



ANNUAL PLAN 2024-25

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Councillor Matthew Hicks
Leader of Suffolk County Council

Local Government is at a pivotal point as it grapples with the combined impacts of increasing demand for services, inflation and scarcity of public funding. Across the country, councils are yet again taking a forensic approach to setting their budgets and annual plans, seeking sustainable solutions to the challenges they face. It is a time for difficult decisions and prioritisation. It is a time for recognising our fundamental responsibilities to residents and delivering for those who need us most. It is also a time for ambitious leadership.

There is a powerful financial context in which we have set Suffolk County Council's Annual Plan 2024-25. With need at an all-time high, and the Government unable to increase public funding right now, we have had to go through the most challenging budget-setting process we have faced for many years. Difficult decisions have been made but, once again, we are putting adult and children's care at the heart of our plans. Over the next two years, we are investing an additional £74 million into services that protect and support the most vulnerable people in Suffolk.

I am talking about some of the most challenging and life-critical public services that people often don't consider until they need them. These include protecting children and adults from neglect or abuse, providing education for young people with special educational needs and disabilities, supporting teenage parents, supporting disabled people or adults with dementia to live independently, and providing care for the elderly. This is where councils step in and do life-changing work.

We are a well-run council which makes sensible and prudent financial decisions. In the past five years, we have saved £66 million by working leaner and smarter. But now it is time to go further, and £64.7 million will be saved in 2024/25 and 2025/26.

There is also another important context to this plan. In recent months, Suffolk has been hit hard by major storms and persistent rainfall that has saturated the land and caused flooding across the county. I have enormous sympathy for residents living in over 800 properties that were impacted by Storm Babet.

We are determined to reduce the risk of this happening again, so we are investing an additional £10 million in drainage projects, bringing in additional flood investigation specialists to identify key causes of flooding, and administering the Government's flood resilience grant scheme for homes and businesses in Suffolk. This work is already underway and will continue throughout this year.

This plan sets out how we will use the £752 million of public funding available to us in 2024/25. This is where ambitious leadership is important. Councillors have approved this plan - and a budget to support it - based on our ambitions for Suffolk. Whether that is looking after our health and wellbeing, strengthening our local economy, protecting and enhancing our environment, or providing value for money for our residents, not a penny is taken for granted and our pledge is to spend it wisely to deliver the greatest good possible during difficult financial times.

My administration will oversee the delivery of this plan by the Chief Executive and her staff and take the difficult decisions needed to ensure continued success. There are exciting and important moments ahead of us this year. The Gull Wing bridge will open and provide much-needed relief to people travelling in and around Lowestoft. We will agree a new contract to provide library services and build on the 'Good' rating our adult care services received from the Care Quality Commission. We will complete and sell our first Housing Joint Venture homes, open the new recycling centre in Haverhill, and refurbish the centre in Stowmarket. We will invest more money in continuing to make improvements to the way we deliver our special educational needs and disabilities services. We will start to change our smaller fire service vehicles to zero-emissions models and consult on the proposed devolution deal for Suffolk. We will forge ahead on developing our £64 million A12 Major Road Network project to support economic growth. We will invest £10 million repairing and resurfacing local roads in villages and residential areas across Suffolk and continue to invest a further £10 million improving pavements. These are just some of the major pieces of work that Suffolk County Council will undertake this year. All the while, we will be starting our additional investment in protecting and supporting the most vulnerable people in our county.

On behalf of my councillor colleagues at Suffolk County Council, I encourage you to read our annual plan and see for yourself just how much good will be done for Suffolk communities.



Nicola Beach

Chief Executive of Suffolk County Council

Each year, I look forward to the publication of our annual plan. It allows us time to take stock and reflect on the breadth and depth of the work we do and our achievements – a practise that often gets forgotten in our busy lives. It also allows me to share with you our ambitions and plans for the coming year.

We have achieved a great deal this year, from awarding a new highways contract worth up to £1 billion to planting more than 50,000 trees. We have launched a learning disability, autism and mental health reablement offer to reach more people and, through the housing joint venture, we have agreed that all housing developed on Suffolk County Council land should be energy efficient as standard. You'll find a handy summary of achievements on page 11, plus case studies with more detail.

Our 2024/25 plan is going to challenge the county council. It is set in the midst of a tough financial climate, with difficult decisions to make and many changes to contend with. Overall, we will see an increase of £105 million from our budget last year - reflecting the acute and unprecedented cost pressures we face from inflation and increased demand. Overall, our budget is more than £750 million.

Yet, despite facing an increase in what we must spend, this annual plan demonstrates an ambitious and steadfast determination to deliver the very best services for the people of Suffolk. I do not believe that operating within challenging budget constraints should or will limit our ambitions. We continue to make Suffolk a stronger, healthier and greener place to live, work and invest.

This year our work will make a life-changing difference for thousands of people across Suffolk. Subject to agreement by councillors, we will invest an additional £74 million over the next two years to protect the county's most vulnerable residents. This means an additional £42.7 million for children's

services and £29.9 million for adult care. I believe it is right that we continue to prioritise those with the greatest need. This investment includes more than £4 million to continue to make improvements to the way we deliver our special educational needs and disabilities services. Reform to the way we deliver SEND provision remains our number one priority.

To afford this additional investment of £74 million, we need to make savings. One of the most significant of these is a commitment to deliver £11 million of staff savings over the next two years. Wherever possible, these will be achieved by utilising natural staff turnover and strong vacancy management. There are clear plans for 2024/25 and proposals for 2025/26 will be brought forward promptly.

Councillors and officers will no doubt agree that this has been the most challenging and complex budget setting process we have faced. It is my job now to ensure that the work made possible by this funding is delivered with pace and efficiency. This year, perhaps more than ever, we stand by our promise to make the best possible use of every pound. Planning and well-informed priorities, as outlined in this plan, enables us to do this. If you wish, you can study our finances in more detail on pages 26-28 of this plan.

I would like to finish by thanking my colleagues. I am immensely proud of the work they do to support residents in Suffolk. Each day I see examples of work delivered with huge passion and pride by those around me. They regularly inspire me.

I also thank our partners too. We do not work in isolation and Suffolk is much improved by the strength of our partnerships. I look forward to working with you as we deliver our outcomes for Suffolk.

SUFFOLK COUNTY COUNCIL IN NUMBERS

10%

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



93%

Local authority maintained schools judged Good or Outstanding (Sept 2023)



48%

Of total procurement spend with Suffolk local suppliers (Sept 2023)



4,724

Number of staff working for the council - FTE, excluding schools' staff (Dec 2023)



3,236

Marriage/civil partnership ceremonies held (12 months to Sept 2023)



£1,216

Net current expenditure per head of Suffolk's resident population (2022-23)

Corporate parent to

971

Children in Care (Dec 2023)



138,363

Customer contacts through our contact centre (12 months to Sept 2023)



6,218

Incidents attended by Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service (2022-23)



5,360

Friends Against Scams, Scam Marshalls, Businesses Against Scams, and Scam Champions (Sept 2023)



39%

Suffolk's household waste reused, recycled, or composted (June 2023)



£3.9m

million visits to libraries (physical & e-issues) 2022-23



91%

Customer satisfaction with our customer services (Sept 2023)



30%

Reduction in carbon emissions from all council buildings since 2019-20



98.5%

Of Suffolk premises with access to superfast broadband (Dec 2023)

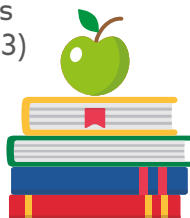


11%

Of school children receiving home to school travel services (Sept 2023)

7,662

Children with Education, Health & Care Plans (Sept 2023)



37%

Reduction in carbon emissions from six largest council buildings since 2019-20



Adult social care help around

10,000

people at any one time - e.g., care homes, home care, direct payments (Nov 2023)



£10m

Extra committed to repair and resurface local roads in villages and residential areas across Suffolk

> SETTING THE SCENE

Globally, the context remains uncertain. Economically, environmentally, politically and technologically, there are significant challenges internationally, nationally and locally. In the UK, living standards are not predicted to return to pre-pandemic levels until 2027/28, due to inflation and interest rates remaining higher for longer. In these difficult times, public services, and particularly local government, have a vital role in supporting residents and communities and ensuring that everyone is able to fulfil their potential. Ambitious, but prudent, Suffolk County Council remains focussed on using its resources and influence to ensure the best possible outcomes for Suffolk and its residents.

Councils' role in delivering economic growth and productivity has been in the spotlight this year, with central Government announcing its intention to withdraw funding for Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) from April 2024. The functions currently undertaken by LEPs – namely, business representation, local economic planning and delivery of government programmes – will now be delivered by local government. For Suffolk, these functions will be delivered by the county council, working with local partners. We are working closely with Government to ensure sufficient resource is provided as we take on this role and will work in partnership to ensure that Suffolk fulfils its international and national economic potential.

In October 2023, the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill, the first major piece of legislation relating to local government for a number of years, received Royal Assent. The Act enshrines the Government's levelling up missions in law, creates a structure by which devolution can be spread more widely to county areas, and reforms the planning system through the creation of a new National Planning Policy Framework. The Autumn Statement 2023 saw a new 'Level 4' of the devolution framework being announced. Devolved institutions in eligible areas will be able to draw down from this framework. It delivers deeper powers, including over adult skills, local transport and housing, alongside new scrutiny expectations. For Suffolk, this is particularly welcome. As one of the first proposed county devolution deals, the opportunity for greater certainty over funding and more local determination, that the new deeper and wider devolution offers, provides an enhanced opportunity to deliver our ambitions for Suffolk.

Along with local authorities up and down the country, the council has been hit hard by inflation and rising demand for services such as children's care, special educational needs and disabilities, and home to school transport. While the 2023 Autumn Statement and the 2024-25 provisional local government finance settlement contained no mention of funding to mitigate these significant financial challenges, a Ministerial announcement in late January 2024 did provide some additional funding, particularly for adult and children's social care. The county council is, however, still having to make difficult decisions about the services it provides, including needing to make £64.7 million of savings in 2024/25 and 2025/26.

Most of the council's budget is spent on people-focussed services. Adult and children's care is at the heart of our plans, and over the next two years the council needs to pump almost £74 million extra into protecting the county's most vulnerable residents. According to a County Councils Network (CCN) and Society of County Treasurers (SCT) survey, conducted in September 2023, adult social care accounts for 25% of the more than £600m overspend county and unitary authorities are predicting for 2023-24. Underlying pressures such as workforce recruitment and retention, more complex demand, and market sustainability mean supporting vulnerable people remains challenging. Over three-quarters of Directors of Adult Social Services are concerned that they won't be able to fully meet their statutory duties around market sustainability - the availability of the right care, in the right place at the right time - in 2024/25. A fully funded, long-term plan to transform social care is still needed to ensure everyone in England can get the care and support they need when they need it.

From April 2023, the Care Quality Commission (CQC) acquired new powers to assess the provision of adult social care by local authorities in England. Innovative and ambitious, Suffolk County Council volunteered to be one of five local authority sites to pilot the assessment approach, with the CQC's final report rating the overall quality of Suffolk County Council's Adult Social Care services as "Good". The CQC began formal assessments in December 2023.



> SETTING THE SCENE

Spending on children's services has spiralled in 2023/24, with a sharp increase in post-pandemic demand. Suffolk County Council's spend on children's services has gone up by 28% in the last 12 months alone. There are now more than 80,000 looked after children in England - the highest number since current records began in 1994. There has also been a significant increase in the cost of placements for children in care, due to inflation and an essentially broken provider market. According to the CCN and SCT survey, almost half of the overspend that county and unitary authorities are projecting is attributable to children's services.

There is also increasing demand for special educational needs and disability (SEND) support and a growing number of children and young people who have Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs). The Local Government Association (LGA) do not believe that the proposals set out in the Government's SEND and Alternative Provision improvement plan will result in this increase either slowing down or stopping. Improving the way in which we deliver SEND provision with partner organisations is a priority for Suffolk County Council. Following a recent Ofsted and CQC inspection of SEND services, we continue to implement wide-ranging reform of provision.

In September 2023, Prime Minister Rishi Sunak announced the UK will be taking a more pragmatic, proportionate, and realistic approach to reaching net zero by 2050, while maintaining all our international commitments. Suffolk is a leader in the green industrial revolution with its energy offer, including Sizewell B nuclear power plant; one of the world's largest offshore wind markets; and Orbis Energy, which is a centre of excellence and flagship location for businesses keen to capture the economic benefits from offshore wind, wave and tidal technologies. As significant energy projects in our region come forward, Suffolk will work with Government, partners and local communities to ensure they have the least possible negative impact on Suffolk's unique natural environment and residents, while doing all we can to maximise the economic opportunities for our county.

With influence over significant sources of emissions and established local networks, councils remain critical players in Government achieving its net zero target. The 28th United Nations Climate Change Conference of the Parties (COP28), in December 2023, recognised the critical role local leaders play by hosting a first-of-its-kind COP28 Local Climate Action Summit. The LGA's 'Make it Local' campaign calls for Government to put in place a national climate action framework with policy, regulatory and investment certainty. Delivery should be through local climate action agreements with councils, underpinned by multi-year, place-based funding allocations. In Suffolk, the county council continues to work with partners and local communities to realise our net zero ambitions. We are also working hard to support communities impacted by extreme weather events such as flooding and storms.

With artificial intelligence (AI) advancing at breakneck speeds, its safe and responsible use is vital and high on the Government's agenda. In November 2023, the UK Government hosted a world-first AI Safety Summit, which focussed on how to best manage the risks from the most recent advances. Suffolk County Council will explore the potential benefits AI can offer, but where we do deploy this powerful technology, we will ensure this happens in a fair and responsible manner.

2024-25 will be a year of challenge, but we remain ambitious for Suffolk and will continue working with Government, our partners and our residents in best using our resources and influence to ensure that Suffolk's places, businesses and residents continue to fulfil their potential.



> OUR AMBITIONS: DELIVERING IN 2024-25

Delivering in 2024-25

This document is the third annual plan based on our Corporate Strategy 2022-26.

The plan has a clear focus on our four ambitions for Suffolk:



Looking after our health and wellbeing.



Strengthening our local economy.



Protecting and enhancing our environment.



Providing value for money for our residents.

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

- 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).
- The 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.
- The Suffolk Fire and 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 and libraries.

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



UPDATE ON MAJOR PROGRAMMES 2022-26

In 2022, Suffolk County Council set out its major programmes for the next four years. These aim to improve services and to help mitigate some of the demand and cost pressures faced by the council. The programmes are underpinned by a range of financial, service improvement, policy and infrastructure drivers.

Our major programmes for 2022-26 are:

Looking after our health and wellbeing:

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

Protecting and enhancing our environment:

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

Strengthening our local economy:

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

Providing value for money for our residents:

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

As the major programmes approach their midpoint, significant progress has been made in the first two years of delivery. Overseen by the council's Transformation Board, the major programmes produce regular progress updates to provide assurance that they remain on track to deliver the intended outcomes and benefits for Suffolk.

The impact of the major programmes is already evident in many areas as key milestones are reached. The building of the Gull Wing bridge in Lowestoft has progressed well, with the bridge scheduled to be completed in 2024. The new highways contract with Milestone Infrastructure has commenced, and important rail and road infrastructure improvements have been secured for future development.

The climate and environment-focused major programmes have reduced carbon emissions across the council's largest buildings, through investment into measures ranging from solar panels to destratification fans. The council has moved to 100% renewable energy contracts, switched to electric vehicle (EV) pool cars, and installed more EV charging stations. The climate programmes are also working with the council's supply chain to reduce emissions in procured goods and services.

In adult social care, use of the innovative care technology service 'Cassius' continues to grow. It provides greater independence and better outcomes for residents, which are key aspects of the council's *People at the Heart of Care* strategy.



UPDATE ON MAJOR PROGRAMMES 2022-26

Edmundham Developments, Suffolk County Council's joint venture with Lovell Partnerships, has secured key planning approvals to enable housing to be developed on council-owned land at several sites across the county, including at West Row and Bacton. Further sites at Newmarket, Mildenhall and Lowestoft are in the process of securing planning consent. These developments will help deliver over 2,500 high quality and energy efficient homes and deliver significant financial returns to the council over a 20-year period. Construction work starts on the first sites in mid-2024.

And, finally, the council's Ways We Work programme is supporting the organisation to deliver effective and efficient public services through modernising its working practices and harnessing the latest technological capabilities.

Some major programmes case studies

Cassius digital care partnership

The Cassius digital care partnership launched in 2021 to support eligible people in Suffolk to meet their care needs using digital technologies. We live in a digitally enabled and connected world and we wanted to ensure that Suffolk residents are able to take advantage of the great benefits that technology can offer.

In July 2023, there were 3,200 people actively using Cassius technology every day. For 327 of those people, this meant they could remain living at home rather than moving into residential care. In total, 18.5% of those accessing social care in Suffolk were being supported with a Cassius device.

We believe Cassius is the most innovative social care technology offer currently available in the country. In the last two years we've supported a total of 3,800 individuals through 7,600 devices. We can call on over 100 different available devices, such as video carephones; Vayyar radar sensors, which help prevent and detect falls; and Reader Pens, which people with cognitive or literacy issues can use to scan and read out text. This results in more personalised care planning and delivery, which supports people to live as independently as possible, whether at home, in supported living, or on discharge from hospital.

Suffolk Climate Change Partnership - Thermal camera imaging loan project

Since 2022, the Suffolk Climate Change Partnership has been supporting community-focused delivery of the Climate Emergency Plan by running a thermal camera imaging loan project. This allows community groups and parish/town councils to borrow equipment to carry out heat loss surveys for homes in their local area. This helps communities identify ways to make homes and community buildings more energy efficient and stay warm for longer, while reducing energy bills and helping Suffolk reach net zero.

Following the heat loss survey, community group members signpost participating householders to schemes such as Warm Homes Suffolk, encourage people to undertake easier DIY fixes, source professional help, or create a community bulk purchasing offer for items such as loft insulation.

Major Programmes

highlights and milestones for 2023-24

Looking after our health and wellbeing

On course to deliver
£11m of targeted savings from adult social care transformation, including from the use of Digital Care technology.

New learning disability, autism, and mental health reablement offer.

New school travel pilot:
'One School One Operator' to develop more efficient school transport provision.

Strengthening our local economy

Gull Wing bridge

Seven of the eight sections installed and highways construction work completed.

Government has confirmed improvements to Ely and Haughley rail junctions.

Outline business case approved for A12 major road network improvements.

Edmundham Developments established between the council and Lovell Partnerships to provide new housing across Suffolk.

Protecting and enhancing our environment

Almost
£1m committed for additional flood investigation specialists following Storm Babet.

Fully electrified pool car fleet by end of 2023/24.

Solar panels on our buildings generate over **400,000 kWh** of green electricity.

County farm tenants supported to improve natural habitats across
4,428 hectares of Suffolk farmland.

53,000 trees and hedge saplings planted, in partnership with Woodland Trust and Suffolk Tree Warden Network.

Providing value for money for our residents

New highways and street lighting contracts successfully commenced on 1 October 2023

New highways contract to deliver
116 footway improvement schemes.

More than
£2.5m saved through switching to LED streetlights across Suffolk.

More major programmes case studies

Decarbonisation of our built estate

A decarbonisation programme for Suffolk County Council's built estate has helped to reduce costs and move the council towards its ambition of net zero by 2030. The council has reduced energy demand by upgrading building management systems and optimising how and when the buildings heat and cool. This is alongside a series of measures such as micro louvres to improve shading, and destratification fans that allow heat to circulate. Collectively, these measures have helped the council to reduce the carbon emissions from energy use in its six largest buildings by 37% since 2019/20.

Multiple installations of solar panels on Suffolk County Council buildings since 2019 will generate over 400,000 kWh of green electricity a year – the equivalent of taking 125 homes off the grid altogether. Phoenix Children's Centre in Sudbury has been fully decarbonised through a fully electric heating and cooling system, supported by solar panels and battery storage. Meanwhile, Suffolk County Council streetlights have been upgraded to high efficiency LED bulbs, helping to reduce their carbon impacts by over 50% since 2020.

Suffolk Marketplace

Over the last year, we have developed Suffolk Marketplace, a free to use, web-based directory of services and e-brokerage platform. This allows care providers to list the Care Quality Commission registered services they deliver across the following five categories: home care, residential and nursing, extra-care housing, live-in care, and supported housing. As of November 2023, 65 providers have listed their services, and we are continuing to work with the care market to publicise the platform and increase take-up.

Through the e-brokerage tool, both Suffolk County Council officers and members of the public will be able to specify individual care package requirements and receive offers from providers who can meet those requirements. Residents can engage directly with providers to set up the care and support they want to receive, within available resources. Our intention is that Suffolk Marketplace will become a significant channel for people to access care and support in Suffolk. It will also support greater independence and resilience for our residents, as part of our new **People at the Heart of Care** strategy for adult social care in Suffolk.

Housing Joint Venture (JV) – Low carbon housing

Through the Housing JV, Suffolk County Council (SCC) has agreed that all housing developed on SCC land should be energy efficient as standard. Energy efficient is defined as being aligned to the Future Homes Standards (FHS) that Government are phasing in. In 2025, compliance with the FHS will become mandatory. Its aim is to ensure that new homes built from 2025 will produce 75-80% less carbon emissions than homes built under the current Building Regulations. SCC have committed to introducing this standard early, and all Edmundham Homes will be built to at least this standard. During 2023, the build specification has been developed, including the thickness of insulation required at Edmundham homes, the performance of doors and glazing, and the specification of the air source heat pumps. This now provides a low carbon template for all Edmundham house types that will be built from 2024 onwards.



OUR AMBITIONS: LOOKING AFTER OUR HEALTH AND WELLBEING



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, WORK HAS PROGRESSED TO ACHIEVE OUR AMBITION:

- Throughout 2023, there has been significant work on developing and finalising the All Age Carers Strategy action plan. A series of events was held to raise awareness of the vital role carers play. A wide range of stakeholders are involved in delivery, which includes information, advice and guidance, and access to the wide range of support delivered via Suffolk Family Carers.
- We have delivered on the sufficiency plan for children's homes accommodation by creating a new children's home in East Suffolk for six young people, and building a new lodge that can provide accommodation for young people that come into care in an emergency. Our plans are advancing for a new specialist home for children with disabilities in West Suffolk.
- We are working towards a sustainably better SEND system in Suffolk. Developments include:
 - Phase 1 of the capital programme delivering 741 new specialist placements up to September 2023. Another 84 places are due to open in September 2024. Phase 2 will deliver between 54 and 72 places, and these will also open in September 2024. A planned Phase 3 will deliver at least 168 places.
 - Improved support for special educational needs coordinators (SENDCo) and schools through a graduated response approach, which provides specialist advice and tools to help meet need at the earliest point.
 - A new Whole School Inclusion Team and Education Access Team supporting inclusive practice within schools.

We recognise there is still more to do. In 2024-25, we will make an additional investment of more than £4 million to continue improving the way we deliver our SEND services.



OUR AMBITIONS: LOOKING AFTER OUR HEALTH AND WELLBEING



IN 2023-24, WORK HAS PROGRESSED TO ACHIEVE OUR AMBITION:

- In May 2023, Suffolk was confirmed as one of five local authorities, responsible for adult social care, that would be pilot sites for a new Care Quality Commission (CQC) inspection framework. The pilot, which included Suffolk County Council completing a self-assessment exercise, helped the CQC develop a new model of inspection to assess how local authorities across the country meet their Care Act duties. The CQC's final report rated the overall quality of Suffolk County Council's Adult Social Care services as "Good". The inspection report will inform action planning for service improvement, delivered through our *People at the Heart of Care* transformation programmes.
- In April 2023, the Government announced that it would be delaying the implementation of the Liberty Protection Safeguards "beyond the life of this Parliament". In the interim, Suffolk County Council has put in place a three-year plan to improve management of the existing Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards process, mobilising in September 2023.
- We have designed and agreed a funding framework with Suffolk and North East Essex Integrated Care Board to put actions in place in line with CORE20PLUS5, which aims to improve population health outcomes, reduce health inequalities, and prevent future ill-health in Suffolk. This work will be steered by the new Health Inequalities and Prevention Committee, chaired by the Suffolk Director of Public Health.
- We have coordinated countywide information on cost of living support, with information maintained on both the Suffolk InfoLink and the Suffolk County Council website. There have been 11,153 visitors to these pages. A leaflet has been designed for the residents of each district and borough, providing information on available services and support for cost of living pressures and winter. Around 30,000 leaflets, translated into seven languages, have been printed and distributed to key public venues including GP surgeries, council offices, job centres, food banks, and community groups.
- We have continued to roll out Cassius care technology to support integrated care for those who have both health and care needs, explored opportunities for children and young people to benefit from the technology, and are starting to develop our offer for the private market. More than 3,000 people now use a Cassius device in Suffolk, avoiding or mitigating the need for more intensive care and support.
- Year 1 actions for the Fire Service's Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) have been completed within the time frame. Some items span over the full four-year CRMP, with all actions on track for completion.





OUR AMBITIONS: LOOKING AFTER OUR HEALTH AND WELLBEING



IN 2024-25, WE WILL:

1. Deliver a range of new, easy-to-use, self-service tools to allow our residents to access adult social care services and their own information at a time of their choosing, including supported self-assessment for adults and their carers.

2. Launch the new Suffolk Dementia Strategy, which has been developed in partnership with communities, people who use dementia services, and their carers, and develop an action plan to deliver it.

3. Deliver the action plan based on the learning from Suffolk's pilot Care Quality Commission inspection to further improve the quality of adult social care practice and support.

4. Work jointly with schools and settings on improving attendance, both to support children's progress and attainment and as a key protective factor.

5. Implement the national agenda for modernising adoption to help children who are adopted better understand where they have come from. By working with adopters, we will help birth families play a continuing role and have positive relationships with their birth children.

6. Further expand the awareness and resilience of our residents, communities and businesses to scams and rogue-trading by increasing the number of followers of our social media alerts; enlarging our network of Trading Standards Champions; building on the number of No Cold Calling Zones in Suffolk; and delivering an SCC-accredited Trusted Trader scheme.

7. Better focus our Fire and Rescue Service prevention work on hard-to-reach communities by introducing a new policy on how we use data, evidence and partnership working to target the vulnerable.

8. Deliver a new £1.1 million programme to support good oral health among children in Suffolk, including investment in Keep Suffolk Smiling Packs; targeting vulnerable and isolated communities over five years; expansion of the supervised toothbrushing schemes over two years; and dental varnishing programmes in the community, including the hiring of two community nurses, over two years.

9. Work with the NHS to embed key programmes of work to address health inequalities. This includes the investment of £3.9 million to tackle inequalities in health access, experience and outcomes; enabling culture change through a 'health inequalities in all policies' approach; and supporting the implementation of high-impact interventions.

10. Spend £300,000, through our Public Health's Contain Outbreak Management grant, to support the Warm Homes Healthy People initiative in Suffolk, which ensures some of our most vulnerable residents are able to improve the warmth and safety of their homes and lessens their risk of becoming unwell.



OUR AMBITIONS: LOOKING AFTER OUR HEALTH AND WELLBEING



Case studies

Supporting care leavers

Suffolk County Council is actively supporting over 500 young people who have previously been in care. We have developed a new, fun and interactive Leaving Care Local Offer based on feedback from young people. This sets out how Suffolk County Council and partner organisations support care leavers to live their best lives as they transition to adulthood. The new Local Offer includes a wealth of information and practical support for care leavers around living arrangements, money, physical and mental health, relationships, education, employment opportunities and understanding their rights.

Getting into the world of work can be challenging for care leavers, especially when they don't have extended networks to draw on or are battling with low self-esteem and confidence. Suffolk County Council's innovative employment model 'The Family Business' was designed to empower care leavers on their journey to success. The Family Business creates meaningful employment opportunities for care leavers in Suffolk and ensures they feel prepared for the world of work.

The programme provides ring-fenced apprenticeships for care leavers across all suitable service areas within Suffolk County Council, giving them the opportunity to earn while they learn. We also partner with businesses across Suffolk to develop cross-sector work experience and paid employment opportunities for care leavers, always seeking bespoke ring-fenced opportunities where we can. In addition, we have developed a tailored, eight-week training and support programme that prepares our young people for the opportunities procured through The Family Business and gives them the chance to meet local employers, career guidance advisors, and industry professionals. As a corporate parent to Suffolk's care leavers, the council is determined to leverage our connections to help these young people on the road to a successful career.

200th Suffolk No Cold Calling Zone launch

In August 2023, Suffolk Trading Standards launched the county's 200th No Cold Calling Zone. This covers 96 properties in an area of Kessingland and is part of our scheme to make people feel safer in their homes. This latest zone was identified by a Trading Standards officer after a resident was fleeced of more than £8,000 by a rogue trader who called at their door.

A No Cold Calling Zone (NCCZ) is a nominated area where residents state they do not want traders to cold call at their homes. Zones are established in association with residents, councillors, police and other partners. They are set up if they meet criteria such as occurrences of doorstep crime or distraction burglary incidents; a population more susceptible to doorstep crime; and being within a defined geographic area. Residents in the nominated zone area are consulted and, with their agreement, a NCCZ is set up, with information packs, door stickers and street signage provided.

The first zone was launched in Maryon Road and Grasmere Close in Ipswich in 2009 and there are now more than 9,700 properties in Suffolk covered by them, with over 20,000 further homes individually protected by the supply of a No Cold Calling door sticker. Anyone wishing to nominate their road should go to the No Cold Calling page on the Suffolk County Council website.



OUR AMBITIONS: 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, WORK HAS PROGRESSED TO ACHIEVE OUR AMBITION:

- Significant progress has been made on the construction of the Lowestoft Gull Wing bridge, with seven of the eight spans completed, and the planning and preparation well underway for the installation of the main bascule span in 2024.
- We have continued development of the A12 Major Road Network project to support growth on the corridor, including Brightwell Lakes and the Energy Coast. In October 2023, the Department for Transport committed to funding up to £54 million of the project's estimated £64million total cost, subject to full business case approval.
- We have presented to the Suffolk Chamber Transport and Infrastructure Group on the 'A14 Growth Corridor' work to maximise opportunities for economic growth, linking Felixstowe and the Energy Coast to the Midlands Engine and Northern Powerhouse. We have worked with the New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership to develop the evidence base and next steps.
- The new highways services and street lighting services contracts were let, mobilised and in operation from October 2023. Both have service provider commitments to economic and social benefits for Suffolk embedded within them.
- The council's Market Sustainability Plan was published in March 2023 and identified four key themes to support the care market. These were: costs to deliver care, development of the workforce, responding to growing needs in the community, and developing offers in response to changing consumer demand. The council is building on this work through development of the new Care Market Strategy during 2023 and 2024.
- We have worked with partners to design a new local economic landscape that will enhance Suffolk's unique, internationally significant economic strengths.
- We have worked 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 AMBITIONS: STRENGTHENING OUR LOCAL ECONOMY



IN 2024-25, WE WILL:

1. Continue the development of the £64m A12 Major Road Network project to support economic growth on the corridor, including Brightwell Lakes and the Energy Coast.

2. Invest an extra £10 million to repair and resurface local roads in villages and residential areas across Suffolk.

3. Continue to develop and deliver the seven active travel projects, through our £7.9m of Active Travel England (ATE) funding. Construction of the first scheme is scheduled for Summer 2024.

4. Complete and open the Lowestoft Gull Wing bridge, which will significantly reduce traffic congestion within Lowestoft, enhance the walking and cycling route network, and act as a catalyst for the regeneration of the town and surrounding area.

5. Design and draw up plans for the Prince Philip Lock pedestrian and cycle bridge, which will complete a circular route around Ipswich Wet Dock and link with established public rights of way. This will help facilitate the wider regeneration of Ipswich Waterfront.

6. Complete and sell our first Housing Joint Venture homes at our Newmarket, West Row and Bacton sites.

7. With local partners, implement new local economic structures and strategies to ensure that Suffolk fulfils its internationally significant economic potential.

8. Work with and influence developers and Government departments to ensure that the impacts of Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs) are minimised, and opportunities maximised, through better coordination, improved mitigation, and community benefit schemes.

9. Establish a Local Visitor Economy Partnership (LVEP) to grow the visitor economy in line with the Visit Britain programme, linking local and national priorities and with an emphasis on sustainability and accessibility.

10. Continue to work with Government and local partners to ensure that a devolved Adult Education Budget supports Suffolk's residents to fulfil their potential and explore further devolved opportunities for education, skills and employment.



OUR AMBITIONS: STRENGTHENING OUR LOCAL ECONOMY



Case studies

Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects Centre of Excellence

Suffolk County Council has been recognised by the Government for its knowledge and expertise when engaging with Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs) such as Sizewell C, Lowestoft's Gull Wing bridge, National Grid upgrades and offshore wind farms. In August 2022, the council was awarded £90,500 from the Government's Innovation and Capacity Fund to set up a Centre of Excellence to support other local authorities in dealing with such complicated projects. The funding enabled the Centre to engage with 16 local authorities across the East of England, with 429 representatives attending webinars and a conference held in Bury St Edmunds.

In November 2023, Suffolk County Council received a further £99,000 from the Government's Innovation and Capacity Fund to continue the work of the Centre and extend our offer across the country. The funding will be spent on more events and materials to upskill and share good practice with councils across England, from parish councils to unitary authorities. The county council has long recognised that town and parish councils, who have limited resources, can easily be overwhelmed by the magnitude of NSIPs. The new funding will enable bespoke guidance to be published in partnership with Suffolk Association of Local Councils.

The Centre will continue to share and further develop our experience and exemplary approaches in dealing with NSIPs, both in the planning process and in promoting wider local and regional growth, skills and other benefits arising from these projects.

Providing personalised care and support through microenterprises

In 2023/24, Suffolk County Council funded Community Catalysts to support the care market to diversify and offer a wider range of services, ensuring people can access personalised care and support, tailored to their needs. Community Catalysts work with people and communities to set up microenterprises – small-scale businesses, run by local people, which provide care and support. This provides a greater range of options for residents to access flexible, personalised care from local providers, and supports the local economy by creating additional employment opportunities. As of September 2023, 65 microenterprises had been established and were supporting more than 250 residents. Residents can benefit from access to options that range from personal care to support with being more organised, money management, and physical exercise - all tailored to their needs and delivered by people who are part of their local community.



OUR AMBITIONS: 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, WORK HAS PROGRESSED TO ACHIEVE OUR AMBITION:

- Six community clusters are currently receiving in-depth technical support to help them realise their community energy projects.
- Over 100 community-owned electric vehicle charging points have been installed. There are also two rapid-charging stations open now - one at each of the Ipswich Park and Ride sites. Charging facilities will be expanded further on council sites to support our electric pool car fleet.
- The council's pool car fleet of 42 vehicles will be fully electric by the end of the 2023/24 financial year.
- A suite of energy saving measures have been installed across our six largest buildings to improve their efficiency, including controls, fans and shading. These have helped deliver savings of 37% against baseline, while enhancing comfort levels and keeping bills low.
- We have been working with Concertus to improve the energy performance certificate (EPC) ratings at highway depots. The project is progressing well, with implementation starting in 2023/24 and continuing into 2024/25.
- Both the highways services and the street lighting services contracts, which came into operation in October 2023, have environmental and biodiversity service provider commitments embedded within.
- £2m has been invested in highway flooding prevention, as part of the council's £10m additional flood risk management funding through to 2024-25. This has allowed us to resolve flooding at 40 locations in Suffolk.
- Preparation work for major changes to waste collection and treatment has continued, both in terms of working closely with partner councils and in adapting SCC procurement and infrastructure. Government issued its 'Simpler Recycling' guidance in October 2023, which will steer this work moving forward.
- Improvements have been made to Suffolk's waste infrastructure with the rebuild of the Foxhall re-use shop and recycling centre. The replacement of the Haverhill recycling centre has been delayed slightly, due to a fire on site, but is now moving forward at pace. The new site is expected to be operational by Summer 2024.
- We have expanded the Greener Homes 0% Loan Scheme, which improves energy efficiency and renewable generation for households across Suffolk, through £3m awarded with Suffolk's proposed devolution deal.



OUR AMBITIONS: PROTECTING AND ENHANCING OUR ENVIRONMENT



IN 2024-25, WE WILL:

1. Support communities in Suffolk impacted by the Storm Babet flooding by ensuring all relevant Government funding is made available to residents and businesses, and that site-specific investigations are undertaken to identify opportunities to reduce future flood risk.
2. Complete the new recycling centre for Haverhill, which is scheduled to open in Summer 2024, and refurbish Stowmarket recycling centre.
3. Encourage the shift to low carbon transport by using the £5.9M Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure funding to install new public charging infrastructure, targeting areas without off-street parking.
4. Work with partners to carry out the agreed actions in the recently published SCC Air Quality Strategy, to improve air quality and support the health and wellbeing of communities in Suffolk.
5. Develop a Local Nature Recovery Strategy for Suffolk to help improve wildlife habitats and reverse the decline of biodiversity across the region. We will work with local communities to develop a tailored nature recovery strategy for their areas.
6. Work with tenants on our county farms estate to support opportunities for nature recovery and enhancement.
7. Work to develop a detailed understanding of our supply chain emissions and support our 100 largest suppliers to move towards net zero.
8. Transition our Fire and Rescue Service small vehicles to zero-emissions models by 2025.
9. Continue to reduce energy use and carbon emissions across the corporate estate, particularly the most carbon intensive buildings. We will maximise self-generation of energy and work towards buildings being independent from the grid where practicable.
10. Continue to work with Government and local partners to ensure Suffolk's proposed devolution deal maximises ways to achieve net zero and protect Suffolk's natural capital.



OUR AMBITIONS: PROTECTING AND ENHANCING OUR ENVIRONMENT



Case study

Landscapes for All

As part of the Coast & Heaths and Dedham Vale Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty's efforts to improve access to the natural environment, local organisations have been working in partnership to launch several initiatives to ensure the landscape is for everyone.

The Landscapes for All work aims to utilise existing, accessible public transport links to introduce underrepresented communities to the countryside, including Ukrainian families, underprivileged women and children, and refugee groups from Eritrea, Ethiopia, and Afghanistan.

Led by local experts, groups have walked from train stations on the edges of the Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty to some of the area's most beloved locations, such as Wrabness, Flatford, and Woodbridge riverside. During the walks, participants learn about local wildlife, the landscape, and artists who have been inspired by it.

Organisations involved in the initiatives include Community Rail Partnerships in Essex and South Suffolk and in East Suffolk; Refugee, Asylum Seeker & Migrant Action (RAMA); P.H.O.E.B.E., an Ipswich-based registered charity that supports black and ethnic minority women and children; as well as the Suffolk Refugee Support group, and The Fitzwilliam Museum in Cambridge.

Introducing different groups of people to the countryside can help develop their knowledge of the local area and public transport links, as well as build confidence and provide the skills to explore the Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty independently. Funding for the initiatives has been provided by Suffolk County Council's Green Access team and Essex County Council's Path to Prosperity.





OUR AMBITIONS: PROVIDING VALUE FOR MONEY FOR OUR RESIDENTS



To meet the ambitions 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, our commitment to make the best possible use of every pound of public money made available to us remains absolute.

IN 2023-24, WORK HAS PROGRESSED TO ACHIEVE OUR AMBITION:

- We have worked with Government and local partners on proposals to secure potential funding through the proposed Suffolk Devolution Deal, which, if approved, will bring opportunities to Suffolk.
- We are providing a range of customer channels to ensure contacting the council is as accessible and inclusive as possible. Development of the council's website and online services now enables over 85% of transactions to be completed online, with offline channels such as telephone always available to support those unable to engage with services digitally.
- Suffolk Highways' social media presence now spans Facebook, X and Instagram (with over 16,000 followers), providing updates to the public.
- As part of the council's work to modernise its main customer websites, new refreshed sites have been delivered for Suffolk Fostering and Adoption, Healthy Suffolk, and Suffolk Local Offer. The new websites provide improved user experience, security and accessibility, enabling more people to engage with services online.
- A peer-led network of over 100 staff, from across the council, provide support with digital adoption, skills development and learning, and explore how technology can improve services and generate savings. Regular 'Innovation and Improvement' case studies are shared through the network and with managers to help drive greater efficiency and effectiveness of service delivery across the council.
- We have rolled out system-based forecasting tools across all directorates, and we will be implementing a new cash receipting system before the end of the financial year. Income and payment processes continue to evolve, along with our use of reports.
- We are ensuring we make the best use of, and get the best value from, our corporate headquarter campus. Corporate services staff have moved from Constantine House into Endeavour House. We have taken on public sector tenants into spare space on the top floor of Constantine House and are currently looking to bring in tenants for the remaining two floors.
- We are making 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. The council has worked with social housing companies to deliver supported living accommodation for our customers on land that we sell for housing schemes.
- The integrated drug and alcohol service procurement has been successfully completed and the integrated sexual health service procurement is nearing completion. Both of these programmes will deliver services for the most vulnerable and provide greater value for money. A new collaboration has been established with Suffolk's districts and borough to deliver better health outcomes and locally-based services for people who want to lose weight, stop smoking, or become more physically active. Through the implementation of a new, comprehensive digital pathway, Suffolk residents have access to high-quality, evidence-based resources, designed to support their health changes.



OUR AMBITIONS: PROVIDING VALUE FOR MONEY FOR OUR RESIDENTS



IN 2023-24, WORK HAS PROGRESSED TO ACHIEVE OUR AMBITION:

- A linked health and care dataset for adults within the Suffolk and North East Essex Integrated Care System has been built. It is available to both analytics teams and frontline staff to identify population need, and to plan and deliver interventions. Detailed analysis on a range of topics is underway. We are working with the Norfolk and Waveney Integrated Care Board to develop the approach in Waveney and enable parity of data across the two integrated care boards.
- A new four-year Corporate Workforce Strategy was developed following wide engagement and came into force in April 2023. The strategy identifies six key themes that will be delivered through annual action plans to ensure that SCC remains an employer of choice with a skilled, engaged, and high-performing workforce. Progress will be measured through a set of performance indicators, which will be published in our Corporate Performance Report.

Case studies

Lowestoft Gull Wing Bridge Social Value

As part of our commitment to delivering a lasting legacy for the local community during the construction of the Gull Wing bridge, the Suffolk County Council project team and our construction partner, Farrans, have worked together to deliver an educational outreach programme, community engagement events, site visits and work experience. We have also facilitated a number of apprentice positions and various career opportunities. Wherever possible, opportunities have been provided to local firms to become sub-contractors or suppliers to the project.

To date, we have engaged with more than 2,000 local students from 13 schools and attended 12 careers' events. Our team has also undertaken 13 community initiatives by partnering with various community and voluntary organisations and social enterprises in the local area. Consultation and collaboration enabled us to identify areas and projects most in need and where we could make the most impact.

New case management system for SEND Family Services

As part of our journey to develop sustainably better systems and processes, we have successfully migrated to the new Liquid Logic case management system. This was a major undertaking and puts in place a key building block to help improve the timely production of Education, Health and Care Plans and Annual Reviews, support effective communication with families, and enable direct access to information for families. New dashboards have been delivered, alongside the system change, to support accurate monitoring of cases and caseloads. From April 2024, as a next stage of this development, the Liquid Logic professional portal will be launched for schools. This will streamline the Annual Review process and support monitoring the progress that children and young people are making towards planned outcomes.



OUR AMBITIONS: PROVIDING VALUE FOR MONEY FOR OUR RESIDENTS



IN 2024-25, WE WILL:

1. Work with residents, care providers and communities to develop new adult social care service offers that make best use of resources, taking advantage of technology and innovation to create new ways to meet people's needs.

2. Use our new linked Population Health Management (PHM) datasets to carry out more effective evaluations of interventions in adult social care (ASC) and develop a greater understanding of the characteristics of people who are ASC customers to support better service planning and design.

3. Continue our exploration of combined emergency services hubs and assess how our fire stations could be used by our partner agencies.

4. Procure a new libraries contract for Suffolk, within budget and on time, which meets the needs of Suffolk residents.

5. Leverage the investment made in our digital content platform to provide modern council websites that comply with the latest Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) legal requirements. This includes developing and launching a new ceremonies marketing website for the Suffolk Registration Service and a new careers website to support staff recruitment and retention.

6. Explore the transformative potential of generative artificial intelligence (AI) to provide automated conversational assistance via our digital channels.

7. Modernise our contact centre platform to improve customer experience and support more efficient ways of working.

8. Review, and make changes as necessary, to the service level agreements with our wholly owned companies.

9. Continue to look for opportunities to make the best use of our land and assets and rationalise the estate, where there are opportunities to do so, and when it is in the best interests of the council.

10. Continue to work with Government and local partners on plans to ensure the additional funding devolved through the proposed Suffolk Devolution Deal, if approved, is invested effectively to enhance positive outcomes for Suffolk's residents and businesses.

> OUR FINANCES

The 2024-25 budget has been set following a period of significant upheaval and disruption caused by world events, in particular the COVID-19 pandemic and the Ukraine war. These have left a legacy of increased demand on services, along with high inflation and interest rates. This is not just a challenge in Suffolk, but nationally across all levels of local government, particularly those with responsibilities for adult and children's social care, home to school transport, homelessness, and special education needs and disabilities.

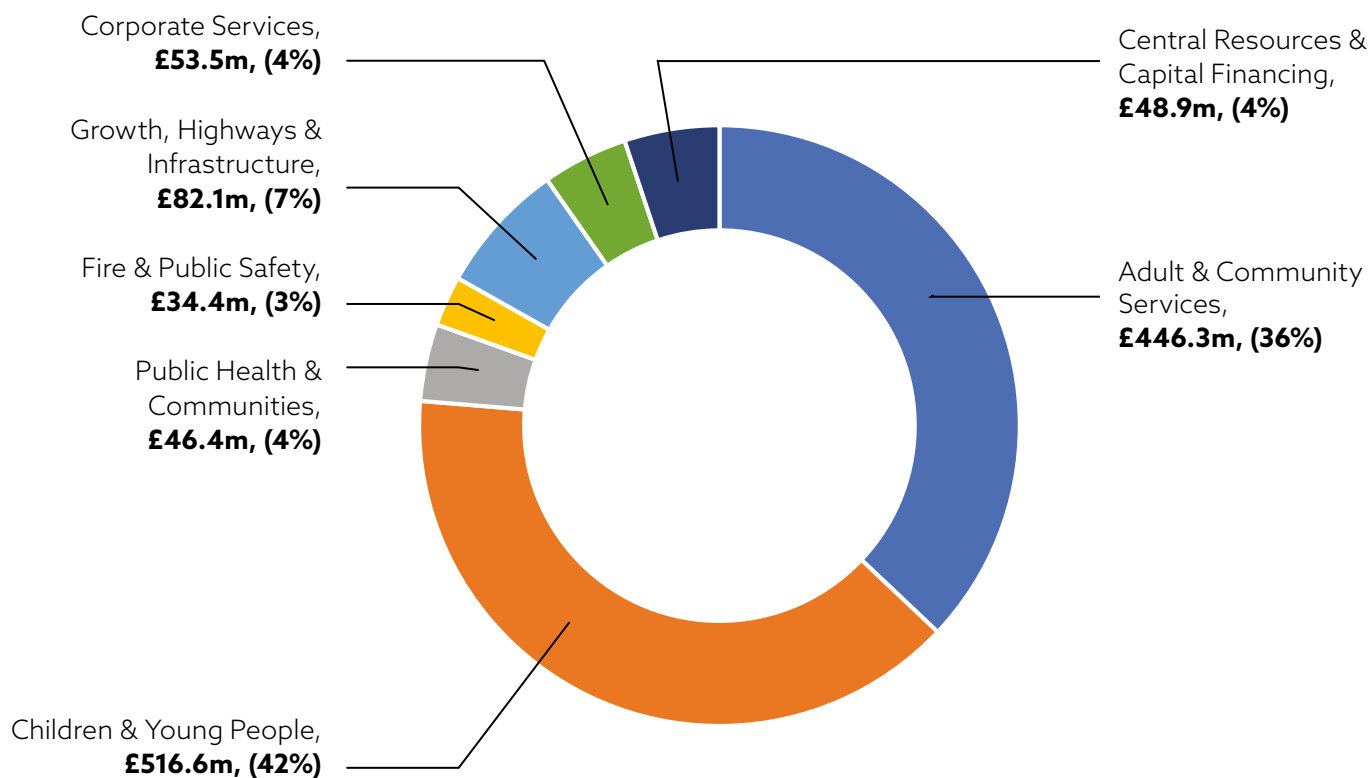
Government funding has not kept pace with these cost pressures, resulting in the council developing a substantial savings programme of £43.1 million for 2024-25 and using a significant drawdown of £8.7 million from the council's reserves to enable setting a balanced budget for 2024-25.

The council will be spending £752.8 million on our services in 2024-25, an increase of £59.8 million (8.6%) from 2023-24. £56.9 million of this increase will be spent within our People Services, which support our most vulnerable residents.

What we spend

The chart below shows how the council will use its budgeted gross expenditure of £1,228.2 million in 2024-25, spread across its six directorates and its centrally managed functions.

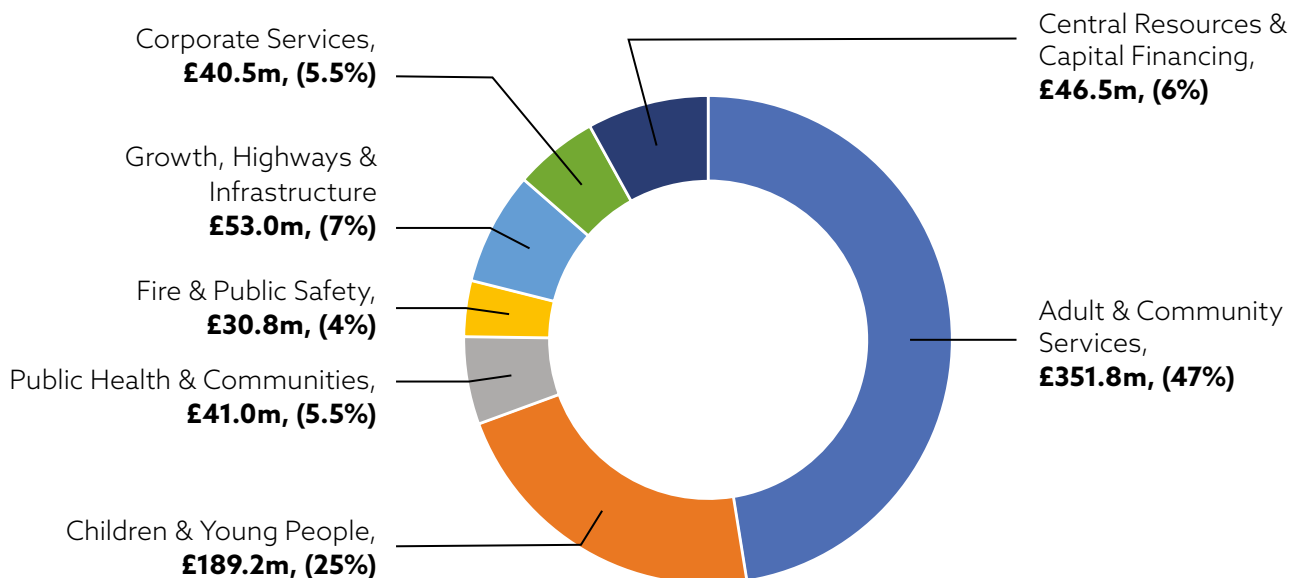
2024-25 Gross Expenditure Budget (£1,228.2 million)



The 2024-25 gross expenditure budget is offset by £327.8 million of service grants (including £275.5 million of Dedicated Schools Grant), £143.7 million of external contributions (such as fees and charges), and a £3.9 million contribution from service reserves, to give a 2024-25 **net expenditure budget of £752.8 million**.

The chart below shows how the council will use its net expenditure of £752.8 million

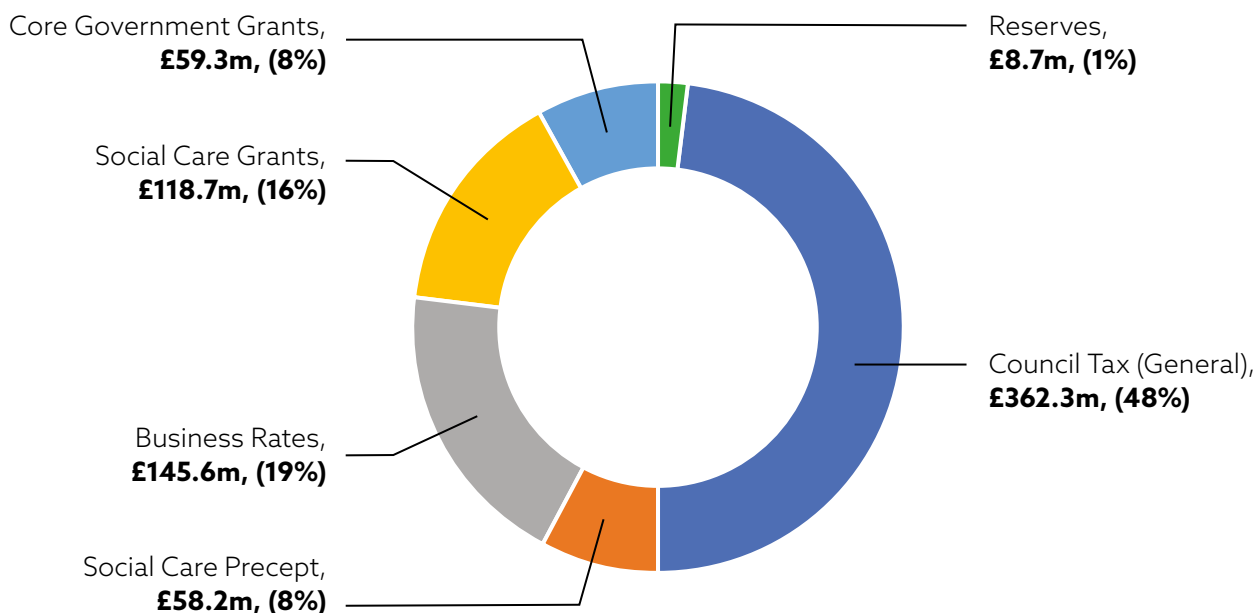
2024-25 Net Expenditure Budget (£752.8 million)



Where the money comes from

The council will fund its 2024-25 budget through a combination of an increase in Government grants announced in the local government finance settlement, increasing council tax by 4.99% and making a one-off use of reserves. The chart below outlines our funding sources.

2024-25 Core Funding Budget (£752.8 million)



Our forecast budget gap between 2024 and 2028

Although the council has set a balanced budget for 2024-25, a budget gap is forecast to emerge from 2025-26 as pressures are expected to continue rising at a faster rate than funding. This gap is expected to reach **£66.9 million** by 2027-28 if there is no intervention. Although our immediate focus will be on delivering the savings plans identified for 2024-25, further plans will need to be developed, or additional funding be provided by Government, to manage the emerging gap from 2025-26 and ensure the council remains sustainable financially. The council is forecasting that it will run out of unallocated reserves by the end of 2026-27.

Investing in Suffolk

Alongside the £752.8 million budget used for the council's day-to-day service expenditure, the council continues to invest **£525 million** in assets and planned infrastructure projects from 2024-25 to 2027-28. This work, known as the council's capital programme, includes:

- £197.8 million for upgrading and renewing Suffolk's highways.
- £109.7 million for developing and maintaining schools.
- £50.8 million for upgrading the A12 East of Ipswich.
- £29.6 million to maintain and improve the council's buildings, including energy efficiency and decarbonisation schemes.
- £15.6 million for new pupil places for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities.
- A £13.6 million programme of IT assets to keep the IT network and systems running effectively.
- £11.6 million for investing in measures to reduce carbon emissions across the county.



> SUFFOLK COUNTY COUNCIL'S CARBON BUDGET

Suffolk County Council activity contributes to climate change by adding to the total amount of greenhouse gases, such as carbon dioxide, in the atmosphere. The Paris Agreement target of limiting warming to 1.5°C means that, globally, we need to reduce emissions to zero by 2050. Recognising that developed countries need to act first, and showing a desire to lead the way, Suffolk County Council has set the ambition of being net zero across its operations by 2030.

Progress towards this is reported annually in our **Net Zero Carbon Budget**. This reports the impacts of the council's own operations, as distinct from the work to achieve net zero across Suffolk through the Suffolk Climate Emergency Plan. Using 2019-20 as its baseline, the Carbon Budget describes progress towards the target for those emissions that are measurable.

It is important to recognise that the emissions we report on do not cover all of our impacts. We estimate that emissions from the goods and services purchased by the council account for 91% of total emissions associated with council activity. These are not reported within the Carbon Budget, as we are not able to monitor them accurately, and do not have direct influence over their reduction. Nonetheless, we are working with suppliers to reduce these impacts, as well as adopting a new assessment process that will allow more accurate reporting across a wider range of emissions. While SCC's emissions have dropped since the 2021/22 report, the total amount reported has increased, due to our expanding the range of impacts that we report on.

In accordance with the Greenhouse Gas Protocol, our emissions are grouped under three headings or 'Scopes':

- **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, owned 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 Carbon Budget graph overleaf shows Suffolk County Council's progress since our declaration of a Climate Emergency and a projection to the 2030 target date.

The graph shows an 11% reduction in the council's carbon footprint relative to 2021/22 - a 21% drop on baseline. The main factors behind this are:

- Efficiency upgrades to the streetlighting network.
- Efficiency measures at offices and schools, leading to reduced energy consumption.
- An ongoing shift to renewables in the national grid reducing the carbon impacts of electricity.
- Since April 2022, all Suffolk County Council electricity being purchased from UK renewables. This is shown as 'Actual emissions (incl. REGO)' in the graph overleaf.



SUFFOLK COUNTY COUNCIL'S CARBON BUDGET

Suffolk County Council's Forecast Carbon Budget Pathway (tCO₂e)



- **Budget** – The grey bars show the required position, based on a linear pathway to net zero.
- **Actual emissions** – Solid lines show the emissions reported to date.
- **Actual emissions (incl. REGO)** – As above but discounting emissions from grid electricity that is 100% generated from renewables backed by Renewable Energy Guarantees of Origin (REGO).
- **Projections** – Dotted lines show the projected emissions for future years, based on work in progress or funded.

Progress towards 2030

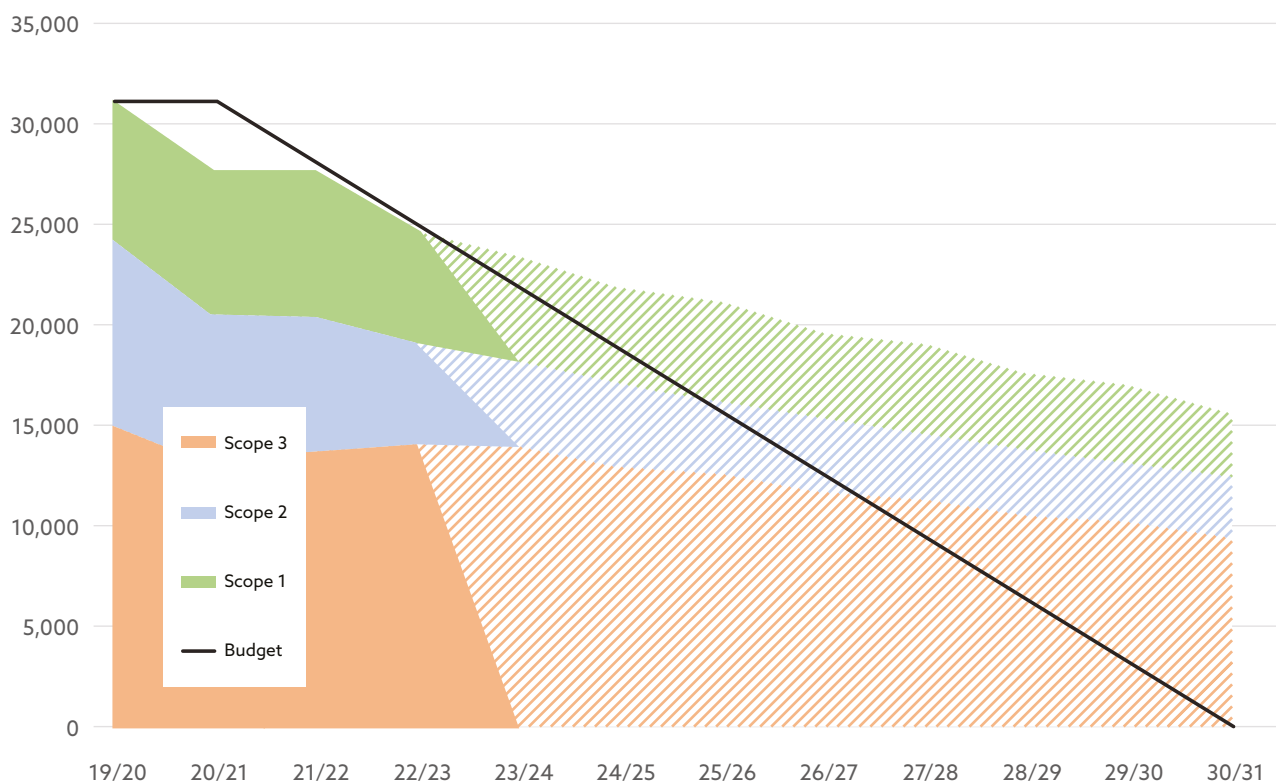
The Carbon Budget shows that progress towards the 2030 goal has been made. But achieving net zero by 2030 remains a challenge in many areas. As the more readily achieved savings are realised, it will get harder to continue the rate of progress needed for net zero.

The dotted projection lines shown in the graph above are based on specific measures with identified funding, and we would expect to exceed these reductions as we identify further savings opportunities. Nonetheless, the projections indicate that there is still a significant gap that we need to bridge to realise our 2030 ambition.

> SUFFOLK COUNTY COUNCIL'S CARBON BUDGET

The council's reported footprint covers a lot of different areas. Some of these are easier to decarbonise than others. Generally, those areas where the council has most control are the ones for which we have the clearest reduction pathway. This is reflected in the projected budget across the three scopes. Scopes 1&2 are dominated by emissions from council-owned vehicles and buildings. Scope 3 includes emissions from sources such as commuting and contracted services, which currently show a slower decarbonisation profile.

Suffolk County Council's Projected Emissions by Scope



Areas in which we will be working to achieve net zero include:

- A £12.8m 'invest to save' programme, which is reducing energy demand and increasing renewable provision across our built estate through investment into measures ranging from solar panels to destratification fans. Work to date has focussed on the top six buildings, representing over half our property emissions, and has resulted in a reduction of 37% relative to baseline. The full range of council properties will present challenges – though a retrofit has seen Phoenix Children's Centre in Sudbury fully decarbonised thanks to solar panels, battery storage and electric heating.
- Switching all the council's fleet vehicles to electric. All 42 of our pool cars will have transitioned to electric by the end of 2023/24. Other vehicles are being replaced with electric models, where feasible. Larger vehicles and those needed for emergency response are currently harder to replace.
- Working with the council's supply chain to reduce emissions in procured goods and services. Our Climate Change Commercial Ask, alongside additional tools for contract management and evaluating tender bids, sets the framework for supporting our suppliers to contribute to our ambitions. 37 of our top 100 suppliers have now adopted net zero commitments.
- Working with others to deliver new solutions to many of the council's Scope 3 emissions. We are rationalising home to school transport delivery contracts to reduce unnecessary miles driven and supporting staff to commute sustainably through travel discounts.
- Supporting staff across the council to shift work and personal behaviours towards more sustainable alternatives. Internal training and a Staff Champion network are helping to embed these changes.

2024-25 will be the second year of our Corporate Workforce Strategy with deliverables and actions detailed in an annual plan, supported by clear performance measures to monitor progress against ambitions. These are focussed on ensuring that Suffolk County Council is an employer of choice, able to attract and retain a highly engaged workforce to deliver our Corporate Strategy and ambitions.

The 2023 corporate staff survey results showed high engagement and motivation across our diverse workforce. We will be delivering action plans to strengthen this even further at corporate, directorate, service, and team level. This will include establishing clearer links between performance objectives set at the individual level and the strategic ambitions of the council.

We will continue to develop, extend, and optimise our Oracle Fusion HR and Payroll system, providing a standardised suite of workforce reports at both the manager and organisation level to accurately inform operational decision making and longer-term strategic planning. In addition, development work will be undertaken to improve the user experience within the system, supported by updated and improved HR information.

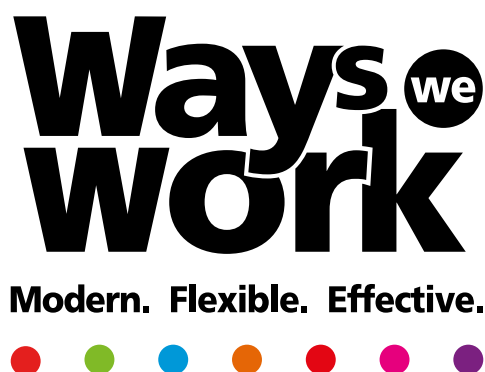
Delivery of our planned equality outcomes will continue. We will focus on targeted actions that are informed by data and will be adding a disability pay gap report to our existing gender and ethnicity pay gap reports.

As part of our Workforce Strategy, we will continue developing career pathways and new recruitment pipelines for hard-to-fill roles, fully utilising the funded apprenticeship opportunities to upskill and develop staff. We will maintain 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 encourage and enable the wider availability and uptake of apprenticeships in Suffolk through promoting and offering apprenticeship levy transfers.

We will review our current approach to learning and development across all directorates to ensure the most effective delivery to meet identified need and ensure value for money. We will continue ensuring that the relevant and required package of mandatory training for staff and managers is completed by all staff. We ASPIRE will continue to be embedded into our online learning platform and policies, with toolkits and further resources developed and extended to further strengthen our core values and behaviours.

We encourage the use of automation and artificial intelligence (AI) tools where it aids service efficiency and effectiveness. We will support our staff to make the best use of both, guided by the principles of information governance and data protection.

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.



> MEASURING OUR PERFORMANCE

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

Looking after our health and wellbeing

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	85% [Summer term 2022]	85% [Summer term 2023]	72% [Summer term 2023]	72% [Summer term 2023]	No target
% Of eligible children (ages 3 & 4) accessing funded childcare	Higher is better	91% [Summer term 2022]	88% [Summer term 2023]	92% [Summer term 2023]	92% [Summer term 2023]	No target
% Maintained Schools Judged Good or Outstanding	Higher is better	96% [Sept 2022]	93% [Sept 2023]	92% [Sept 2023]	89% [Sept 2023]	Better than England (2023)
Number of children with Education, Health & Care Plans	N.A.	6,848 [Sept 2022]	7,662 [Sept 2023]	5,439 [Sept 2023]	6,729 [Sept 2023]	No target
% Education, Health & Care Plans issued within 20 weeks	Higher is better	86% [2021]	23% [2022]	37% [2022]	52% [2022]	No target
Number of Children in Care (CiC) per 10,000 children aged 0-17	Lower is better	66.1 [Dec 2022]	65.5 [Dec 2023]	71.0 [2022/23]	67.8 [2022/23]	59.0 [2023/24]
Admission to residential and nursing care homes, per 100,000 population (Age 65+)	Lower is better	445.2 [2021/22]	553.0 [2022/23]	535.5 [2022/23]	523.9 [2022/23]	600.9 [2023/24]
% Of customers in residential/nursing care rated Inadequate	Lower is better	1.7% [Sept 2021]	0.8% [Sept 2023]	N.A.	N.A.	1.5% [2023/24]
Incidents attended by Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service	Lower is better	5,425 [2021/22]	6,218 [2022/23]	10,318 [2022/23]	7,893 [2022/23]	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	90.8% [2021/22]	90.0% [2022/23]	92.6% [2022/23]	91.7% [2022/23]	Same or better than national average
Number of apprenticeship starts across Suffolk (all ages)	Higher is better	4,730 (Academic year 2021/22)	4,440 (Academic year 2022/23)	No meaningful comparison	No meaningful comparison	Annual increase
Number of people (all) on Universal Credit (UC)	N.A.	57,062 [Dec 2022]	63,485 [Dec 2023]	No meaningful comparison	No meaningful comparison	No target
% Of principal 'A' roads where maintenance should be considered	Lower is better	2% [2021/22]	2% [2022/23]	4% [2022/23]	5% [2022/23]	No target
Number of Highways customer enquiries logged for further action	Lower is better	36,257 [12 mths to Sept 2022]	44,420 [12 mths to Sept 2023]	Local measure	Local measure	No target
% Suffolk premises with access to superfast broadband	Higher is better	98.1% [Dec 2022]	98.5% [Dec 2023]	98.3% [Dec 2023]	97.4% [Dec 2023]	No target

> 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 (tCO2e) metric tonnes of Carbon Dioxide Equivalent	Lower is better	8,785 [2021/22]	6,994 [2022/23]	Local measure	Local measure	Annual reduction
Per capita CO2 emissions (Local Authority influence) Tonnes/person	Lower is better	4.4 [2020]	4.6 [2021]	3.9 [2021]	4.8 [2021]	Annual reduction
Number of Energy Efficiency (ECO) measures per 1,000 households	Higher is better	68.9 [2022]	70.3 [2023]	137.0 [2023]	99.6 [2023]	Annual increase
% Household waste reused, recycled, or composted	Higher is better	39.3% [Q1, 2022/23]	38.9% [Q1, 2023/24]	46.8% [2021/22]	46.3% [2021/22]	Annual increase
% Household waste to energy recovery	Higher is better	55.3% [Q2, 2021/22]	59.4% [Q2, 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.	£1,204 [2021/22]	£ 1,216 [2022/23]	£ 1,336 [2022/23]	£ 1,297 [2022/23]	No target
Total expenditure on adult social care per head of population aged 18+ years	N.A.	£678 [2021/22]	£659 [2022/23]	£629 [2022/23]	£646 [2022/23]	No target
Total expenditure on children and young people services per head of population aged 0-17 years	N.A.	£725 [2021/22]	£753 [2022/23]	£ 959 [2022/23]	£983 [2022/23]	No target
Number of customer contacts through Contact Centre (incl. Blue Badge and Customer First)	Lower is better	297,268 [12 mths to Sept 2022]	234,376 [12 mths to Sept 2023]	Local measure	Local measure	No target
Number of customers accessing the council's main website (unique visits)	Higher is better	3.2 million [12 mths to Sept 2022]	2.8 million [12 mths to Sept 2023]	Local measure	Local measure	No target
Proportion of transactions using online self-service options	Higher is better	84.2% [12 mths to Sept 2022]	86.5% [12 mths to Sept 2023]	Local measure	Local measure	5% annual increase
Number of staff working for the council (FTE, excluding schools' staff)	N.A.	4,431 [Dec 2022]	4,724 [Dec 2023]	Local measure	Local measure	No target
% Working days lost to staff sickness	Lower is better	4.8% [12 mths to Dec 2022]	4.8% [12 mths to Dec 2023]	Local measure	No comparison	Annual reduction

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