



Thriving West Suffolk

Annual Report

2024 to 2025



West Suffolk

Council

Foreword

Our ambition is for a Thriving West Suffolk, achieving the very best for the residents living in this beautiful part of the county now and into the future.

It is at the heart of all that we do. It is the fierce passion that drives us in our decisions and the very reason that we stood for election as councillors.

This annual report sets out some of what has been achieved in the past year. It marks some of the progress made in 2024/25 on our collective journey toward a Thriving West Suffolk.

Many of these achievements are delivered as part of our four strategic priorities for affordable, available, and decent homes, environmental resilience, sustainable growth, and thriving communities.

We also recognise the importance of the day-to-day services that we deliver and that residents, businesses and other local organisations rely on. This report captures some of the ways that we are continuing to invest in getting the essentials right.

This report is a moment of reflection of what has been achieved on behalf of our residents and the future generations of West Suffolk. It comes at a time when the future of local councils is set to change – and where we are making the case that local is better for the people we serve. That’s why we’re working to keep the Local in Local Government.

So, while we are pleased to share these successes, our focus very much remains on continuing to do all within our power to deliver a Thriving West Suffolk for all.



Cllr Cliff Waterman,
Leader of the Council

Cllr Victor Lukaniuk,
Deputy Leader and leader
of the Independents

Introduction

The four strategic priorities set by the new administration in December 2023 for West Suffolk Council are:

- affordable, available, and decent homes
- environmental resilience
- sustainable growth
- thriving communities

What does this look like?

Affordable, available, and decent homes

In order to deliver on our strategic priority of affordable, available and decent homes, we will:

- use planning powers to significantly increase the supply of affordable housing in West Suffolk, particularly for social rent, and explore other options for increasing provision
- investigate options to address the specific market conditions in West Suffolk that make it challenging for local people to afford to buy or rent
- use the council's planning, regulatory and other powers to ensure all housing is of good quality and sustainably built and has minimal environmental impacts, including noise
- work with communities to ensure all housing is supported by the right infrastructure.

Environmental resilience

To deliver on our strategic priority of environmental resilience and our ambition to be net zero by 2039 (agreed by Cabinet on 20 May 2025) as a council we will:

- bring about environmental improvements that support progress to net zero, including work in partnership with businesses, residents and others
- work together to implement actions to adapt to climate change in West Suffolk, in line with the government's third National Adaptation Programme
- promote improved public and active travel opportunities in West Suffolk and work to reduce the impact of heavy goods vehicles in communities.

Sustainable growth

In order to deliver on our strategic priority of sustainable growth, we will:

- support new and existing businesses to grow, for example, through start-up support and skills development
- work to ensure West Suffolk is an attractive place for businesses, to ensure growth is supported by employment. This will have a particular focus on attracting higher-skilled enterprises to support wage growth
- continue to support West Suffolk's local high streets and markets as the vibrant centres of thriving local communities
- seek to develop infrastructure that supports growth
- maximise what makes us distinctive.

Thriving communities

In order to deliver on our strategic priority of thriving communities, we will:

- ensure all West Suffolk residents are able to access appropriate services, benefits and support
- enable West Suffolk residents to improve their physical and mental health and wellbeing through sport, physical and cultural activities, as well as access to health services. In particular, nurture and protect parks and open spaces for the benefit of both residents and visitors
- work with partners to prevent and reduce crime and antisocial behaviour in the district.

Engagement

Through our strategic priorities West Suffolk Council has established a strong commitment 'to ensuring that everything we do takes account of the needs and views of local communities, residents, businesses and interest groups'. In this year, we have committed to establishing councillor-led panels that will cover:

- environment and sustainability
- towns and high streets
- health
- the horse-racing industry
- transport.

We have, during 2024-25 undertaken consultation and engagement on the emerging West Suffolk Local Plan, the new housing, homelessness reduction and rough sleeping strategy and a new street trading policy, all detailed in the pages of this report.

During this first full year of our administration, we have been talking to and engaging with a range of groups and partners to understand their needs and how we can work together. This has included councillor tours of West Suffolk's towns and rural areas and engagement with Abbeycroft Leisure, Cambridgeshire district councils, Homes England, private sector landlords, registered providers, the wider Suffolk system, the United States Air Force, the Suffolk Climate Change Partnership, Environment and Energy Board, Transport East and the horse racing industry among many others.

You can read more on this on our [Strategic priorities](#) webpage.

Corporate Peer Challenge

West Suffolk Council's first ever Corporate Peer Challenge took place between 23 and 26 July 2024.

The review looked at the last five to 10 years, including current and past administrations and suggested recommendations which formed part of an action plan that was considered by Council on 19 November 2024. The council received a positive report, stating that the right priorities were in place to meet future challenges. It was found that the council has: strong foundations and the right ambitions as well as priorities; a sound financial base; good visible leadership; engaged staff whose contribution is recognised and talents developed; Cabinet and councillors working well to deliver on strategic priorities; and strong relationships with partners to drive forward initiatives and common goals.

A number of recommendations were agreed that informed the action plan referenced above. The Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee has monitored progress against the actions throughout this year ahead of the 10 month review by the Corporate Peer Challenge team that took place on 21 May 2025.

In the [Corporate Peer Challenge Feedback report](#), it was stated that:

"West Suffolk is a high-performing council with sound financial management and a strong reputation both internally and externally. Since its last Peer Review, the council has demonstrated its ability to handle major change; in particular, the formation of the council and a new joint administration - the West Suffolk Working Partnership (made up of the Independents and the Progressive Alliance grouping (Labour, Liberal Democrat and Green) in 2023. The Chief Executive and Leader are both well-respected and the council benefits from an approachable officer leadership team and ambitious portfolio holders."

Affordable, available, and decent homes



The housing, homelessness reduction and rough sleeping strategy, which sets out a partnership approach to help more people to better be able to access a decent and secure home, support residents by improving living conditions which will benefit their health and wellbeing and reduce the impact on health and social care, and reduce homelessness and rough sleeping.



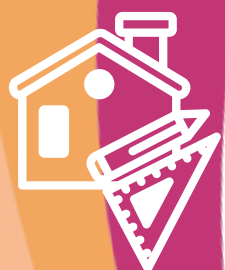
562 new homes were delivered by the end of 2024 to 2025. As well as meeting the existing policy requirement for 30 per cent of new homes on developments of 10 homes or more to be affordable, an additional 95 affordable homes were also supplied.



Strategic housing policies were supported by the Inspector at the local plan examination, including 30 per cent affordable housing on brownfield sites and 40 per cent affordable housing on greenfield sites. Sites have already begun delivering on the emerging West Suffolk Local Plan policy of 40 per cent affordable housing on developments such as Cavendish Road, Clare. We are awaiting the final outcome of the local plan examination.



We commissioned a review to help the council understand how it may further increase the supply of affordable housing to meet local need.



We invested and worked in collaboration with Havebury to deliver 13 additional affordable rent and social rent homes at Lark Grange in Bury St Edmunds. The council has contributed over £1 million in developer contributions, including from the council's redevelopment of the former Post Office site in Bury St Edmunds. That enabled, the provision of additional two and three bed homes available for affordable rent (80 per cent of the market rent) as well as three four-bedroom homes for social rent (45 per cent of market rent).



A new contract has been signed by Barley Homes Group Ltd (the council's wholly owned housing company) and Seamans Building to build a mix of new detached and semi-detached homes for Rougham. This site will deliver 13 homes with four of the homes being affordable.



Barley Homes continued to appraise numerous sites to work towards achieving its target of delivering 10 new homes per year. Barley Homes adopted a [business plan](#) for 2024 to 2029.



£1,121,800 of local authority housing funding has been awarded to the council to deliver four units of temporary accommodation and four units of accommodation in partnership with local registered providers.



West Suffolk Housing Pathway Service was developed throughout this year to help vulnerable people and further West Suffolk Council's work in preventing and reducing homelessness. The service is tailored to individual needs to help people who need support either in sustaining accommodation or to maintain independent living. It includes support for people with learning difficulties or mental health needs, people battling drug or alcohol addiction, homeless people and ex-offenders and will help people who are working but who need additional support.



Work progressed on rural housing including delivery through rural exception sites and community land trusts. Four parishes have undertaken housing needs studies, three of which are currently investigating site opportunities. A further three parishes have expressed interest in working with us to progress this for their area. These opportunities could generate up to 70 additional affordable homes in the medium to long term.



We have invested to continue the work of Safe Suffolk Renters in West Suffolk. Following the end of the national pathway funding for Safe Suffolk Renters on 1 April 2025, both East Suffolk and West Suffolk Councils have committed their own resources to continue to work in collaboration to deliver this essential work, aimed at improving living conditions in the private rented sector. It includes work with private sector landlords to support them and their tenants, help ensure standards and share best practice.



44 proactive inspections, where we act on data or intelligence that indicates a property might be a House in Multiple Occupation (HMO), and 51 routine inspections, where an HMO we are aware of is on our inspection programme, were undertaken this year.



Following efforts this past year, 35 more landlords have signed up to work with the council. West Suffolk Letting Partnership (WSLP) which offers a guaranteed rent scheme manages over 130 properties on behalf of 116 landlords and letting agents. It also works with another 36 landlords with deposits in place to secure 36 tenancies. WSLP continues to encourage more landlords to work with them in housing council placed tenants.



Since the new Independent Living Service was introduced in December 2020, the number of disabled facilities grants approved has increased from 72 in 2020 to 184 in the year ending 31 March 2025. The number of grants completed has increased from 108 in 2020 up to 184 completed in the year ending 31 March 2025. On average this equates to 3.5 applications approved and 3.5 grants completed every week (an average of 7 grants in total per week). The average wait from approval to works complete was 35 days.



During 2024 to 2025, we assisted 184 West Suffolk households with adaptations to their homes. This saw £1,607,958 million spent on providing essential adaptations and facilities to enable elderly, disabled and vulnerable residents to live independently and safely in their homes through the Disabled Facilities Grant.



The council helped prevent 173 households from becoming homeless. It also supported another 334 households through temporary accommodation during 2024 to 2025. During the year it helped 175 households out of temporary accommodation and into a permanent, settled home of their own. As of 31 March 2025, 31 households were being supported in temporary accommodation including emergency accommodation.



The national figures for the number of homeless people sleeping outdoors, termed rough sleepers by the Government, increased from eight to 10 in West Suffolk. The figure is based on a snapshot on one single night across the whole of England and fluctuates almost daily as people are accommodated and other people either become homeless or lose their place of accommodation.

Environmental resilience

A summary of the council's environmental performance can be found in the Environmental Statement on our [Climate Change](#) webpage, which is a summary of the council's progress to net zero. Other environmental initiatives include:

Following the recommendations from the Corporate Peer Challenge, West Suffolk Council has continued to build on its significant work towards environmental resilience. A key focus has been defining intended outcomes and developing an accessible roadmap with clear milestones and costings to support the council's commitment to achieving net zero as quickly as possible. The council had previously committed to 2030 but it is evident this is not now achievable and, throughout this year, the target was reviewed with a recommendation that the trajectory plan be amended to achieving net zero by 2039.

A £17 million loan facility was secured by the council from the UK Infrastructure Bank (UKIB), to deliver a range of net zero projects which presents a unique proposition utilising a blended return across the various projects. This will also benefit the health and wellbeing of our communities and support business growth by helping them save on energy costs. The first round included Decarbonisation Initiative Fund (DIF) grants was completed for streetlights alongside grant offers to 28 community schemes.

During 2024 to 2025, Toggam solar farm, owned by the council, generated 11,420 megawatt hours (MWh) of renewable electricity which was 0.3 per cent above target for the year and achieved an income of £3,197,738. The electricity that is sold into the National Grid is enough to power around 3,320 homes for a full year and offset the annual carbon dioxide emissions from approximately 1,500 cars.

The Solar for Business programme, offered by West Suffolk Council had another successful year with 827kW installed in 2024 to 2025, bringing the total installed capacity to 8.4 megawatts (MW). There are now over 100 businesses benefiting from the scheme and saving a collective 2,006 tonnes of carbon emissions each year. The council is also working on plans to provide Solar for Business across Babergh and Mid-Suffolk so businesses can generate their own power to cut carbon emissions and reduce utility bills.





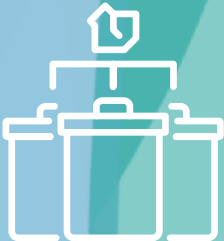
Installation of solar PV on 13 of our own buildings took place in 2024 to 2025. The combined size of these installs is 351 kilowatt peak (kWp) with an annual generation of 315,000kWh. This is the equivalent of powering almost 90 homes for an entire year.



The installation of electric vehicle (EV) chargers in The Guineas Shopping Centre car park in Newmarket and Parkway surface car park in Bury St Edmunds were completed.



The reverse vending machines which West Suffolk Council secured across sites in Bury St Edmunds and Newmarket, led to an international 2024 Global Recognition Award. This was for the sustainable innovation in retail through advanced recycling technology. On average, the machines are collecting 1,300 items a month and the scheme has now been extended into Haverhill.



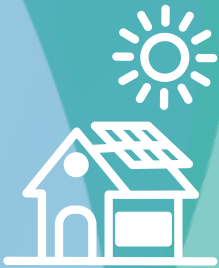
Preparations to deliver the Government's Simpler Recycling reforms are progressing, with the aim to increase recycling rates, reduce carbon emissions, and comply with new legal duties under the Environment Act 2021. The national policy requires all councils to introduce weekly food waste collections and expand the range of recyclable materials collected at the kerbside, including glass, cartons, and flexible plastics. Given the scale and complexity, it represents the most significant service change in 30 years and a vital step toward a more sustainable local waste system.



A new recycling service for commercial waste customers launched early as part of the Government's new Simpler Recycling legislation stating that all workplaces and non-domestic premises with 10 or more employees are required to separate key recyclable materials from 1 March 2025.



We took part in the Great British Spring Clean scheme at West Suffolk House while we also supported communities who took part in litter picks across the district.



West Suffolk is the lead authority advising all Suffolk councils and schools on the solar panel programme for schools agreed by Suffolk public sector leaders.



In addition to those new trees in the district planted by community partners or developers, 120 to 130 semi-mature trees have been planted in 2024 to 2025 by the council utilising external funding. Semi-mature trees have a higher survival success rate and an immediate impact in the local area. As part of our plans, we also work towards increasing canopy cover across the district generally and carbon capture.

Sustainable Growth



Greene King and the council have signed a memorandum of cooperation. This agreement sets out a commitment to work closely with key stakeholders and members of the local community to develop a masterplan for the Westgate site for when Greene King has completed the relocation of its brewing operations to a new purpose built site at Suffolk Business Park. This approach will ensure a wide range of ideas are considered from the very beginning, helping to shape the future of the site.



The council held an informal public consultation about the council's plans to redevelop the former household waste site at Rougham Hill, Bury St Edmunds. The project aims to improve this gateway into the town and create employment opportunities while also contributing income to help pay for the day-to-day services we provide to our residents. As part of the consultation we also announced that following the marketing of the site for prospective tenants Aldi supermarket and Wendy's drive through restaurant are our chosen tenants for the site. The informal public consultation will now inform a planning application to be submitted in summer 2025.



The Independent Commission on the future of Brandon was established in 2025, overseeing the exploration of options to shape Brandon as a place where businesses and communities can thrive. The independent commission, funded by the council and chaired by Mark Pragnell, will provide an evidence-base and locally grounded advice to guide the future development of Brandon, taking account of the housing delivery required to meet needs in West Suffolk and the restrictions associated with the presence of protected species. This initiative aims to balance options that will best support the sustainable growth of Brandon alongside the health and wellbeing of current and future residents, while recognising and protecting the sensitive ecological and environmental characteristics of the town and wider area in which it is located.



The West Suffolk Local Plan which progressed to an examination in public, held by independent national planning inspectors, designates land for employment purposes to ensure the continuation of sustainable growth to support our local economy and employment for West Suffolk communities.



The West Suffolk Business Festival in October 2024 attracted 1,000 attendees including many of the regions business leaders. Now in its 14th year, the festival is a collaboration between the council and many key partners and business support organisations. The festival is designed to offer valuable support and networking opportunities that foster the growth and success of business across West Suffolk.



28 applications to the West Suffolk Start-Up grant have been completed since January 2025. 22 of these were approved totalling an investment by the council of £23,241.40 and signalling a total investment by those businesses of £46,574.29.



West Suffolk Manufacturing Group with support from the council continues to play a key role in supporting the growth of the local manufacturing sector. It saw around 40 people attend its meeting in January. In this year the group has been hosted by Greene King, the XR Lab and Treatt PLC. The group is regularly attended by many of the districts' leading employers and continues to expand and evolve. Notably, a health and safety sub-group has been established which held its first meeting in March this year.



Architects on behalf of West Suffolk Council submitted a planning application for Advanced Manufacturing and Engineering Centre at Suffolk Business Park. West Suffolk is working with the county council to deliver the centre. It aims to stimulate economic growth by building on our existing work and brings the opportunity to create a cluster, develop skills in partnership with the colleges, inspire future generations, promote economic growth and support and enhance existing supply chains. The first phase is for a 40,000 square foot building to include 17 workshop units, a hub with reception, meeting rooms, conference space and a café.



The council has become a member of the Suffolk Chamber of Commerce, Suffolk Business Digital Champions Group to support increased connectivity within West Suffolk.



The council is committed to offering the opportunity for apprenticeships as a career path. As of March 2025, West Suffolk Council had 31 apprentices.



Skills events held included skills escalation days and jobs and skills fairs. Three UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) funded employment initiatives were launched with West Suffolk College: Thrive – Suffolk Skills and employment service, Apprenticeship Suffolk – Suffolk apprenticeship support services and Talent Forge – West Suffolk Skills Development Programme. Hundreds of local jobseekers were able to access employment and upskilling opportunities at jobs and skills fairs delivered in partnership with the Department for Work and Pensions across Bury St Edmunds, Haverhill, Mildenhall and Newmarket. The council supported the Eastern Education Group to deliver Skills Escalator Days for year two students in Brandon, Haverhill, Mildenhall and Newmarket this year with further events planned throughout 2025. The Choose Hospitality initiative, that promotes career options in this sector to young people in particular is in its third year.



The council acquired the freehold of the former Stourview Medical Centre which was identified as a key site for town centre redevelopment in the Haverhill Town Centre Masterplan. We are looking at options that will increase town centre footfall and generate a rental income.



In the face of national challenges to high streets, West Suffolk high streets continue to attract interest as demonstrated by lower than UK average vacancy rates. The UK average for empty town centre commercial units is 14 per cent. In West Suffolk, the vacancy rate across our six market towns on 31 March 2025, was 7.8 per cent.



Alongside a mix of regular street markets, the council organised and promoted specialist market events including monthly makers markets in Bury St Edmunds, Newmarket, and Haverhill in addition to special events in Mildenhall. The Newmarket Market Square was improved as part of the Markets Development Plan and the £30,000 investment fund. We have attracted new traders to all of our markets.



A new fully enclosed cycle hub with 16 spaces, lighting and CCTV has been installed at the northern entrance of Bury St Edmunds rail station. Additional stands were installed at the southern entrance which are more accessible. The project included a new walking and cycling path along the railway embankment from the northern station entrance to Fornham Road. This £200,000 project was jointly funded by Greater Anglia, Suffolk County Council, the Cycle Rail fund and through West Suffolk's UKSPF.



The council continues to support strategic transport improvements through representation and contributions to the Ely taskforce, East-West Rail Mainline Partnership and East-West Rail Easter Section Board to deliver the objectives of improved passenger and rail freight services within West Suffolk and the wider region.



We have continued to support the West Suffolk Hospital NHS Foundation Trust in the development of the new hospital.



2025 to 2026 is the fourth and final year in which we will receive money from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) and Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF) to allocate locally. To date communities and businesses across West Suffolk have benefitted from more than £2.6 million of investment made by West Suffolk Council over the course of three years using these funds. UKSPF will be spent across the priority areas of 'Communities and Place', 'Supporting Local Business' and 'People and Skills'. Communities and Place funding for 2025 to 2026 covers the areas of Leisure and Culture and Families and Communities and will see money go to projects such as improving greenspace in parks and helping to grow the visitor economy as well as to supporting the capacity building of community groups. Supporting Local Business money has been allocated to MENTA, YTKO and Groundworks East to support start-up businesses, grow existing businesses, and support businesses in reducing their carbon footprint respectively. People and Skills money supports Suffolk wide skills initiatives such as Thrive Youth and Apprenticeships Suffolk as well as Talent Forge employment skills courses that are delivered by West Suffolk College.



West Suffolk saw an increase of 6 per cent in off-street and on-street car parking events in 2024 to 2025 compared to the previous year.

UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) and Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF)

The council agreed an investment plan for its £1,943,467 million share of the Government's UKSPF to further strengthen the West Suffolk economy, improve job opportunities, town centres and rural areas as well as support community groups over the three years. The funding is being delivered over three years and in the year of April 2024 to 31 March 2025, £1,235,895 of UKSPF was provided to support projects such as the following:

- Community sports clubs from across West Suffolk could apply for a council grant. The aim was to help increase participation and activity to support the health and wellbeing of residents. Grants of between £200 and £1000 were made available under West Suffolk Council's Capital Sports Fund.
- Thrive Youth were commissioned to deliver targeted and intensive support for young people aged 16-24 to gain and sustain employment or education.
- Community and environment charity Groundwork East continued to work with Suffolk's local authorities to deliver free and impartial expert advice to help businesses and organisations save energy, reduce their emissions and establish tailored decarbonisation plans.
- A contribution to improve accessibility to the Lark Valley Way path from Mildenhall to West Row and Bury St Edmunds to Fornham All Saints was given to Suffolk County Council's Public Rights of Way team. The Racing Centre received a grant to launch the Newmarket Community Pantry Shop. The pantry shop allows people to buy a mix of nutritious low-cost food. Support services are provided alongside food and hygiene items to help both the immediate need and long-term practical advice.

REPF

The council was also a recipient of REPF funding, a top-up to UKSPF funding aimed at supporting the Levelling Up White Paper and Future Farming Programme. Within West Suffolk this can be used everywhere outside Bury St Edmunds, with a total sum of funding of £753,701 spread across two years (2023 to 2024 and 2024 to 2025). In 2024 to 2025, £565,701 was provided to support projects such as those listed below:

- Capital grants with a value between £5,000 to £10,000 to support small businesses looking to grow and expand.
- Capital grants of up to £5,000 were awarded to community groups as investments into infrastructure and capacity building.

Green space improvement works were carried out at Mildenhall Half Moon Park, Haverhill residential estates, Newmarket Yellow Brick Road and Guarded Orchard and Brandon Country Park.

Thriving communities

The 2024 to 2025 Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme (LCTRS) which supports low-income working age residents, was extended. This meant residents could see the entirety of their council tax bill for the year reduced to £0 subject to LCTRS criteria.

We implemented the refreshed [Thriving Communities approach](#) to ensure it reflects the council's strategic priorities 2024 to 2028 and continues to respond to the current challenges the council and local communities face.

The Thriving Communities Fund was launched in 2024 to 2025, replacing the Community Chest scheme. The new funds designed to offer two levels of grant – community grants of between £2,000 and £8,000 for one-off projects by community groups, that will support residents in a small part of the district such as an estate or village, and larger grants of between £8,001 and £20,000 to fund work to support residents across the whole of West Suffolk or large parts of the district such as a town. The scheme was also designed to more closely align with councillor locality budgets as a way applying for smaller grants of £100 to £2,800 throughout the year.

The past year saw the council agree a £600,000 grant agreement (over three years) to support Citizen's Advice West Suffolk in its work in delivering free, confidential advice to people struggling with money, their home, health, work, loneliness and more. It will also see some of Citizen's Advice's work link up directly with support and services provided through the council and its partners and directly work with the council on campaigns and initiatives to help and support residents. The funding means that Citizen's Advice West Suffolk no longer need to apply each year to the council's annual grant scheme which previously meant it had no guarantee over the level of funding it was likely to receive.

With the £200,000 grant agreement with Citizens Advice, £266,733 was available under the Thriving Communities Fund. In total 77 applications were received totalling £984,067.54 applications were considered by the Grant Working Party. Overall, it recommended funding to 44 organisations in either full or part using the entire budget allocation of £266,733.



The overall spend on Locality Budgets for 2024 to 2025 was £196,208.64. The End of Year Transparency Report for a [full overview of grants paid](#) is available.



The council was a key partner in Newmarket Together, put in place in response to a Home Office initiative 'Clear Hold Build'. This uses a problem solving and evidence-based approach to reduce serious and organised crime and the harm that it causes communities. The approach brings together public, private and voluntary sector partners to put the community at the heart of the response. Part of Newmarket was identified as the first area under the initiative with work progressing throughout the year and 36 individuals were arrested for drugs supply offences.



Safer Streets projects continued to be delivered in this year. It included enhancement of CCTV in the main towns, work with Abbeycroft Leisure to provide a Teen Chill project in Bury St Edmunds with a focus on youth educational activities and working with Abbeycroft Leisure and 4YP to deliver youth work in Bury St Edmunds, Mildenhall and Newmarket focused on engaging with young people and addressing behaviours.



Crucial Crew met in person for the first time in four years (after being delivered virtually during COVID). The event invites all primary schools across West Suffolk to attend a series of short scenarios highlighting important personal safety messages. In this year, 24 schools attended and nearly 700 Year 6 pupils took part in seven scenarios looking at fire safety, water safety, healthy relationships, consent, anti social behaviour, exploitation and hate crime.



Nearly 40 warm spaces were announced to support residents across West Suffolk during the winter of 2024 to 2025. The council contacted Warm Spaces providers to see if they needed funding support in order to provide the service and 26 providers which required funds were supported by West Suffolk Council using funding from Suffolk County Council. Advice was given to over 324 people about pension credit. They were directed or provided with support to help them to apply.



This year, the council maintained the annual £61,000 grant to the Theatre Royal in Bury St Edmunds for core costs.



Proposals were agreed for demolition and decontamination works at the Olding Road site in addition to the creation of a new recreational and community use in the former depot and the refurbishment of the warehouse section to support sustainable growth.



An extensive full public consultation on refurbishment of the Bury St Edmunds leisure centre including an online survey, in-person sessions, focus groups and a digital campaign resulted in feedback from over 1,000 residents, centre users and stakeholders. Proposed enhancements to the leisure centre were agreed in this year and are designed to improve the facilities and services offered, making them better matched to the needs of the community. The final stage of the design process is being carried out before works can begin later this year.



A £34,000 Capital Sports Fund offered grants of between £200 and £1,000 to grassroots sports clubs. The fund supported 43 community clubs with capital costs for a range of sports including football to tchoukball, and bowls to junior triathlon training, and runners to anglers. The funding was to buy kit and equipment that could then be used to encourage further participation and activity to benefit the health and wellbeing of residents.



The council secured £667,297 grant to provide new Football Foundation PlayZones in Haverhill, Mildenhall and Newmarket to boost sports activity and participation. The grant was secured through the Government's Football Foundation with funding from the Football Foundation, the Premier League and The Football Association.



The Council's Holiday and Activity and Food (HAF) programme which supports students on benefits related free school meals, offered 7429 places to children over the Easter, Summer and Winter holidays by providing a healthy meal and fun activities. Christmas hampers were provided to over 225 families meaning they had everything they needed for a meal on Christmas day and beyond. Children were enabled to learn new skills such as horse-riding and video editing, try activities including archery, outdoor cooking and graffiti art while also benefiting from a healthy meal.



The Building Resilience and Nutrition fund is a grant scheme launched in January 2025 that will invest in activities to help people out of fuel poverty, improve health and nutrition and reduce food waste. It has been created from £90,000 given by Suffolk public sector leaders and is being delivered by the council in partnership with Community Action Suffolk and Suffolk County Council. Reach, Gatehouse, Revive Suffolk Community Interest Company, Cavenham Village Green and the Befriending Scheme received funding in the first round.



Feel Good Suffolk, the healthy lifestyle service, for residents of Suffolk is continuing to support people who want support in getting more active, managing their weight, or giving up smoking. The service is already exceeding health outcome targets. It has supported over 1,100 people to stop smoking and 70 per cent of physical activity clients have increased their activity levels while weight management programmes have helped over 700 individuals.



Replacement play equipment has been installed at four of our play parks: Heasman Close Play Area, Newmarket; Green Road Play Area, Newmarket; Woodcock Rose, Brandon; and Lowry Close Play Area, Haverhill.



Half Moon Park in Mildenhall has been improved using £37,000 of Government's Rural England Prosperity Fund to make it more accessible, enjoyable and secure.



The Apex in Bury St Edmunds had its best financial year on record, both in box office income and ticket sales, with 120,811 tickets sold worth £3,037,129 million between April 2024 to March 2025. The venue achieved a 74 per cent capacity in the main auditorium, meaning 74 per cent of all tickets available were sold throughout the year.



15,786 school children visited West Suffolk Heritage sites including West Stow Anglo-Saxon Village and Moyse's Hall Museum.



An additional 42 allotment sites have been created at Moreton Hall, as part of a planning condition for Taylor Wimpey. The allotments were handed over to the council who immediately transferred them to Bury St Edmunds Town Council, who manage allotments in the town.



An Overview and Scrutiny Committee review of Rural Bus services in West Suffolk and the impacts that a reduction in service has on rural communities has led to a number of actions including the creation of a new Rural Buses Steering Group to improve rural bus services in the district.



Following a £2 million capital investment by the council as part of the Haverhill High Street improvement project, Provincial House saw West Suffolk College, as part of Eastern Education Group, open its Personal and Professional Learning Centre. It was followed by Unity Healthcare, a GP practice managed by the Suffolk GP Federation which created a triage and operations e-consultations hub on part of the second floor. The GP practice, which serves a patient list of approximately 25,000 patients in Haverhill, as well as Long Melford and Lavenham, and the surrounding villages.

Getting the essentials right



A budget agreed for 2025 to 2026 includes £78 million for the day-to-day delivery of services through the annual budget and a £60 million investment programme over the next five years.



We submitted our Local Government Reorganisation interim plan to Government in March 2025.



In March 2025, 56 per cent of all contact with the customer service team was online or by email, compared to 44 per cent in March 2022. This means there are more opportunities for customers to access services and make contact with the council at a time that is convenient to them. For people who are unable to access services online, the council continues to provide a telephone customer service. Where a face to face or virtual conversation is preferable, appointments are arranged at a time that suits the customer.



A West Suffolk Council cross-party advisory group of members was established to support the Portfolio Holder for Leisure with the review of grounds maintenance across the district. As a result, the council invested in and made changes to the grass cutting service which has reduced complaints and helped support safety, civic pride and biodiversity.



9186 residents and 1,425 businesses signed up to receive an e-bill during this year following an e-billing sign up campaign. This is estimated to have saved £9975 in costs.



Improvements to processes and systems has seen it become easier for residents to update the council with their change of address for Council Tax. That in turn has seen an increase in residents completing this online which helps us make sure they receive bills for the right amount at the right address and avoid falling into arrears.



During 2024 to 2025, the council responded to 953 reports of environment crime from residents and businesses, resulting in 52 abandoned vehicles, 92 sweeping requests, 96 dead animal removal requests, 38 broken glass clearance requests, 11 syringe removal requests and almost 47 tonnes of fly-tipped waste being removed.



More than 4.45 million bins from West Suffolk households were emptied during the year, resulting in 26,484 tonnes of recycled waste and 40,003 tonnes of non-recyclable household waste being sent for processing at the Energy from Waste facility in Great Blakenham. The council's recycling rate for 2024 to 2025 was 39.8 per cent. 99.9 per cent of bins were collected on schedule throughout the year.



In 2024 to 2025, 29,068 households subscribed to 30,486 bins for the garden waste collection service, through which 12,183 tonnes of garden waste were collected and composted locally. Once collected, the garden waste is taken to a composting site where it is turned into a nutritious soil conditioner. This can be used for agriculture, land reclamation and as an ingredient in some multipurpose composts for purchase at a garden centre.



The total tonnage collected from street sweepings and litter bins for last year was 2,172 tonnes.



The Building Control service was strengthened to align with new regulatory requirements introduced by the Health and Safety Executive's Building Safety Regulator in response to the Grenfell Tower tragedy. The service now operates under an improved structure that supports the licensing of registered building inspectors and ensures compliance with operational standard rules.



During 2024 to 2025, the council determined 1977 planning applications supporting the delivery of much needed new housing including affordable housing to help meet local need, and business growth across the district. Through planning applications and agreements, the council also secured the delivery of suitable infrastructure including funds for education places, transport including roads, and contributions towards health provision managed by NHS partners.



48 major, 261 minor and 687 'other' (for example, change of use, listed buildings and adverts) planning applications were granted during 2024 to 2025, compared to 43 major, 208 minor and 702 'other' in 2023 to 2024.

Appendix 1

- Total emissions figures include West Suffolk Council and Abbeycroft Leisure.
- Total emissions down 34 per cent compared to 2010 baseline.
- Total emissions down 0.2 percent compared to 2023 to 2024.
- The summary figures below are for West Suffolk Council only.
- Renewable energy generation up 206 per cent compared to 2012 baseline.
- Renewable energy generation up 8 per cent compared to 2023 to 2024.
- Gas consumption up 54 per cent compared to 2019 to 2020 baseline.
- Gas consumption down 8 per cent compared to 2023 to 2024.
- Grid electricity consumption up 29 per cent compared to 2019 to 2020 baseline.
- Grid electricity consumption down 3 per cent compared to 2023 to 2024.
- Total owned vehicle emissions down 13 per cent compared to 2019 to 2020 baseline.
- Total owned vehicle emissions down 1 per cent compared to 2023 to 2024.
- Business travel down 60 per cent compared to 2010 baseline.
- Business travel up 17 per cent compared to 2023 to 2024.
- Total water consumption down 4 per cent compared to 2010 to 2011 baseline.
- Total water consumption down 10 per cent compared to 2023 to 2024.
- Total West Suffolk House waste down 67 per cent compared to 2012 baseline.
- The recycling rate 65 per cent, down 11 per cent compared to 2023 to 2024.
- Total West Suffolk House waste down 4 per cent compared to 2023 to 2024.
- 6 Green Flags retained - Abbey Gardens, East Town Park, Brandon Country Park, Aspal Close and West Stow Country Park, Nowton Park.
- Public electric vehicle (EV) chargers installed by West Suffolk Council can support 78 EVs charging at the same time up 11 per cent compared to 2023 to 2024.
- Energy delivered to drivers powered 546,241 miles up 30 per cent compared to 2023 to 2024.
- 162 trees planted during 2024 to 2025.
- Office printing down 35 per cent compared to 2019 baseline.
- Office printing down 21 per cent compared to 2023 to 2024.



West Suffolk

Council