Suffolk County Council’s Environment Policy

Suffolk County Council is committed to the sustainable management of the local and global environment to support vibrant communities, growth in our local economy and the health of Suffolk’s population. We will strive to achieve the ambition to *Create the Greenest County* by managing the impacts of a changing climate, reducing damaging emissions, protecting and enhancing the natural and historic environment. In planning and delivering our services, we are committed to meeting all relevant regulatory, legislative and other requirements, and to the continual improvement of our environmental performance.

The Environment Strategy Team will work with officers from across the organisation to develop the Council’s environment policies, targets and plans, overseen by the Cabinet Member with responsibility for the Environment. The Council will also support the implementation of the Suffolk Climate Action Plan in partnership with all of Suffolk’s local authorities and other partner organisations. We will be explicit about monitoring and measuring our progress towards achieving our plans and targets in the Action Plan.

The Council recognises the importance of managing its own direct and indirect environmental impacts and will encourage other members of the community to reduce their negative impacts on the environment. We will seek to demonstrate to communities, businesses, the voluntary sector and employees, all the benefits of improving environmental practices, reducing carbon emissions and effectively managing resources. We will also highlight the importance of understanding and managing the risks related to the impacts of climate change and the changing nature of severe weather events likely to affect Suffolk.

The following objectives support the environment policy:

a) We will manage and improve our own environmental performance through the implementation of an environmental management system. This will ensure that we undertake the following actions:
   - Prevent environmental pollution and minimise waste.
   - Reduce our carbon emissions.
   - Continually improve our energy efficiency and reduce our use of resources.
   - Reduce the impact of vehicle travel by County Council employees
   - Implement sustainable procurement practices.
   - Assess the environmental impact of key decisions, ensuring a whole life cost view is taken to balance financial, social and environmental issues.
   - Enhance biodiversity, conserve distinctive landscapes and protect the historic environment.

b) We will ensure that sustainable development and design is a fundamental element of our policies and activities.

c) We will champion environmental awareness and sustainability to staff and Suffolk’s communities.

d) We will involve and consult the public on issues affecting the local and global environment.

e) We will work in partnership with other organisations and through education, advice and regulation help to bring about environmental protection and enhancement.

f) We will champion Suffolk’s ambition to *Create the Greenest County* and will contribute actively to the achievement of this ambition.

g) We will work to support the Local Enterprise Partnership’s ambition to deliver growth and a prosperous green economy and the Health and Well-Being Board’s objective use our environment to improve health outcomes in Suffolk.
Supporting policies:

**Energy and Water Policy**

Suffolk County Council is committed to improving its energy and water efficiency and will seek to achieve this by managing its energy and water consumption. The county council will invest in and implement measures that reduce energy consumption resulting in reduced long term costs and carbon emissions. The county council will seek to be creative in the design and maintenance of buildings through implementing the use of renewable and innovative technologies where this is feasible and cost effective. The county council will communicate the value of energy and water conservation to staff and, as community leader, to the general public.

To guide this policy the county council has adopted the fuel hierarchy below to indicate the priorities to consider when deciding how to power county council facilities:

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**BREEAM Policy**

Where the council has influence over a project it will expect a standard of BREEAM ‘Excellent’. Where this is not possible (in circumstances agreed by the Cabinet Member responsible for the Greenest County) the council expects a minimum standard of ‘Very Good’ or equivalent to be met and will aim for ‘Excellent’ in particular aspects of BREEAM e.g. energy or biodiversity”

- For projects where the “Construction cost (also known as Initial Target Price)”** is greater than £5 million a BREEAM assessment must be completed with the exception of where less than 75% of the floor area is new build or the refurbishment does not qualify as a major refurbishment according to the BREEAM definition (In that case it must follow the process laid out in point 2 below). The BREEAM status being aimed for must be reported to the
Cabinet Member with the responsibility for the Greenest County at pre-assessment stage using the BREEAM form and at any other stage if the expected and agreed rating to be achieved changes e.g. the rating changes from 'Excellent' to 'Very Good'. If the build is not expected to achieve BREEAM 'Excellent' at any stage then a brief explanation is required for the Cabinet Member to explain why the build is not expected to achieve BREEAM 'Excellent' and what it would take to make it possible to achieve BREEAM 'Excellent' from its current rating in order to conform with the council's current policy.

- For all projects falling below the £5 million threshold (or where the ITP is £5 million+ but the floor area affected is less than 75% or the project does not qualify as a BREEAM major refurbishment) a Sustainability Action Plan must be completed for all projects. This will form part of the design critique process and must be reviewed at set intervals during a project. 
  *N.B. Construction cost for the purpose of this policy is defined as = “Build construction costs including fixtures and fittings but excluding all professional fees - also known as the 'Initial Target Price'”.

This policy is reviewed annually. Date: March 2016