



# CORPORATE STRATEGY

2022-26







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# > FOREWORD



**Councillor Matthew Hicks**

Leader of  
Suffolk County Council

It has been said a lot recently that we have all experienced a time like no other over the last 18 months. We have faced great challenges, as individuals, organisations and as a community, but through it all Suffolk has continued to demonstrate its resilience, determination and positive spirit. I very much hope we can all begin to look forward to more positive times again in the near future.

I want to thank you for once more putting your trust and support in us, as we return as the county council's administration for a new four-year electoral cycle. As Council Leader, I am absolutely committed to seeing us build back better, stronger and greener. While the 2021 local elections were run very differently to usual, it was a pleasure to have the opportunity to walk through our communities and speak to residents about their aspirations for work and life in general. It is clear that our local values are still as strong as ever. My thanks go to all who volunteered and worked so hard to help the elections go ahead safely in 2021. It is pleasing to see so many returning councillors, and I am particularly happy to welcome a number of new councillors, supporting their communities for the first time, as we continue to broaden local representation and diversity as an organisation.

As Suffolk begins its recovery from the pandemic, many things will not be the same as before. A new way of life has already begun to present itself, with new opportunities and challenges. As Suffolk's leading public service provider and local employer, Suffolk County Council will be bold and ready to influence the future to the advantage of all. We will make the most of emerging innovations in technology, new ways of working, and environmental innovation to deliver our commitment to become a carbon neutral organisation by 2030.

Suffolk County Council has led, coordinated and supported a range of new approaches to service delivery during the pandemic, working closely with our borough and district council partners, and with NHS services across Suffolk.

We have further developed our strong, collaborative relationships with our partners and will continue to lead on new community initiatives and strategic projects in Suffolk. Together we have an opportunity to build a Suffolk that's better suited to taking on the challenges of the next 30 years, building on the learning we take from our response to the pandemic. I want to see a Suffolk economy that embraces innovation, attracts new investment, makes the best use of technology, and is supported by the training, skills and opportunities to benefit everyone equally.

The county council's ambitious objectives for the next four years are based around the 'Four Pillars' from our manifesto. Our promise to the people of Suffolk is that we will lead the county through recovery:

- Promoting and supporting the health and wellbeing of all people in Suffolk.
- Strengthening Suffolk's economy.
- Protecting and enhancing Suffolk's environment.
- Providing value for money for the Suffolk taxpayer.

Throughout this document, you will learn more about how these objectives provide the foundation for our ambitious objectives, as we continue to invest in services and projects that benefit Suffolk. This includes continuing to create new school places for children with special educational needs and disabilities, and providing the appropriate level of care for adults and young people who need support. We are investing in new infrastructure, like the landmark Gull Wing bridge in Lowestoft, and we will be upgrading hundreds of miles of pavements and footpaths and addressing local flooding issues. We remain focussed on the environment, launching new services like the first fully electric community bus service, and rolling out more electric vehicle charging points.

We can do all this because we continue to deliver value for money through considered, prudent financial management. Our responsibility to spend taxpayers' money wisely, and rise to the challenge of climate change, will continue to drive the strategic decisions we make. I look forward to the next four years with real positivity as, while there may be challenges along the way, I know that our focus will enable us to build back better, stronger and greener.



# FOREWORD



**Nicola Beach**

Chief Executive of  
Suffolk County Council

**W**e are constantly evolving as a public service organisation, reflecting the priorities of our communities and adapting the services we provide through innovation and best practice to ensure we continue to support Suffolk, drive prosperity and respond to the climate emergency.

In 2019, we invited a small number of our local government peers from leading authorities to learn more about how we do things in Suffolk and to provide us with constructive challenge on how we can do things better and make the best use of our budget and fantastic staff. While I was pleased that we received a very positive peer review report, confirming our strengths in delivering value for money and working collaboratively with our local partners, the council's political leadership and my executive team and I were equally keen to see us embrace some of the constructive learning and recommendations made by the group.

It has been absolutely right for us to focus our collective energies over the past 18 months on responding to the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic in Suffolk. Now, as we look ahead to a period of recovery, our Corporate Strategy for 2022-26 incorporates many of the elements identified through the recent peer review. This includes creating a bold strategic approach focused on how we will support those most in need in Suffolk and how we can drive local investment, while maintaining our commitment to reducing our environmental impact and making the most of every Suffolk pound. As a major local employer and public service provider, Suffolk County Council is best placed to help set the pace of recovery across the county, through positive collaboration with strategic partners and improving the way we support, communicate and engage with residents and businesses.

Throughout the pandemic, our staff have continued to adapt and demonstrate exemplary behaviours and values, in incredibly challenging times, to ensure continued levels of service and focus on those who need support. Newly created teams successfully coordinated the supply of personal

protective equipment across the county, and we rapidly set up community resilience schemes to ensure residents received food and support packages where needed. An organisation is only as good as the people who work within it, and I know our staff are committed to delivering and improving local services for the communities they serve and live in. Our 2020 staff survey had the highest-ever participation rate, with many positive increases across a range of work-life indicators and in the level of morale in teams and services. The efforts of our staff demonstrate the organisation's behavioural values of WE ASPIRE, which underpin our approach to supporting our customers and our colleagues. WE ASPIRE clearly reflects our increased commitment to and emphasis on equality across the organisation. Suffolk County Council embraces the value of individuals by celebrating the diversity of our workforce and providing equal opportunities for all. That commitment extends to our communities, and we are committed to providing services that are fair and accessible to everyone.

As we look ahead to the next four years and what we seek to achieve as an organisation, we recognise that every penny counts and every minute matters. We will continue to have an agile approach to how our services operate, making the best use of resources, technology and assets. The last 18 months have taught us a lot about how we can work differently to achieve positive outcomes. So, we will keep an open mind to the ways we might change, innovate and adapt as we strive to continually improve our services and support, through the most efficient use of our resources.

This document cites a range of major projects and initiatives that Suffolk County Council seeks to deliver over the next four years. It is a bold, ambitious strategy that seeks to support our communities, keep us all connected, and help us live in a healthy, safe environment.

We all have a part to play in shaping the future of Suffolk.

## > CONTEXT

The launch of our Corporate Strategy 2022-26 comes just over 18 months since COVID-19 was declared a pandemic. The Government's response to the pandemic has now moved away from stringent restrictions on everyone's day-to-day lives, towards advising people on how to protect themselves and others as the country learns to live with the virus. Suffolk County Council will be there to advise and support communities and businesses as they adjust to the new normal.

Local government has faced unprecedented challenges as a result of the spread of the pandemic and Suffolk County Council has worked at pace to adapt and manage, designing a range of new solutions to meet local community needs. From what has been a difficult time nationally, we need to build on our learning and successful response to the pandemic, as a number of challenges are expected to continue into 2022 and beyond.

Suffolk County Council's response to COVID-19 has relied on strong and productive working relationships with district and borough councils, the NHS, Suffolk Police and other emergency services, armed forces, voluntary and community organisations, and many other partners working together as part of the Suffolk Resilience Forum. The Suffolk Public Sector Leaders group provides leadership on key strategic issues across the county and has an agreed Strategic Recovery approach with clear priorities and programmes of work.

The council's role as an anchor institution has never been more evident than during the pandemic. Suffolk County Council does not just deliver public services; it is rooted in Suffolk and is a significant employer and purchaser of goods and services supporting local supply chains. We can and will use our assets, resources, leadership and influence to continue to impact positively on our residents' health and wellbeing and reduce the inequalities exacerbated by COVID-19.

Despite the challenges posed by COVID-19, national and local Government, businesses and communities continue to come together to tackle the climate emergency. The UK Government has introduced a legally binding target to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to net zero by 2050 – the first major economy in the world to legislate a zero net emissions target. The Government has outlined a 10-point plan for a Green Industrial Revolution and published the Energy White Paper and the Environment Bill. The UK will host the 26th United Nations Climate Change Conference of the Parties (COP26) in November 2021. This will be a critical event for international efforts to prevent the worst effects of climate change.

Suffolk County Council declared a Climate Emergency in March 2019 and our ambition is to be net zero by 2030.

Going forward, the council will need to take its aim of being a carbon neutral authority into account across all tenders, projects and initiatives as well as in our behaviours and the way we work. As a result of collaborative work with public sector partners, a Suffolk Climate Emergency Plan was agreed in June 2021. The plan details further actions to support Suffolk's contribution to reducing emissions that support the global commitment to limit the impact of climate change.



## > CONTEXT

A number of developments and reforms at the national level will also come into play in 2022-26. The Government's plan for economic recovery post-COVID, 'Build Back Better', aims to level up the whole of the UK, support the transition to net zero, and strengthen the vision of a 'Global Britain'. The core idea of levelling up is that everyone in the UK should have access to good jobs, good wages and good economic prospects. The best way to improve people's life chances is to give them the skills to succeed. The Government's Plan for Jobs aims to support new opportunities in every part of the country, while the Lifetime Skills Guarantee will enable anyone to acquire the skills to do those jobs, wherever they live and whatever their stage of life. Councils are ideally placed to understand how employer demand is changing and how the local skills profile of an area needs to adapt. Local leaders need to be empowered to create local, integrated skills and employment offers, tailored to the needs of local economies and residents.

The levelling up agenda includes regenerating struggling towns in all parts of the UK via the UK Shared Prosperity Fund and the Levelling Up Fund, and creating Freeports across the country, including Freeport East. Freeport East is centred upon the Port of Felixstowe, Britain's busiest container port; Harwich International Port; and Gateway 14, poised to be the largest logistics and business park in East Anglia. In both Ipswich and Lowestoft, we have £25m Towns Fund projects to bring forward, working with Ipswich Borough and East Suffolk Councils.

A Levelling Up White Paper will be published late in 2021. The focus will be on tangible, meaningful change for communities and Government aims to encourage good, local leadership and ensure local leadership is given the skills, powers and resources they need to succeed. County councils are expected to play a leading role. Together with other local leaders, we have shown throughout the pandemic that we are well placed to deliver the best outcomes for local communities. We are also best placed to align the work of government departments and agencies with the assets and opportunities of different places. Suffolk County Council can use its local knowledge and its integration into the local community to utilise resources more efficiently and develop partnerships to grow the local economy.

By investing in net zero initiatives, Government aims to create new opportunities for economic growth and jobs across the UK. The Government will grow our current net zero industries and encourage new ones to emerge. Suffolk's geography, centres of innovation, its workforce and their skills mean the county is well placed to play a key role in creating a cleaner, greener, sustainable and inclusive economy.



## > CONTEXT

Building Back Better also entails creating a new international role for the UK post EU exit and taking advantage of new opportunities outside the EU as a fully sovereign trading nation. A Global Britain can make its own regulations, access global talent, and forge new trade deals, ensuring the UK remains a leading destination for global investment, and supporting opportunities for trade and collaboration. Suffolk is ready and uniquely placed to play a role in Global Britain. At the heart of Suffolk's offer is the A14, a critical section in Britain's premier trade route. Freeport East is on the world's major trade routes and will be a strategic hub linking UK businesses to suppliers and customers across the globe. Suffolk is also home to a connected, global research and innovation offer, with Adastral Park recognised as a global hub.

In July 2021, the Health and Care Bill was laid before Parliament. This legislation aims to integrate health and care, recognising that neither the health system nor local authorities can meet the needs of their populations alone. By harnessing the collective resources of the local system, NHS, local authorities, and the voluntary sector we can shape a truly joined-up health, wellbeing and social care system to improve health and wellbeing and close the gap in outcomes.

The pandemic has also reinforced the need for a long-term plan for social care. Over the past decade, adult social care costs have risen by £8.5 billion, while total funding has grown by only £2.4 billion. This has left councils with a gap of £6.1 billion to fill. The Queen's speech 2021 pledged that proposals on social care reform will be brought forward in 2021.

Council finances are under continued financial strain and Spending Review 2020 only covered 2021/22. We will continue to advocate for a full three-year Spending Review. Only long-term, sustainable funding will enable us to plan and deliver in the most efficient and effective way.

We will work with the NHS, district and borough councils, Suffolk Police, the voluntary and community sector, businesses and communities as all these national developments, and others, come forward, ensuring we achieve the best possible outcomes for the people of Suffolk.

Working with partners and local communities, Suffolk County Council stands ready to lead Suffolk through recovery.





# LEADING SUFFOLK THROUGH RECOVERY

## Our objectives for 2022-26:



- To promote and support the health and wellbeing of all people in Suffolk.



- To strengthen our local economy.



- To protect and enhance our environment.



- To provide value for money for the Suffolk taxpayer.





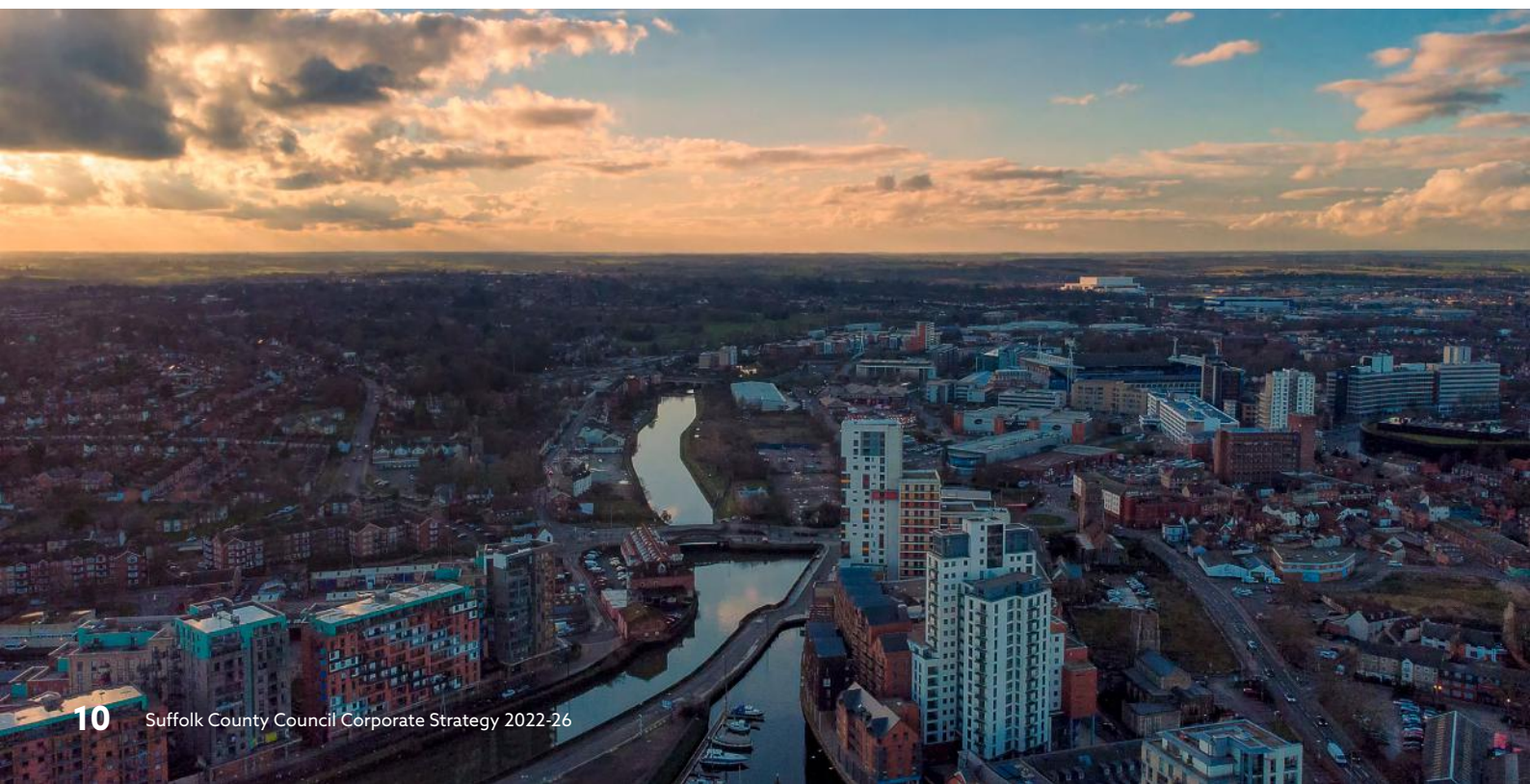
# LEADING SUFFOLK THROUGH RECOVERY

Over the next four years, the focus for the county council, and arguably for everyone across the UK and beyond, is the social and economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.

The county council, working with partner organisations, will lead that recovery for Suffolk. To do that, we will have a clear focus on the policy priorities set out in our four 'pillars', namely the health and wellbeing of all people in Suffolk, our local economy, our environment, and value for money in all that we do. The recovery will take time. We will use our ambition for Suffolk to drive projects and services which deliver now, are fit for the longer-term, and promote growth that benefits individuals and communities in Suffolk while balancing our economic, social and environmental aspirations.

Suffolk will lead, influence and engage in activity across the 'Suffolk system' and will deploy our resources and capacity with partners to tackle those 'wicked issues' where no one organisation can deliver a solution on their own. These system-wide challenges include:

- Tackling the inequalities that exist in Suffolk and have been exacerbated by COVID-19.
- Bringing together our health and care system and building on learning and good work carried out in response to the pandemic.
- Addressing the mental health challenges we face in Suffolk and supporting residents as we adjust to a new normal.
- Ensuring that major infrastructure projects in Suffolk deliver for our communities as well as our economy.





# LEADING SUFFOLK THROUGH RECOVERY

Suffolk has a great deal to offer as a contributor to the national economy, but we must ensure that all of Suffolk's people benefit from that contribution.

We know that post-COVID, Government will return to its policy agenda, including reforming health and care, putting special education needs services on a sustainable footing, and the levelling up and organisational reform agenda. These policies need to be accompanied by a sustainable, long-term solution to funding for local government and wider public services. Suffolk County Council will work with Central Government and MPs to make government intervention and policy work for Suffolk.

Finally, looking at our organisation, value for money and innovation will be central to everything we do as a council. Over the past eight years, the council has run and delivered on large transformation programmes to allow us to save money at a time of national austerity.

As we come out of the pandemic and focus on recovery, our aims have changed. We will still deliver major programmes in key service areas to mitigate the demand and pressures we face and to improve services. However, productivity, efficiency and innovation in and across all our services is what will enable us to work within our budgets, sustain high quality services and practice across our organisation, and drive improvement in the future.

There is no doubt that the next four years will be tough. They will require change and adaptation based on learning from our response to the pandemic, but also a return to some of the things we have lost during that time. The county council will lead this agenda by example and ensure Suffolk enhances its reputation for collaboration, innovation and delivery.



# PROMOTING AND SUPPORTING THE HEALTH AND WELLBEING OF ALL PEOPLE IN SUFFOLK

This 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 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 those most in need of extra support to live as safely, independently, healthily and well as possible.

## WE WILL DELIVER ON THIS OBJECTIVE BY:

- Working with the NHS, district and borough councils, and other partners to prioritise the physical and mental health of all people in Suffolk.
- Making our Public Health services more integrated and holistic, considering the needs of individuals as a whole, and strengthening the consideration of equalities and inequalities in our decision making.
- Working with our partners to create communities and environments that promote and enable healthier, active lives and tackle issues such as isolation, loneliness and obesity.
- Supporting the voluntary and community sector to rebuild and flourish post COVID-19.
- Continuing, through our services, to prioritise vulnerable older people and adults, as well as young people and children needing extra support.

## MAJOR PROGRAMMES FOCUSED ON DELIVERING THIS OBJECTIVE INCLUDE:

- **People First:** We will keep people at the heart of what we do, ensuring our services remain financially sustainable and provide the best outcomes. We will develop new models of care provision with care providers, alongside the further embedding of person-centred, asset-based practice and planning. Using technology and innovation, we will support people to be connected and safe, so more people can achieve and maintain the maximum possible independence for their individual circumstances. The cost of Adult and Community Service provision in Suffolk will be met through mitigation of year-on-year budget increases, corresponding to £26.2M total savings between 2018 and 2024.
- **Independent Lives:** We will ensure People with Learning Disabilities and/or Autism receive the right support and flexible, financially sustainable models of care that offer choice and control and accommodate people's individual needs. We will enable and maximise independence and progression with the use of digital solutions, allowing individuals to take control of living an ordinary life including employment opportunities. There will be robust oversight, accountability and business efficiency in all aspects of the financial management of Learning Disabilities and Autism budgets.
- **SEND (special educational needs and disabilities):** We will implement the recommendations from the independent Suffolk SEND review to improve the journey for children and young people with SEND. We will deliver 870 specialist educational places across Suffolk by 2025.



# > 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. Given the context of the pandemic, this relationship between the economy and wellbeing is even more important. We will work with local businesses, communities and other partners to ensure that the Suffolk economy is in a position to fulfil its potential, and that its residents can contribute to and benefit from that.

## WE WILL DELIVER ON THIS OBJECTIVE BY:

- Looking to stimulate a stronger, fairer local economy, promoting procurement opportunities for Suffolk businesses as we recover from and learn to live with COVID-19.
- Working with our partners - the Local Enterprise Partnership, Chamber of Commerce and councils - to develop jobs, skills and infrastructure.
- Helping young people into work and older people to switch careers or start a business.
- Promoting economic growth that strengthens communities, reduces inequalities and encourages residents to fulfil their potential and prevents them falling into crisis.
- Maximising growth through our decisions and actions to support more people and businesses in Suffolk to do well. This, in turn, can support a stronger, sustainable local economy that produces good jobs, good housing and connectivity, while protecting the natural environment.

## MAJOR PROGRAMMES FOCUSED ON DELIVERING THIS OBJECTIVE INCLUDE:

- **Lowestoft Gull Wing Bridge:** This iconic and important bridge will provide a much needed third crossing over the town's Lake Lothing. It will reduce congestion, regenerate the area, attract new investment into the local economy, and improve connections between communities.
- **Strategic Rail and Route Campaigns and Business Cases:** Vital to Suffolk fulfilling its economic potential in a way that all local people can benefit from, this programme will include developing a pipeline of key infrastructure projects, championing the benefits of East-West passenger and freight rail links, and a growth strategy for the wider A14 to enable community regeneration and job creation.
- **Housing Joint Venture:** We will accelerate and support delivery of the council's strategic objectives through high-quality residential development that maximises social value, providing the type of homes Suffolk needs across a range of sites, while meeting our climate and sustainability commitments.



# PROTECTING AND ENHANCING OUR ENVIRONMENT

Suffolk's environment is one of its greatest strengths. It is why so many people enjoy living and working in Suffolk as well as visiting our great county. Suffolk's environment also makes a significant economic contribution as a leader in green growth with its renewables and technology sectors. 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, and work to encourage others' behaviour changes. Both are needed to protect and enhance Suffolk's environment and biodiversity.

## WE WILL DELIVER ON THIS OBJECTIVE BY:

- Accelerating work to deliver on the county council's pledge to be carbon neutral by 2030. 2026 is a staging post on the way to 2030 carbon neutrality.
- Leading, supporting and contributing to activities in Suffolk's Climate Emergency Action Plan to achieve a net zero Suffolk by 2030.
- Taking collaborative action with partners to build sustainable homes, promote and adopt low carbon transport, use cleaner power, and reduce industrial and commercial energy use.
- Promoting biodiversity and conserving natural habitats and open spaces.
- Promoting clean air and carbon capture through nature.
- Installing hundreds of electric vehicle charging points and supporting discounts on solar panels and energy efficiency grants.
- Playing an active role in the 2021 United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP26) and maximising benefits from the legacy of this vital conference.

## MAJOR PROGRAMMES FOCUSSED ON DELIVERING THIS OBJECTIVE INCLUDE:

- **Climate Emergency PDP Implementation Plan:** Following the county council's declaration of a climate emergency, a councillor-led policy development panel developed recommendations to accelerate the county council's journey to net zero. These recommendations are the basis for the implementation plan. While the implementation plan is being led by senior officers across the council, it will need engagement from staff, councillors, and partners to have the most impact.
- **Suffolk Climate Emergency Action Plan:** Complementing work from individual organisations across Suffolk (including the county council's Climate Emergency PDP Implementation Plan), this evidence-led plan sets out a wide range of actions that need collaboration and action from across the public sector, businesses, and communities. For use by everyone living and working in, and visiting Suffolk, it is a living and ambitious plan and will be a key focus in helping Suffolk to become carbon neutral and making living with climate action part of our daily lives.
- **Growing Biodiversity in Suffolk:** We will use Suffolk County Council's policy development panel process to run a 'Biodiversity PDP' during 2021/22 to develop recommendations for promoting and growing biodiversity in Suffolk over the next decade.



# 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 county council's leadership will be bold, innovative and challenging in ensuring value for money and accountability to local people in everything that we do.

## WE WILL DELIVER ON THIS OBJECTIVE BY:

- Redesigning services and processes to drive productivity and value for money.
- Continuing our strong track record of sound financial management and governance.
- Investing in technology and using the internet and innovation to improve communication, services and our efficiency.

## MAJOR PROGRAMMES FOCUSED ON DELIVERING THIS OBJECTIVE INCLUDE:

- **School Travel:** We will review our current approach to ensure we provide the best possible service to families and deliver better school travel budget and contract management.
- **Highways New Operating Model:** We will secure a new contract for highways services post September 2023 that will deliver our ambitions for highways and incorporate requirements for inclusivity, social value, and carbon reduction/becoming carbon neutral.
- **New Ways of Working:** We will increase the capacity and effectiveness of the county council's workforce by modernising the way we work to deliver for Suffolk residents. We will reduce costs and carbon emissions through rationalisation of county council office buildings and reduced travel time and costs.
- **Capital Investment in Highways:** We will bring forward specific proposals for a £20m programme tackling highways flooding (£10m) and improving and upgrading pavements and footpaths (£10m) over the next four years.

# > OUR FINANCES

## FUNDING

Over the past ten years, the way local government is funded has changed. The overall effect has been to reduce the amount of funding from central grants, and increase councils' reliance on locally generated revenue, such as retained business rates, council tax, fees and charges, and commercial revenue.

## WHAT WE NEED TO SPEND

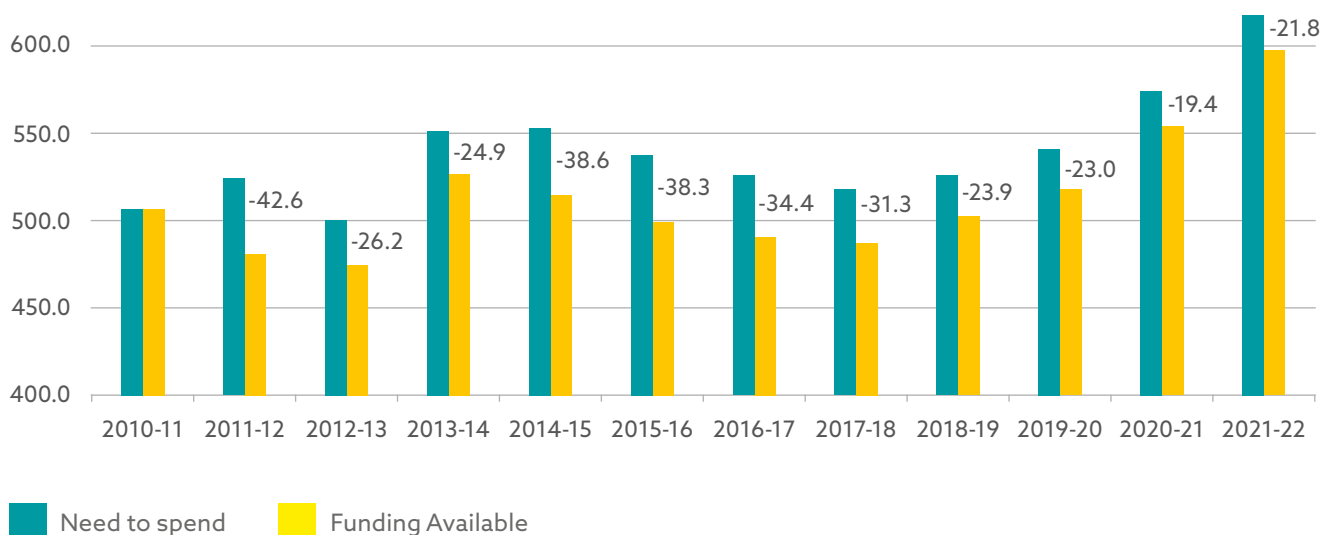
Increasing costs that come from ever increasing demands, specifically in our high demand service areas (children's and adult social care), mean that the amount of money we need to spend on our services far exceeds any increase in funding we receive or can generate as a council.

The difference between the funding received and what we need to spend on our services (gross expenditure budget less any specific grants, contributions and fees and charges) to maintain service quality and meet this increasing demand is known as our 'budget gap'.

To ensure a balanced budget is set, any 'budget gap' needs to be offset by savings. Between 2011, and planned up to 2022, the council has successfully managed the financial challenges by making savings of £324.4m. The response to these budget challenges has been measured, pragmatic, and innovative and designed to protect frontline services as much as possible.

The chart below shows the amount we have needed, or need to spend, compared to funding received over the years. The difference between the two represents savings made.

### Amount we need to spend, compared to funding received (£ million)

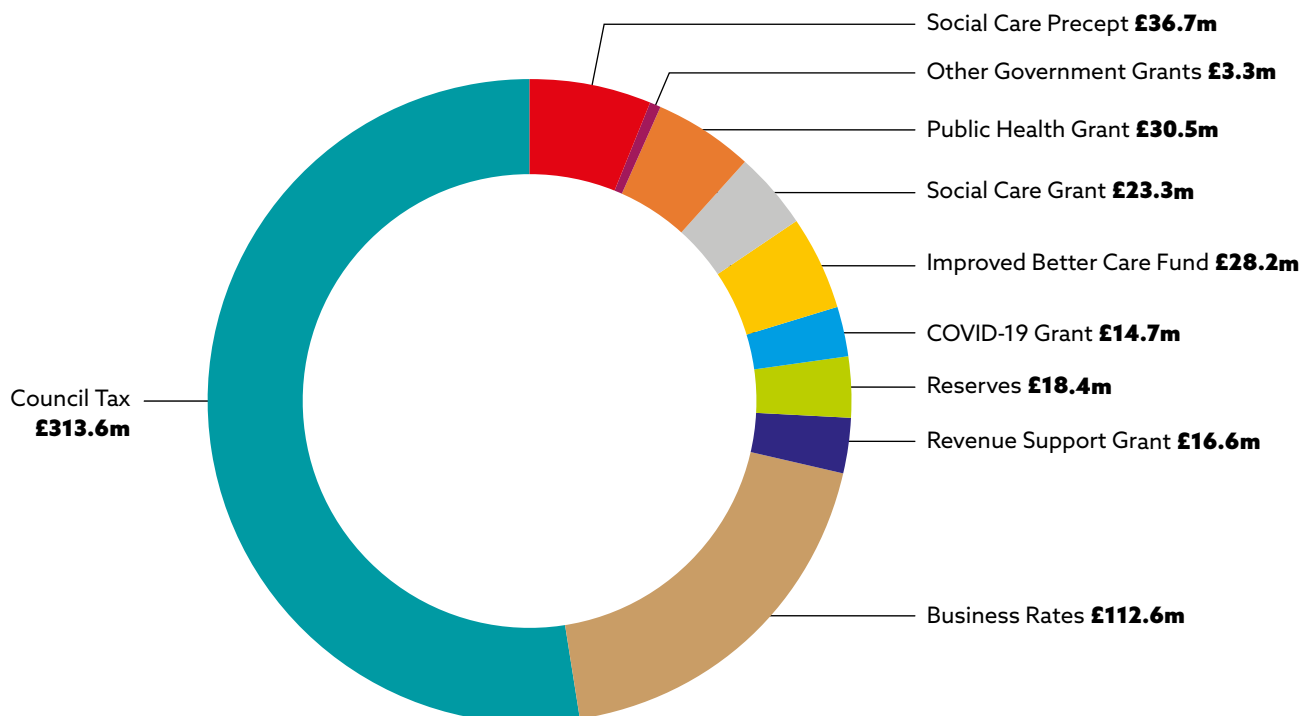




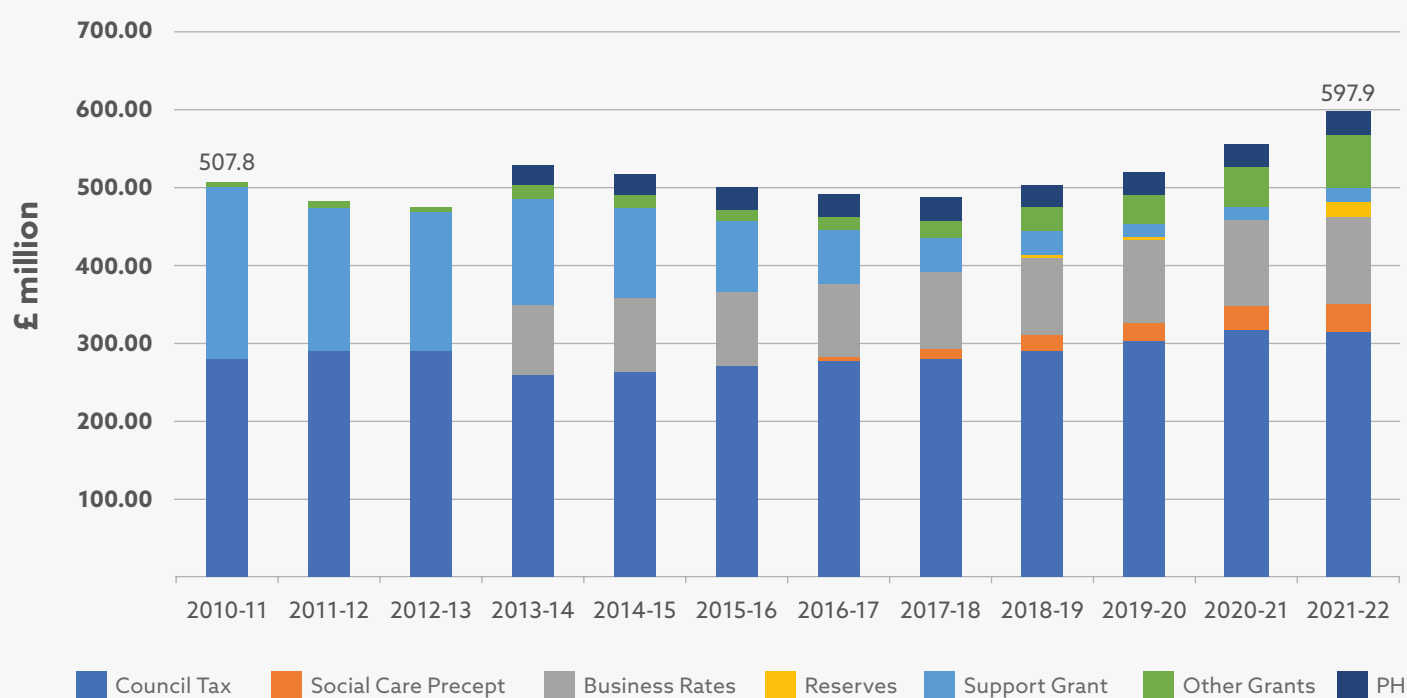
## WHERE THE MONEY COMES FROM

In 2021-22 Suffolk County Council has a net budget of £597.9 million.

This is funded as follows:

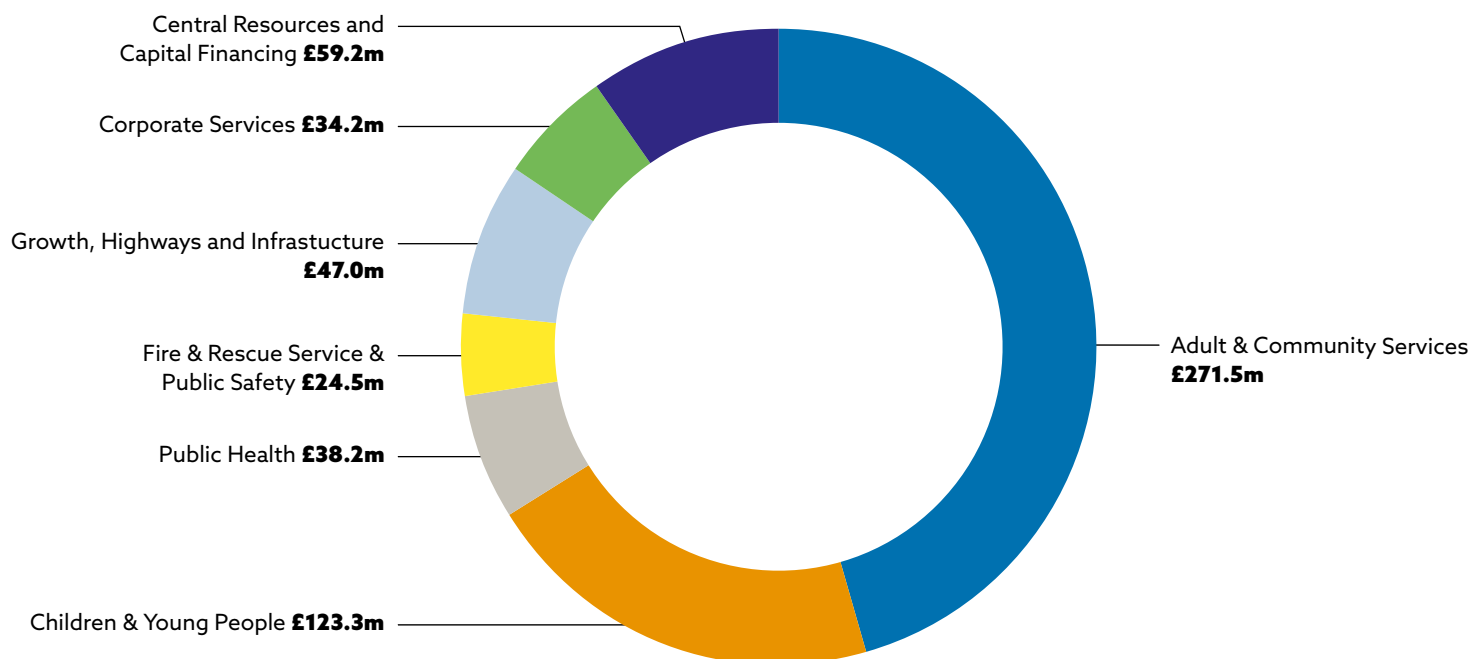


The chart below shows where our funding has come from since 2010-11

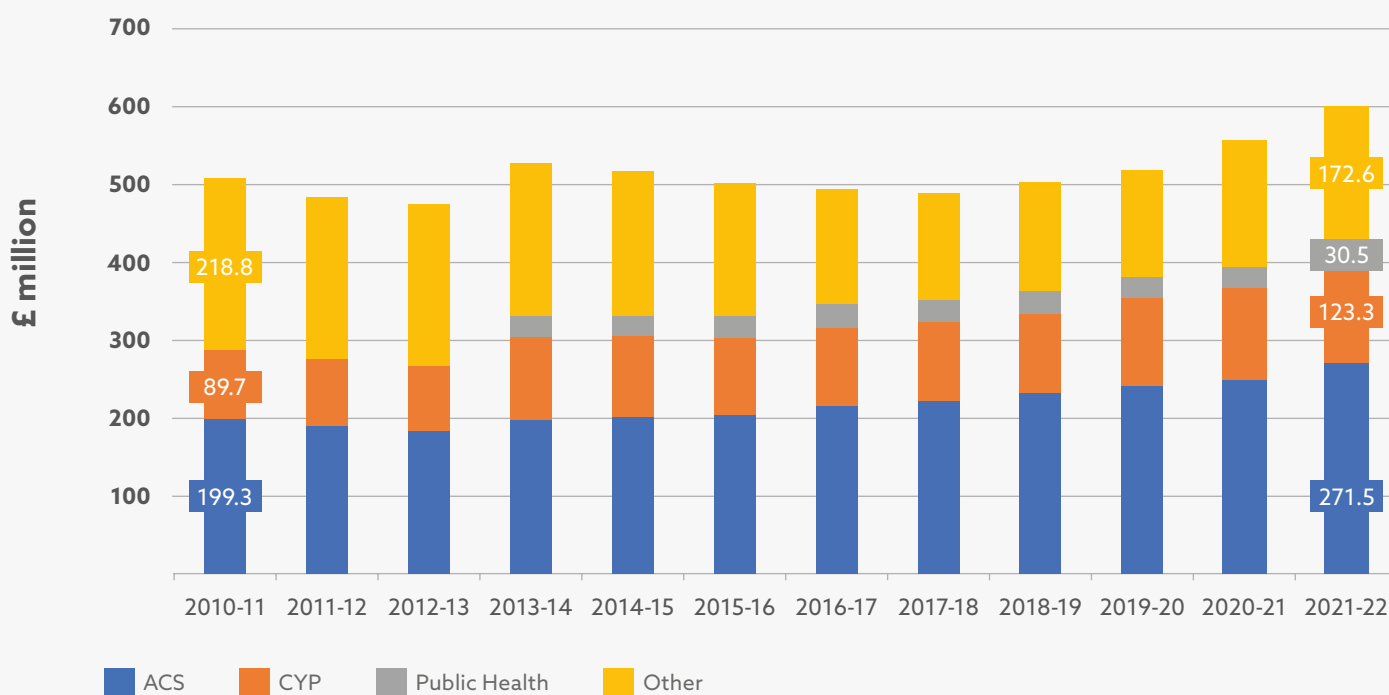


## WHERE WE SPEND THE MONEY

In 2021-22, Suffolk County Council will spend two-thirds of its net budget (66%) on adult care, children's care, education and learning.



The chart below shows our net budget expenditure since 2010-11



## OUR CAPITAL PROGRAMME

Alongside the council's revenue budget, we have committed £320 million to investing in assets and planned infrastructure projects from 2021-24. A total of £100 million of this spend will be funded by borrowing.

### **This investment includes:**

- £74 million on highways maintenance
- £69 million on the Gull Wing bridge in Lowestoft
- £9 million on recycling centre improvements
- £8 million on local transport schemes
- £94 million on schools - basic need and additional school places, including specialist education places
- £12 million on IT infrastructure and wide area network
- £3 million on developing land for housing
- £12 million on fire schemes
- £18 million on maintaining our buildings.

## CHALLENGES MOVING FORWARD AND OUR MEDIUM-TERM FINANCIAL PLAN

Significant uncertainty continues to dominate the context within which we are working. This includes:

- The ongoing impact of COVID-19 on Suffolk's residents, particularly those who are vulnerable, and the demand pressures on our key services remains hard to predict.
- Our financial outlook remains unclear with the need for multi-year settlements for local government. The delays to the Fairer Funding Review and the Business Rates Reset and Retention Scheme mean that councils do not have the certainty they need to plan for their future financial sustainability.
- The impact of Government reviews and reforms for public services – adult social care and health and social care integration, special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), and children's social care – remains to be seen.
- National Policy reforms will have an impact - such as Government's Levelling Up programme and national infrastructure developments.
- We have yet to see the full impact of operating in an economy recovering from COVID-19. Government will need to consider how it begins to pay off the record amount it has borrowed during the pandemic.
- There are continuing implications of Brexit on the UK economy.
- Tackling the climate emergency, prioritising biodiversity recovery, and protecting the natural environment will have a significant impact on our work.

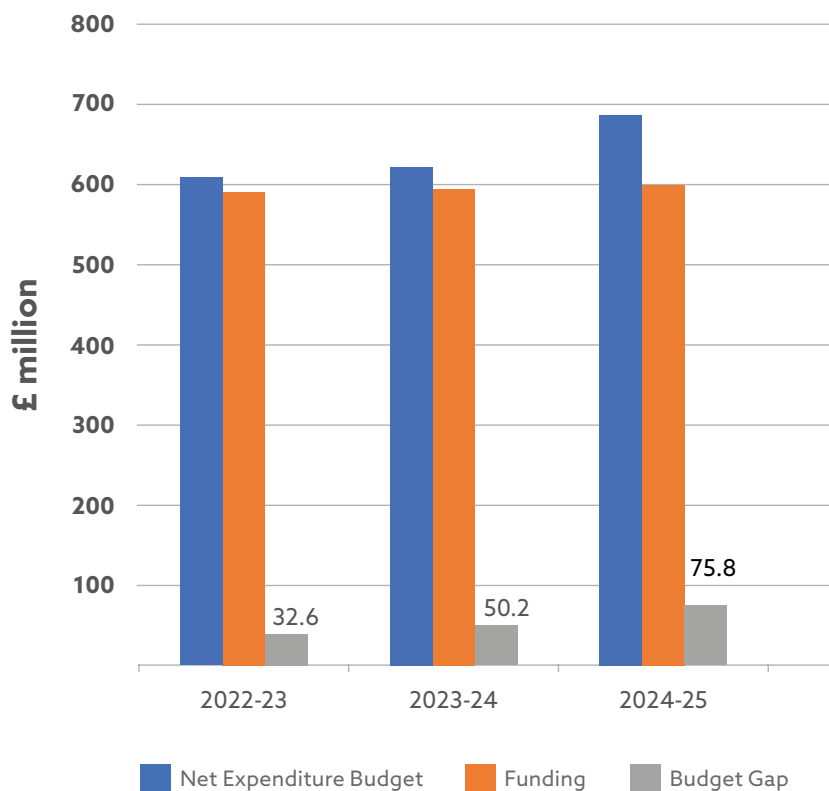


Despite the uncertainty, funding estimates and forecast spending plans have been developed for the period to 2022-25 but, at this stage, these can only be treated as indicative.

Our strong financial management has enabled the council to hold unallocated reserves, which we will continue to use in a structured way as we face times of increasing financial risk and uncertainty.

In the short to medium term, the council will focus on productivity, efficiency and innovation in all our services, as well as developing major programmes to mitigate demand, reduce costs or generate income. Innovation, acting commercially and the use of technology will be considered in everything we do, to allow us to work within our budgets, sustain high quality services, and practise and drive improvement.

## Forecast Budget Gap



# > OUR PEOPLE AND OUR VALUES

Our priorities are delivered by our people – whether that’s directly, through managed contracts, or through cross-organisational teams.

In our most recent staff survey, the statement that staff agreed most strongly with was that they are committed to helping the people of Suffolk. This was fully demonstrated in their response to the COVID-19 pandemic, as they moved at pace to successfully meet the challenges it presented through hard work, flexibility, creativity, and innovation.

Following our experiences of the past year, we are redefining we are redefining our workplace and the way we work to embed new learning and deliver improvements in the services we provide. This will include innovation around digital connectivity with our service users, and flexible working to increase capacity and efficiency to deliver.

Partnership working to support system-wide service delivery has become a core element of the way that we work, and we are seeing the impact that integrated working has on improving the customer experience for our residents. There is more for us to do, and we will continue to align our workforce plans and ambitions with those of our public sector partners to strengthen integration.



We will develop our managers and assist them to apply the skills needed to lead, support, and empower their teams. We will work to create the conditions that nurture the confidence and culture required for continuous improvement and innovation, as we adapt to meet changing needs and demands on our services. We will be active, open to learning from others, and willing to adopt and follow best practice.

We are committed to equality, inclusion, and diversity, and we will work alongside our staff networks to deliver an ambitious programme of actions to ensure respect, fairness, access, support, and opportunities are available for all. We will continue to grow our aspirational work programmes to support career development for future and current employees through supported apprenticeships and programmes such as Kickstart. We want our staff to do their best and thrive, and we recognise the importance of both mental and physical wellbeing in the workplace to enable this.

We want our staff to feel valued for the good work they do and to have a strong connection to our objectives for the people of Suffolk. We will celebrate our successes internally, locally, and nationally whenever possible.

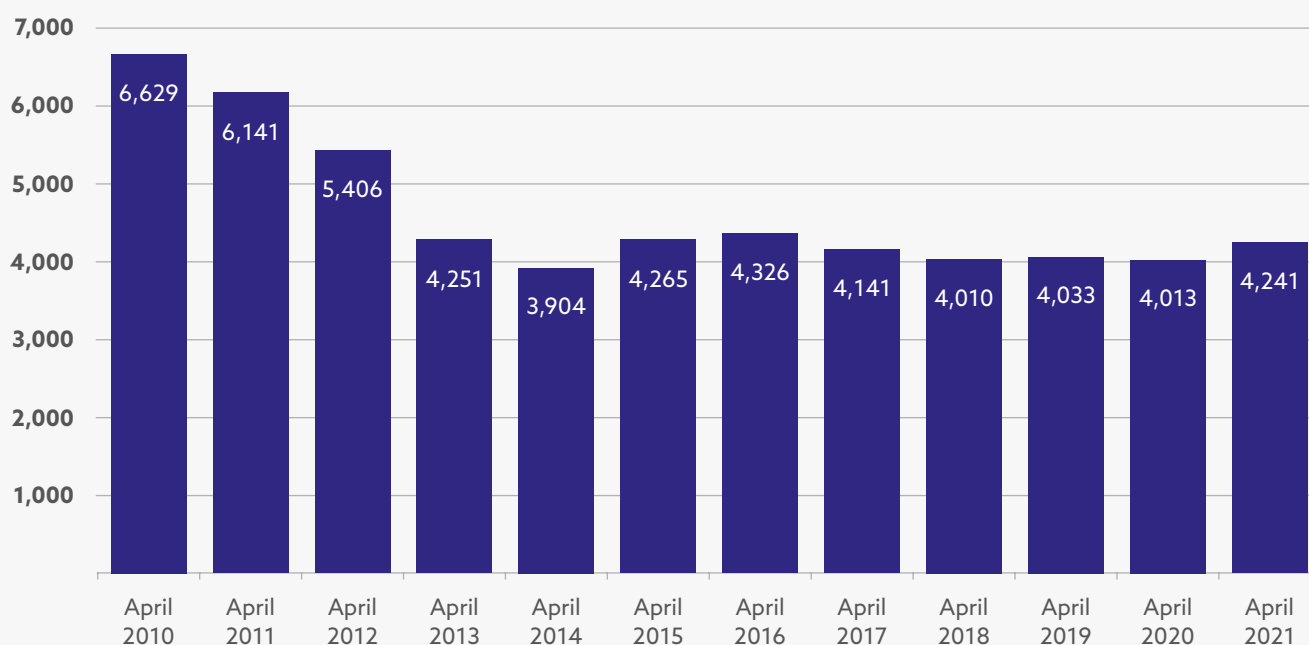
Suffolk County Council has a refreshed set of values and behaviours - WE ASPIRE - which have been developed by staff, for staff, and embody the way that we will work in Suffolk to deliver for residents.



Suffolk County Council currently has a workforce of 4,241 full-time equivalent staff. The chart below shows the change in our workforce since April 2010.

## SCC Staff (Non-schools, FTE) Numbers

Change from April 2010 to April 2021





# > SUFFOLK'S BIG CONVERSATION

As a dynamic, innovative public authority, Suffolk County Council is committed to positively engaging with residents, businesses and other local/regional partners as part of its long-term strategic policy planning and development process.

Every year, a range of council services periodically hold consultations and engagement programmes to understand local sentiment in relation to the introduction of new services, or changes to existing services, and to seek views on relevant proposals.

As part of the authority's Local Government Association's Peer Challenge Review in 2019, it was recognised that, in addition to the range of service-led consultations that are undertaken, there is sufficient scope and opportunity for the county council to hold much broader conversations across Suffolk, potentially in partnership with other public service organisations. This could further strengthen the council's position as a community leader, assist in understanding future service demand and the development of new service delivery models, and provide greater understanding of the hopes, aspirations and concerns of communities across the length and breadth of the county.

In 2020, prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, initial discussions were held between Suffolk's public service leaders, which established a sense of commitment and collaboration to developing and delivering a broad package of community engagement. However, the clear and still-present challenges of the last 18 months meant that plans and progress had to halt for all authorities to pay due care and attention to the COVID-19 response.

In 2021, the aspiration and commitment to developing a wide-reaching engagement programme remains as strong as ever. Working collectively with public sector partners, Suffolk County Council is currently developing Suffolk's Big Conversation with a view to being ready to launch in early 2022.

The ambition is to learn more about Suffolk's thoughts on communities, business and climate change. We want to hear Suffolk's views on how COVID-19 has affected our county and what needs to happen to drive a prosperous future, post-COVID. The engagement will be meaningful, inclusive and wide-reaching, capturing the voices of those who are seldom heard or who often feel unable to engage due to social or cultural barriers.

The most important thing is to understand what matters to people in Suffolk and to set in motion a programme of continued engagement as we move forward together through the next four years.



## > NEXT STEPS

In support of our Corporate Strategy 2022-26, we will produce an annual plan each year that sets out the things we will be focusing on for the coming year. To help us monitor our progress in delivering on the activities outlined in the annual plan, we will identify a number of performance measures that we can report on. Some of these will relate to services we are directly responsible for, while others will relate to wider public services that we are not responsible for but can influence. This will allow us to demonstrate how we are delivering against our objectives and what we have achieved to date. The annual plan will be linked to our budget plans for the coming year.

We will publish these annual plans alongside our budget so that people can hold us to account, and review and assess the progress we are making.

The annual plans in turn will inform the service plans of our individual directorates and teams and provide the framework for our staff to set their own personal objectives each year.



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