page for some 2022-23 highlights and milestones for our major programmes.

Innovation and continuous service improvement

Transformation and service improvement activity in the council is not limited to the major programmes. The council is developing a continuous service improvement culture where all services routinely consider how to improve customer experience, productivity, efficiency and effectiveness, and in particular how technology and innovation can help achieve this. The council's Innovation Fund enables services to test and embed innovative solutions and tools to help improve business processes and the experience of users. Discovery and prototype projects in areas such as artificial intelligence, machine learning and virtual reality are ensuring the council is well-positioned to anticipate and benefit from the latest cutting-edge advances in technology and adapt to changes in customer behaviour and preferences in how they access council information and services. See page 11 for some innovation and continuous improvement case studies.

SOME MAJOR PROGRAMMES HIGHLIGHTS AND MILESTONES FOR 2022-23



£250k

Savings - Digital Care (cashable & cumulative) (as at end Dec 2022)

People First

£3.3m

Savings - Customer Reviews (as at end Nov 2022)

£651k

Savings - Digital Care (as at end Dec 2022)

Independent Lives

82.2%

Proportion of adults with a learning disability living in their own home or with their family [Q3 2022-23]

Lowestoft Gull Wing Bridge

Colin Law Way opened to road traffic

First bridge span installed over East Suffolk railway line



Investment in Footpaths and Drainage

11.61 miles

Of footway maintenance completed (end Q3 2022-23)

96

Drainage issues resolved (end Q3 2022-23)

Strategic Rail and Route Campaigns and Business Cases

A12/A14 Copdock Junction Consultation

Ely/Haughley Business Case



Housing Joint Venture

Lovell Partnerships selected as joint venture partner



Newmarket St Felix Development Brief consulted on/adopted



Net Zero by 2030 Implementation Plan

20% Reduction in carbon footprint of Suffolk County Council buildings and streetlights



Suffolk Climate Emergency Plan

1,289 Domestic solar panel and battery systems ordered through Solar Together 2022



Growing Biodiversity in Suffolk

42,013

Metres of highway verge managed as Roadside Nature Reserves

30%

Of SCC land assets to be more biodiverse by 2030

49,751

Trees and hedge saplings planted in 2022-23

School Travel

Parental mileage rate increased from 25p to HMRC 45p per mile



Highways New Operating Model

3 Bidders' detailed tenders and prices submitted



Streetlighting contract procurement launched

14% more SCC staff using Endeavour House as their base for hybrid working as our building rationalisation gets underway

3,084 Average number of staff connecting remotely (Jan 2023)

Ways we work
Modern. Flexible. Effective.

Innovation and continuous service improvement case studies



Homes for Ukraine

When the Homes for Ukraine scheme was launched by Government in March 2022, allowing people living in the UK to sponsor a Ukrainian national or family to come and live with them, the council moved quickly to develop the systems and processes to administer the scheme locally in Suffolk. In a matter of weeks, the council developed a new digital system to manage the end-to-end process and facilitate collaboration with our partners.

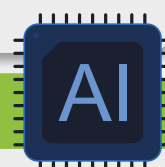
Sponsor data flows from central Government into the local system where workflows initiate the necessary checks and property inspections to be carried out before guests are placed with suitable sponsors. As of November 2022, the scheme had successfully placed over 1,100 Ukrainian guests with 450 sponsor households.



Local Welfare Assistance Scheme

The Local Welfare Assistance Scheme (LWAS) supports people who are facing financial hardship by providing a cash payment or cash out voucher. In October 2022, a refreshed LWAS service was launched by the council to accept applications directly from the public. The service is now more accessible, and it is easier both for members of the public to apply and for LWAS staff to process applications. This was all achieved through the development of an innovative digital system that includes a smart online form, with built-in eligibility checking, for people to submit applications. Applications are then managed within a simple, easy-to-use workflow, which enables quick and easy processing and reduced waiting times for applicants.

The new system also includes simple checks to combat potential fraud in the process. Integration with the council's finance system ensures payments are made without delay for eligible applicants. In October and November 2022 alone, over 2,700 applications for support were received.



Contact Centre Optimisation

The council used cutting-edge artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning technology to help analyse its contact centre demand data. Working with vast datasets, the council was able to use the technology to efficiently analyse the drivers of demand, identify opportunities to increase online self-service, and explore areas that would be suitable for automated assistance channels, such as chatbots. By the end of the project, the council had obtained valuable insights into customer contact centre demand, which has informed business decision making and resource planning. In just five weeks, the council uncovered several areas where AI could enable cost-savings and improve customer experience.



New Suffolk County Council website

The council's main website is used by more than 100,000 people a month to access council information and services. In December 2022, the council launched its new faster, simpler, easier to use, and more accessible website. The council's website is now hosted on more secure, resilient and scalable cloud infrastructure, which is fit for the future. The new website provides residents with a more modern and visually engaging site and features more images of Suffolk's people, places and services.

> OUR OBJECTIVES

Promoting and supporting the health and wellbeing of all people in Suffolk

Promoting and supporting the health and wellbeing of all Suffolk's people is a vital role for the county council. It is at the heart of both the services we provide and our wider roles as a local leader, employer, and owner of assets. This objective relies on our maximising our ability to innovate, adapt and work in partnership with individuals, communities and partners.

While the health and wellbeing of the whole local population is vital, the county council has a particular focus on enabling the most vulnerable Suffolk residents to live as safely, independently, healthily and well as possible.

Promoting and supporting the health and wellbeing of all people in Suffolk encompasses a wide range of activities, including:

- Prioritising children and young people requiring extra support and protecting those at risk.
- Improving SEND (special educational needs and disabilities) services.
- Supporting adults who require care and support to lead independent and fulfilling lives.
- Supporting good physical and mental health for all people in Suffolk.
- Keeping people in Suffolk safe.



IN 2023-24, WE WILL:

1. Collaborate on, promote and deliver the Joint Suffolk All Age Carers' Strategy 2022-2027.
2. Deliver on the sufficiency plan for children's homes accommodation, including new solo provision and a specialist home for disabled children.
3. Continue to work with parents, carers and young people, as well as our partners, to deliver further improvements in SEND services.
4. Complete a self-assessment of our strengths and weaknesses in delivering adult social care functions, in preparation for the new independent Care Quality Commission (CQC) inspection regime, to inform an action plan for future service development.
5. Prepare for significant statutory change in further protecting people who do not have capacity to make their own decisions by delivering Liberty Protection Safeguards.
6. Lead work with NHS colleagues and wider partners to develop a Prevention Action Plan and to implement the service and data improvements needed to embed CORE20PLUS5, which will improve population health outcomes, reduce health inequalities, and prevent future ill-health in Suffolk.
7. Continue to work with local NHS partners and the Department of Health and Social Care to explore wider devolution of powers and funding to the local health and care system as part of the proposed Suffolk Devolution Deal.
8. Coordinate countywide information on cost of living support, and work with the wider system to ensure local and national funding and support is delivered efficiently to those who require it.
9. Expand the council's integrated health and care technology offer, Cassius+, including greater take-up through NHS organisations in Suffolk, Children and Young People's Services, and the private market, to help more people to live safe and independent lives.
10. Deliver the Year 1 objectives of the Fire Service's Community Risk Management Plan to protect vulnerable people living in rural and urban communities, through prevention, protection and response activity targeted on risk, to keep our communities as safe as possible.

OUR OBJECTIVES

Strengthening our local economy

This objective is focussed on maximising economic opportunities that benefit everyone, so that no one is left behind. A strong economy is vital to ensuring Suffolk's people and places can fulfil their potential, and economic wellbeing has a significant impact on physical and mental health and wellbeing

We will work with local businesses, communities and other partners to ensure that the Suffolk economy, with its international gateways, connectivity to the UK, and vital key sectors fulfils its potential, and that its residents can contribute to and benefit from that.

IN 2023-24, WE WILL:

1. Progress the construction phase of the Gullwing Bridge in Lowestoft, installing the remaining six approach viaduct spans and the main bascule span in the lake itself.
2. Begin work on our first housing joint venture site in West Row, which will deliver 108 new homes.
3. Continue development of the A12 Major Road Network project to support growth on the corridor, including Brightwell Lakes and the Energy Coast.
4. Develop the 'A14 Growth Corridor' to maximise opportunities for economic growth, linking Felixstowe and the Energy Coast to the Midlands Engine and Northern Powerhouse.
5. Complete procurement of the new Highways Services Contract, ensuring it offers maximum economic and social benefit to Suffolk and its communities.
6. Support the SME supply chain that delivers some highway services in Suffolk by reviewing the Highways Services Contract price list rates monthly to account for increases in fuel, material and labour costs, providing a sustainable environment for continued work on the contract.
7. Recognising the economic value of the care market in Suffolk, refresh the council's Care Market and Support Sustainability Strategy to reflect long-term changes following the pandemic.
8. Publish evidence-based guidance for developers and planners that sets out clearly what housing and environment options give people the best chance to maximise their chance for a healthy life where they live and work.
9. Work in partnership to refresh Suffolk's economic priorities, including considering the implications of the proposed Suffolk Devolution Deal and how we will deliver our priorities.
10. Work with local partners to maximise the opportunities associated with having a devolved Adult Education Budget for Suffolk as part of the proposed Suffolk Devolution Deal.

> OUR OBJECTIVES

Protecting and enhancing our environment

Suffolk's natural and historic environment is one of its greatest strengths. It is why so many enjoy living and working in and visiting Suffolk and, therefore, has a vital role in improving health and wellbeing. Suffolk's environment also makes a significant economic contribution, as a leader in green growth with its renewables and technology sectors, as well as its visitor economy.

The county council has declared a climate emergency and recognises both the urgency for action and the scale of the challenge to becoming carbon neutral. We will continue to change our own approaches to progress to net zero, as well as work to encourage others' behaviour changes. Both are needed to protect and enhance Suffolk's environment and biodiversity, while also reducing harmful carbon emissions.

IN 2023-24, WE WILL:

1. Support the development of community energy projects across the county.
2. Encourage the shift to low carbon transport by installing a further 200 community-managed electric vehicle charging points, opening a second rapid-charging station on the outskirts of Ipswich, and expanding charging facilities in our own buildings.
3. Implement the first phase of electric cars into the council's pool car fleet and manage the design and installation of future-proofed electric charging infrastructure across our estate.
4. Further reduce energy use, and continue to reduce reliance on gas, in our five most carbon intensive buildings, while maximising the potential for self-generation of electricity. This will minimise the financial impact of energy price increases and ensure the estate is in the optimal position to transition to low carbon fuel sources.
5. Work towards improving Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) ratings at highway depots.
6. Place the environment at the heart of the new Highways contract and ensure our new provider works to reduce emissions and deliver biodiversity improvements across the highway network, including working towards glyphosate-free treatments for highway weeds in 2023-24.
7. Invest £2m in highway flooding prevention in 2023-24, as part of the council's £10m additional flood risk management funding through to 2024-25.
8. Work closely with partner councils in the Suffolk Waste Partnership to prepare for major changes to waste collection and treatment in line with emerging Government policy.
9. Improve Suffolk's waste infrastructure to support increases in re-use and recycling, including upgrading Foxhall re-use shop and recycling centre and replacing Haverhill recycling centre.
10. Through delivery of the proposed Suffolk Devolution Deal, maximise the opportunity to work with Government on ways to achieve net zero, initially boosted by £3 million to expand the Greener Homes 0% Loan Scheme that improves energy efficiency and renewable generation for households across Suffolk.



> OUR OBJECTIVES

Providing value for money for the Suffolk taxpayer



To meet the ambitious objectives set out in this document and provide the best outcomes for Suffolk residents, it is crucial that the county council delivers the best possible value for money. This includes how we manage all our resources, such as staff, buildings, estates, and budgets. The cumulative pressures of demand and budget constraints means achieving that is tough. However, the county council's leadership will be bold and challenging in ensuring value for money and accountability to local people in everything that we do.

IN 2023-24, WE WILL:

1. Develop plans to ensure the additional funding devolved through the proposed Suffolk Devolution Deal, if approved, is invested effectively to enhance positive outcomes for Suffolk residents and businesses. This is particularly important for the £16 million per year over 30 years Investment Fund.
2. Continue to transform our customer services through new technology, including the development and implementation of intelligent automated assistance over the web and voice, and the use of Messenger and WhatsApp to meet customers on the channel of their choice and offer greater access and convenience.
3. Make it easier for people to access the council online by introducing a Suffolk Highways Facebook page; launching new and improved websites, including Healthy Suffolk and Suffolk Fostering and Adoption; and improving accessibility across all our websites.
4. Establish a council-wide Innovation and Improvement Network to share inspiration and best practice and drive the efficiency and effectiveness of services.
5. Continue to make the council's operations more efficient by, for example, improving cash receipting, data management, income and payment processes for users across the council, and improved forecasting and medium-term financial planning.
6. Ensure we are making the best use of, and getting the best value from, our corporate headquarter campus. Making the best use of our space will allow us to work more efficiently and create opportunities to share spaces with our public sector partners. This could bring in income for the council and enable more effective partnership working.
7. Make use of the council's assets, both land and money, to address gaps in care such as extra care housing and new models of supported housing, where investment makes good business sense.
8. Ensure the best use of our resources by renewing our healthy behaviours, substance misuse and sexual health services, and strengthening our digital services, so we can focus physical resources on the most vulnerable and those at risk of the greatest inequalities.
9. Play a major role in building one linked health and care dataset for adults across Suffolk. We will also provide new analytics, with health colleagues, to help design and deliver new, targeted health and wellbeing interventions.
10. Launch a new, four-year Corporate Workforce Strategy, to run from April 2023 to March 2027, which sets a clear direction to ensure the council is an employer of choice, able to attract and retain a highly-engaged workforce to deliver our Corporate Strategy and objectives.

> OUR FINANCES

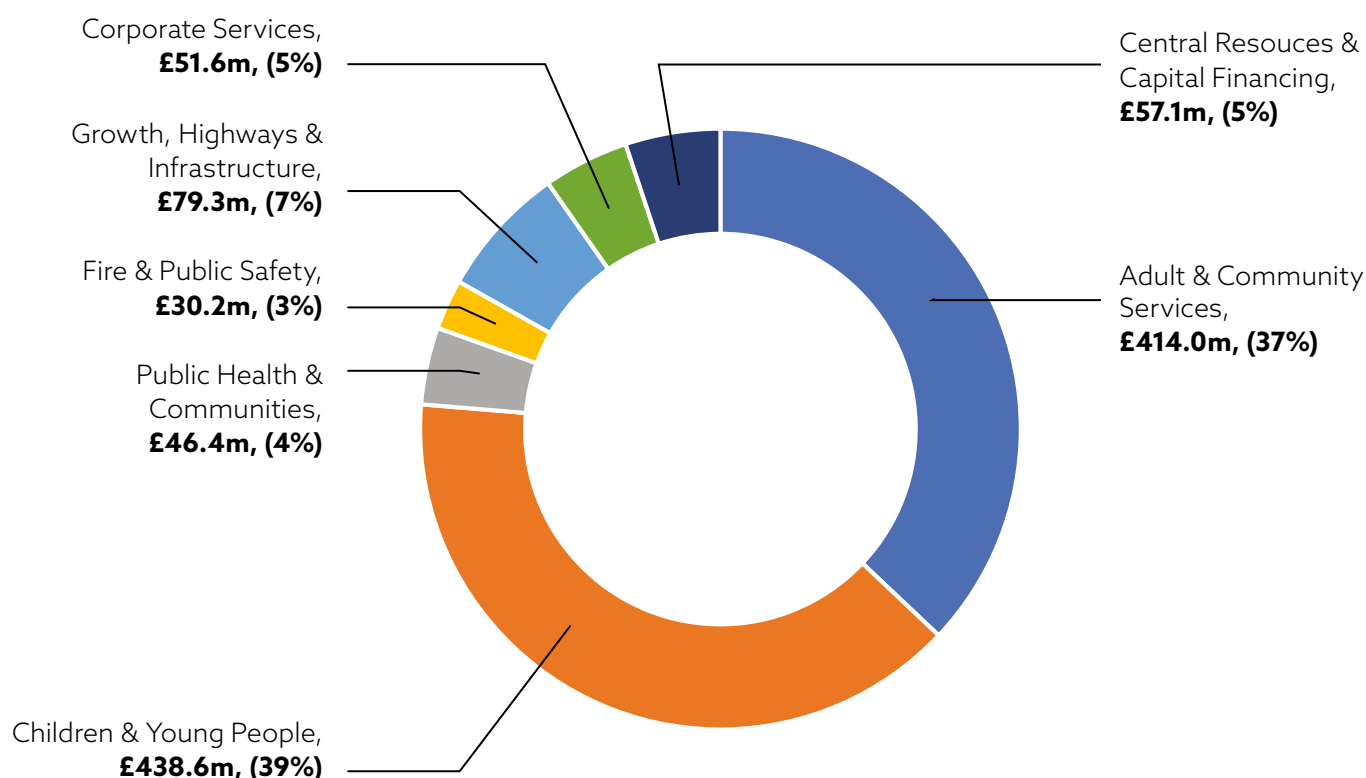
The 2023-24 budget has been set against a backdrop of over two years of significant upheaval and disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, leaving a legacy of service pressures. The position has been further complicated by the Ukraine war. This, amongst other factors, has led to a worsening of the national economic situation and contributed to inflation rising into double digits, well beyond the levels projected when the 2022-23 budget was set.

Despite these challenges, the council has been able to set a balanced budget for 2023-24 that fully funds all verified cost pressures identified by directorates. Although this will require achieving £15.6 million of new savings and mitigations in 2023-24, these do not involve any reduction to, or removal of, service provision to Suffolk's residents or businesses.

What we spend

The chart below shows how the council will use its budgeted gross expenditure of £1,117.2 million in 2023-24, spread across its six directorates and its centrally managed functions.

2023-24 Gross Expenditure Budget (£1,117.2million)

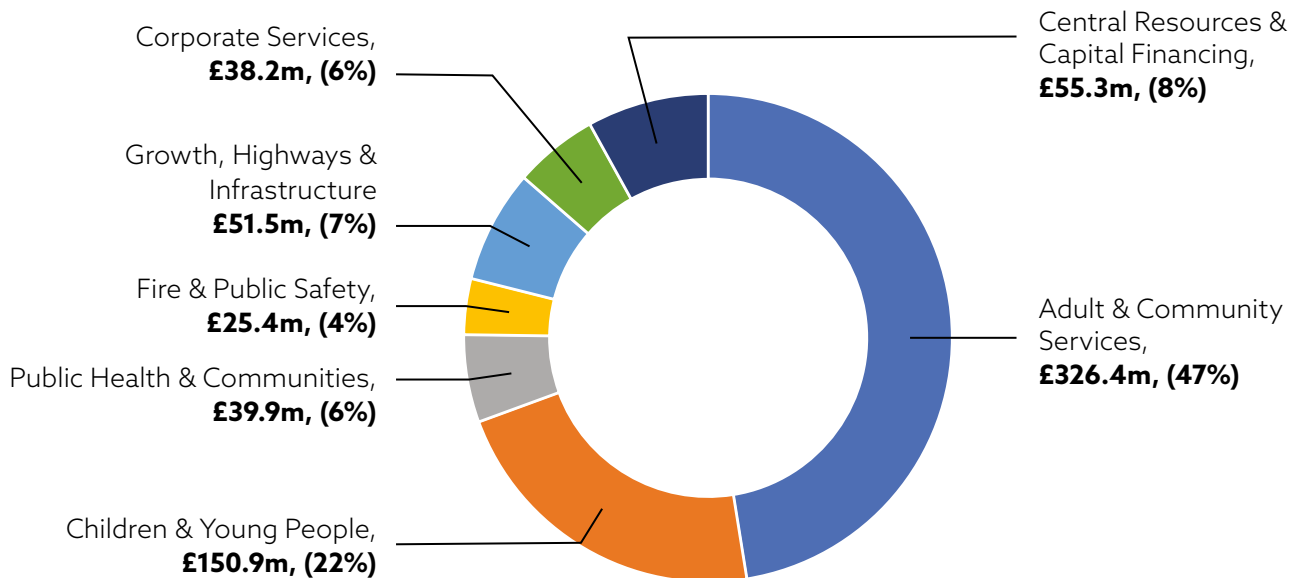


The 2023-24 gross expenditure budget is offset by £291.9 million of service grants (including £238.6 million of Dedicated Schools Grant), £129.0 million of external contributions (such as fees and charges), and a £8.7 million contribution from service reserves, to give a 2023-24 **net expenditure budget of £687.6 million**.

> OUR FINANCES

The chart below shows how the council will use its net expenditure of £687.6 million.

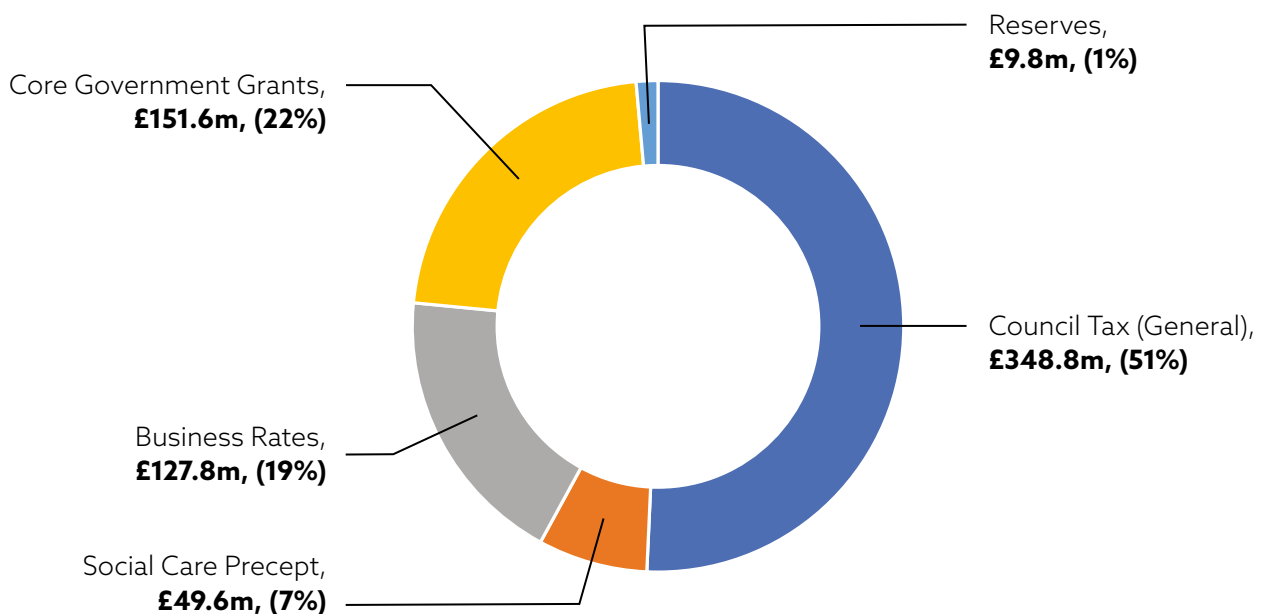
2023-24 Net Expenditure Budget (£687.6million)



Where the money comes from

The council will fund its 2023-24 budget through a combination of an increase in Government grants announced in the local government finance settlement, increasing council tax by 3.99%, and making a one-off use of reserves. The chart below outlines our funding sources.

2023-24 Core Funding Budget (£687.6million)



> OUR FINANCES

Our forecast budget gap between 2023 and 2026

Although the council has a balanced budget for 2023-24, and is forecasting a balanced budget in 2024-25, a budget gap is forecast to emerge from 2025-26 as pressures are expected to rise at a faster rate than funding. This gap is expected to reach **£10.2 million** by 2025-26 if there is no intervention. Although our immediate focus will be to deliver the savings plans identified for 2023-24 and 2024-25, further plans will need to be developed to manage the emerging gap from 2025-26 and ensure that the council can remain sustainable financially.

Investing in Suffolk

Our careful approach to financial management over previous years has ensured we are in a strong enough position to commit to investing some **£436.9 million** in assets and planned infrastructure projects from 2023-24 to 2026-27. This work, known as the council's capital programme, is over and above the **£687.6 million** budget used for day-to-day service expenditure, and includes:

- £129 million for upgrading and renewing Suffolk's highways. This includes £15.3 million of the council's £20 million commitment to improve footways and drainage, with the remaining £4.7 million due to have been spent in 2022-23.
- £83.4 million for developing and maintaining schools.
- £49.3 million for upgrading the A12 East of Ipswich.
- £18.2 million for new pupil places for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).
- £11.6 million for investing in measures to reduce carbon emissions.
- £10.7 million to develop household recycling centres across Suffolk.



> SUFFOLK COUNTY COUNCIL'S CARBON BUDGET

Responding to climate change requires greenhouse gas emissions associated with all aspects of our society to be reduced to net zero carbon. This needs to be achieved as soon as practically possible to mitigate future impacts.

Suffolk County Council has produced a Net Zero Carbon Budget for its **own operations**, using 2019-20 as the baseline and working towards a target of achieving net zero by 2030. To tackle the ongoing impacts of climate change, actions that focus on adaptation are also required; these are not addressed in the Carbon Budget. Wider emissions arising from Suffolk society are not included in this Carbon Budget; actions to tackle these emissions are detailed in the Suffolk Climate Emergency Plan.

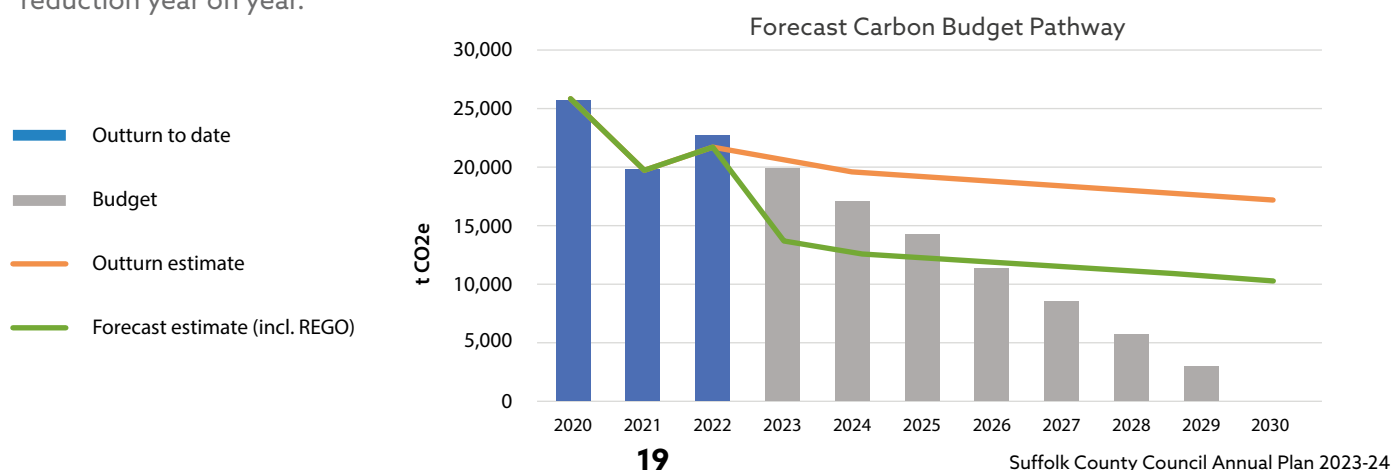
The baseline and previous years' emissions have been established through the collection of emissions data from across Suffolk County Council. Emissions releasing activities are classified into three groups, known as scopes. These are:

- **Scope 1 (Energy direct): Emissions that occur directly from sites or assets owned or controlled by the organisation (e.g., gas boilers at own premises, fleet vehicles).**
- **Scope 2 (Energy indirect): Emissions from purchased energy generated elsewhere (e.g., electricity, heat or steam).**
- **Scope 3 (Other indirect): Emissions that occur due to the organisation's activities/products/services, but that are not directly owned or controlled by the organisation (e.g., travel in employee-owned vehicles or on public transport, purchased goods and services, and waste disposal).**

The collection of the emissions data is a complex process and while the information in this Carbon Budget is comprehensive for Scope 1 and 2, only very limited Scope 3 data is available currently from the council's supply chain. New processes will be put in place to ensure this significant proportion of the council's footprint is recorded in future Carbon Budgets.

The Carbon Budget graph below shows Suffolk County Council's current forecast toward the 2030 net zero target:

- **Reported outturn** – recorded emissions.
- **Forecast outturn** – the reduction path including current projects planned or in place.
- **Forecast outturn (incl. REGO)** – as above but including Renewable Energy Guarantees of Origin (REGO) – i.e., 100% renewable electricity purchased by the council.
- **Annual budget cap** – the required reduction pathway to achieve net zero by 2030, based on a linear reduction year on year.



> SUFFOLK COUNTY COUNCIL'S CARBON BUDGET

The graph clearly shows reductions in the year 2020-21, which were due to the exceptional circumstances related to the COVID-19 pandemic. The 15% drop from the baseline year to 2021/22 can mainly be attributed to:

- A shift to homeworking and more online interactions (reduced commuting/business travel and building energy use).
- More efficient street lighting.
- A reduction in the UK electricity grid emissions.

The net zero target can be met through addressing four broad areas:

- The reduction of demand e.g., through reduced energy consumption, reduced mileage, service redesign and delivery.
- The take-up of low carbon solutions e.g., heating, lighting, and transport.
- Further generation of renewable energy.
- Working with the council's supply chain to reduce emissions in the goods and services that are procured.

The use of offsets, such as purchasing carbon credits or actions like planting trees, will be a last resort and will always be delivered as locally as possible.

The council has committed to the transformation required to move towards the net zero target, and actions include:

- A £12.8m 'invest to save' programme to reduce emissions and future energy costs in our buildings. This includes solar PV and battery storage, LED lighting, heat recovery, upgraded heating controls and monitoring, office rationalisation and switching off unused space. Savings to date include reducing gas consumption in one of our properties, Constantine House, by 80% over a 12-month period.
- A £2.9m investment in electric vehicle charging infrastructure at council office buildings, highway depots and fire stations to enable the switch of small service vehicles and our pool fleet to fully electric by 2025.
- Completion of a project to upgrade over 43,000 street lights to energy-saving LEDs. As a result, 76% less energy is used, and maintenance costs will be reduced. To date, over £2.5m has been saved.
- An ongoing commitment to our Climate Change Commercial Ask, which supports the council's objective to work with the supply chain to record emissions and take procurement decisions that drive down Scope 3 emissions.



A carbon budget showing performance against the net zero carbon target will continue to be presented to the Suffolk County Council Cabinet on an annual basis, alongside the financial budget. The delivery of the existing programme, and the development of future projects to close the gap to net zero, is overseen by a board of senior officers chaired by the council's Executive Director of Growth Highways and Infrastructure.

> OUR PEOPLE

Suffolk County Council's new Corporate Workforce Strategy will run from April 2023 to March 2027. It sets a clear direction to ensure the council is an employer of choice, able to attract and retain a highly-engaged workforce to deliver our Corporate Strategy and objectives.

We will continue to embed hybrid working, strengthen our flexible working approach, and modernise our working styles and environment through our Ways We Work major programme. Hybrid working is a type of flexible working that will optimise our service delivery, balancing some remote/homeworking alongside working together and/or visiting in person in an office/community setting.

This will be underpinned by using digital technology to improve both work efficiency and work-life balance. It will enable more efficient use of our office buildings, supporting our value for money commitment. Policies will be developed to reflect and enable successful hybrid working. Managers will continue to be supported and guided to develop their skills in a hybrid working environment, aiding all staff to successfully adapt and deliver their best.

Delivery of our planned equality outcomes will continue to be prioritised. We will focus on targeted actions that are informed by data, which includes our gender and ethnicity pay gap reports. We will further develop our family-friendly suite of policies to support staff.

We will be further extending and optimising our Oracle Fusion HR and payroll system in 2023-24, providing improved workforce reporting at both a manager and organisational level to accurately inform operational decision making and longer-term strategic planning.

Growth in apprenticeship numbers remains a target. We will continue to maximise the opportunity to upskill existing staff while maintaining a clear focus on providing entry-level career opportunities, ensuring that the range of apprenticeships offered is aligned to our priorities and workforce development plans. We will further support the wider availability and uptake of apprenticeships in Suffolk by promoting and offering apprenticeship levy transfers through the accessible online process we have recently introduced.

We have procured a new provider to deliver our next series of staff engagement surveys, commencing in April 2023. The survey questions will be aligned to our workforce objectives and priorities and the feedback will be presented through an accessible, dynamic, online platform to enable timely and responsive action planning.

The mandatory package of training for staff and managers will be refreshed in 2023-24, to build on the learning delivered in its initial year. Our We ASPIRE values will continue to be embedded in our online learning and policies, with toolkits and resources developed and extended to further strengthen our core values and behaviours.

We continue to work effectively with our partners across the Suffolk system, further integrating services and jointly funding posts. Within the integrated care systems, we are working with Health partners to share and align workforce planning where possible.

Ways we Work

Modern. Flexible. Effective.



> MEASURING OUR PERFORMANCE

Monitoring of the performance measures below is embedded into our regular performance reporting arrangements.

Promoting and supporting the health and wellbeing of all people in Suffolk

Performance Measures	What success looks like	Previous performance	Latest performance	England (average)	Similar councils (average)	Target
% Of eligible children (age 2) accessing funded childcare	Higher is better	84% [Summer term 2021]	85% [Summer term 2022]	62% [Summer term 2022]	72% [Summer term 2022]	No target
% Of eligible children (ages 3 & 4) accessing funded childcare	Higher is better	90% [Summer term 2021]	91% [Summer term 2022]	90% [Summer term 2022]	92% [Summer term 2022]	No target
% Maintained Schools Judged Good or Outstanding	Higher is better	96% [Nov 2021]	97% [Nov 2022]	92% [Nov 2022]	91% [Nov 2022]	Better than England (2022)
Number of children with Education, Health & Care Plans	N.A.	6,133 [Sept 2021]	6,847 [Sept 2022]	5,558 [2020/21]	5,512 [2020/21]	No target
% Education, Health & Care Plans issued within 20 weeks	Higher is better	90% [Dec 2020]	86% [Dec 2021]	65% [2020/21]	55% [2020/21]	No target
Number of Children in Care (CiC)	Lower is better	926 [Dec 2021]	973 [Dec 2022]	N.A.	N.A.	No target
Number of Children in Care (CiC) per 10,000 children aged 0-17	Lower is better	60.6 [Dec 2021]	65.4 [Dec 2022]	60.0 [2020/21]	59.6 [2020/21]	59.0 [2022/23]
Admission to residential and nursing care homes, per 100,000 population (Age 65+)	Lower is better	304.7 [2020/21]	445.2 [2021/22]	498.2 [2021/22]	467.9 [2021/22]	600.9 [2022/23]
% Of customers in residential/nursing care rated Inadequate	Lower is better	1.7% [Sept 2021]	1.5% [Sept 2022]	N.A.	N.A.	1.5% [2022/23]
Number of fire incidents attended	Lower is better	5,415 [2020/21]	5,511 [2021/22]	9,557 [2020/21]	7,408 [2020/21]	No target

> MEASURING OUR PERFORMANCE

Strengthening our local economy

Performance Measures	What success looks like	Previous performance	Latest performance	England (average)	Similar councils (average)	Target
Proportion of 16-17-year-olds in education, training and employment	Higher is better	92.3% [2020/21]	90.8% [2021/22]	92.9% [2021/22]	92.5% [2021/22]	Same or better than national average
Number of apprenticeship starts across Suffolk (all ages)	Higher is better	4,160 (Academic year 2020/21)	3,850 (Academic year 2021/22)	No meaningful comparison	No meaningful comparison	Annual increase
Number of people (all) on Universal Credit (UC)	N.A.	55,524 [Nov 2021]	57,187 [Nov 2022]	No meaningful comparison	No meaningful comparison	No target
% Of principal 'A' roads where maintenance should be considered	Lower is better	2% [2020/21]	2% [2021/22]	4% [2021/22]	4% [2021/22]	No target
Number of Highways customer enquiries logged for further action	Lower is better	46,560 [12 mths to Sept 2021]	36,257 [12 mths to Sept 2022]	Local measure	Local measure	No target
% Suffolk premises with access to superfast broadband	Higher is better	97.5% [Sept 2021]	97.9% [Sept 2022]	98% [Dec 2022]	96.7% [Dec 2021]	98% [2022/23]

> MEASURING OUR PERFORMANCE

Protecting and enhancing our environment

Performance Measures	What success looks like	Previous performance	Latest performance	England (average)	Similar councils (average)	Target
Carbon emissions across SCC buildings (tCO ₂ e) metric tonnes of Carbon Dioxide Equivalent	Lower is better	7,846 [2020/21]	7,574 [2021/22]	Local measure	Local measure	Annual reduction
Per capita CO ₂ emissions (Local Authority influence) Tonnes/person	Lower is better	4.9 [2019]	4.4 [2020]	4.2 [2020]	4.9 [2019]	Annual reduction
Number of Energy Efficiency (ECO) measures per 1,000 households	Higher is better	67.6 [2021]	68.2 [2022]	125.5 [2022]	99.2 [2022]	Annual increase
% Household waste reused, recycled, or composted	Higher is better	43.1% [Q1, 2021/22]	42.4% [Q1, 2022/23]	42.3% [2020/21]	46.5% [2020/21]	Annual increase
% Household waste to energy recovery	Higher is better	56.3% [Q1, 2021/22]	56.3% [Q1, 2022/23]	Local measure	Local measure	Maintain same level

> MEASURING OUR PERFORMANCE

Providing value for money for the Suffolk taxpayer

Performance Measures	What success looks like	Previous performance	Latest performance	England (average)	Similar councils (average)	Target
Total net current expenditure per head of resident population	N.A.	£1,121 [2020/21]	£1,167 [2021/22]	£1,248 [2021/22]	£1,192 [2021/22]	No target
Total expenditure on adult social care per adult (Age 18+)	N.A.	£669 [2020/21]	£635 [2021/22]	£602 [2021/22]	£594 [2021/22]	No target
Total gross expenditure on all children and young people services per head 0-17 years	N.A.	£2,450 [2020/21]	£2,641 [2021/22]	£3,459 [2021/22]	£3,363 [2021/22]	No target
Number of customer contacts through Contact Centre (incl. Blue Badge and Customer First)	Lower is better	297,269 [12 mths to Sept 2021]	275,768 [12 mths to Sept 2022]	Local measure	Local measure	No target
Number of customers accessing the council's main website (unique visits)	Higher is better	3.5 million [12 mths to Sept 2021]	5.3 million [12 mths to Sept 2022]	Local measure	Local measure	No target
Proportion of transactions using online self-service options	Higher is better	77% [12 mths to Sept 2021]	83% [12 mths to Sept 2022]	Local measure	Local measure	5% annual increase
Number of staff working for the council (FTE, excluding schools' staff)	N.A.	4,289 [Sept 2021]	4,377 [Sept 2022]	Local measure	Local measure	No target
% Working days lost to staff sickness	Lower is better	3.1% [12 mths to Sept 2021]	3.8% [12 mths to Sept 2022]	3.4% [LGA – June 2021]	No comparison	Annual reduction

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