Environment and Climate Change Action Plan 2025-26 update

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1. Biodiversity workstream

Strategic action	Action or task	Detailed progress update	Status
1.1 External funding			
	Secure external funding to maintain and increase tree cover across West Suffolk Council managed land.	The council continues to actively seek both internal and external funding opportunities to support tree planting, woodland management and wider biodiversity enhancement projects across council-owned land. External funding remains an important mechanism for increasing tree canopy cover, delivering habitat improvements and supporting the council's net zero ambitions without placing additional pressure on council budgets. Funding opportunities continue to be monitored alongside national grant programmes and partnership funding initiatives.	Ongoing

Strategic action	Action or task	Detailed progress update	Status
1.2 Biodiversity and environment – parks and green spaces			
Maintain Green Flag standards across council parks and identify opportunities for continual improvement.	West Suffolk Council continues to maintain the exceptionally high standards required for Green Flag accreditation across its flagship parks. The six parks retaining Green Flag status are Aspal Close Nature Reserve, Brandon Country Park, East Town Park, Nowton Park, Abbey Gardens and West Stow Country Park. These awards recognise excellent environmental management, visitor facilities, biodiversity, safety and community engagement. During 2025–26 an additional Heritage Award application was submitted for Abbey Gardens, recognising its nationally important historic landscape. The council continues to review Green Flag judges' feedback each year to identify opportunities for further improvements and investment. The annual Love Parks Week campaign promotes the importance of parks for biodiversity, physical health, mental wellbeing and community engagement while encouraging greater public use of these valued green spaces.		Ongoing
	Improve understanding of park usage through resident engagement.	Visitor satisfaction surveys are being undertaken across Green Flag parks to improve understanding of how residents and visitors use these spaces. Survey results will identify areas requiring investment, inform future park management plans and measure visitor satisfaction. Feedback will also support future Green Flag submissions and help prioritise	Ongoing

Strategic action	Action or task	Detailed progress update	Status
		environmental improvements, accessibility enhancements and biodiversity initiatives.	
	Encourage responsible use of parks and open spaces through improved information and awareness.	The council continues to promote responsible use of parks through environmental campaigns, interpretation, ranger engagement and wider biodiversity awareness activity. This work is closely aligned with Suffolk's Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS), which aims to reverse biodiversity decline and establish a countywide Nature Recovery Network. Cabinet approved the final draft LNRS during 2025, enabling Suffolk County Council to proceed towards formal adoption. The strategy provides a long-term framework for restoring habitats, improving ecological connectivity and supporting nature recovery across West Suffolk and the wider county.	Ongoing
1.3 Biodiversity and environment – parks and green spaces			
Review grounds maintenance regimes to improve biodiversity.	Grounds maintenance practices continue to evolve to better balance recreational use with biodiversity enhancement. Weekly grass-cutting updates are shared with town and parish councils, elected members and residents through the council's website to explain seasonal management approaches and biodiversity objectives. The council continues to review mowing regimes where appropriate to encourage wildflower growth, improve habitat diversity and support pollinating insects whilst maintaining safe and accessible public spaces.	Ongoing	

Strategic action	Action or task	Detailed progress update	Status
	Create wildlife habitats within council parks.	Significant biodiversity improvements have been delivered within Nowton Park through the creation of a dedicated wildlife garden inside the historic walled garden. Working alongside volunteers, Community Payback teams and park rangers, the area now includes pollinator-friendly planting using donated plants from Realise Futures, volunteers and council staff. Plants are also being grown from seed to improve long-term sustainability. A bug hotel constructed entirely from recycled materials provides habitat for insects, while Margaret's Pond, donated by a regular park visitor, has become an important wildlife feature supporting mallard ducklings, frogs, toads, newts and other aquatic wildlife. The area has become an important educational resource used by local schools and nurseries to teach children about biodiversity, pollinators, habitats and conservation.	Ongoing
	Strengthen delivery of Suffolk's Local Nature Recovery Strategy.	The council continues to work closely with Suffolk County Council, the Suffolk Climate Change Partnership, environmental organisations and local communities to support implementation of the Local Nature Recovery Strategy. This collaborative approach focuses on restoring habitats, increasing biodiversity, improving ecological resilience and supporting nature recovery across the district through coordinated action and shared investment.	Ongoing
	In partnership with local interest groups build on existing work to improve the district’s river corridors and neighbouring meadows.	Partnership working continues with environmental organisations, Suffolk County Council and local interest groups to enhance river corridors, restore meadow habitats and strengthen ecological networks across West	Ongoing

Strategic action	Action or task	Detailed progress update	Status
		Suffolk. This work contributes towards wider biodiversity recovery objectives whilst improving climate resilience, water quality and habitat connectivity.	
	Investigate greener grounds maintenance equipment.	The council continues to investigate opportunities to replace traditional grounds maintenance equipment with lower-emission alternatives where operationally and financially viable. Business cases are being explored to support future equipment replacement programmes, contributing towards reductions in operational carbon emissions whilst maintaining high standards of grounds maintenance.	Ongoing
1.4 Partnerships			
Work collaboratively with environmental organisations and community groups to improve biodiversity on council-managed land.	Partnership working remains central to delivery of the council's biodiversity objectives. West Suffolk Council continues to work alongside Suffolk County Council, the Suffolk Climate Change Partnership, community organisations, environmental charities, volunteers and local interest groups to deliver habitat improvements, biodiversity projects and wider environmental initiatives. Public engagement has continued through consultations, environmental campaigns and awareness raising activities, including the Local Nature Recovery Strategy consultation, encouraging residents to become actively involved in protecting and enhancing their local environment. Partnership working also supports improvements to air quality, sustainable	Ongoing	

Strategic action	Action or task	Detailed progress update	Status
	transport planning and wider environmental resilience across the district.		
	Implement further habitat enhancements on sites identified in Suffolk Wildlife Trust habitat surveys.	Habitat improvement activity continued during the year, supporting biodiversity enhancement across council-owned land and open spaces. This work contributes to wider biodiversity objectives and delivery of the council's environmental commitments.	Ongoing
	Develop cleaner waterways project.	Initial scoping work continues to identify opportunities for future projects aimed at improving water quality, supporting healthier river environments and enhancing biodiversity within West Suffolk's waterways. Future work will be developed alongside environmental partners and funding opportunities as projects mature.	Ongoing

2. Communities and communications workstream

Strategic action	Action or task	Detailed progress update	Status
2.1 Reduce public waste and improve recycling output		West Suffolk Council continues to work closely with the Suffolk Waste Partnership (SWP) to deliver a comprehensive programme of local and national recycling and waste reduction campaigns. Throughout the year the council has promoted Global Recycling Day, Food Waste Action Week, The Great British Spring Clean, Earth Day, Compost Week, Buy Nothing New Month, Plastic Free July, Zero Waste Week and World Refill Day. These campaigns encourage residents and businesses to reduce waste, recycle correctly and adopt more sustainable lifestyles. Communications have been delivered through	Ongoing

Strategic action	Action or task	Detailed progress update	Status
		social media, the Suffolk Recycles website, council publications, events and partnership working.	
	Increase recycling through existing blue bins, recycling banks and public recycling infrastructure.	The council continues to maximise the use of existing recycling infrastructure across West Suffolk. The "Glass – It's Better in the Bank" campaign was relaunched to encourage greater use of bottle banks through promotional activities and public competitions. Recycling communications continue throughout the year, particularly during periods of increased consumer activity such as Easter and Christmas. The council also works with Suffolk Waste Partnership partners to improve recycling participation and encourage residents to make full use of existing recycling facilities.	Ongoing
	Ensure relevant climate-related communications clearly highlight how the council is engaging with communities most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change.	The council continued to support vulnerable households through programmes including Warm Homes Suffolk, energy efficiency initiatives, financial inclusion activity and wider cost-of-living support measures. Communications linked environmental improvements with support available for residents most affected by rising energy costs.	Ongoing
	Improve the quality of recyclable material collected.	Recycling contamination levels continue to be monitored across West Suffolk. Although major communications campaigns have been moderated whilst preparations for the national Simpler Recycling reforms progressed, county-wide recycling advice has continued through Suffolk Recycles and council communication channels. Education remains focused on helping residents recycle the correct materials to improve recycling quality and maximise the value of collected materials.	Ongoing

Strategic action	Action or task	Detailed progress update	Status
	Expand public recycling facilities.	Significant investment has been made in public recycling infrastructure. Twenty-four Recycling on the Go bins have been installed across Brandon, Bury St Edmunds, Haverhill and Mildenhall following consultation with Town Councils and Business Improvement Districts. During their first year the bins collected an estimated 1.476 tonnes of recyclable material, helping to reduce litter whilst making recycling more accessible in busy public locations.	Ongoing
	Implement and promote new electrical recycling banks where practicable, funded by Material Focus, across West Suffolk for small domestic appliances.	Following successful funding from Material Focus, the council installed 18 electrical recycling banks across West Suffolk for the collection of small household electrical appliances such as kettles, toasters and hairdryers. Between January and March 2026 alone, almost 18 tonnes of electrical waste were collected, diverting valuable materials from landfill and increasing opportunities for residents to recycle electrical items locally.	Ongoing
	Focus on communications with communities and businesses to ensure successful implementation and adoption of Simpler Recycling.	A major programme of work has been undertaken in preparation for the Government's Better Recycling (Simpler Recycling) reforms. This has included procurement and delivery of new recycling bins, distribution of food waste caddies, recruitment of operational staff, fleet preparation, depot improvements, resident communications and close coordination with Suffolk Waste Partnership authorities. The new service introduces weekly food waste collections and expands the range of recyclable materials collected from households, ensuring West Suffolk is fully prepared for the national reforms. Significant communications activity was undertaken throughout 2025 to 2026 to support	Ongoing

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		the introduction of Better Recycling, West Suffolk's response to Simpler Recycling. Information packs, collection calendars, guidance materials and online resources were provided to residents. New bins and food waste caddies were delivered to approximately 80,000 households ahead of the June 2026 service launch.	
	Support businesses to improve recycling and comply with new legislation.	The council's Commercial Waste Team has worked proactively with local businesses ahead of the introduction of new recycling legislation. Businesses have received advice regarding food waste separation, dry recycling requirements and compliance with Simpler Recycling regulations. A new commercial food waste collection service has been introduced and now supports more than 300 businesses, helping organisations reduce waste whilst meeting their new legal obligations.	Ongoing
	Seek to reduce food waste through initiatives such as Simpler Recycling, Feel Good Suffolk and the council's Building Resilience and Nutrition Fund (BRAN).	Alongside Better Recycling preparations, the council continues to promote waste prevention through Feel Good Suffolk, Building Resilience and Nutrition (BRAN) projects and Food Savvy Suffolk campaigns. These initiatives encourage residents to reduce food waste, improve nutrition, make better use of surplus food and support local communities experiencing food insecurity.	Ongoing
	Continue anti-litter initiatives and community engagement.	Community involvement continues to play a significant role in maintaining cleaner public spaces. More than 400 volunteers participated in the annual Great British Spring Clean, including council staff who organised lunchtime litter picks to encourage wider public participation. Through Rural England Prosperity funding, over 100 litter and dog waste bins have been upgraded, larger capacity bins installed along major road corridors	Ongoing

Strategic action	Action or task	Detailed progress update	Status
		and 350 litter pickers, 100 sack hoops and high-visibility clothing distributed to community groups. Since 2018, over 1,800 volunteers have been supported with equipment to undertake regular litter picking activities across West Suffolk. Additional community litter picks continue to be organised alongside national environmental campaigns such as World Environment Day.	
	Complete an Equalities Impact Assessment for the Environment and Climate Change Action Plan to ensure fair and inclusive delivery.	Work commenced to ensure environmental initiatives are delivered in a fair and inclusive manner. Equalities considerations continue to be incorporated into project development and implementation processes across the council.	Ongoing
	Continue to ensure residents have ongoing opportunities to shape and influence the delivery of the Environment and Climate Change Action Plan.	Residents continued to engage with the council through consultations, community engagement exercises and public participation opportunities associated with environmental projects, recycling service changes and strategic planning initiatives. Environmental performance reporting remains publicly available through annual reporting arrangements.	
2.2 Environment and biodiversity awareness campaigns			
Deliver environmental education and awareness campaigns through parks and public events.	The council continues to deliver a wide range of public engagement activities promoting biodiversity, sustainable lifestyles and environmental awareness. Ranger-led events, seasonal campaigns and educational activities encourage residents to enjoy West Suffolk's parks whilst learning about wildlife, conservation and sustainable living. Annual campaigns such as Love Parks Week continue to highlight the important contribution parks make to health, wellbeing and biodiversity.	Ongoing	

Strategic action	Action or task	Detailed progress update	Status
	Continue to deliver compost giveaways and plastic reduction campaigns as part of national events such as Plastic Free July, Zero Waste Week, and World Refill Day.	Free compost giveaway events have continued to encourage sustainable gardening and demonstrate the circular economy. Compost produced from residents' garden waste collections was distributed at Brandon Country Park and Haverhill Rugby Club. These events promote composting, improve soil health, reduce landfill and provide a visible benefit to residents participating in the garden waste collection service.	Ongoing
	Promote local food production and sustainable growing.	The council continues to support local food production through Food Savvy Suffolk, community food initiatives and promotion of locally grown produce within West Suffolk markets. Locality budgets have also supported community organisations such as Still Good Food in Bury St Edmunds, helping reduce food waste while supporting vulnerable residents.	Ongoing
	Deliver tree planting programme.	As part of the council's Net Zero ambitions, 61 standard trees and 345 whips were planted during 2025–26 across council-owned land. Work continues to identify suitable locations for future tree planting and habitat creation, supporting increased canopy cover and biodiversity improvements across the district.	Ongoing
	Seek sites for the planting of the first of the 5,000 trees on council land included in the new Net Zero Plan.	During 2025 to 2026, the council planted 61 standard trees and 345 whips across West Suffolk. Work continues to identify further opportunities for tree planting and habitat enhancement on council-owned land.	
	Promote waste reduction and refill initiatives.	Communications supporting Plastic Free July, Zero Waste Week, World Refill Day and other national campaigns continue to encourage residents to	Ongoing

Strategic action	Action or task	Detailed progress update	Status
		reduce single-use plastics and make use of refill services available through local businesses and market traders.	
2.3 Travel and transport partnership working			
Work with Suffolk County Council to improve walking and cycling infrastructure.	The council continues to work in partnership with Suffolk County Council to maximise opportunities arising from the Cycling and Walking Fund and wider sustainable transport programmes. Partnership working aims to improve walking and cycling infrastructure, encourage active travel and reduce transport-related carbon emissions across West Suffolk.	Ongoing	
2.4 Air quality			
Improve local air quality through partnership working and public engagement.	West Suffolk Council continues to support the Suffolk Climate Partnership and other environmental partners to improve air quality across the district. Public awareness campaigns have included Clean Air Night, promoting reduced domestic wood burning and cleaner heating choices. Additional communications during National Walking Month and Walk to School initiatives encourage residents and staff to reduce car journeys and choose active travel where possible. Through the Thriving Communities Fund, environmental and sustainability projects continue to receive financial support, including projects aimed at reducing food waste and improving community resilience.	Ongoing	
	Reduce vehicle idling in sensitive locations.	The council continues to work with partners to encourage behavioural change around unnecessary vehicle idling through awareness raising, education and wider air quality initiatives.	Ongoing

Strategic action	Action or task	Detailed progress update	Status
2.5 Domestic renewable energy			
Promote renewable energy technologies for residents.	Residents continue to receive information and guidance on domestic renewable technologies including solar photovoltaic systems and air source heat pumps. Communications have promoted Government funding opportunities, including the £7,500 Boiler Upgrade Scheme grant, alongside information regarding the Radio Teleswitch Service (RTS) switch-off and the transition to smart meters. Successful Decarbonisation Initiatives Fund projects have also been promoted to demonstrate local examples of renewable energy investment within communities.	Ongoing	
2.7 Renewable energy portfolio			
Expand renewable energy generation across West Suffolk.	Work continues to expand renewable energy generation through council projects. Installation of solar photovoltaic canopies at Mildenhall Hub has commenced and is expected to generate more than £130,000 of electricity annually whilst saving over 124 tonnes of carbon dioxide each year. The council continues to investigate further opportunities for renewable energy generation, including additional solar projects, wind energy and hydrogen technologies where appropriate.	Ongoing	
	Support parish and town council decarbonisation.	Through the Decarbonisation Initiatives Fund, West Suffolk Council has supported the conversion of over 1,600 parish and town council-owned streetlights to energy-efficient LED lanterns. This has reduced electricity consumption, lowered carbon emissions and	Ongoing

Strategic action	Action or task	Detailed progress update	Status
		generated long-term financial savings for local councils.	
2.8 Public electric vehicle charging			
Increase provision of electric vehicle charging infrastructure.	The council continues to expand public electric vehicle charging infrastructure across West Suffolk. Existing council-owned chargers have been successfully transferred to the Fuuse network, improving reliability, accessibility and roaming capability across multiple charging networks. New signage has been installed to improve user experience. The council continues to work with Suffolk County Council through the Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure programme, which has already delivered 46 on-street charging sockets for residents without off-street parking. Further expansion of the charging network remains a priority. All electricity supplied to council-operated charging points is sourced from 100% renewable electricity.	Ongoing	
2.9 Deposit return scheme			
Operate and promote the reverse vending machine scheme.	The council continues to support the successful Trovr reverse vending initiative across Bury St Edmunds, Haverhill and Newmarket. Since launching, nearly 10,000 residents have registered with the Trovr app and more than 32,000 plastic bottles and aluminium cans have been recycled through over 5,600 recycling transactions. The scheme has diverted approximately 451kg of recyclable material, including 334kg of plastic and 117kg of aluminium, while preventing an estimated 1,162kg of carbon emissions. The	Ongoing	

Strategic action	Action or task	Detailed progress update	Status
	initiative continues to encourage recycling through digital rewards whilst improving local recycling rates and reducing litter.		

3. Existing housing workstream

Strategic action	Action or task	Detailed progress update	Status
3.1 Green taxi fleet	Review vehicle emission requirements as part of the taxi and private hire licensing policy.	West Suffolk Council has strengthened environmental standards within its taxi and private hire licensing policy by replacing vehicle age requirements with Euro 6 emission standards for all new vehicles entering the licensed fleet from 1 July 2026. This approach aligns the council's licensing policy with Department for Transport best practice and provides greater flexibility to reduce emissions from the licensed vehicle fleet over time. The revised policy supports improvements in local air quality whilst encouraging operators to invest in cleaner, lower-emission vehicles as older vehicles are replaced.	Ongoing
3.2 Improve the energy efficiency of existing homes			
	Work with housing partners to improve the environmental performance of new and existing homes.	The council continues to work alongside Barley Homes, registered providers, Suffolk County Council and other housing partners to improve the environmental performance of housing across West Suffolk. Through collaboration on new developments and retrofit opportunities, the council supports delivery of higher environmental standards that align with the emerging local plan, building regulations and the council's ambition for Barley Homes to become an environmental exemplar whilst continuing to operate commercially. Partnership working remains	Ongoing

Strategic action	Action or task	Detailed progress update	Status
		essential in delivering more energy-efficient homes that reduce carbon emissions and improve resilience to future climate change.	
	Improve the energy efficiency of social housing.	The council continues to work with Registered Providers and housing partners to identify opportunities to improve the energy efficiency of social housing. Improvements include exploring retrofit opportunities, supporting funding bids and encouraging investment that reduces energy consumption, lowers carbon emissions and helps tenants reduce household energy costs. Work continues as national funding opportunities become available and new standards emerge.	Ongoing
	Continue to deliver improvements in energy efficiency particularly focusing on low-income households, vulnerable residents and those in fuel poverty.	The council continued to support energy efficiency improvements through programmes including Warm Homes Suffolk and wider retrofit initiatives. Across Suffolk, 112 Warm Homes grants were delivered, including 15 properties in West Suffolk, helping residents reduce energy consumption and manage energy costs. The council also continued to promote financial inclusion and support vulnerable households through wider housing and community initiatives.	Ongoing
	Deliver retrofit and housing improvement programmes through external funding.	West Suffolk Council continues to support retrofit programmes designed to improve the energy efficiency of existing homes through external grant funding and partnership delivery. Funding opportunities are regularly monitored to maximise investment into West Suffolk, ensuring residents benefit from improvements including insulation, low-carbon heating technologies and wider energy efficiency measures. This work supports the council's net zero ambitions whilst helping	Ongoing

Strategic action	Action or task	Detailed progress update	Status
		residents reduce fuel bills and improve thermal comfort.	
	Continue delivering energy efficiency improvements for low-income households, vulnerable residents and those experiencing fuel poverty.	The council continues to support vulnerable households through the Warm Homes Suffolk programme and wider retrofit initiatives. Across Suffolk, 112 Warm Homes grants were awarded during the reporting period, including 15 properties within West Suffolk. These grants have supported improvements including insulation, heating upgrades and other energy efficiency measures that reduce energy consumption and improve living conditions. Alongside grant funding, the Warm Homes Suffolk Loan Scheme (Lendology) continues to provide accessible finance to homeowners wishing to undertake energy efficiency improvements where grant funding is not available. Collectively these initiatives help tackle fuel poverty, improve public health and reduce domestic carbon emissions.	Ongoing
	Develop improved reporting for social housing and the Private Rented Sector.	The council is working with Suffolk partners to consider the development of a more consistent reporting framework for the condition and energy performance of both social housing and the Private Rented Sector. Improved data collection will help identify priorities for intervention, monitor progress against housing quality objectives and better target future investment in housing improvements across West Suffolk.	Ongoing
3.3 Improve housing through funding and regulation			
Monitor housing standards and performance.	The council has completed the establishment of regular monitoring arrangements for housing standards. This enables improved reporting of the number of rented homes	Complete (monitoring ongoing)	

Strategic action	Action or task	Detailed progress update	Status
	identified as requiring improvement alongside those successfully brought up to the required standard. Continued monitoring supports evidence-based decision making and helps ensure regulatory interventions remain effective.		
	Support Suffolk-wide initiatives to improve standards within the private rented sector.	West Suffolk Council continues to work collaboratively with Suffolk local authorities and housing partners to improve standards within the Private Rented Sector. Partnership working supports consistent enforcement, improved landlord engagement, better housing conditions and greater awareness of available support for landlords and tenants. The council continues to promote best practice whilst ensuring vulnerable residents are supported to access safe, energy-efficient accommodation.	Ongoing
	Improve awareness and signposting to housing improvement funding.	The council continues to improve the availability of information relating to grants, loans and financial assistance available for homeowners and landlords wishing to improve the energy efficiency of their properties. Signposting through council services and partner organisations helps residents identify the most appropriate funding opportunities to support retrofit works, renewable energy technologies and wider home improvements.	Ongoing
	Explore future retrofit opportunities through the housing strategy.	The council's developing housing strategy continues to consider future opportunities to expand retrofit programmes across West Suffolk. The strategy aims to identify practical approaches to improving the energy efficiency of existing housing stock, supporting carbon reduction, reducing fuel poverty and improving long-term	Ongoing

Strategic action	Action or task	Detailed progress update	Status
		housing quality. Lessons learned from existing retrofit programmes and emerging Government policy will inform future priorities.	
	Continue promoting the Warm Homes Suffolk Loan Scheme (Lendology).	The Warm Homes Suffolk Loan Scheme, delivered through Lendology, continues to provide affordable finance for residents wishing to undertake energy efficiency improvements to their homes. The scheme enables homeowners who may not qualify for grant funding to access low-cost loans for improvements such as insulation, replacement heating systems, renewable energy technologies and wider retrofit measures. The council continues to promote the scheme as an important mechanism for improving the energy performance of existing homes across West Suffolk.	Ongoing
New action – data collection and evidence Improve the use of housing data to support evidence-based decision making.	Ensure housing and environmental decisions are supported by robust performance data and monitoring.	Work continues to strengthen the collection, management and use of housing and environmental performance data across the council. Improved data collection will enable better monitoring of housing conditions, retrofit activity, energy efficiency improvements and carbon reduction outcomes. This evidence base will help inform future investment decisions, identify priority areas for intervention and support transparent reporting against the council's climate action plan and housing strategy objectives. Opportunities to improve the use of digital systems and performance reporting are currently being explored.	Ongoing

4. Planning and regulation workstream

Strategic action	Action or task	Detailed progress update	Status
4.1 Maximise the Application of Planning Policy to encourage higher performance in new development	Develop and implement climate change and sustainable development policies through the West Suffolk Local Plan.	The West Suffolk Local Plan reached a significant milestone during the reporting period, with the completion of the main modifications consultation and formal adoption of the plan in July 2025. The adopted local plan establishes a comprehensive planning framework that strengthens climate change mitigation, sustainable development, environmental protection and biodiversity across the district. The Strategic Planning and Environment teams have worked collaboratively to ensure that climate policies are fully integrated into the planning framework, providing greater certainty for developers whilst supporting the council's ambition to achieve net zero and deliver sustainable growth.	Ongoing
	Publish supporting climate change planning guidance.	Following adoption of the Local Plan, the council produced and published the Climate Change and Sustainable Building Planning Advice Note (PAN). The guidance provides practical advice to developers, planning agents and applicants on meeting the local plan's climate change policies, including energy efficiency, sustainable construction, renewable energy technologies, biodiversity enhancement, water management and climate resilience. The document supports consistent decision-making across the planning process and improves understanding of the council's environmental expectations for new development.	Complete – monitoring ongoing
	Promote the Planning Advice Note (PAN) and monitor its effectiveness.	The planning advice note has now been fully implemented within the planning process. Officers continue to promote its use during pre-	Complete – monitoring ongoing

Strategic action	Action or task	Detailed progress update	Status
		application discussions and throughout the determination of planning applications. Monitoring of its effectiveness continues to ensure the guidance remains relevant, supports consistent decision-making and assists applicants in delivering higher-quality sustainable development. Feedback from developers and planning officers will inform future updates where required.	
	Develop supporting checklists and guidance for planning applications.	The Strategic Planning and Environment teams have worked together to prepare supporting guidance and practical tools that assist applicants in demonstrating compliance with climate change and sustainability policies. These resources provide greater clarity on council expectations at an early stage, helping improve the quality of planning submissions and reducing delays during the application process. Future guidance will continue to evolve as planning policy and national legislation develop.	Ongoing
	Continue exploring opportunities to exceed national building standards.	The council continues to investigate opportunities to encourage higher environmental performance standards than national minimum requirements where planning legislation allows. Through implementation of the local plan and preparation for future policy reviews, officers continue to examine opportunities to improve energy efficiency, reduce operational carbon emissions and encourage more sustainable construction methods in advance of future Local Plan reviews.	Ongoing
	Continue to provide training for planning and regulatory teams on biodiversity net gain, carbon literacy and active travel design.	Officer development remains a priority to ensure planning decisions continue to reflect current legislation and best practice. Training continues in biodiversity net gain (BNG), natural capital,	Ongoing

Strategic action	Action or task	Detailed progress update	Status
		carbon literacy, sustainable design, active travel and climate change policy. Mandatory BNG requirements have now been fully embedded into planning processes, supported by ongoing professional development for planning officers and regulatory teams.	
	Strengthen specialist ecological expertise within the Planning Service.	To strengthen delivery of biodiversity objectives, the council has appointed an Ecologist within the Planning Team and created a dedicated Landscape Architect post. These specialist roles improve the council's ability to assess ecological impacts, monitor biodiversity net gain requirements, advise developers and ensure landscape and biodiversity enhancements secured through planning permissions are delivered effectively.	Ongoing
	Implement the climate change policies in the newly adopted West Suffolk Local Plan, including preparation and publication of the Climate Change Guidance Note.	Following adoption of the West Suffolk Local Plan, implementation of climate-related planning policies continues through the Climate Change and Sustainable Building Planning Advice Note. The council now focuses on ensuring policies are consistently applied across all relevant planning applications, providing developers with clear expectations while supporting delivery of more sustainable, resilient and energy-efficient development across the district.	Ongoing
4.2 Protect and enhance biodiversity through the planning process			
Maintain planning expertise in biodiversity net gain, green infrastructure and natural capital.	Planning officers continue to undertake regular professional development to ensure knowledge remains current in relation to biodiversity net gain (BNG), green infrastructure, natural capital and wider environmental legislation. Since mandatory		Ongoing

Strategic action	Action or task	Detailed progress update	Status
	BNG requirements came into force nationally, training has focused on ensuring officers are equipped to assess applications consistently and effectively, whilst understanding the resource implications associated with implementing the new requirements.		
	Monitor implementation of biodiversity improvements secured through planning permissions.	The council continues to review the resources required to effectively monitor planning permissions that include biodiversity mitigation, habitat creation and landscape improvements. The appointment of an Ecologist, together with additional landscape expertise, strengthens the council's ability to ensure biodiversity enhancements secured through planning permissions are successfully delivered, maintained and monitored over the long term.	Ongoing
	Encourage sustainable tree retention and increased canopy cover through new development.	The adopted local plan contains strengthened policies promoting the protection of existing trees, increased tree planting and greater canopy cover across new developments. Planning officers continue to work with developers to maximise opportunities for retaining mature trees wherever possible while incorporating additional tree planting and landscaping into new developments. This approach supports biodiversity, climate resilience, urban cooling and improved public amenity.	Ongoing
Land use			
Promote efficient use of land through sustainable development.	Continue exploring opportunities to maximise efficient land use while maintaining high-quality development.	The local plan promotes the efficient use of previously developed land and appropriate development densities whilst recognising the importance of local character, design quality and	Ongoing

Strategic action	Action or task	Detailed progress update	Status
		environmental protection. Site-specific considerations continue through master planning, pre-application discussions and detailed planning applications. The Planning Policy Team is also exploring the development of design codes that will provide further guidance on building heights, density and efficient land use whilst respecting local context and community character.	
Climate adaptation			
Ensure new development is resilient to the impacts of climate change.	Continue developing climate adaptation policies for new development.	Climate adaptation policies have been embedded within the adopted Local Plan to ensure new developments are better prepared for future climate risks including flooding, overheating, water scarcity and extreme weather events. Officers continue to monitor implementation of these policies and will review their effectiveness as part of future local plan updates. The council remains committed to ensuring new developments contribute towards long-term environmental resilience alongside carbon reduction objectives.	Ongoing
Active travel			
Promote walking, cycling and sustainable transport through the planning system.	Continue developing planning approaches that encourage active travel and reduce reliance on private vehicles.	The adopted local plan includes a comprehensive range of policies supporting walking, cycling and sustainable transport. West Suffolk Council continues to work closely with Suffolk County Council to prepare supporting guidance that prioritises sustainable transport infrastructure within new developments. The shared objective is to maximise opportunities for active travel and public transport whilst reducing the need for extensive highway infrastructure and lowering transport-related carbon emissions. Planning	Ongoing

Strategic action	Action or task	Detailed progress update	Status
		negotiations increasingly focus on integrating sustainable travel measures at the earliest design stages to create healthier, lower-carbon communities.	

5. Corporate action workstream

Strategic action	Action and task	Detailed progress update	Status
5.1 Environmental management systems	Review the council's environmental management system annually.	The council continues to review and update its environmental management system (EMS) annually to ensure it remains aligned with organisational priorities, legislative requirements and best practice. The methodology used for corporate carbon reporting will be updated to reflect the revised net zero by 2039 trajectory, subject to Council approval. Annual reviews ensure environmental objectives, performance indicators and reporting arrangements remain robust and continue to support continuous improvement across all council services.	Ongoing
	Reduce paper consumption across council buildings.	Work continues with service areas and building users to reduce paper consumption and encourage digital working practices wherever possible. This supports the council's wider ambitions to reduce waste, improve resource efficiency and lower operational carbon emissions. Progress continues to be monitored annually through the environmental management system.	Ongoing
	Review and update the green travel plan.	The council continues to work with Human Resources and Suffolk County Council to refresh the West Suffolk House Travel Plan. Staff consultation has been undertaken to better	Ongoing

Strategic action	Action and task	Detailed progress update	Status
		understand current travel behaviours and identify opportunities to encourage sustainable commuting, including greater use of walking, cycling, public transport, car sharing and electric vehicles. The updated Travel Plan will help reduce business travel emissions whilst supporting staff wellbeing.	
5.3 Internal reporting			
Improve environmental reporting and funding management.	Develop and maintain a central register for environmental grants and funding.	Work continues to establish a centralised register of environmental grants and funding opportunities. This will improve visibility of funding secured across the organisation, support future bidding opportunities and ensure greater coordination of projects contributing towards climate change mitigation, biodiversity enhancement and environmental sustainability. Improved reporting will also help demonstrate the value of external funding secured by the council.	Ongoing
	Keep under review how climate implications are considered in the development of policies and projects.	Climate implications continue to be considered through policy development, project appraisal and decision-making processes. This has included implementation of climate-related policies within the adopted West Suffolk Local Plan and supporting guidance.	Ongoing
	Ensure climate change commitments continue to be reflected within strategic and operational documents.	Climate change and environmental resilience remain one of West Suffolk Council's four strategic priorities. Environmental objectives continue to be embedded within key corporate strategies, service plans and investment decisions, including the updated Net Zero Route Map approved in May 2025.	Ongoing
5.5 Reduce energy consumption across the council estate			

Strategic action	Action and task	Detailed progress update	Status
Reduce energy consumption within council-owned buildings.	Continue monitoring and reducing energy consumption across the council estate.	Energy consumption continues to be monitored across all council-owned sites, with detailed performance analysis reported through the annual environmental statement. The council continues to identify opportunities to improve building efficiency, optimise energy management systems and reduce operational carbon emissions through ongoing investment and improved asset management.	Ongoing
	Deliver the Public Sector Decarbonisation Programme. Continue to aim to decarbonise remaining sites using combined heat and power (CHP) systems, specifically Newmarket Leisure Centre followed by Mildenhall Hub when opportunities arise.	Significant progress has been made in decarbonising the council's operational estate. West Suffolk Council secured £4.2 million through the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme, supplemented by £600,000 from the council's Decarbonisation Fund, to deliver major low-carbon improvements at Bury St Edmunds Leisure Centre and Haverhill Leisure Centre. Planned improvements include installation of solar photovoltaic canopies, air source heat pumps, upgraded insulation, replacement glazing, building management system improvements and wider energy efficiency measures. These projects will significantly reduce energy consumption, lower carbon emissions and improve the long-term sustainability of the council's largest operational buildings. Decarbonisation works progressed across the council’s estate, including major investment at leisure facilities. During the year, gas systems at The Apex were removed and replaced with low-carbon technologies, while decarbonisation projects progressed at Bury St Edmunds and Haverhill Leisure Centres. Solar canopies were also installed at Mildenhall Hub. Cabinet approved	Ongoing

Strategic action	Action and task	Detailed progress update	Status
		an updated and costed Net Zero Route Map in May 2025 to guide future investment decisions.	
	Increase renewable energy generation across council assets.	Renewable energy generation continues to expand across the council's estate. Installation of solar photovoltaic canopies at Mildenhall Hub has commenced and is expected to generate more than £130,000 of electricity annually, whilst reducing carbon emissions by approximately 124 tonnes each year. The council also continues to investigate opportunities for additional solar generation and other renewable technologies across its property portfolio to support long-term energy resilience and reduce reliance on grid electricity.	Ongoing
	Expand electric vehicle charging infrastructure.	The council continues to expand electric vehicle charging infrastructure across operational sites and public locations. A total of 46 on-street charging sockets have now been installed through the Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (LEVI) programme. Existing public chargers have also been transferred to the Fuuse charging network, improving reliability, accessibility and customer experience. All electricity supplied through council-operated chargers is sourced from 100 per cent renewable energy, supporting further reductions in transport emissions.	Ongoing
5.51 Sustainable transport			
Decarbonise the council's vehicle fleet and business travel.	Continue transitioning the council fleet to low-emission vehicles.	The council continues to replace operational fleet vehicles with lower-emission alternatives wherever practical. During the reporting period, new electric vans were introduced into the Property Services fleet, reducing emissions associated with day-to-day maintenance	Ongoing

Strategic action	Action and task	Detailed progress update	Status
		activities. The vehicles are supported by expanded charging infrastructure at the West Suffolk Operational Hub, Haverhill Depot and Mildenhall Depot, enabling continued transition towards an electric fleet.	
	Support decarbonisation projects delivered by parish and town councils.	Through the Decarbonisation Initiatives Fund (DIF), West Suffolk Council has supported the conversion of more than 1,600 parish and town council-owned streetlights to energy-efficient LED lanterns. These improvements have significantly reduced electricity consumption, lowered carbon emissions and generated long-term savings for local councils whilst improving lighting efficiency across communities.	Ongoing
	Develop a long-term strategy for removing gas from council buildings.	Initial scoping work has commenced to explore options for removing natural gas from council buildings over the longer term. This work will inform future investment planning and identify suitable technologies capable of replacing fossil fuel heating systems whilst maintaining reliable building performance.	Ongoing
	Replace Combined Heat and Power (CHP) systems.	Business case development has now concluded following the award of Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme funding. Planned decarbonisation works at the leisure centres include replacing existing Combined Heat and Power systems with lower-carbon technologies including air source heat pumps and renewable energy generation. These improvements represent a significant milestone in reducing emissions from the council's largest energy-consuming buildings.	Complete
5.6 Professional development			

Strategic action	Action and task	Detailed progress update	Status
Improve driving efficiency across council staff.	Encourage efficient and safer driving practices.	The council continues to explore opportunities to incorporate driving efficiency measures within staff performance and development arrangements. Encouraging more efficient driving behaviour supports reductions in fuel consumption, operating costs and fleet emissions whilst contributing to improved road safety. Professional development for drivers continues alongside wider fleet decarbonisation initiatives.	Ongoing
5.7 Alternative fuel vehicles			
Review alternative fuel technologies during fleet procurement.	Consider alternative fuel options when replacing fleet vehicles.	Review work has now been completed, with consideration of alternative fuel technologies embedded within the council's fleet replacement programme. Electric vehicles remain the default option wherever operationally viable, whilst emerging technologies continue to be monitored for larger and more specialised fleet vehicles.	Closed
5.8 Fleet management			
Ensure ultra low emission vehicles (ULEVs) remain the default fleet choice.	Review operational need before procuring new fleet vehicles.	The council's fleet replacement policy now requires all services requesting new vehicles to demonstrate operational need, with Ultra Low Emission Vehicles considered the default option. Internal combustion engine vehicles are only procured where a robust operational justification exists. This approach supports continued fleet decarbonisation whilst ensuring operational resilience.	Ongoing
	Continue trials of alternative technologies for specialist vehicles.	The council continues to investigate alternative low-carbon technologies for larger operational vehicles, including road sweepers and refuse collection vehicles. Emerging technologies are monitored to ensure future procurement decisions reflect advances in battery technology,	Ongoing

Strategic action	Action and task	Detailed progress update	Status
		hydrogen and other suitable low-carbon solutions.	
	Complete transition of Vertas pool cars.	All Vertas pool cars used by West Suffolk Council have now transitioned to electric vehicles, significantly reducing emissions associated with staff business travel and demonstrating the council's commitment to leading by example in fleet decarbonisation.	Complete
	Expand depot charging infrastructure.	Fast and rapid electric vehicle charging infrastructure has now been installed at the West Suffolk Operational Hub (12 charging sockets), Haverhill Depot (6 charging sockets) and Mildenhall Depot (1 charging socket). These facilities support continued electrification of the council's operational fleet. Future work will focus on assessing charging requirements for larger fleet vehicles, including electric refuse collection vehicles.	Ongoing
	Investigate options for a mixed fleet.	Work continues to assess the costs, operational implications and infrastructure requirements associated with operating a mixed fleet of electric, alternative fuel and conventional vehicles during the transition towards a fully decarbonised fleet.	Ongoing
5.9 Sustainable catering and facilities management			
Improve sustainability within council-operated cafés and kiosks.	Explore ways to prevent or reduce single-use plastics at events hosted on council land or in council venues.	The council continues to work closely with Vertas, ensuring cafés and kiosks minimise single-use plastics wherever possible, provide free tap water upon request and source products locally where practical. At Brandon Country Park, nearly all disposable items are biodegradable or recyclable. Plastic bottled water remains available due to operational requirements within the	Ongoing

Strategic action	Action and task	Detailed progress update	Status
		environmentally sensitive park setting; however, visitors are encouraged to use the external refill station provided outside the café. Alternative packaging options continue to be explored. Café West and Brandon Country Park both provide free tap water to encourage reusable bottle use and reduce plastic waste.	
5.10 Renewable energy systems within council assets			
Install renewable energy systems when maintaining or replacing council assets.	Continue incorporating low-carbon technologies into asset replacement programmes.	Renewable energy and low-carbon technologies continue to be incorporated into major refurbishment and maintenance projects across the council's estate. During the reporting period, The Apex removed its gas heating system and replaced it with air source heat pumps and other low-carbon technologies. Major decarbonisation works continue at Bury St Edmunds Leisure Centre, Haverhill Leisure Centre and Mildenhall Hub, where renewable energy generation, improved insulation and upgraded building services are delivering significant reductions in energy consumption and operational carbon emissions. These projects demonstrate the council's long-term commitment to creating a low-carbon, energy-efficient estate.	Ongoing

Cross-cutting governance

Workstream	Strategic action	Action or task	Detailed progress update	Status
Cross-cutting governance	Funding monitoring process	Establish a process to monitor internal and external funding that supports climate change and environmental initiatives.	Work has commenced to establish a coordinated process for identifying, recording and monitoring environmental funding streams across the council. The aim is to improve visibility of funding secured for climate change, biodiversity, decarbonisation	Ongoing

Workstream	Strategic action	Action or task	Detailed progress update	Status
			and environmental improvement projects. By maintaining a central record of grants, loans and external funding sources, the council will be better positioned to demonstrate the value of investment secured, identify future opportunities and promote successful projects. This process will also strengthen reporting arrangements and improve coordination between service areas delivering environmental initiatives.	
		Monitor environmental investment and funding outcomes.	The council continues to track the outcomes of externally funded projects to ensure environmental and carbon reduction benefits are realised. Monitoring arrangements are being developed to capture environmental impacts, financial benefits and community outcomes from funded projects, enabling stronger evidence-based decision making in future funding bids.	Ongoing
Partnership funding	Secure external funding to accelerate climate action.	Maximise opportunities for grant funding and low-cost finance.	The council has continued to secure significant external investment to support environmental and climate-related projects. During the reporting period, West Suffolk Council secured a £17 million loan from the UK Infrastructure Bank to support Net Zero projects and wider environmental improvements. This funding will help accelerate delivery of projects that reduce emissions, improve energy efficiency and support environmental resilience across the district. Additional funding opportunities continue to be explored through Government programmes and partnership initiatives.	Ongoing
		Pursue funding for fleet decarbonisation.	Scoping work has commenced to explore opportunities through the Government's Depot Charging Scheme, supporting future installation of charging infrastructure for larger operational fleet	Ongoing

Workstream	Strategic action	Action or task	Detailed progress update	Status
			vehicles. This work will help prepare the council for future fleet electrification and reduce operational transport emissions.	
Performance and data management	Improve environmental data collection and performance reporting.	Ensure decisions are supported by robust evidence and measurable outcomes.	The council continues to strengthen its approach to environmental performance management. Work is underway to improve the collection, analysis and reporting of environmental data across all workstreams, ensuring progress can be measured consistently against Climate Action Plan objectives. Improved reporting arrangements will support greater transparency, more effective resource allocation and stronger evidence for future decision-making.	Ongoing
		Improve use of environmental data across services.	Opportunities are being explored to better utilise environmental and operational data to support strategic planning, investment decisions and performance monitoring. Enhanced data management will enable the council to identify trends, prioritise interventions and demonstrate the environmental benefits delivered through council activities.	Ongoing
Governance and reporting	Maintain oversight of climate action plan delivery.	Monitor progress across all workstreams.	The council continues to monitor progress against climate action plan actions through regular reporting and performance management processes. This ensures that achievements, risks and emerging priorities are identified and addressed in a timely manner. Reporting arrangements support accountability, transparency and continuous improvement across all environmental workstreams.	Ongoing
		Embed environmental considerations into council decision-making.	Environmental considerations continue to be integrated into policy development, project delivery, procurement, asset management and	Ongoing

Workstream	Strategic action	Action or task	Detailed progress update	Status
			service planning. This approach ensures climate change mitigation, adaptation and biodiversity objectives are considered consistently across council operations and strategic decisions.	

Overall climate action plan outcomes

Across all six sections of the climate action plan, West Suffolk Council has continued to make significant progress in delivering its environmental ambitions through:

- Biodiversity
    - Maintaining six Green Flag parks.
    - Delivering habitat improvements and wildlife projects.
    - Supporting the Local Nature Recovery Strategy.
    - Expanding tree planting and biodiversity enhancement.
- Communities and communications
    - Delivering major recycling and waste reduction campaigns.
    - Expanding recycling infrastructure.
    - Supporting community litter-picking and environmental awareness.
    - Promoting sustainable transport and renewable energy.
- Existing housing
    - Supporting retrofit programmes and energy efficiency improvements.
    - Delivering Warm Homes Suffolk grants and loans.
    - Improving housing standards and reducing fuel poverty.
- Planning and regulation
    - Adopting the West Suffolk Local Plan.
    - Publishing climate change planning guidance.
    - Embedding biodiversity net gain requirements.

    - Strengthening climate and sustainability requirements for new development.

- Corporate action

    - Securing £4.2 million public sector decarbonisation funding
    - Expanding renewable energy generation
    - Electrifying fleet vehicles
    - Improving energy efficiency across council assets
    - Expanding EV charging infrastructure.

- Governance and funding

    - Securing significant external investment.
    - Improving environmental monitoring and reporting.
    - Strengthening delivery and oversight of climate-related programmes.

Climate action plan delivery: ongoing

The council has continued to make substantial progress across all workstreams, delivering practical environmental improvements, reducing operational emissions, supporting communities and strengthening the policy framework required to achieve long-term climate and biodiversity objectives. Future priorities will focus on accelerating decarbonisation, securing further external funding, improving environmental performance monitoring and delivering the next phase of actions required to support the council's net zero ambitions.