

Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee



Title	Agenda											
Date	Thursday 30 May 2024											
Time	5.00 pm											
Venue	Conference Chamber West Suffolk House Western Way Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk, IP33 3YU											
Full Members	<p style="text-align: center;">Chair Peter Armitage Vice Chair Frank Stennett</p> <table style="width: 100%; border: none;"> <tr> <td style="width: 33%;">Conservative Group (4)</td> <td style="width: 33%;">Mike Chester Nick Clarke</td> <td style="width: 33%;">Ian Houlder Karen Richardson</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Independents (3)</td> <td>Richard Alecock Frank Stennett</td> <td>Andy Neal</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Progressive Alliance Grouping (3)</td> <td>Peter Armitage Sue Perry</td> <td>Janne Jarvis</td> </tr> </table>			Conservative Group (4)	Mike Chester Nick Clarke	Ian Houlder Karen Richardson	Independents (3)	Richard Alecock Frank Stennett	Andy Neal	Progressive Alliance Grouping (3)	Peter Armitage Sue Perry	Janne Jarvis
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Substitutes	<table style="width: 100%; border: none;"> <tr> <td style="width: 33%;">Conservative Group (2)</td> <td style="width: 33%;">John Augustine</td> <td style="width: 33%;">John Griffiths</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Independents (2)</td> <td>Jools Savage</td> <td>Don Waldron</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Progressive Alliance Grouping (2)</td> <td>Pat Hanlon</td> <td>Liz Smith</td> </tr> </table>			Conservative Group (2)	John Augustine	John Griffiths	Independents (2)	Jools Savage	Don Waldron	Progressive Alliance Grouping (2)	Pat Hanlon	Liz Smith
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Independents (2)	Jools Savage	Don Waldron										
Progressive Alliance Grouping (2)	Pat Hanlon	Liz Smith										
By invitation	Diane Hind	Portfolio Holder for Resources										
Interests – declaration and restriction on participation	Members are reminded of their responsibility to declare any disclosable pecuniary interest, other registerable or non-registerable interest which they have in any item of business on the agenda, no later than when that item is reached and, when appropriate, to leave the meeting prior to discussion and voting on the item.											
Quorum	Four Members											
Committee administrator	Christine Brain Democratic Services Officer (Scrutiny) Telephone 01638 719729 Email democratic.services@westsuffolk.gov.uk											

<p>Venue</p>	<p>Conference Chamber West Suffolk House, Western Way, Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk, IP33 3YU</p>
<p>Contact information</p>	<p>Telephone: 01638 719729 Email: democratic.services@westsuffolk.gov.uk Website: www.westsuffolk.gov.uk</p>
<p>Access to agenda and reports before the meeting</p>	<p>The agenda and reports will be available to view at least five clear days before the meeting on our website.</p>
<p>Attendance at meetings</p>	<p>This meeting is being held in person in order to comply with the Local Government Act 1972.</p> <p>Measures have been applied to ensure the health and safety for all persons present at meetings.</p> <p>We may also be required to restrict the number of members of the public able to attend in accordance with the room capacity.</p> <p>If you consider it necessary for you to attend, please let Democratic Services know in advance of the meeting so they can endeavour to accommodate you and advise you of the necessary health and safety precautions that apply to the meeting. For further information about the venue, please visit http://www.westsuffolk.gov.uk/contact-us-cfm</p>
<p>Public participation</p>	<p>Members of the public who live or work in the district are welcome to speak and may ask one question or make a statement of not more than three minutes duration relating to items to be discussed in Part 1 of the agenda only.</p> <p>If a question is asked and answered within three minutes, the person who asked the question may ask a supplementary question that arises from the reply.</p> <p>The Constitution allows that a person who wishes to speak must register at least 15 minutes before the time the meeting is scheduled to start.</p> <p>There is an overall time limit of 15 minutes for public speaking, which may be extended at the Chair's discretion</p>
<p>Accessibility</p>	<p>If you have any difficulties in accessing the meeting, the agenda and accompanying reports, including for reasons of a disability or a protected characteristic, please contact Democratic Services at the earliest opportunity using the contact details provided above in order that we may assist you.</p>

Recording of meetings	<p>The Council may record this meeting and permits members of the public and media to record or broadcast it as well (when the media and public are not lawfully excluded).</p> <p>Any member of the public who attends a meeting and objects to being filmed should advise the Committee Administrator who will instruct that they are not included in the filming.</p>
Personal Information	<p>Any personal information processed by West Suffolk Council arising from a request to speak at a public meeting under the Localism Act 2011, will be protected in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018. For more information on how we do this and your rights in regards to your personal information and how to access it, visit our website: https://www.westsuffolk.gov.uk/Council/Data_and_information/howweuseinformation.cfm or call Customer Services: 01284 763233 and ask to speak to the Information Governance Officer.</p>

Agenda

Procedural matters

1. Substitutes

Any member who is substituting for another member should so indicate, together with the name of the relevant absent member.

2. Apologies for absence

3. Minutes

1 - 12

To confirm the minutes of the meeting held on 25 January 2024 (copy attached.)

4. Declarations of interest

Members are reminded of their responsibility to declare any disclosable pecuniary interest, other registerable or non-registerable interest which they have in any item of business on the agenda, **no later than when that item is reached** and, when appropriate, to leave the meeting prior to discussion and voting on the item.

Part 1 – public

5. Public participation

Members of the public who live or work in the district are welcome to speak and may ask one question or make a statement of not more than three minutes duration relating to items to be discussed in Part 1 of the agenda only. If a question is asked and answered within three minutes, the person who asked the question may ask a supplementary question that arises from the reply.

The Constitution allows that a person who wishes to speak must register at least 15 minutes before the time the meeting is scheduled to start.

There is an overall limit of 15 minutes for public speaking, which may be extended at the Chair's discretion.

6. Ernst and Young - 2022 to 2023 Interim Value for Money Report to those Charged with Governance

13 - 36

Report number: **PAS/WS/24/007**

7.	Ernst and Young - Presentation of External Audit Plan and Fees 2023 to 2024 Report number: PAS/WS/24/008	37 - 104
8.	2023 to 2024 Performance Report (Quarter Four) Report number: PAS/WS/24/009	105 - 212
9.	Internal Audit Annual Report (2023 to 2024) Report number: PAS/WS/24/010	213 - 248
10.	Outline Internal Audit Plan (2024 to 2025) Report number: PAS/WS/24/011	249 - 268
11.	Local Code of Corporate Governance Report number: PAS/WS/24/012	269 - 286
12.	Co-opting Non-elected Independent Members Report number: PAS/WS/24/013	287 - 294
13.	Annual Report from the Health and Safety Sub-Committee Report number: PAS/WS/24/014	295 - 308
14.	Annual Re-Appointments to the Financial Resilience Sub-Committee Report number: PAS/WS/24/015	309 - 314
15.	Work programme update 2024 to 2025 Report number: PAS/WS/24/016	315 - 318
16.	Exclusion of the Press and Public To consider whether the press and public should be excluded during the consideration of the following item because it is likely in view of the nature of the business to be transacted or the nature of the proceedings, that if members of the public were present during the item, there would be disclosure to them of exempt categories or information as prescribed in Part 1 of Scheduled 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, and indicated against each item and, in all circumstances of the case, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.	

Part 2 – exempt

**17. 2023 to 2024 Performance Report (Quarter Four) -
EXEMPT Appendix F**

319 - 320

EXEMPT Appendix F to report number: **PAS/WS/24/009**

(Exempt Appendix F is to be considered in private under paragraphs 1 and 2 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, as it contains information relating to an individual and information which is likely to reveal the identify of an individual).

Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee



Minutes of a meeting of the **Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee** held on **Thursday 25 January 2024** at **5.00 pm** in the **Conference Chamber, West Suffolk House**, Western Way, Bury St Edmunds IP33 3YU

Present **Councillors**

Chair Peter Armitage

Vice Chair Frank Stennett

Richard Alecock

John Augustine

Mike Chester

Nick Clarke

Janne Jarvis

Andy Neal

Sue Perry

Karen Richardson

Phil Wittam

In attendance

Diane Hind, Cabinet Member for Resources

Victor Lukaniuk, Deputy Leader

Cliff Waterman, Leader

227. **Substitutes**

No substitutions were declared.

228. **Apologies for absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Ian Houlder.

229. **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 23 November 2023 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

230. **Declarations of interest**

[Councillor Nick Clarke arrived at 5.04pm during this item.]

Members' declarations of interest are recorded under the item to which the declaration relates.

231. **Public participation**

There were no members of the public in attendance on this occasion.

232. **Delivering a Sustainable Medium-Term Budget**

The Cabinet Member for Resources presented report number PAS/WS/24/001, which provided an update on the challenges all councils, including West Suffolk Council faced in the delivery of council services as well as providing an update on the latest funding details from Government.

The report set out new pressures the council would be facing from next year, from those which had already been assumed in the indicative 2024 to 2025 budget set in February 2023, of which £5 million for the year, pressures that would now form (in the most cases) a new cost base for all future year's budgets. These pressures were due to the continued impact of inflation, utility costs and the cost-of-living crisis which had inflated prices as well as demand for services. Attached to the report were a number of appendices, namely:

- Appendix A – Budget assumption changes.
- Appendix B – Proposed revenue budget following changes set out in Appendix A.
- Appendix C – (including Appendix Ci; Cii and Ciii) – Proposed West Suffolk capital programme.
- Appendix D – (including Appendix Di; Dii; Diii; Div and Dv) – Revenue reserves.
- Appendix E – (including Appendix Ei) – Fees and charges 2024 to 2025.
- EXEMPT Appendix Fi; Fii and Fiii (Exempt business cases to support new strategic capital projects).

Appendix A to the report provided proposed changes to the budget assumptions from those used in the February 2023 Budget and Council Tax Report, alongside growth in service demand, support towards the new strategic priorities and anticipated savings and initiatives proposed or delivered to date to achieve a sustainable and balanced budget for 2024 to 2026.

Appendix B set out the revenue budgets for 2024 to 2025 and future years to 2028. This showed uncertainty relating to government funding in the later years of the plan giving rise to significant budget gaps. Paragraph 3.7 of the report set out how much the gaps were dependent upon central government decisions with a potential swing of £9.6 million between the best and worst business rate retention. The council's strategy was to continue to identify and deliver annual savings in anticipation of the future funding review and to get ahead where possible of those financial challenges. The council also held reserves that would provide time to adjust if the worst-case funding scenarios were to materialise.

Appendix C proposed capital investment plans across the medium-term. The proposed capital programme contained a number of already agreed strategic projects, including the council's commitment to achieving net zero by 2030 as well as significant investment plans in the council's operational assets, buildings and commercial estate. The programme was fully funded from a mixture of available reserves, capital receipts balances and prudential borrowing.

The Committee scrutinised the report in detail and asked questions to which comprehensive responses were provided. In particular discussions were held on the projected budget gaps and whether the budget was prudent enough and future proof; the number of exempt papers attached to the report and encouraging the council to review whether papers needed to be exempt to bring more into the public domain; council tax levels; Appendix C - charging points across the district; Appendix D - coin payment machines; industrial units' income/rental and whether there were any future proposals for the Western Way site.

In response to a question raised in relation to the budget proposal of £200k for more staff in the planning department, the Committee was advised that the proposal was for extra capacity in the local plans team, to cover additional requirements from central government and the emerging West Suffolk local plan.

In response to a question raised on the future use of the Olding Road site, Bury St Edmunds, the Cabinet Member for Resources advised that the council was working on proposals which would be presented to Council in due course for all members to consider.

In response to a question raised on Appendix D, reduction of coin payment machines, the Cabinet Member stated that there would always be coin machines in every car park, and when using Ringo, you should not be paying more.

In response to a question raised regarding commercial properties and the suggestion of pitching prices slightly below the market value to encourage take-up rather than standing empty, the Committee was advised that the pricing was based on the local market values which take into account demand in the area.

At the conclusion of the discussions, it was proposed by Councillor Phil Wittam, seconded by Councillor Sue Perry, and with the vote being 10 for and one against, it was:

RECOMMENDED: That

- 1) Cabinet be recommended to include the proposals, as detailed in Section 2 of report number PAS/WS/24/001 and Appendix A (Budget Assumption Changes) in the 2024 to 2025 Revenue Budget.**
- 2) Cabinet be recommended to include the Capital Programme as set out in Appendix C (including annex Ci, Cii and Ciii) to report number PAS/WS/24/001 in the budget setting process.**

233. Exclusion of the press and public

With the vote being unanimous, it was

Resolved:

That, under Section 100(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as prescribed in Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, and indicated against each item and, in all circumstances of the case, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

234. Delivering a Sustainable Medium-Term Budget - EXEMPT Appendices Fi, Fii and Fiii

The meeting moved into private session to allow for the Committee to pose specific questions on the information which related to the Exempt Appendices Fi; Fii and Fiii.

Once the discussion was concluded, the Committee then moved back into the open session of the meeting.

235. Re-admittance of press and public

The press and public were re-admitted to the meeting.

236. Internal Audit Report on Bank Mandate Fraud

The Cabinet Member for Resources presented report number PAS/WS/24/002, which provided information on the bank mandate fraud incident that took place in July 2023. This was a regrettable incident, which the council had learnt lessons from, and procedures had since been strengthened.

Appendix A attached to the report set out what happened, and the actions taken to mitigate the risk of fraud reoccurring whilst omitting specific details which could identify parties involved or provide fraudsters with information that could be useful to them. Specific details had been included for members information in Exempt Appendix B.

This type of bank mandate fraud was targeted at both the public and private sector as well as individuals. The National Crime Agency had stated in their most recent figures that in the year to September 2021 there had been reported losses of around £152 million and over 4,600 individual cases.

The Cabinet Member for Resources wished to reassure the Committee that any changes to how the council worked had been made.

The Committee considered the report in detail and asked questions to which responses were provided.

At the conclusion of the Committee's discussions, the Committee **noted** the contents of the report, subject to the council writing to the bank in question stressing its disappointment in the loss of public money; the banks moral

obligations and that the payment should have been paused, until it had received the appropriate confirmation.

237. Exclusion of the press and public

With the vote being unanimous, it was

Resolved:

That, under Section 100(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as prescribed in Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, and indicated against each item and, in all circumstances of the case, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

238. Internal Audit Report on Bank Mandate Fraud - EXEMPT Appendix B

The meeting moved into private session to allow for the Committee to pose specific questions on the information which related to the Exempt Appendix B.

Once the discussion was concluded, the Committee then moved back into the open session of the meeting.

239. Re-admittance of press and public

The press and public were re-admitted to the meeting.

240. CIPFA Guidance on Audit Committees

The Chair of the Committee presented report number PAS/WS/24/003. With an increased focus on all local authority financial and governance matters including local audit committee arrangements, the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) had issued a new Position Statement on Audit Committees in Local Authorities and Police, followed by some practical guidance.

The Chair had worked with officers to review the guidance against the council's current arrangements for the Committee. The report included a number of proposals set out in paragraphs 2.2 to 2.10 to further strengthen arrangements in key areas of the Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee's activity.

One of the proposals was co-opting non-elected independent members onto the Committee which was covered in the next agenda item (report number PAS/WS/24/004).

The Chair informed the Committee that he supported the report and its approach and proposals to strengthening the work and arrangements for the Committee and sought its support on the proposals.

The committee were also informed that Officers would look at the role of the committee's two sub committees.

The Committee considered the report in detail and asked questions to which responses were provided.

During discussions, some members raised concerns about the suggestion in the CIPFA guidance that members should sit on the committee for no more than two full terms. In response officers advised the council was not suggesting limiting members to two full terms and the current arrangements would continue.

In response to a question raised on why CIPFA was suggesting no more than eight members on the committee as the council's constitution currently allowed for "up to 12 members", officers agreed to raise the issue with CIPFA to find out their reasoning behind having eight members.

It was then proposed by Councillor Peter Armitage, seconded by Councillor Frank Stennett, and with the vote being 10 for and one abstention, it was:

RESOLVED:

That the Committee **endorses** the proposals as set out in paragraphs 2.2 to 2.10 of report number PAS/WS/24/003 to strengthen West Suffolk Council's audit committee arrangements.

[Following the vote taking place, Councillors Andy Neal and Richard Alecock left the meeting at 6.20pm.]

[Following the vote, the Committee took a recess break at 6.20pm.]

241. **Co-opting Non-elected Independent Members**

[The Committee reconvened at 6.25pm.]

The Chair presented report number PAS/WS/24/004, which sought the Committee's agreement to the principle of appointing two non-elected members to the Committee. Whilst the co-opting of independent members was not presently a statutory requirement, it was anticipated that it would be in the future.

Section two of the report set out the approach to co-opting independent members and the next steps were set out in paragraph 2.8. Attached at Appendix A to the report was an example role description for non-elected independent members.

The Committee considered the report and asked questions to which responses were provided.

In response to a question raised as to who the independent members would be answerable to, members were advised that they would be answerable to the Committee.

It was then proposed by Councillor Peter Armitage, seconded by Councillor John Augustine, and with the vote being unanimous, it was:

RESOLVED: That

- 1) The Committee **agrees** to the principle of co-opting two non-elected independent members to the Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee, as part of the current 12 membership of the Committee.
- 2) The Committee **approves** the approach to co-opting independent members as set out Section 2 and the next steps at paragraph 2.8 of report number PAS/WS/24/004.

242. 2023 to 2024 Performance Report (Quarter Three)

The Cabinet Member for Resources presented report number PAS/WS/24/005, which set out the quarter three performance for the period October 2023 to December 2023 and the forecast 2023 to 2024 revenue and capital position.

Attached to the report were a number of appendices as follows:

- Appendix A: Key Performance Indicator (KPIs) Dashboards
- Appendix B: Income and expenditure
- Appendix C: Capital Programme
- Appendix D: Earmarked reserves
- Appendix E: Strategic Risk Register
- Appendix Ei: West Suffolk Risk Management Toolkit
- EXEMPT Appendix F: Aged debt over 90 days
- Appendix G: List of available KPIs
- Appendix H: Environment and Sustainability Reference Group quarterly progress report.

At the last meeting in November 2023 there had been a debate over the number of KPIs being reported and whether these should be reduced to more manageable levels. The Cabinet Member advised that officers were currently working on a review of all the current KPIs, in order for Portfolio Holders to select the suite of indicators to monitor in 2024 to 2025. Members of the Committee were invited to submit suggestions for changes to the KPIs.

The Cabinet Member highlighted a number of KPIs in Quarter three as follows:

Car parking events by town	Following a request by the Committee car parking events by town had been included as an indicator which showed good progress in the post COVID recovery.
Number of Housing Health and Safety Rating System hazards removed or reduced	During 2023 to 2024 to date, there had been greater activity in identifying and resolving housing standards issues, particularly in relation to damp and mould in light of greater focus on the issues.

<p>Anglia Revenue Partnership (ARP) – days taken to process benefits</p>	<p>Whilst the length of time taken to process claims was currently exceeding target, ARP had a plan in place with the aim of meeting the year-end target. Issues faced had been a system issue around Council Tax Reduction claims; and the remaining Housing Benefit claims being complex cases as the Universal Credit migration continued.</p>
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The Cabinet Member for Resources then presented the forecast year-end outturn as at quarter three, which showed an overall balanced position. This result included the release of £572,000 of the planned top-up to the general fund of £800,000. Officers would continue to review the position as the year progressed, but the forecast would mean the general fund would increase to £5.3 million by the year-end. The council was forecasting to spend £19.7 million in the year 2023 to 2024.

The council's reserve position remained strong with a forecast balance of £41.2 million, against a budgeted closing balance of £36.6 million. The majority of the variance related to the timing of expenditure into the next financial year related to capital programme spend. The net under-utilisation was primarily due to savings on borrowing costs and higher interest receivable.

A review of the Strategic Risk Register had taken place in the context of how the council assesses and rates risks. The review had included an initial update to the Risk Management Toolkit which provided a framework for identifying, assessing and rating risks. There were still six risks which still had a high residual risk even mitigation and controls and this was predominantly due to the wider economic and social environment, despite the actions the council had taken. The review of the strategic risks would be ongoing as the council planned to also benchmark its approach to other local authorities.

Attached at Appendix H was a new update from the Environment and Sustainability Reference Group, which reported on the progress the council was making in delivering its environmental and climate change action plans.

The Committee considered the report in detail and asked a number of questions to which responses were provided. In particular discussions were held on the KPI's; the financial forecast summary and the risk register.

In response to a suggestion regarding including new KPIs for staff vacancies and access to social media by the public, officers agreed that these could be included.

Officers also agreed, in response to a suggestion, that the KPIs that were monitored by the Office of Local Government (Oflog) would be highlighted in future dashboards.

A member of the Committee suggested that one approach to dealing with the large number of KPIs would be for the Committee to consider them on a

rolling basis, by topic, but also always to take exception reports on KPIs from the standard suite, that were outside the particular area of focus. Officers would in future include on the dashboards a way of viewing the KPIs by strategic priority.

In response to a question raised on the Risk Register, in particular risk WS12 "Partner / Public Sector Failure" as it was felt there was no mitigation around the avoidance of "cost shunting". The Committee was advised that following the review of the risk register, the risk had moved, but the council was being prudent by still showing it as a red risk. The council was engaging with partners and actions were being taken on limiting any cost shunting.

At the conclusion of the discussions, the Committee:

- **Noted** the forecast 2023 to 2024 revenue and capital positions as detailed in report number PAS/WS/24/005 and attached appendices.
- **Noted** the risk management review process to date.

243. **Treasury Management Report (December 2023)**

The Cabinet Member for Resources presented report number FRS/WS/24/001, which had been considered by the Financial Resilience Sub-Committee on 15 January 2024.

The Council held £55,750,000 of investments as of 31 December 2023. Interest receivable in the first nine months of the financial year amounted to £2,083,152.79 against a budget for the period of £536,250. This has created a budgetary surplus of £1,546,902.79 due to two main reasons;

- the Council holding higher levels of cash balances than anticipated; and
- the rising Bank of England base rate having a knock-on effect on investment returns.

External borrowing as of 31 December 2023 was £9,500,000, a reduction of £250,000 from 1 April 2023 which relates to the repayment plan for the recent PWLB £10m 40-year loan), with the Council's level of internal borrowing being £47,604,200 as of 31 December 2023. The overall borrowing total of both external and internal is expected to increase over the full financial year.

The report also included a summary of the borrowing activity during the period; borrowing strategy and sources of borrowing; borrowing and capital costs – affordability; borrowing and income – proportionality; borrowing and asset yields; treasury management prudential indicators; market information and CIPFA financial resilience index.

Councillor Frank Stennett, a member of the Financial Resilience Sub-Committee advised it had scrutinised the report in detail and asked questions to which comprehensive responses were provided. In scrutinising the report, he informed the Committee that it was clear the council was currently receiving extra revenue due to the interest levels, but at some point, the revenue would start to decline.

The Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee considered the report and asked questions to which responses were provided.

In response to a question raised on the council's capital requirements had increased and also questioned the revenue cost. In response officers agreed to provide a written response relating to the revenue budget interest payable and how much was being set aside for future years.

It was then proposed by Councillor Frank Stennett, seconded by Councillor Phil Wittam, and with the vote being unanimous, it was:

RECOMMENDED:

That subject to the approval of Council, the Treasury Management Report (December 2023) as contained in report number FRS/WS/24/001, be approved.

244. Annual Financial Resilience Management Statement and Investment Strategy Statements (2024 to 2025)

The Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy's (CIPFA) Treasury Management Code of Practice requires that, prior to the start of the financial year that Council formally approves a Treasury Management Policy Statement and Investment Strategy, setting out the Council's treasury management policy and strategy for the forthcoming year.

The Cabinet Member for Resources presented the proposed Treasury Management Strategy Statement 2024 to 2025 was attached as Appendix 1 to Report number: FRS/WS/24/002, along with the Treasury Management Code of Practice at Appendix 2, which had been considered by the Financial Resilience Sub-Committee on 15 January 2024.

It was reported that the only significant change to the Treasury Management Strategy Statement for 2024 to 2025 was the addition of the UK Infrastructure Bank as a source of Borrowing. In relation to the Treasury Management Code of Practice for 2024 to 2025 there were no significant changes.

The report also included additional supporting information on treasury advisors; borrowing strategy; investment strategy counterparty ratings and interest rate projections.

Councillor Frank Stennett, a member of the Financial Resilience Sub-Committee advised it had scrutinised the report in detail and asked questions to which comprehensive responses were provided and recommended the report and recommendations to the Committee.

The Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee considered the report and did not raise any issues.

It was then proposed by Councillor Frank Stennett, seconded by Councillor Phil Wittam and with the vote being unanimous, it was

RECOMMENDED

That:

- 1) Subject to the approval of Cabinet and Council the Treasury Management Strategy Statement 2024 to 2025, attached as Appendix 1 to Report number: FRS/WS/24/002, be approved.**
- 2) Subject to the approval of Cabinet and Council, the Treasury Management Code of Practice, attached as Appendix 2 to Report number: FRS/WS/24/002, be approved.**

245. Work programme update

The Committee received report number: PAS/WS/24/006, which updated members on the current status of its rolling work programme of items for scrutiny during 2024 (Appendix 1).

The Committee considered its work programme, and there being no decision required, the Committee **noted** the update.

246. Exclusion of the Press and Public

See minute numbers 247 and 248 below.

247. 2023 to 2024 Performance Report (Quarter Three) - EXEMPT Appendix F

The Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee made no reference to Exempt Appendix F under report number PAS/WS/24/005, therefore, this item was not held in private session.

248. Treasury Management Report - December 2023 - EXEMPT Appendix 3

The Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee made no reference to Exempt Appendix 3 under report number FRS/WS/24/001, therefore, this item was not held in private session.

The meeting concluded at 7.05pm

Signed by:

Chair

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Ernst and Young (EY) Update on the External Audit of the 2022 to 2023 Financial Statements and Interim Value for Money Report to those Charged with Governance

Report number:	PAS/WS/24/007	
Report to and date(s):	Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee	30 May 2024
Cabinet member:	Councillor Diane Hind Portfolio Holder Resources and Property Email: diane.hind@westsuffolk.gov.uk	
Lead officer:	Rachael Mann Director (Resources and Property) Tel: 01638 719245 Email: rachael.mann@westsuffolk.gov.uk	

Decisions Plan: This item is not required to be included in the Decisions Plan.

Wards impacted: All wards

Recommendation: It is recommended that the Committee:

1. Notes the update on the external audit of the 2022 to 2023 financial statements; and
2. Notes that, at this stage, the auditor has concluded that the council had proper arrangements in place in 2022 to 2023 to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources (Appendix A).

1. Context to this report

- 1.1 Ernst and Young (EY), the council's appointed external auditor, are formally required to report the results of their audit of the 2022 to 2023 financial statements of West Suffolk Council, to those charged with governance. This committee is charged with governance in accordance with powers delegated to it under the council's constitution.
- 1.2 EY are also required to report on the results of the work undertaken to assess the council's arrangements to secure value for money (VFM) in the use of resources.
- 1.3 The purpose of this report is to update members on the audit of the 2022 to 2023 financial statements and, through the attached interim report, explain the work the external auditor has undertaken to assess the Council's value for money arrangements for the period 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023 and highlight any significant weaknesses identified along with recommendations for improvement (see **Appendix A**).
- 1.4 The auditor will consider any new information at the conclusion of the 2022 to 2023 audit and summarise their final view of the value for money arrangements as part of the Auditor's Annual Report.

2. Proposals within this report

- 2.1 The Department for Levelling-up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) has developed measures to address the sector wide delays in local audits, including the introduction of statutory backstop dates for the completion of audits and publication of financial statements. The proposed backstop date for 2022 to 2023 is 30 September 2024.
- 2.2 The most recent audited set of financial statements for West Suffolk Council are those relating to the year 2021 to 2022. The unaudited financial statements for West Suffolk Council relating to 2022 to 2023 were published on the council's website on 31 May 2023 and have been available to EY, as our external auditors, to be audited from that publication date. Although requested for them to do so, EY are not undertaking any core local authority audits for the financial year 2022 to 2023 (except for pension audits).
- 2.3 The focus for EY is to start the planning and delivery of 2023 to 2024 audits, their strategy being to recover audits across their audit clients as a whole for 2023 to 2024, drawing a line on all historical previous audits (for some councils this will be for multiple years, for West Suffolk this relates to the 2022 to 2023 financial statements). As a result of the backstop dates and EY's approach to not undertake any

2022 to 2023 audits, EY are likely to issue a disclaimed and modified opinion on the council's 2022 to 2023 financial statements. As this is through no fault of West Suffolk, this will be made clear in EY's disclaimed and modified opinion when issued later this year. EY are awaiting the formal outcome of the recent DLUHC consultation on local audit delays – link provided in the background report - before issuing any 2022 to 2023 audit reports. EY are, however, continuing to report VFM in line with existing responsibilities as set out in the National Audit Office's Code of Audit Practice (the Code).

- 2.4 The Code requires auditors to provide an annual commentary on the council's arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources (value for money). This commentary must be against the following three specified criteria:
- Financial sustainability – how the council plans and manages its resources to ensure it can continue to deliver its services.
 - Governance – how the council ensures that it makes informed decisions and properly manages its risks.
 - Improving economy, efficiency and effectiveness – how the council uses information about its costs and performance to improve the way it manages and delivers its services.
- 2.5 At the time of this interim report, EY have concluded that the council had proper arrangements in place in 2022 to 2023 to enable it to plan and manage its resources to ensure that it can continue to deliver its services and to make informed decisions and properly manage its risks. A final report is anticipated alongside their anticipated reporting of a disclaimed and modified opinion on the core financial statements later this year.
- 2.6 The issuing of a disclaimed and modified opinion by EY for the financial statements for 2022 to 2023 should not be seen as a negative reflection on the council's financial management or the quality of its draft accounts. It is simply an unintended consequence for West Suffolk Council of the national audit backlog, the proposals to reset the system and EY's approach to not conducting any 2022 to 2023 audits of the financial statements. West Suffolk Council have a strong track record in the delivery of good quality financial statements and supporting working papers as seen in previous external audit reports.

3. Alternative options that have been considered

- 3.1 The audit of the financial statements is governed by the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 and is conducted in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (UK) (ISAs (UK)) and applicable law. Therefore, there are no alternative options.

3.2 EY are West Suffolk’s assigned auditors under the Public Sector Audit Appointments contract. Therefore, no alternative audit provision can be considered.

3.3 West Suffolk have responded to the DLUHC consultation on the audit backlog, suggesting that for those councils that only have the financial year 2022 to 2023 outstanding that a backstop date is not appropriate and that we should continue to have our accounts audited when audit resources are available and accept that these will be delayed but still completed.

4. Consultation and engagement undertaken

4.1 This report and the appendix have been compiled by the Finance team in consultation with external audit.

5. Risks associated with the proposals

5.1 There are no risks associated with considering this report.

6. Implications arising from the proposals

6.1 All implications arising from the report are covered within the report and its associated appendices.

7. Appendices referenced in this report

7.1 **Appendix A** – West Suffolk Council Value for Money Interim Report for the year ended 31 March 2023

8. Background documents associated with this report

8.1 [Addressing the local audit backlog in England: Consultation - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/addressing-the-local-audit-backlog-in-england)

West Suffolk Council

Value for Money Interim Report

Year ended 31 March 2023

05 March 2024

Page 17



Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee
West Suffolk Council
West Suffolk House
Burry St Edmunds
Suffolk
IP33 3YU

05 March 2024

Dear Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee Members

2022/23 Value for Money Interim Report

We are pleased to attach our interim commentary on the Value for Money (VFM) arrangements for West Suffolk Council. This commentary explains the work we have undertaken during the year and highlights any significant weaknesses identified along with recommendations for improvement. The commentary covers our interim findings for audit year 2022/23.

The Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) has worked collaboratively with the FRC, as incoming shadow system leader, and other system partners, to develop measures to address the delay in local audit. The National Audit Office (NAO) issued a consultation on 8 February 2024 seeking views on changes to the Code of Audit Practice (the Code) to support auditors to meet backstop dates and promote more timely reporting of their work on value for money arrangements. The consultation proposes to reduce the scope of the VFM reporting up to and including the 2022/23 financial year. At this stage, we are continuing to report VFM in line with our existing responsibilities as set out in the 2020 Code.

This report is intended solely for the information and use of the Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee and management. It is not intended to be and should not be used by anyone other than these specified parties.

We welcome the opportunity to discuss the contents of this report with you at the Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee meeting on 30 May 2024.

Yours faithfully

David Riglar
Partner
For and on behalf of Ernst & Young LLP
Encl

Contents

01 Executive Summary



02 Value for Money Commentary



03 Appendices



Public Sector Audit Appointments Ltd (PSAA) issued the “Statement of responsibilities of auditors and audited bodies”. It is available from the PSAA website (<https://www.psa.co.uk/auditquality/statement-of-responsibilities/>). The Statement of responsibilities serves as the formal terms of engagement between appointed auditors and audited bodies. It summarises where the different responsibilities of auditors and audited bodies begin and end, and what is to be expected of the audited body in certain areas. The “Terms of Appointment and further guidance (updated July 2021)” issued by the PSAA sets out additional requirements that auditors must comply with, over and above those set out in the National Audit Office Code of Audit Practice (the Code) and in legislation, and covers matters of practice and procedure which are of a recurring nature.

This report is made solely to Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee and Management of West Suffolk Council in accordance with the statement of responsibilities. Our work has been undertaken so that we might state to the Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee and Management of West Suffolk Council those matters we are required to state to them in this report and for no other purpose. To the fullest extent permitted by law we do not accept or assume responsibility to anyone other than the Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee and Management of West Suffolk Council for this report or for the opinions we have formed. It should not be provided to any third-party without our prior written consent.



BOARDROOM



01 Executive Summary

Executive Summary

Purpose

Auditors are required to be satisfied that the Council has made proper arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources. We do not issue a 'conclusion' or 'opinion', but where significant weaknesses are identified we will report by exception in the auditor's opinion on the financial statements. In addition, auditor's provide an annual commentary on arrangements published as part of the Auditor's Annual Report. In doing so, we comply with the requirements of the 2020 Code of Audit Practice (the Code) and Auditor Guidance Note 3 (AGN 03).

Appendix B sets out the Authority responsibilities for value for money, and the Auditor's responsibilities.

The purpose of this interim commentary is to explain the work we have undertaken during the period 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023 and highlight any significant weaknesses identified along with recommendations for improvement. The commentary covers our interim findings for audit year 2022/23.

The Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) has worked collaboratively with the Financial Reporting Council (FRC), as incoming shadow system leader, and other system partners, to develop measures to address the delay in local audit. As part of the NAO consultation issued on 8 February 2024, there is a proposal to reduce the scope of the VFM reporting up to and including the 2022/23 financial year. However, the consultation states that where auditors have begun or already undertaken work that no longer falls under the reduced scope (if agreed once the consultation closes), they may still report on it in accordance with Schedule 4. We are continuing to report VFM in line with our existing responsibilities as set out in the 2020 Code to ensure a smooth transition to the 2023/24 audit year when auditors are required to meet the full Code reporting responsibilities.

The report sets out the following areas which have been assessed up to the point of issuing this interim report:

- Any identified risks of significant weakness, having regard to the three specified reporting criteria;
- An explanation of the planned responsive audit procedures to the significant risks identified;
- Findings to date from our planned procedures; and
- Summary of arrangements over the period covered by this report (Appendix A).

We will summarise our final view of the value for money arrangements as part of the Auditor's Annual Report once the audit report has been issued for 2022/23.

Executive Summary (continued)

Risks of Significant Weakness

In undertaking our procedures to understand the body's arrangements against the specified reporting criteria, we identify whether there are risks of significant weakness which require us to complete additional risk-based procedures. AGN 03 sets out considerations for auditors in completing and documenting their work and includes consideration of:

- our cumulative audit knowledge and experience as your auditor;
- reports from internal audit which may provide an indication of arrangements that are not operating effectively;
- our review of Council committee reports;
- meetings with the relevant Finance Officers;
- information from external sources; and
- evaluation of associated documentation through our regular engagement with Council management and the finance team.

We completed our risk assessment procedures and did not identify any significant weaknesses in the Council's VFM arrangements.

As a result, we have no matters to report by exception at this stage of the audit and we will update our interim reporting as part of issuing the final commentary in the Auditor's Annual Report later in the year.

Executive Summary (continued)

Reporting

Our interim commentary for 2022/23 is set out over pages 10 to 12. The interim commentary on these pages summarises our understanding of the arrangements at the Council based on our evaluation of the evidence obtained in relation to the three reporting criteria (see table below) throughout 2022/23.

Appendix A includes the detailed arrangements and processes underpinning the reporting criteria. These were reported in our 2021/22 Auditor’s Annual Report and have been updated for 2022/23.

In accordance with the NAO’s 2020 Code, we are required to report a commentary against the three specified reporting criteria. The table below sets out the three reporting criteria, whether we identified a risk of significant weakness as part of our planning procedures, and whether, at the time of this interim report, we have concluded that there is a significant weakness in the body’s arrangements.

Page 23

Reporting Criteria	Risks of significant weaknesses in arrangements identified?	Actual significant weaknesses in arrangements identified?
Financial sustainability: How the Council plans and manages its resources to ensure it can continue to deliver its services	No significant risks identified	No significant weakness identified
Governance: How the Council ensures that it makes informed decisions and properly manages its risks	No significant risks identified	No significant weakness identified
Improving economy, efficiency and effectiveness: How the Council uses information about its costs and performance to improve the way it manages and delivers its services	No significant risks identified	No significant weakness identified



Executive Summary (continued)

Independence

The FRC Ethical Standard requires that we provide details of all relationships between Ernst & Young (EY) and the Council, and its members and senior management and its affiliates, including all services provided by us and our network to the Council, its members and senior management and its affiliates, and other services provided to other known connected parties that we consider may reasonably be thought to bear on the our integrity or objectivity, including those that could compromise independence and the related safeguards that are in place and why they address the threats.

There are no relationships from 1 April 2022 to the date of this report, which we consider may reasonably be thought to bear on our independence and objectivity.

EY Transparency Report 2023

Ernst & Young (EY) has policies and procedures that instil professional values as part of firm culture and ensure that the highest standards of objectivity, independence and integrity are maintained.

Details of the key policies and processes in place within EY for maintaining objectivity and independence can be found in our annual Transparency Report which the firm is required to publish by law. The most recent version of this Report is for the year end 30 June 2023:

[EY UK 2023 Transparency Report | EY UK](#)



02 Value for Money Commentary

Value for Money Commentary

Financial Sustainability: How the Council plans and manages its resources to ensure it can continue to deliver its services

No significant weakness identified

The Council is required to have arrangements in place to ensure proper resource management and the primary responsibility for these arrangements and reporting on the design and operation of these arrangements via the annual governance statement, rests with management. In accordance with the NAO's Code the focus of our work should be on the arrangements that the Council is expected to have in place during the year ended 31 March 2023. Our risk assessment did not identify any risk of significant weakness in arrangements to secure financial sustainability.

The Council has an established process of estimating significant financial pressures and the funding sources. This process starts with the preparation of the Strategic Plan which sets out on a high level the key priorities for the Council. Each service area develops a Business Plan for delivery of the Strategic Plan. Both the Strategic and Business Plan play a crucial role in framing the Medium Term Financial Strategy, identifying the necessary resources to deliver the services. Each year the Medium Term Financial Strategy is updated which is achieved through consultation with budget managers in their areas of responsibility. The Medium Term Financial Strategy allocates resources in line with the priorities established in the Council Strategic Plan and Business Plan. The Council have established a framework to identify and respond to financial challenges.

During 2022/23 the Council have continued to manage the impact of Covid on their finances, as well as additional challenges such as the conflict in Ukraine and the cost-of-living crisis linked to inflation. The direct financial impact of the pandemic has lessened from previous years, as the immediate business response to Covid has slowed.

The final outturn on the General Fund for the year was a deficit of £1.044 million, compared to revised budgeted shortfall of £0.474 million. There was a net overspend on services of £0.570 million, where a contribution from General Fund reserve was made to cover the net pressures in year. The net overspend is spread across a number of individual services. This was caused by a variety of reasons, including higher energy prices, general inflation, and slower recovery of income streams post-Covid (particularly income from car parks).

At the 31 March 2023, the Council held the General Fund balance at the approved minimum level, £5 million. The Council also held Earmarked Reserves of £42 million. This provides a strong level of resources to mitigate financial challenges identified in the Medium Term Financial Strategy.

The Council should continue to identify, assess and respond to financial challenges to minimise the use of non recurrent resources like reserves balances.

Conclusion: Based on the work performed, the Council had proper arrangements in place in 2022/23 to enable it to plan and manage its resources to ensure that it can continue to deliver its services.

Value for Money Commentary (continued)

Governance: How the Council ensures that it makes informed decisions and properly manages its risks

No significant weakness identified

The Council is required to have arrangements in place to ensure proper risk management and the primary responsibility for these arrangements and reporting on the design and operation of these arrangements via the annual governance statement, rests with management. In accordance with the NAO's Code the focus of our work should be on the arrangements that the Council is expected to have in place during the year ended 31 March 2023. In 2022/23, we did not identify a risk of significant weakness in governance arrangements.

The Council's performance management framework, as outlined in 2020-2024 Council Strategic Framework, aims to provide a clear picture of the Council's progress in achieving its strategic priorities to its councillors, officers, partners, stakeholders, and residents. Financial performance and key performance indicators are reviewed quarterly by the Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee.

Page 27 The Council maintains a Strategic Risk Register and undertakes a review of its high-level risks to assess their relevance and suitability and make recommendations to the relevant directorate and risk owner. The review is an opportunity to consider all known strategic risks that may impact the Council's ability to deliver services. This is updated regularly by the Risk Management Group.

The development of the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) and Annual Budget Setting Process is in line with the Council's Strategic and Business Plan. Budget holders are consulted for the areas of the budget in which they will be held responsible and accept accountability for their budgets and services to be delivered. The Council reviewed the Budget Report in February 2022, with the Medium Term Financial Strategy updated during the year. Both documents were taken to the Cabinet and Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee before final approval at Full Council, which ensures that all Members are kept well informed of the process.

The Council's Annual Governance Statement sets out the core governance arrangements for the year. The Service Manager (Internal Audit) concluded that for the 2022/23 financial year, reasonable assurance may be awarded over the adequacy and effectiveness of the Council's overall internal control environment.

The Council published their draft 2022/23 financial statements for audit on the 31 May 2023, in line with the Audit and Accounts regulations, and advertised and held an inspection period for members of the public in line with these regulations. We confirm that the 2022/23 draft financial statements were arithmetically correct, agreed to the data in the general ledger, and prepared in line with the content required by the CIPFA Code. The Council has carried out bank reconciliations during the year. Therefore, appropriate arrangements for financial reporting were in place during 2022/23.

Conclusion: Based on the work performed, the Council had proper arrangements in place in 2022/23 to make informed decisions and properly manage its risks.

Value for Money Commentary (continued)

Improving economy, efficiency and effectiveness: How the Council uses information about its costs and performance to improve the way it manages and delivers its services

No significant weakness identified

The Council is required to have arrangements in place to ensure economy, efficiency and effectiveness, and the responsibility for these arrangements and reporting on the design and operation of these arrangements via the annual governance statement, rests with management. In accordance with the NAO's Code the focus of our work should be on the arrangements that the Council is expected to have in place during the year ended 31 March 2023. In 2022/23, we did not identify a risk of significant weakness in arrangements in place to ensure economy, efficiency and effectiveness.

We did not identify any weaknesses in the Council's procurement procedures in 2022/23. The Council has a dedicated procurement team that manages the commissioning and procurement of contracts throughout the Council. The Council has a procurement manager who is trained and experienced to ensure that procurement is delivered in accordance with relevant legislation, professional standards and internal policies. Significant procurement activities are monitored through budget reports provided by specifically assigned project managers.

The Council has a culture of engaging with significant partnerships through a wider public sector network, in particular governance boards and regular management meetings. These boards monitor key performance matters and assess delivery against objectives. Partnerships include Anglia Revenue Partnership (ARP), which performance is monitored and considered separately at the ARP Joint Committee. The Council has representatives sitting as Board Directors in Barley Homes (wholly owned subsidiary). Periodic financial reporting of Barley Homes is regularly reviewed by the Council. Quarterly progress review is reported to the Shareholder Advisory Group (consists of elected members, supported by the Section 151 and Monitoring officers). The Group also meets regularly with the Directors of the Barley Homes to scrutinise the performance of the company and to represent the interests of the shareholders.

The Council Strategic framework sets out the Council's ambitions and priorities. The Council's performance framework uses a mix of operational, financial, staff performance, customer feedback and contextual information to build a picture of progress in achieving the vision and objectives. Achievement of priorities and progress against intended outcomes are reported to Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee (quarterly basis), as well as Council's Annual Report.

The Council has an Overview and Scrutiny Committee that has the role to evaluate decisions and actions related to Council's discharge of functions and other service providers in West Suffolk.

Conclusion: Based on the work performed, the Council had proper arrangements in place in 2022/23 to enable it to plan and manage its resources to ensure that it can continue to deliver its services.



03 Appendices

Appendix A - Summary of arrangements

Financial Sustainability

We set out below the arrangements for the financial sustainability criteria covering the year 2022/23.

Reporting Sub-Criteria

Findings

How the body ensures that it identifies all the significant financial pressures that are relevant to its short and medium-term plans and builds these into them

The Council prepares a Strategic Plan outlining the key priorities for the Council. Each service area develops a Business Plan for delivery of the Strategic Plan. The Strategic Plan and Business Plan are used in the development of the Medium Term Financial Strategy which identifies the required resources to deliver services. Each year the Medium Term Financial Strategy is updated with a subsequent period. This is achieved through consultation with budget managers in their areas of responsibility.

How the body plans to bridge its funding gaps and identifies achievable savings

Funding gaps are identified as part of the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) and Annual Budget Setting Process. The Council engages in the use of financial levers through changes in council tax, business rates, and service fees to bridge these gaps. Directors assign budget holders responsibility for areas of the budget aligned with the decision making responsibility for that area of expenditure.

MTFS for 2022/23 to 2025/26 reported a budget gap of £5.850 million for the medium term period. The Council's budget delivery plan and response to the financial challenges and opportunities continue to follow 6 key themes which includes:

- (1) Aligning resources to the Council's strategic framework and essential services;
- (2) Sharing services and transformation of service delivery;
- (3) Behaving more commercially;
- (4) Considering new funding models;
- (5) Encouraging the use of digital forms for customer access;
- (6) Taking advantage of new forms of local government finance.

Plans for anticipated savings and initiatives required to deliver a sustainable and balanced budget is presented to the Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee.

Appendix A - Summary of arrangements (continued)

Financial Sustainability (continued)

We set out below the arrangements for the financial sustainability criteria covering the year 2022/23.

Reporting Sub-Criteria

Findings

How the body plans finances to support the sustainable delivery of services in accordance with strategic and statutory priorities

The Medium Term Financial Strategy allocates resources in line with the priorities established in the Council Strategic Framework and essential services. The Annual Budget Setting Process considers where expenditure can be scaled back or identification of opportunities for generation of income. This includes considerations to the Council's commitment to achieving net zero by 2030, in line with "Investing in the West Suffolk Council Net Zero 2030 Emissions Target".

How the body ensures that its financial plan is consistent with other plans such as workforce, capital, investment, and other operational planning which may include working with other local public bodies as part of a wider system

The Council prepares a Strategic Plan outlining the key priorities for the Council. Each service area develops a Business Plan for delivery of the Strategic Plan. The Strategic Plan and Business Plan are used in the development of the Medium Term Financial Strategy.

How the body identifies and manages risks to financial resilience, e.g. unplanned changes in demand, including challenge of the assumptions underlying its plans

The Council maintains a Strategic Risk Register that identifies the potential risk, level of risk based on probability and impact, owners of the risk, and actions to mitigate the risk. The Council maintains a treasury management strategy to safeguard against liquidity shortages and undertakes going concern assessment as part of preparation of the Statement of Accounts.

Appendix A - Summary of arrangements (continued)

Governance

We set out below the arrangements for the governance criteria covering the year 2022/23.

Reporting Sub-Criteria

Findings

How the body monitors and assesses risk and how the body gains assurance over the effective operation of internal controls, including arrangements to prevent and detect fraud

Risk reporting is undertaken as part of the balanced scorecard approach to performance management. These scorecards are reviewed monthly by the Leadership team and quarterly by the Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee. Assurance over the operation of internal controls is achieved through an internal audit function who use a risk-based approach to identify the on-going audit programme. The Council has also established counter-fraud and whistle blowing policies to facilitate a culture of incident reporting.

Page 32

How the body approaches and carries out its annual budget setting process

The Section 151 Officer prepares and submits the annual budget to the Council on the basis of information provided by the West Suffolk Council Leadership team and budget holders. Consideration is given to the existing approved Medium Term Financial Plan and updates are made as necessary for assumption, changes in existing delivery plans, and changes in the macro environment. Budget holders are consulted for the areas of the budget in which they will be held responsible and accept accountability for their budgets and services to be delivered. The budget is presented to the Council for approval.

How the body ensures effective processes and systems are in place to ensure budgetary control; to communicate relevant, accurate and timely management information (including non-financial information where appropriate); supports its statutory financial reporting requirements; and ensures corrective action is taken where needed

Directors are responsible for controlling income and expenditure based on the budget approved by the Council. The directors further delegate the monitoring of the budget to budget holders directly responsible for the decision making process that commits expenditure. Budget monitoring is an on going process with quarterly performance reporting to the Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee.

The Section 151 Officer was responsible for the preparation of the Statement of Accounts. The accounts and its disclosures were produced in accordance with the CIPFA code and published in compliance with the relevant legislation.

Appendix A - Summary of arrangements (continued)

Governance (continued)

We set out below the arrangements for the governance criteria covering the year 2022/23.

Reporting Sub-Criteria

How the body ensures it makes properly informed decisions, supported by appropriate evidence and allowing for challenge and transparency. This includes arrangements for effective challenge from those charged with governance/audit committee

Findings

The Council consults with members of the public through a number of avenues from workshops, telephone calls, social media channels and the website, to gauge public opinion issues. Non-cabinet member and the public are also permitted to speak at meetings on any matter of the agenda. The Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee is comprised of appropriately skilled and experienced members and have clear terms of reference which emphasise the Committee's role in providing effective challenge. After considering the CIPFA Guidance on the Role of the Audit Committee, the Council is considering the appointment of an Independent Person on the Joint Audit Scrutiny Committee.

Page 33

How the body monitors and ensures appropriate standards, such as meeting legislative/regulatory requirements and standards in terms of officer or member behaviour (such as gifts and hospitality or declarations/conflicts of interests)

The Council has policies and procedures in place to ensure that staff operate in accordance with relevant legislative and regulatory requirements as set out in the Constitution under Section 5 for Members, Officers, and Employees. The Council has an established complaints process with complaints being addressed by the Monitoring Officer. Any gifts and hospitality received are declared under the relevant members name and published on the website. Additionally, all offers of gifts and hospitality of whether accepted or not, must be recorded within 28 days. Reminders are sent monthly to members to update declarations.

Appendix A - Summary of arrangements (continued)

Improving economy, efficiency and effectiveness

We set out below the arrangements for improving economy, efficiency and effectiveness criteria covering the year 2022/23.

Reporting Sub-Criteria	Findings
How financial and performance information has been used to assess performance to identify areas for improvement	The Council appoints a Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee that monitors the performance of the council with consideration of performance indicators, financial information, reports from external inspections, audit reports, and business plans. On a quarterly basis the Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee receives Performance Reporting from the Section 151 Officer.
How the body evaluates the services it provides to assess performance and identify areas for improvement	The Council identifies priorities in its Strategic Framework to assess the performance in achievement of the stated strategic initiatives. These measures are reported on a quarterly basis to the Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee. In preparation of the Annual Budget the Council considers adjustments to the services provided to achieved a balanced budget through reduction of service or identification of new income generation streams. The Council furthers uses a balanced score card approach.
How the body ensures it delivers its role within significant partnerships, engages with stakeholders it has identified, monitors performance against expectations, and ensures action is taken where necessary to improve	Partnership arrangements take the form of Service Level Agreements which are reviewed as part of the budget setting process. The Council maintains a formal protocol on how it enters into funding arrangements with voluntary and third sector organisations. Council partnerships include Anglia Revenue Partnership (ARP) which is monitored through ARP Working Party and performance is reported quarterly to Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee. Barley Homes has Council's representatives sitting as Board Directors. The governance arrangements for Barley Homes are well established with quarterly reviews of progress made to the Shareholder Advisory Group. The group consists of elected members, supported by the Section 151 and Monitoring officers. The group meets regularly with the directors of the company to scrutinise the performance of the company and to represent the interests of the shareholders
How the body ensures that commissioning and procuring services is done in accordance with relevant legislation, professional standards and internal policies, and how the body assesses whether it is realising the expected benefits	The Council employs a procurement strategy through its Contract Procedure Rules, Modern Slavery Statement, Equality Statement, and Strategic Framework. The Council has a qualified procurement manager who assesses the appropriateness of significant procurement contracts against laws and regulations. Significant procurement activities are monitored through budget reports provided by specifically assigned project managers.

Appendix B - Value for Money

Council responsibilities for value for money

The Council is required to maintain an effective system of internal control that supports the achievement of its policies, aims and objectives while safeguarding and securing value for money from the public funds and other resources at its disposal.

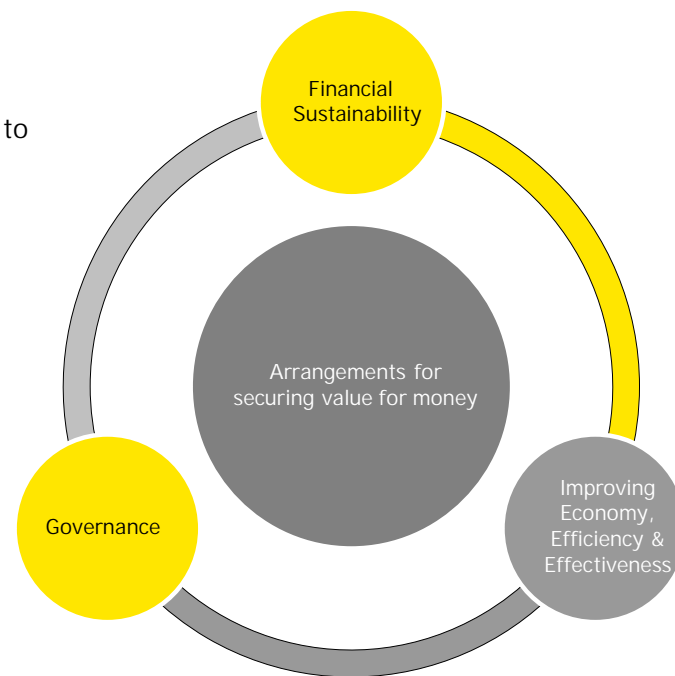
As part of the material published with the financial statements, the Council is required to bring together commentary on the governance framework and how this has operated during the period in a governance statement. In preparing the governance statement, the Council tailors the content to reflect its own individual circumstances, consistent with the requirements of the relevant accounting and reporting framework and having regard to any guidance issued in support of that framework. This includes a requirement to provide commentary on arrangements for securing value for money from the use of resources.

Auditor Responsibilities

Under the NAO Code of Audit Practice we are required to consider whether the Council has put in place 'proper arrangements' to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness on its use of resources. The Code requires the auditor to design their work to provide them with sufficient assurance to enable them to report to the Council a commentary against specified reporting criteria (see below) on the arrangements the Council has in place to secure value for money through economic, efficient and effective use of its resources for the relevant period.

The specified reporting criteria are:

- ▶ Financial sustainability - How the Council plans and manages its resources to ensure it can continue to deliver its services.
- ▶ Governance - How the Council ensures that it makes informed decisions and properly manages its risks.
- ▶ Improving economy, efficiency and effectiveness - How the Council uses information about its costs and performance to improve the way it manages and delivers its services.



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ED None

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Ernst and Young (EY) Presentation of External Audit Plan and Fees 2023 to 2024

Report number:	PAS/WS/24/008	
Report to and date(s):	Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee	30 May 2024
Cabinet member:	Councillor Diane Hind Portfolio Holder Resources and Property Email: diane.hind@westsuffolk.gov.uk	
Lead officer:	Rachael Mann Director (Resources and Property) Tel: 01638 719245 Email: rachael.mann@westsuffolk.gov.uk	

Decisions Plan: **There is no requirement to include in the Decisions Plan.**

Wards impacted: **All wards.**

Recommendation: **It is recommended that:**

- 1. Members note EY’s Audit Planning Report for the year ended 31 March 2024.**

1. Context to this report

1.1 The Council's appointed external auditors, Ernst and Young (EY), are required to provide an audit plan (attached at **Appendix A**) which covers the work they plan to perform in order to provide the Council with:

- An audit opinion on whether the financial statements of the Council give a true and fair view of the financial position at 31 March 2024 and of the income and expenditure for the year then ended.
- Commentary on the Council's arrangements to secure value for money in its use of resources.

2. Proposals within this report

2.1 When planning the audit EY take into account several key inputs:

- Strategic, operational and financial risks relevant to the financial statements.
- Developments in financial reporting and auditing standards.
- The quality of systems and processes.
- Changes in the business and regulatory environment.
- Management's views on all of the above.

2.2 Sections 2 and 3 of Appendix A, summarise EY's assessment of the key risks which drive the development of an effective audit for the Council, and outlines their planned audit strategy in response to those risks. Identification of these risks does not mean that these practices have actually taken place. Officers will be working with EY over the coming months to ensure that these risks are managed and where possible to come to an agreement over their treatment prior to the issuing of the Audit Results Report, and Audit Opinion.

Local audit backlog

2.3 The Department for Levelling-up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) has developed measures to clear the current sector wide backlog in local audits. They are consulting on proposals for statutory backstop dates for the completion of audits and publication of financial statements. The proposed backstop date for historic audits up to and including 2022 to 2023 is 30 September 2024 and for 2023 to 2024 is 31 May 2025.

2.4 Although requested for them to do so, EY are not undertaking any core local authority audits for the financial year 2022 to 2023 (except for pension audits). The focus for EY is to start the planning and delivery of 2023 to 2024 audits, their strategy being to recover audits across their audit clients as a whole for 2023 to 2024, drawing a line on all historical previous audits. As a result of the backstop dates and

EY's approach, EY are likely to issue a disclaimed and modified opinion on the council's 2022 to 2023 financial statements, through no fault of West Suffolk and this will be made clear in EY's disclaimed and modified opinion when issued later this year. This will impact the audit procedures needed to gain assurance on the 2023 to 2024 financial statements. The attached Audit Plan highlights those areas where EY consider it most likely that the proposed measures will impact their audit approach and scope.

Audit timeline

- 2.5 Set out in Section 7 of Appendix A is EY's provisional timeline for delivering the 2023 to 2024 audit. It is expected that the Audit Results Report will be available by November 2024 with the Audit Opinion and Auditor's Annual Report being issued in December 2024.

Audit fees

- 2.6 The fees for carrying out this work for 2023 to 2024 are set out on page 49 of the Audit Plan at Appendix A. A scale fee of £199,671 has been set by Public Sector Audit Appointments (PSAA). However, the final fee may include additional charges (variations) which will be discussed with management and will also need to be agreed by PSAA. Appendix A gives details of the factors which may result in fee variations being charged to the council.

3. Alternative options that have been considered

- 3.1 The audit of the financial statements is governed by the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 and is conducted in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (UK) (ISAs (UK)) and applicable law. Therefore, there are no alternative options.

4. Consultation and engagement undertaken

- 4.1 This report and the appendix have been compiled by the Finance team in consultation external audit.

5. Risks associated with the proposals

- 5.1 The assessment of the key strategic or operational risks and the financial statement risks facing the Council have been identified by EY through their knowledge of the organisation's operations, and through discussion with members and senior officers.

6. Implications arising from the proposals

- 6.1 All implications arising from the proposals are covered within the report and its associated appendices.

7. Appendices referenced in this report

- 7.1 **Appendix A** – West Suffolk Council Audit planning report: Year ended 31 March 2024

8. Background documents associated with this report

- 8.1 None

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West Suffolk Council
Audit planning report

Year ended 31 March 2024

3 May 2024

Page 43





Performance & Audit Scrutiny Committee
West Suffolk Council
West Suffolk House
Bury St Edmunds
Suffolk
IP33 37U

03 May 2024

Dear Performance & Audit Scrutiny Committee

Audit planning report Year ended 31 March 2024

Attached is our audit planning report for the forthcoming meeting of the Performance & Audit Scrutiny Committee. The purpose of this report is provide the Performance & Audit Scrutiny Committee of West Suffolk Council (the Council) with a basis to review our proposed audit approach and scope for the 2023/24 audit, in accordance with the requirements of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014, the National Audit Office's 2020 Code of Audit Practice, the Statement of Responsibilities issued by Public Sector Audit Appointments (PSAA) Ltd, auditing standards and other professional requirements, but also to ensure that our audit is aligned with the Committee's service expectations.

This report summarises our assessment of the key issues which drive the development of an effective audit for the Council. We have aligned our audit approach and scope with these. The report also considers the likely impact of Government proposals to clear the backlog in local audit and put the local audit system on a sustainable footing. The joint statement on the update to proposals to clear the backlog and embed timely audit recognises that timely, high-quality financial reporting and audit of local bodies is a vital part of our democratic system. Not only does it support good decision making by local bodies, by enabling them to plan effectively, make informed decisions and manage their services, it ensures transparency and accountability to local taxpayers. All stakeholders have a critical role to play in addressing the audit backlog.

The Performance & Audit Scrutiny Committee, as the Council's body charged with governance, has an essential role in ensuring that it has assurance over both the quality of the draft financial statements prepared by management and the Council's wider arrangements to support the delivery of a timely and efficient audit. Where this is not done it will impact the level of resource needed to discharge our responsibilities. We will consider and report on the adequacy of the Council's external financial reporting arrangements and the effectiveness of the Performance & Audit Scrutiny Committee in fulfilling its role in those arrangements as part of our assessment of Value for Money arrangements, and consider the use of other statutory reporting powers to draw attention to weaknesses in those arrangements where we consider it necessary to do so.

(continued)

We draw Performance & Audit Scrutiny Committee members and officers attention to the Public Sector Audit Appointment Limited's Statement of Responsibilities (paragraphs 26-28) which clearly set out what is expected of audited bodies in preparing their financial statements (see Appendix A).

This report is intended solely for the information and use of the Performance & Audit Scrutiny Committee, and Management, and is not intended to be and should not be used by anyone other than these specified parties. We welcome the opportunity to discuss this report with you on 30 May 2024 as well as understand whether there are other matters which you consider may influence our audit.

Yours faithfully

David Riglar
Partner
For and on behalf of Ernst & Young LLP
Enc

Contents

01

Overview of our 2023/24 audit strategy



02

Audit risks



03

Value for Money risks



04

Audit Materiality



05

Scope of our audit



Page 46



06

Audit team



07

Audit timeline



08

Independence



09

Appendices

Public Sector Audit Appointments Ltd (PSAA) issued the "Statement of responsibilities of auditors and audited bodies". It is available from the PSAA website (<https://www.psa.co.uk/managing-audit-quality/statement-of-responsibilities-of-auditors-and-audited-bodies/statement-of-responsibilities-of-auditors-and-audited-bodies-from-2023-24-audits/>). The Statement of responsibilities serves as the formal terms of engagement between appointed auditors and audited bodies. It summarises where the different responsibilities of auditors and audited bodies begin and end, and what is to be expected of the audited body in certain areas. The "Terms of Appointment and further guidance (updated July 2021)" issued by the PSAA (<https://www.psa.co.uk/managing-audit-quality/terms-of-appointment/terms-of-appointment-and-further-guidance-1-july-2021/>) sets out additional requirements that auditors must comply with, over and above those set out in the National Audit Office Code of Audit Practice (the Code) and in legislation, and covers matters of practice and procedure which are of a recurring nature.

This report is made solely to the Performance & Audit Scrutiny Committee and Management of West Suffolk Council. Our work has been undertaken so that we might state to the Performance & Audit Scrutiny Committee and Management of West Suffolk Council those matters we are required to state to them in this report and for no other purpose. To the fullest extent permitted by law we do not accept or assume responsibility to anyone other than the Performance & Audit Scrutiny Committee and Management of West Suffolk Council for this report or for the opinions we have formed. It should not be provided to any third-party without our prior written consent.



Page 47

01

Overview of our 2023/24 audit strategy

Overview of our 2023/24 audit strategy

Context for the 2023/24 audit - Department for Levelling-up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) and Financial Reporting Council (FRC) measures to address local audit delays

Timely, high-quality financial reporting and audit of local bodies is a vital part of our democratic system. It supports good decision making by local bodies and ensures transparency and accountability to local taxpayers. There is general agreement that the backlog in the publication of audited financial statements by local bodies has grown to an unacceptable level and there is a clear recognition that all stakeholders in the sector will need to work together to address this. DLUHC has worked collaboratively with the FRC, as incoming shadow system leader, and other system partners, to develop measures to clear the backlog. The proposals, which have been developed to maintain auditor independence and enable compliance with International Standards on Auditing (UK) (ISAs (UK)), consist of three phases:

- ▶ Phase 1: Reset involving clearing the backlog of historic audit opinions up to and including financial year 2022/23 by 30 September 2024.
- ▶ Phase 2: Recovery from Phase 1 in a way that does not cause a recurrence of the backlog by using backstop dates to allow assurance to be rebuilt over multiple audit cycles.
- ▶ Phase 3: Reform involving addressing systemic challenges in the local audit system and embedding timely financial reporting and audit.

To support the further development and testing of the measures, consultations are taking place to receive further feedback and inform the decision on how to proceed. Specifically:

DLUHC has launched a consultation on changes to the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 to insert statutory backstop dates for historic financial statements and for the financial years 2023/24 to 2027/28.

- ▶ The National Audit Office (NAO) has launched a consultation on amending the Code of Audit Practice to :
 - ▶ Require auditors to issue audit opinions according to statutory backstop data for historic audits, and place specific duties on auditors to co-operate during the handover period for the new PSAA contract for the appointment of local authority auditors covering the years 2023/24 to 2027/28.
 - ▶ Allow auditors to produce a single value for money commentary for the period to 2022/23 and use statutory reporting powers to draw significant matters to the attention of councils and residents.
- ▶ The Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) has launched consultation on temporary changes to the accounting code for preparation of the financial statements. The proposed temporary changes to the financial reporting framework have an impact on both how the financial statements are prepared and our audit procedures necessary to gain assurance.

As a result of the system wide implementation of backstop dates it is likely that we will qualify disclaim the opinion on the Council's 2022/23 accounts. The proposed disclaimer of the Council's 2022/23 accounts will impact both the audit procedures we need to undertake to gain assurance on the 2023/24 financial statements and the form of our audit report in 2023/24 and subsequent years during the recovery phase.

The changes proposed by the consultations therefore will have a significant impact on both the scope of the 2023/24 audit and our assessment of risk. We will continue to provide updates to the Performance & Audit Scrutiny Committee as the audit progresses and our final assessment on the scope and nature of procedures we will undertake becomes clearer. We have highlighted those areas where we consider it most likely that the proposed measures will impact our audit approach and scope as part of this Audit Planning Report.



Overview of our 2023/24 audit strategy

Responsibilities of Council management and those charged with governance

For the planned measures to be successful and the current backlog to be addressed it is vital that all stakeholders properly discharge their responsibilities.

The Council's Section 151 Officer is responsible for preparing the statement of accounts in accordance with proper practices and confirming they give a true and fair view of the financial position at the reporting date and of its expenditure and income for the year ended 31 March 2024. To allow the audit to be completed on a timely and efficient basis it is essential that the financial statements are supported by high quality working papers and audit evidence and that Council resources are readily available to support the audit process, within agreed deadlines. The Performance & Audit Scrutiny Committee, as the Council's body charged with governance, has an essential role in ensuring that it has assurance over both the quality of the draft financial statements prepared by management and the Council's wider arrangements to support the delivery of a timely and efficient audit. Where this is not done, we will:

- ▶ Consider and report on the adequacy of the Council's external financial reporting arrangements as part of our assessment of Value for Money arrangements.
- ▶ Consider the use of other statutory reporting powers to draw attention to weaknesses in Council financial reporting arrangements where we consider it necessary to do so.

Seek a fee variation for the cost of additional resources needed to discharge our responsibilities. We have set out this and other factors that will lead to a fee variation at Appendix B of this report together with, at Appendix A, paragraphs 26-28 of PSAA's Statement of Responsibilities which clearly set out what is expected of audited bodies in preparing their financial statements.

Impact the availability of audit resource available to complete the audit work in advance of any applicable backstop dates.

Overview of our 2023/24 audit strategy

The following 'dashboard' summarises the significant accounting and auditing matters outlined in this report. It seeks to provide the Performance & Audit Scrutiny Committee with an overview of our initial risk identification for the upcoming audit and any changes in risks identified in the current year.

Audit risks and areas of focus

Risk/area of focus	Risk identified	Change from PY	Details
Misstatement due to fraud or error	Fraud risk	No change in risk or focus	There is a risk that the financial statements as a whole are not free from material misstatement whether caused by fraud or error. We perform mandatory procedures regardless of specifically identified fraud risks.
Inappropriate capitalisation of revenue expenditure	Fraud risk	No change in risk or focus	Under ISA 240 there is a presumed risk that revenue may be misstated due to improper revenue recognition. In the public sector, this requirement is modified by Practice Note 10 issued by the Financial Reporting Council, which states that auditors should also consider the risk that material misstatements may occur by the manipulation of expenditure recognition. We have assessed the risk is most likely to occur through the inappropriate capitalisation of revenue expenditure.
Valuation of Council's solar farm asset	Significant risk	No change in risk or focus	The fair value of the Solar Farm represent significant balances in the Council's accounts. The valuation is subject to estimation changes, impairment reviews and depreciation charges. Management is required to make material judgemental inputs and apply estimation techniques to calculate the year-end balances recorded in the balance sheet. The current volatility in the energy market which is resulting in significantly higher energy costs will have an impact on the power price forecasting, this being one of the key judgements used in the valuation of the solar farm. The impact of this judgement will potentially be material and it is therefore important that the most appropriate and relevant power price forecast is used in the solar farms valuation.
Valuation of Land and Buildings	Inherent risk	No change in risk or focus	The valuation of land and buildings represent significant balances in the Council's accounts and are subject to valuation changes, impairment reviews and depreciation charges. Management is required to make material judgemental inputs and apply estimation techniques to calculate the year-end balances recorded in the balance sheet. ISAs (UK and Ireland) 500 and 540 require us to undertake procedures on the use of management experts and the assumptions underlying fair value estimates.

Overview of our 2023/24 audit strategy

The following 'dashboard' summarises the significant accounting and auditing matters outlined in this report. It seeks to provide the Performance & Audit Scrutiny Committee with an overview of our initial risk identification for the upcoming audit and any changes in risks identified in the current year.

Audit risks and areas of focus

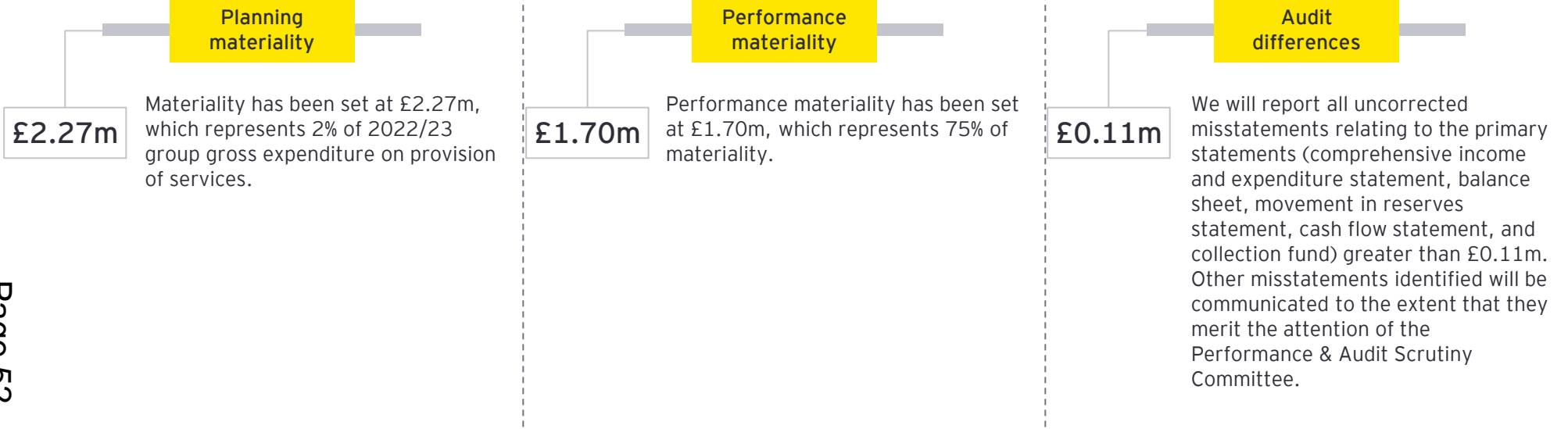
Risk/area of focus	Risk identified	Change from PY	Details
Pension Valuation	Inherent risk	No change in risk or focus	<p>The Local Authority Accounting Code of Practice and IAS19 require the Council to make extensive disclosures within its financial statements regarding its membership of the Local Government Pension Scheme.</p> <p>Accounting for this scheme involves significant estimation and judgement and therefore management engages an actuary to undertake the calculations on their behalf. ISAs (UK) 500 and 540 require us to undertake procedures on the use of management experts and the assumptions underlying fair value estimates.</p>
Implementation of IFRS 16 Leases	Area of Focus	New area of focus	<p>IFRS 16 Leases introduces a number of significant changes which go beyond accounting technicalities. These changes have the potential to impact on the procurement processes as more information becomes available on the real cost of leases. The key accounting impact is that assets and liabilities in relation to significant lease arrangements previously accounted for as operating leases will need to be recognised on the balance sheet.</p> <p>IFRS 16 requires all substantial leases to be accounted for using the acquisition approach, recognising the rights acquired to use an asset. IFRS 16 does not come into effect for local authority until 1 April 2024. However, Officers should be acting now to assess the Council's leasing positions and secure the required information to ensure the Council will be fully compliant with the 2024/25 Code.</p>

Page 51

The outcome of consultation on the planned measures to address local audit delays and related proposed temporary changes to CIPFA's Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting are likely to impact our assessment of audit risks and our response to them. We will continue to keep the Performance & Audit Scrutiny Committee updated on our assessment of any changes to audit risk as this becomes clearer.

Overview of our 2023/24 audit strategy

Group Materiality

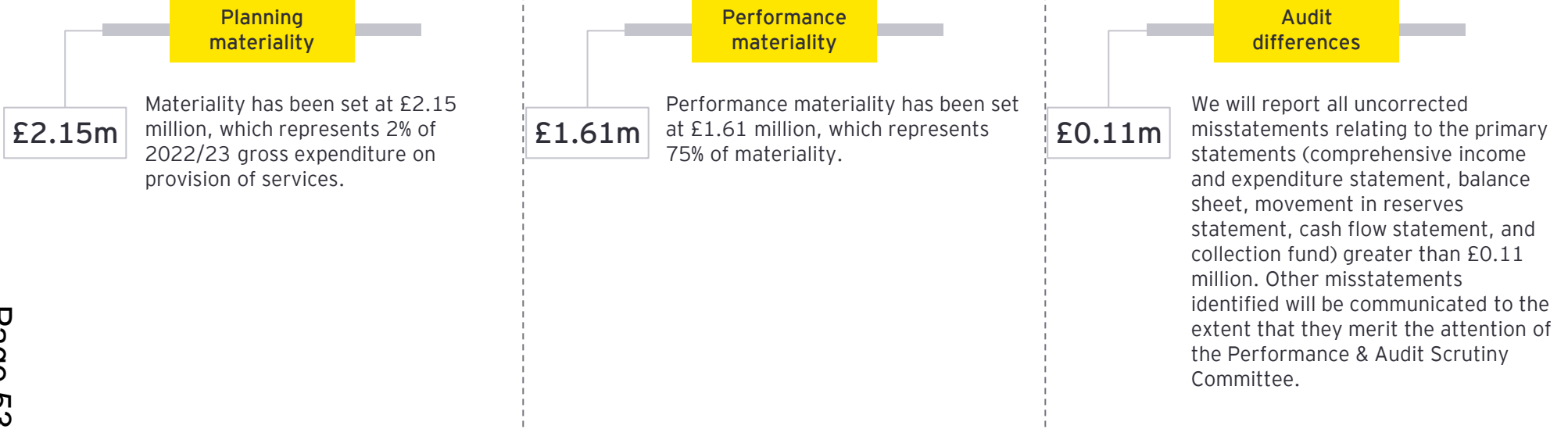


Page 52

The outcome of consultation on the planned measures to address local audit delays and the likely issue of a disclaimer on the Council's 2022/23 financial statements and any guidance subsequently issued may continue to impact on our assessment of materiality for the 2023/24 audit. We will keep the Performance & Audit Scrutiny Committee updated on any changes to materiality levels as the audit progresses.

Overview of our 2023/24 audit strategy

Council Materiality



Page 53

The outcome of consultation on the planned measures to address local audit delays and the likely issue of a disclaimer on the Council's 2022/23 financial statements and any guidance subsequently issued may continue to impact on our assessment of materiality for the 2023/24 audit. We will keep the Performance & Audit Scrutiny Committee updated on any changes to materiality levels as the audit progresses.



Overview of our 2023/24 audit strategy

Audit scope

This Audit planning report covers the work that we plan to perform to provide you with:

- ▶ Our audit opinion on whether the financial statements of the Council give a true and fair view of the financial position as at 31 March 2024 and of the income and expenditure for the year then ended; and
- ▶ Our commentary on your arrangements to secure value for money in your use of resources for the relevant period. We include further details on VFM in Section 3.

We will also review and report to the National Audit Office (NAO), to the extent and in the form required by them, on the Council's Whole of Government Accounts return.

Our audit will also include the mandatory procedures that we are required to perform in accordance with applicable laws and auditing standards.

When planning the audit we take into account several key inputs:

- ▶ Strategic, operational and financial risks relevant to the financial statements;
- ▶ Developments in financial reporting and auditing standards;
- ▶ The quality of systems and processes;
- ▶ Changes in the business and regulatory environment; and,
- ▶ Management's views on all of the above.

By considering these inputs, our audit is focused on the areas that matter and our feedback is more likely to be relevant to the Council.

Taking the above into account, and as articulated in this Audit planning report, our professional responsibilities require us to independently assess the risks associated with providing an audit opinion and undertake appropriate procedures in response to those risks. Our Terms of Appointment with PSAA allow them to vary the fee dependent on "the auditors assessment of risk and the work needed to meet their professional responsibilities". Therefore to the extent any of these or any other risks are relevant in the context of the Council's audit, we set those within this Audit planning report and we will continue to discuss these with management as to the impact on the scale fee.



Overview of our 2023/24 audit strategy

Audit scope (Cont.)

Effects of climate-related matters on financial statements

Public interest in climate change is increasing. We are mindful that climate-related risks may have a long timeframe and therefore while risks exist, the impact on the current period financial statements may not be immediately material to the Council. It is, nevertheless, important to understand the relevant risks to make this evaluation. In addition, understanding climate-related risks may be relevant in the context of qualitative disclosures in the notes to the financial statements and value for money arrangements.

We make inquiries regarding climate-related risks on every audit as part of understanding the entity and its environment. As we re-evaluate our risk assessments throughout the audit, we continually consider the information that we have obtained to help us assess the level of inherent risk.

Audit scope and approach

We intend to take a substantive audit approach.

The Government proposals to re-establish the local authority framework on a more sustainable basis and the outcome of the related consultations are likely to have an impact on the scope of the audit. In particular, where we do not have assurance spanning a number of historic financial years, this is likely to have an impact on our assessment of materiality and our ability to issue an unmodified opinion early in the recovery phase. We draw your attention to the audit scope section 5 of this audit plan where we set out our current understanding of some of the likely impact of the proposals on our scope and approach for your 2023/24 audit. We will continue to provide updates on the impact of these changes to the Performance & Audit Scrutiny Committee where necessary to do so.

Overview of our 2023/24 audit strategy

Value for Money

We are required to consider whether the Council has made 'proper arrangements' to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness on its use of resources.

Planning on value for money and the associated risk assessment is focused on gathering sufficient evidence to enable us to document our evaluation of the Council's arrangements, to enable us to prepare a commentary under three reporting criteria. This includes identifying and reporting on any significant weaknesses in those arrangements and making appropriate recommendations.

We will provide a commentary on the Council's arrangements against three reporting criteria:

- ▶ Financial sustainability - How the Council plans and manages its resources to ensure it can continue to deliver its services;
- ▶ Governance - How the Council ensures that it makes informed decisions and properly manages its risks; and
- ▶ Improving economy, efficiency and effectiveness - How the Council uses information about its costs and performance to improve the way it manages and delivers its services.

The commentary on the Council's value for money arrangements will be included in the Auditor's Annual Report.

Page 56

Timeline

A timetable has been agreed with management to complete the audit by 30 November 2024. In Section 07 we include a provisional timeline for the audit. All parties need to work together to ensure this timeline is adhered to.

Key Audit Partner and senior audit team



Engagement Partner (David Riglar)

The Engagement Partner has overall responsibility for:

- ▶ The audit and its performance;
- ▶ The auditor's report that is issued on behalf of EY; and
- ▶ The overall quality of the audit



Manager (Claire Sulam)

The Manager has responsibility for management of the audit ensuring that it is adequately resourced to meet both its time and budget constraints. They will also support the individual engagement team members to complete timely high quality audit fieldwork.



02 Audit risks

Our response to significant risks

We have set out the significant risks (including fraud risks denoted by*) identified for the current year audit along with the rationale and expected audit approach. The risks identified below may change to reflect any significant findings or subsequent issues we identify during the audit.

Misstatements due to fraud or error*

What is the risk?

The financial statements as a whole are not free of material misstatements whether caused by fraud or error.

As identified in ISA (UK) 240, management is in a unique position to perpetrate fraud because of its ability to manipulate accounting records directly or indirectly and prepare fraudulent financial statements by overriding controls that otherwise appear to be operating effectively.

We identify and respond to this fraud risk on every audit engagement.

What will we do?

- ▶ Identifying fraud risks during the planning stages.
- ▶ Inquiry of management about risks of fraud and the controls put in place to address those risks
- ▶ Understanding the oversight given by those charged with governance of management's processes over fraud
- ▶ Discussing with those charged with governance the risks of fraud in the entity, including those risks that are specific to the entity's business sector (those that may arise from economic industry and operating conditions)
- ▶ Consideration of the effectiveness of management's controls designed to address the risk of fraud
- ▶ Determining an appropriate strategy to address those identified risks of fraud
- ▶ Performing mandatory procedures regardless of specifically identified fraud risks, including testing of journal entries and other adjustments in the preparation of the financial statements
- ▶ Undertake procedures to identify significant unusual transactions
- ▶ Consider whether management bias was present in the key accounting estimates and judgments in the financial statements

Having evaluated this risk we have considered whether we need to perform other audit procedures not referred to above. We concluded that those procedures included under 'Inappropriate capitalisation of revenue expenditure' are required.

Our response to significant risks

We have set out the significant risks (including fraud risks denoted by*) identified for the current year audit along with the rationale and expected audit approach. The risks identified below may change to reflect any significant findings or subsequent issues we identify during the audit.

Inappropriate capitalisation of revenue expenditure*

Financial statement impact

We have assessed that the risk of misreporting revenue outturn in the financial statements is most likely to be achieved through:

- ▶ Revenue expenditure being inappropriately recognised as capital expenditure at the point it is posted to the general ledger.
- ▶ Expenditure being classified as revenue expenditure financed as capital under statute (REFCUS) when it is inappropriate to do so.
- ▶ Expenditure being inappropriately transferred by journal from revenue to capital codes on the general ledger at the end of the year.

If this were to happen it would have the impact of understating revenue expenditure and overstating Property, Plant and Equipment (PPE) and REFCUS in the financial statements.

What is the risk?

Under ISA 240 there is a presumed risk that revenue may be misstated due to improper revenue recognition. In the public sector, this requirement is modified by Practice Note 10 issued by the Financial Reporting Council, which states that auditors should also consider the risk that material misstatements may occur by the manipulation of expenditure recognition.

We have assessed the risk is most likely to occur through the inappropriate capitalisation of revenue expenditure.

What will we do?

- ▶ Test Property, Plant and Equipment (PPE) additions to ensure that the expenditure incurred and capitalised is clearly capital in nature.
- ▶ Assess whether the capitalised spend clearly enhances or extends the useful life of asset rather than simply repairing or maintaining the asset on which it is incurred.
- ▶ Consider whether any development or other related costs that have been capitalised are reasonable to capitalise i.e. the costs incurred are directly attributable to bringing the asset into operational use.
- ▶ Test REFCUS, if material, to ensure that it is appropriate for the revenue expenditure incurred to be financed from ringfenced capital resources. Based on our work at the planning stage of the audit we do not expect there to be material REFCUS in the year.
- ▶ Seek to identify and understand the basis for any significant journals transferring expenditure from revenue to capital codes on the general ledger at the end of the year.

Our response to significant

We have set out the significant risks (including fraud risks denoted by*) identified for the current year audit along with the rationale and expected audit approach. The risks identified below may change to reflect any significant findings or subsequent issues we identify during the audit.

Valuation of Solar Farm Asset

Financial statement impact

The fair value of the Solar Farm represent significant balances in the Council's accounts. The valuation is subject to estimation changes, impairment reviews and depreciation charges. Management is required to make material judgemental inputs and apply estimation techniques to calculate the year-end balances recorded in the balance sheet.

What is the risk?

Management is required to make material judgemental inputs and apply estimation techniques to calculate the year-end balances recorded in the balance sheet. At 31 March 2023, the value of the solar farm totalled £16.53 million.

The current volatility in the energy market which is resulting in significantly higher energy costs will have an impact on the power price forecasting this being one of the key judgements used in the valuation of the solar farm. The impact of this judgement will potentially be material and it is therefore important that the most appropriate and relevant power price forecast is used in the solar farms valuation.

ISAs (UK and Ireland) 500 and 540 require us to undertake procedures on the use of management experts and the assumptions underlying fair value estimates.

What will we do?

- ▶ Reviewing the information provided to the Council's Valuer as Management Expert (Cornwall Insight);
- ▶ Undertaking procedures to ensure that we can rely on the Valuer as management's expert;
- ▶ Employing our internal valuation specialist as our expert to review the assumptions and conclusions of Cornwall Insight and the Council in relation to the valuation of the solar farm at the balance sheet date; and
- ▶ Reviewing and testing the accounting entries and disclosures made within the Council's financial statements in relation to Solar Farm asset.

Other areas of audit focus

We have identified other areas of the audit, that have not been classified as significant risks, but are still important when considering the risks of material misstatement to the financial statements and disclosures and therefore may be key audit matters we will include in our audit report.

What is the risk/area of focus, and the key judgements and estimates?

Valuation of Land and Buildings (inherent risk)

The value of Land and Buildings represents a significant balance in the Council's accounts and is subject to valuation changes, impairment reviews and depreciation charges.

Management is required to make material judgemental inputs and apply estimation techniques to calculate the year-end balances recorded in the balance sheet.

The valuation basis varies depending on the type of assets, and therefore subject to different input, estimation process and assumptions used.

ISAs (UK and Ireland) 500 and 540 require us to undertake procedures on the use of management experts and the assumptions underlying fair value estimates.

Our response: Key areas of challenge and professional judgement

We will:

- ▶ Consider the work performed by the valuer, including the adequacy of the scope of the work performed, their professional capabilities and the results of their work;
- ▶ Perform testing of key assumptions and methodologies on a sample of assets and consider the reasonableness of the estimation techniques employed;
- ▶ Sample testing key asset information used by the valuer in performing their valuation, and agreeing this to what has been recorded in the fixed asset register and general ledger;
- ▶ Consider if there are any specific changes to assets that have occurred and that these have been communicated to the valuer;
- ▶ Consider changes to useful economic lives as a result of the most recent valuation;
- ▶ Consider the annual cycle of valuations to ensure that assets have been valued within a 5 year rolling programme as required by the Code;
- ▶ Review assets not subject to valuation in 2023/24 to confirm that the remaining asset base is not materially misstated;
- ▶ Test accounting entries have been correctly processed in the financial statements; and
- ▶ Review the disclosures to ensure this is adequate in relation to estimation uncertainty.

What else will we do?

We will continue to consider the need to use EY Real Estates, our internal specialists on asset valuations, to support our work in this area. Based on procedures performed at the planning stage we do not expect to commission EY Real Estates.

Other areas of audit focus

We have identified other areas of the audit, that have not been classified as significant risks, but are still important when considering the risks of material misstatement to the financial statements and disclosures and therefore may be key audit matters we will include in our audit report.

What is the risk/area of focus, and the key judgements and estimates?

Pension Valuation (inherent risk)

The Local Authority Accounting Code of Practice and IAS19 require the Council to make extensive disclosures within its financial statements regarding its membership of the Local Government Pension Scheme administered by the Council.

The Council's pension valuation is a material estimated balance. At 31 March 2023, this showed a net position of £0 million, comprising the present value of the defined benefit obligation (£217 million), the fair value of plan assets £234 million, and the effect of the asset ceiling (£17 million).

The information disclosed is based on the IAS 19 report issued to the Council by the actuary to the Council.

Accounting for this scheme involves significant estimation and judgement and therefore management engages an actuary to undertake the calculations on their behalf. ISAs (UK) 500 and 540 require us to undertake procedures on the use of management experts and the assumptions underlying fair value estimates.

Our response: Key areas of challenge and professional judgement

We will:

- ▶ Liaise with the auditors of Suffolk Pension Fund, to obtain assurances over the information supplied to the actuary in relation to the Council
- ▶ Assess the work of the pension fund actuary including the assumptions they have used by relying on the work of PWC - Consulting Actuaries commissioned by the National Audit Office for all local government sector auditors, and considering any relevant reviews by the EY actuarial team
- ▶ Evaluate the reasonableness of the Pension Fund actuary's calculations by comparing them to the outputs of our own auditor's specialist's model; and
- ▶ Review and test the accounting entries and disclosures made within the Council's financial statements in relation to IAS19.

What else will we do?

We will consider outturn information available at the time we undertake our work after production of the Council's draft financial statements, for example the year-end actual valuation of pension fund assets. We will use this to inform our assessment of the accuracy of estimated information included in the financial statements and whether any adjustments are required.

Other areas of audit focus

We have identified other areas of the audit, that have not been classified as significant risks, but are still important when considering the risks of material misstatement to the financial statements and disclosures and therefore may be key audit matters we will include in our audit report.

What is the risk/area of focus, and the key judgements and estimates?

Implementation of IFRS 16 Leases (New area of focus)

IFRS 16 Leases introduces a number of significant changes which go beyond accounting technicalities. These changes have the potential to impact on the procurement processes as more information becomes available on the real cost of leases. The key accounting impact is that assets and liabilities in relation to significant lease arrangements previously accounted for as operating leases will need to be recognised on the balance sheet. IFRS 16 requires all substantial leases to be accounted for using the acquisition approach, recognising the rights acquired to use an asset.

IFRS 16 does not come into effect for local authority until 1 April 2024. However, Officers should be acting now to assess the Council's leasing positions and secure the required information to ensure the Council will be fully compliant with the 2024/25 Code. Further details can be found in Appendix C - Accounting and Regulatory Update in this report.

Our response: Key areas of challenge and professional judgement

We will:

- ▶ Review the Council's data collection process that identifies all arrangements which convey the right to control the use of specified assets for a set period of time;
- ▶ Review the Council's policy choices, including an adoption of a portfolio approach, the low value threshold set, the asset classes and the management policy in relation to discount rates to be used;
- ▶ Seek to understand the Council's preparedness to implement the changes. This includes assessing the finance team's familiarity and understanding on the Code adaptations for the public sector, the transitional accounting arrangements, the ongoing accounting arrangements and determining when a lease requires remeasurement and modifications.

What else will we do?

We will review the disclosure in the 2023/24 Statement of Accounts on the impact the initial application of IFRS 16 is expected to have on the Council's financial statements.



03 Value for Money risks

Value for Money

Council responsibilities for value for money

The Council is required to maintain an effective system of internal control that supports the achievement of its policies, aims and objectives while safeguarding and securing value for money from the public funds and other resources at its disposal.

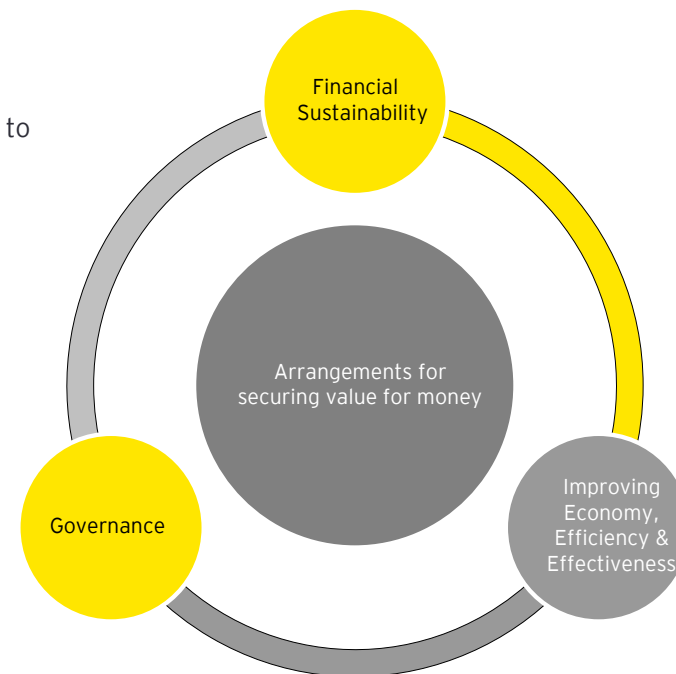
As part of the material published with the financial statements, the Council is required to bring together commentary on the governance framework and how this has operated during the period in a governance statement. In preparing the governance statement, the Council tailors the content to reflect its own individual circumstances, consistent with the requirements of the relevant accounting and reporting framework and having regard to any guidance issued in support of that framework. This includes a requirement to provide commentary on arrangements for securing value for money from the use of resources.

Auditor Responsibilities

Under the NAO Code of Audit Practice we are required to consider whether the Council has put in place 'proper arrangements' to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness on its use of resources. The Code requires the auditor to design their work to provide them with sufficient assurance to enable them to report to the Council a commentary against specified reporting criteria (see below) on the arrangements the Council has in place to secure value for money through economic, efficient and effective use of its resources for the relevant period.

The specified reporting criteria are:

- ▶ Financial sustainability - How the Council plans and manages its resources to ensure it can continue to deliver its services.
- ▶ Governance - How the Council ensures that it makes informed decisions and properly manages its risks.
- ▶ Improving economy, efficiency and effectiveness - How the Council uses information about its costs and performance to improve the way it manages and delivers its services.



Planning and identifying risks of significant weakness in VFM arrangements

The NAO's guidance notes requires us to carry out a risk assessment which gathers sufficient evidence to enable us to document our evaluation of the Council's arrangements, in order to enable us to draft a commentary under the three reporting criteria. This includes identifying and reporting on any significant weaknesses in those arrangements and making appropriate recommendations.

In considering the Council's arrangements, we are required to consider:

- ▶ The Council's governance statement;
- ▶ Evidence that the Council's arrangements were in place during the reporting period;
- ▶ Evidence obtained from our work on the accounts;
- ▶ The work of inspectorates and other bodies; and
- ▶ Any other evidence source that we regard as necessary to facilitate the performance of our statutory duties.

We then consider whether there is evidence to suggest that there are significant weaknesses in arrangements. The NAO's guidance is clear that the assessment of what constitutes a significant weakness and the amount of additional audit work required to adequately respond to the risk of a significant weakness in arrangements is a matter of professional judgement. However, the NAO states that a weakness may be said to be significant if it:

- ▶ Exposes - or could reasonably be expected to expose - the Council to significant financial loss or risk;
- ▶ Leads to - or could reasonably be expected to lead to - significant impact on the quality or effectiveness of service or on the Council's reputation;
- ▶ Leads to - or could reasonably be expected to lead to - unlawful actions; or

Identifies a failure to take action to address a previously identified significant weakness, such as failure to implement or achieve planned progress on action/improvement plans.

We should also be informed by a consideration of:

- ▶ The magnitude of the issue in relation to the size of the Council;
- ▶ Financial consequences in comparison to, for example, levels of income or expenditure, levels of reserves (where applicable), or impact on budgets or cashflow forecasts;
- ▶ The impact of the weakness on the Council's reported performance;
- ▶ Whether the issue has been identified by the Council's own internal arrangements and what corrective action has been taken or planned;
- ▶ Whether any legal judgements have been made including judicial review;
- ▶ Whether there has been any intervention by a regulator or Secretary of State;
- ▶ Whether the weakness could be considered significant when assessed against the nature, visibility or sensitivity of the issue;
- ▶ The impact on delivery of services to local taxpayers; and
- ▶ The length of time the Council has had to respond to the issue.



Value for Money

Responding to identified risks of significant weakness

Where our planning work has identified a risk of significant weakness, the NAO's guidance requires us to consider what additional evidence is needed to determine whether there is a significant weakness in arrangements and undertake additional procedures as necessary, including where appropriate, challenge of management's assumptions. We are required to report our planned procedures to the Performance & Audit Scrutiny Committee.

Reporting on VFM

Where we are not satisfied that the Council has made proper arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources the Code requires that we should refer to this by exception in the audit report on the financial statements.

In addition, the Code requires us to include the a commentary on your value for money arrangements in the Auditor's Annual Report. The Code states that the commentary should be clear, readily understandable and highlight any issues we wish to draw to the Council's attention or the wider public. This may include matters that we do not consider to be significant weaknesses in your arrangements but should be brought to your attention. This will include details of any recommendations arising from the audit and follow-up of recommendations issued previously, along with our view as to whether they have been implemented satisfactorily.

Status of our 2023/24 VFM planning

We have completed our initial VFM (value for money) risk planning work, where we have considered:

Our entity level controls and understanding the business assessment/ The Council's Risk Register/ The Annual Governance Statement/ Council meeting minutes/ Our planning meetings with management/ Key financial and budget information/ Key performance reports/ Internal audit reports/ Information from local, national and specialist media/ Findings of other inspectorates, review agencies and other relevant bodies including the CQC.

We have not identified and risk of significant weakness in the Council's arrangements at this stage.

We will keep our understanding of arrangements during planning under review. We will update our work to reflect any emerging risks or findings that may suggest an additional significant weakness in arrangements, and communicate these to you



04 Audit materiality

Materiality

Group materiality

For planning purposes, Group materiality for 2023/24 has been set at £2.27m. This represents 2% of the Group's 2022/23 gross expenditure on provision of services. It will be reassessed throughout the audit process. The Council is a public sector body and the main function of the entity is to provide services to the local community. For a public sector entity, the expectations of users (including regulators) of the entity are focused on the measurement of expenditure and as such the income statement is considered the most appropriate basis for determining materiality for public sector bodies.

We have provided supplemental information about audit materiality in Appendix F.

Key definitions

Planning materiality – the amount over which we anticipate misstatements would influence the economic decisions of a user of the financial statements.

Performance materiality – the amount we use to determine the extent of our audit procedures. We have set performance materiality at £1.70m which represents 75% of planning materiality. We have considered the factors of having a higher likelihood of material misstatements based on prior year adjustments.

Per our initial assessment, we do not believe there are errors that are indicative of pervasive errors throughout the financial statements or a higher likelihood of misstatement in other areas. We have therefore used a higher end or 75% of our Planning Materiality as our Performance Materiality

Component performance materiality range – we determine component performance materiality as a percentage of Group performance materiality based on risk and relative size to the Group.

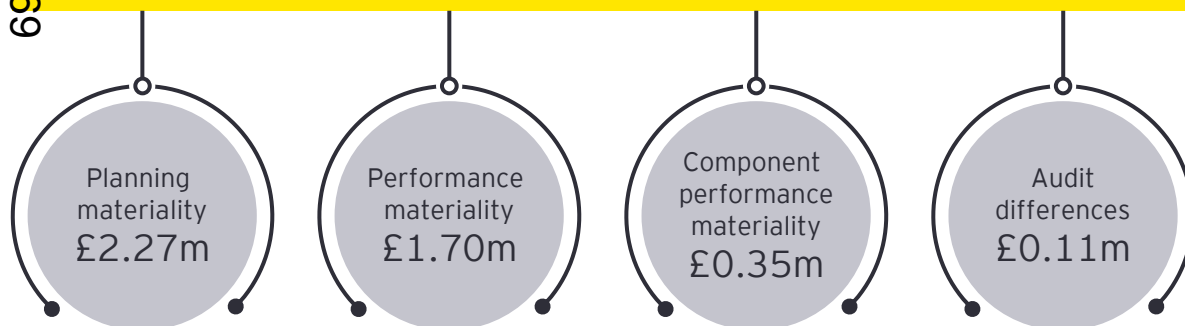
Audit difference threshold – we propose that misstatements identified below this threshold are deemed clearly trivial. The same threshold for misstatements is used for component reporting. We will report to you all uncorrected misstatements over this amount relating to the income statement and balance sheet that have an effect on income or that relate to other comprehensive income.

Other uncorrected misstatements, such as reclassifications and misstatements in the cashflow statement or disclosures and corrected misstatements will be communicated to the extent that they merit the attention of the Performance & Audit Scrutiny Committee, or are important from a qualitative perspective.

Page 69

Group gross expenditure on provision of services

£113.32m



The outcome of consultation on the planned measures to address local audit delays may impact our assessment of materiality for the 2023/24 audit. We will keep Performance & Audit Scrutiny Committee updated on any changes to materiality levels as the audit progresses.

We request that the Performance & Audit Scrutiny Committee confirm its understanding of, and agreement to, these materiality and reporting levels.

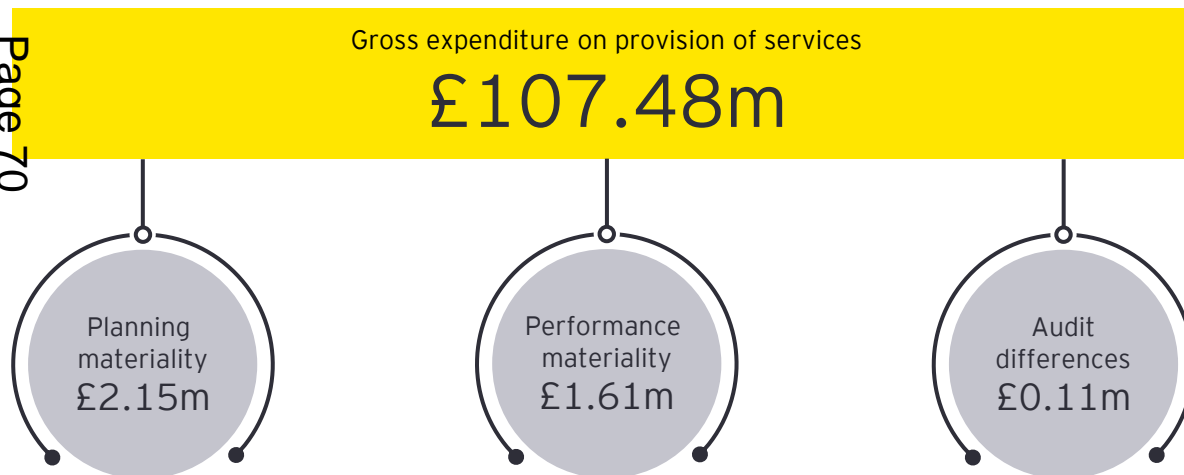
Materiality

Council materiality

For planning purposes, Council's materiality for 2023/24 has been set at £2.15 million. This represents 2% of the Council's 2022/23 gross expenditure on provision of services. It will be reassessed throughout the audit process. The Council is a public sector body and the main function of the entity is to provide services to the local community. For a public sector entity, the expectations of users (including regulators) of the entity are focused on the measurement of expenditure and as such the income statement is considered the most appropriate basis for determining materiality for public sector bodies.

We have provided supplemental information about audit materiality in Appendix F.

Page 70



The outcome of consultation on the planned measures to address local audit delays may impact our assessment of materiality for the 2023/24 audit. We will keep the Performance & Audit Scrutiny Committee updated on any changes to materiality levels as the audit progresses.

We request that the Performance & Audit Scrutiny Committee confirm its understanding of, and agreement to, these materiality and reporting levels.

Key definitions

Planning materiality – the amount over which we anticipate misstatements would influence the economic decisions of a user of the financial statements.

Performance materiality – the amount we use to determine the extent of our audit procedures. We have set performance materiality at £1.61 million which represents 75% of planning materiality. We have considered the factors of having a higher likelihood of material misstatements based on prior year adjustments. Per our initial assessment, we do not believe there are errors that are indicative of pervasive errors throughout the financial statements or a higher likelihood of misstatement in other areas. We have therefore used a higher end or 75% of our Planning Materiality as our Performance Materiality.

Audit difference threshold – we propose that misstatements identified below this threshold are deemed clearly trivial. The same threshold for misstatements is used for component reporting. We will report to you all uncorrected misstatements over this amount relating to the income statement and balance sheet that have an effect on income or that relate to other comprehensive income.

Other uncorrected misstatements, such as reclassifications and misstatements in the cashflow statement or disclosures and corrected misstatements will be communicated to the extent that they merit the attention of the Performance & Audit Scrutiny Committee, or are important from a qualitative perspective.



05 Scope of our audit

Audit process and strategy

Objective and Scope of our Audit scoping

Under the Code of Audit Practice, our principal objectives are to undertake work to support the provision of our audit report to the audited body and to satisfy ourselves that the audited body has made proper arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources to the extent required by the relevant legislation and the requirements of the Code.

We issue an audit report that covers:

1. Financial statement audit

Our opinion on the financial statements:

- ▶ whether the financial statements give a true and fair view of the financial position of the Group and its expenditure and income for the period in question; and
- ▶ whether the financial statements have been prepared properly in accordance with the relevant accounting and reporting framework as set out in legislation, applicable accounting standards or other direction.

Our opinion on other matters:

- ▶ whether other information published together with the audited financial statements is consistent with the financial statements; and
- ▶ where required, whether the part of the remuneration report to be audited has been properly prepared in accordance with the relevant accounting and reporting framework.

Other procedures required by the Code:

- ▶ Examine and report on the consistency of the Whole of Government Accounts schedules or returns with the body's audited financial statements for the relevant reporting period in line with the instructions issued by the National Audit Office.

2. Arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness (value for money)

We are required to consider whether the Council has put in place 'proper arrangements' to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness on its use of resources and report a commentary on those arrangements.

Audit process and strategy

Objective and Scope of our Audit scoping (cont'd)

Department for Levelling-up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) and Financial Reporting Council (FRC) measures to address local audit delays

The changes proposed by the consultations are likely to have a significant impact on both the scope of the 2023/24 audit and our assessment of risk. We will continue to provide updates to the Performance & Audit Scrutiny Committee as the audit progresses and our assessment on the required scope and nature of procedures we will undertake becomes clearer. As examples:

- ▶ Where prior year audit opinions are modified work will be required to gain assurance, where possible, on opening balances over the period of the recovery phase (phase 2). Where we are unable to gain assurance over opening balances, we anticipate that this may lead to limitation of scope of our audit over those balances.
- ▶ Where prior year audit opinions are modified, and particularly where we do not have assurance spanning a number of historic financial years, this is likely to have an impact on our assessment of materiality and our ability to issue an unmodified opinion early in the recovery phase.
- ▶ Changes to the Code of Audit Practice on Local Authority Accounting will potentially impact on our assessment of audit risk generally, risks associated with significant accounting estimates, such as the valuation of operational property, plant and equipment and the related need to rely on management's and auditor's specialists.

Audit process and strategy

Audit Process Overview

Our audit involves:

- ▶ Identifying and understanding the key processes and internal controls; and
- ▶ Substantive tests of detail of transactions and amounts.
- ▶ Reliance on the work of other auditors where appropriate;
- ▶ Reliance on the work of experts in relation to areas, such as pensions and property valuations.

Our initial assessment of the key processes across the Council has not identified any processes where we will seek to test key controls, either manual or IT. Our audit strategy will, as in previous years, follow a fully substantive approach. This will involve testing the figures within the financial statements rather than looking to place reliance on the controls within the financial systems. We assess this as the most efficient way of carrying out our work and obtaining the level of audit assurance required to conclude that the financial statements are not materially misstated.

Analytics

We will use our computer-based analytics tools to enable us to capture whole populations of your financial data, in particular journal entries. These tools:

- ▶ Help identify specific exceptions and anomalies which can then be subject to more traditional substantive audit tests; and
- ▶ Give greater likelihood of identifying errors than random sampling techniques.

We will report the findings from our process and analytics work, including any significant weaknesses or inefficiencies identified and recommendations for improvement, to management and the Performance & Audit Scrutiny Committee.

Internal audit

We will review internal audit plans and the results of their work. We will reflect the findings from these reports, together with reports from any other work completed in the year, in our detailed audit plan, where they raise issues that could have an impact on the financial statements.

Scope of our audit

Group scoping

Our audit strategy for performing an audit of an entity with multiple locations is risk based. We identify components as:

1. **Significant components:** A component is significant when it is likely to include risks of material misstatement of the group financial statements, either because of its relative financial size to the group (quantitative criteria), or because of its specific nature or circumstances (qualitative criteria). We generally assign significant components a full or specific scope given their importance to the financial statements.
2. **Not significant components:** The number of additional components and extent of procedures performed depended primarily on: evidence from significant components, the effectiveness of group wide controls and the results of analytical procedures.

For all other components we perform other procedures to confirm that there is no risk of material misstatement within those locations. These procedures are detailed below

Scoping by Entity

Our preliminary audit scopes by number of locations we have adopted are set out below.

page 75



Scope definitions

Full scope: locations where a full audit is performed to the materiality levels assigned by the Group audit team for purposes of the consolidated audit. Procedures performed at full scope locations support an interoffice conclusion on the reporting package. These may not be sufficient to issue a stand-alone audit opinion on the local statutory financial statements because of the materiality used and any additional procedures required to comply with local laws and regulations.

Specific scope: locations where the audit is limited to specific accounts or disclosures identified by the Group audit team based on the size and/or risk profile of those accounts.

Review scope: locations where procedures primarily consist of analytical procedures and inquiries of management. On-site or desk top reviews may be performed, according to our assessment of risk and the availability of information centrally.

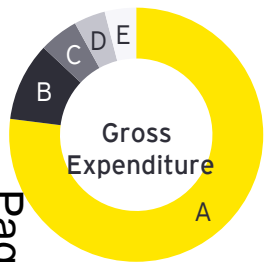
Specified Procedures: locations where the component team performs procedures specified by the Group audit team in order to respond to a risk identified.

Other procedures: For those locations that we do not consider material to the Group financial statements in terms of size relative to the Group and risk, we perform other procedures to confirm that there is no risk of material misstatement within those locations.

Scoping the group audit

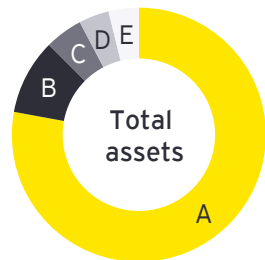
Coverage of Revenue/Profit before tax/Total assets

Based on the group's prior year results, our scoping is expected to achieve the following coverage of the group's gross expenditure and total assets.



94.71%
(2022: 94.50%)

of the group's forecast revenue will be covered by full scope audit, with the remainder covered by specific scope audit.



99%
(2022: 1%)

of the group's forecast revenue will be covered by full scope audit, with the remainder covered by specific scope audit.

Key changes in scope from last year

- ▶ No changes in scope from last year.

Details of specified and other procedures

- ▶ Review of group wide entity level controls over these components, including group management oversight and results of Internal Audit visits;
- ▶ Write to and obtain assurance from the components auditors over material balances in the components accounts;
- ▶ Perform analytical review procedures on each component;
- ▶ Test consolidation journals and intercompany eliminations; and
- ▶ Enquiry of management about unusual transactions in these components.

Our audit approach is risk based and therefore the data above on coverage is provided for your information only.

Scoping the group audit

Group audit team involvement in component audits

Auditing standards require us to be involved in the work of our component teams. Our approach will focus on:

- ▶ Review of group wide entity level controls over these components, including group management oversight and results of internal audit visits;
- ▶ Write to and obtain assurance from the components audits over material balances in the components accounts;
- ▶ Perform analytical review procedures on each component;
- ▶ Test consolidation journals and inter-company elimination; and
- ▶ Enquiry of management about unusual transactions in these components.



Page 73

06 Audit team

Audit team



Page 79

Use of specialists

When auditing key judgements, we are often required to use the input and advice provided by specialists who have qualifications and expertise not possessed by the core audit team. The areas where EY specialists are expected to provide input for the current year audit are:

Area	Specialists
Valuation of Land and Building	Management Specialist - Wilkes Head & Eve EY Real Estates (in relation to assessing the Council's valuers and otherwise required)
Valuation of Solar farm asset	Management Specialist - Cornwall Insight EY Valuations Team (to review the valuation of Council's solar farm asset)
Pensions disclosure	Management Specialist - Hymans Robertson (Actuary to Suffolk Pension Fund) EY Pensions advisory PwC (Consulting Actuary commissioned by NAO)
NNDR appeals provision	Management Specialist - Wilkes Head & Eve
Financial instruments	Management Specialist - Link Asset Services

Page 80

In accordance with Auditing Standards, we will evaluate each specialist's professional competence and objectivity, considering their qualifications, experience and available resources, together with the independence of the individuals performing the work.

We also consider the work performed by the specialist in light of our knowledge of the Group's business and processes and our assessment of audit risk in the particular area. For example, we would typically perform the following procedures:

- ▶ Analyse source data and make inquiries as to the procedures used by the specialist to establish whether the source data is relevant and reliable
- ▶ Assess the reasonableness of the assumptions and methods used
- ▶ Consider the appropriateness of the timing of when the specialist carried out the work
- ▶ Assess whether the substance of the specialist's findings are properly reflected in the financial statements



07

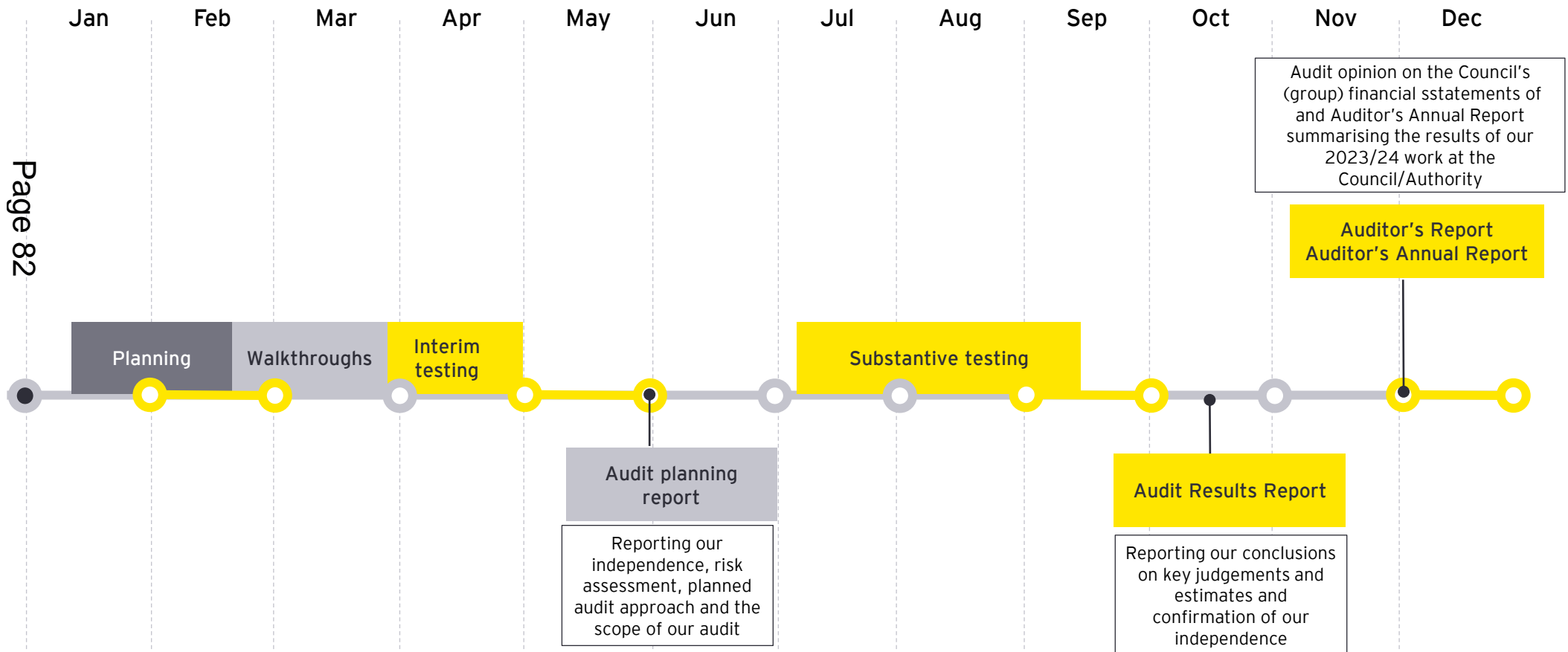
Audit timeline

Timetable of communication and deliverables

Timeline

Below is a timetable showing the key stages of the audit and the deliverables we have agreed to provide to you through the audit cycle in 2023/24.

From time to time matters may arise that require immediate communication with the Performance & Audit Scrutiny Committee and we will discuss them with the Performance & Audit Scrutiny Committee Chair as appropriate. We will also provide updates on corporate governance and regulatory matters as necessary.





08

Independence

Introduction

The FRC Ethical Standard 2019 and ISA (UK) 260 'Communication of audit matters with those charged with governance', requires us to communicate with you on a timely basis on all significant facts and matters that bear upon our integrity, objectivity and independence. The Ethical Standard, as revised in December 2019, requires that we communicate formally both at the planning stage and at the conclusion of the audit, as well as during the course of the audit if appropriate. The aim of these communications is to ensure full and fair disclosure by us to those charged with your governance on matters in which you have an interest.

Required communications

Planning stage

- ▶ The principal threats, if any, to objectivity and independence identified by Ernst & Young (EY) including consideration of all relationships between you, your affiliates and directors and us;
- ▶ The safeguards adopted and the reasons why they are considered to be effective, including any Engagement Quality review;
- ▶ The overall assessment of threats and safeguards;
- ▶ Information about the general policies and process within EY to maintain objectivity and independence.

Final stage

- ▶ In order for you to assess the integrity, objectivity and independence of the firm and each covered person, we are required to provide a written disclosure of relationships (including the provision of non-audit services) that may bear on our integrity, objectivity and independence. This is required to have regard to relationships with the entity, its directors and senior management, its affiliates, and its connected parties and the threats to integrity or objectivity, including those that could compromise independence that these create. We are also required to disclose any safeguards that we have put in place and why they address such threats, together with any other information necessary to enable our objectivity and independence to be assessed;
- ▶ Details of non-audit/additional services provided and the fees charged in relation thereto;
- ▶ Written confirmation that the firm and each covered person is independent and, if applicable, that any non-EY firms used in the group audit or external experts used have confirmed their independence to us;
- ▶ Details of any non-audit/additional services to a UK PIE audit client where there are differences of professional opinion concerning the engagement between the Ethics Partner and Engagement Partner and where the final conclusion differs from the professional opinion of the Ethics Partner
- ▶ Details of any inconsistencies between FRC Ethical Standard and your policy for the supply of non-audit services by EY and any apparent breach of that policy;
- ▶ Details of all breaches of the IESBA Code of Ethics, the FRC Ethical Standard and professional standards, and of any safeguards applied and actions taken by EY to address any threats to independence; and
- ▶ An opportunity to discuss auditor independence issues.

Page 84

In addition, during the course of the audit, we are required to communicate with you whenever any significant judgements are made about threats to objectivity and independence and the appropriateness of safeguards put in place, for example, when accepting an engagement to provide non-audit services.

We ensure that the total amount of fees that EY and our network firms have charged to you and your affiliates for the provision of services during the reporting period, analysed in appropriate categories, are disclosed.

Relationships, services and related threats and safeguards

We highlight the following significant facts and matters that may be reasonably considered to bear upon our objectivity and independence, including the principal threats, if any. We have adopted the safeguards noted below to mitigate these threats along with the reasons why they are considered to be effective. However we will only perform non-audit services if the service has been pre-approved in accordance with your policy.

Overall Assessment

Overall, we consider that the safeguards that have been adopted appropriately mitigate the principal threats identified and we therefore confirm that EY is independent and the objectivity and independence of David Riglar, your audit engagement partner and the audit engagement team have not been compromised.

Self interest threats

A self interest threat arises when EY has financial or other interests in your company. Examples include where we have an investment in your company; where we receive significant fees in respect of non-audit services; where we need to recover long outstanding fees; or where we enter into a business relationship with you. At the time of writing, there are no long outstanding fees.

We believe that it is appropriate for us to undertake those permitted non-audit/additional services set out in Section 5.40 of the FRC Ethical Standard 2019 (FRC ES), and we will comply with the policies that you have approved.

One of the services are prohibited under the FRC's ES and the services have been approved in accordance with your policy on pre-approval. In addition, when the ratio of non-audit fees to audit fees exceeds 1:1, we are required to discuss this with our Ethics Partner, as set out by the FRC ES, and if necessary agree additional safeguards or not accept the non-audit engagement. We will also discuss this with you.

At the time of writing, the ratio of non-audit fees does not exceed 1:1. No additional safeguards are required. A self interest threat may also arise if members of our audit engagement team have objectives or are rewarded in relation to sales of non-audit services to you. We confirm that no member of our audit engagement team, including those from other service lines, has objectives or is rewarded in relation to sales to you, in compliance with Ethical Standard part 4.

There are no other self interest threats at the date of this report.

Relationships, services and related threats and safeguards

Self review threats

Self review threats arise when the results of a non-audit service performed by EY or others within the EY network are reflected in the amounts included or disclosed in the financial statements.

There are no self review threats at the date of this report.

Management threats

Partners and employees of EY are prohibited from taking decisions on behalf of management of your company. Management threats may also arise during the provision of a non-audit service in relation to which management is required to make judgements or decision based on that work.

There are no management threats at the date of this report.

Other threats

Other threats, such as advocacy, familiarity or intimidation, may arise.

There are no other threats at the date of this report.



Other communications

EY Transparency Report 2023

EY has policies and procedures that instil professional values as part of firm culture and ensure that the highest standards of objectivity, independence and integrity are maintained. Details of the key policies and processes in place within EY for maintaining objectivity and independence can be found in our annual Transparency Report which the firm is required to publish by law. The most recent version of this Report is for the period ended 30 June 2023 and can be found here: [EY UK 2023 Transparency Report](#).



09 Appendices

Appendix A – PSAA Statement of Responsibilities

As set out on the next page our fee is based on the assumption that the Council complies with PSAA's Statement of Responsibilities of auditors and audited bodies. See <https://www.psa.co.uk/managing-audit-quality/statement-of-responsibilities-of-auditors-and-audited-bodies/statement-of-responsibilities-of-auditors-and-audited-bodies-from-2023-24-audits/>. In particular the Council should have regard to paragraphs 26-28 of the Statement of Responsibilities which clearly set out what is expected of audited bodies in preparing their financial statements. We set out these paragraphs in full below:

Preparation of the statement of accounts

26. Audited bodies are expected to follow Good Industry Practice and applicable recommendations and guidance from CIPFA and, as applicable, other relevant organisations as to proper accounting procedures and controls, including in the preparation and review of working papers and financial statements.

27. In preparing their statement of accounts, audited bodies are expected to:

- prepare realistic plans that include clear targets and achievable timetables for the production of the financial statements;
- ensure that finance staff have access to appropriate resources to enable compliance with the requirements of the applicable financial framework, including having access to the current copy of the CIPFA/LASAAC Code, applicable disclosure checklists, and any other relevant CIPFA Codes.

Page 89

assign responsibilities clearly to staff with the appropriate expertise and experience;

provide necessary resources to enable delivery of the plan;

maintain adequate documentation in support of the financial statements and, at the start of the audit, providing a complete set of working papers that provide an adequate explanation of the entries in those financial statements including the appropriateness of the accounting policies used and the judgements and estimates made by management;

- ensure that senior management monitors, supervises and reviews work to meet agreed standards and deadlines;
- ensure that a senior individual at top management level personally reviews and approves the financial statements before presentation to the auditor; and
- during the course of the audit provide responses to auditor queries on a timely basis.

28. If draft financial statements and supporting working papers of appropriate quality are not available at the agreed start date of the audit, the auditor may be unable to meet the planned audit timetable and the start date of the audit will be delayed.

Appendix B – Fees



The duty to prescribe fees is a statutory function delegated to Public Sector Audit Appointments Ltd (PSAA) by the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government.

This is defined as the fee required by auditors to meet statutory responsibilities under the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 in accordance with the requirements of the Code of Audit Practice and supporting guidance published by the National Audit Office, the financial reporting requirements set out in the Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting published by CIPFA/LASAAC, and the professional standards applicable to auditors' work.

The agreed fee presented on the next page is based on the following assumptions:

- ▶ Officers meeting the agreed timetable of deliverables;
- ▶ Our accounts opinion and value for money conclusion being unqualified;
- ▶ Appropriate quality of documentation is provided by the Council;
- ▶ The Council has an effective control environment; and

Page 90 The Council complies with PSAA's Statement of Responsibilities of auditors and audited bodies. See <https://www.psa.co.uk/managing-audit-quality/statement-of-responsibilities-of-auditors-and-audited-bodies/statement-of-responsibilities-of-auditors-and-audited-bodies-from-2023-24-audits/>. In particular the Council should have regard to paragraphs 26 - 28 of the Statement of Responsibilities which clearly sets out what is expected of audited bodies in preparing their financial statements. These are set out in full on the previous page.

any of the above assumptions prove to be unfounded, we will seek a variation to the agreed fee. This will be discussed with the Council in advance.

Appendix B – Fees

	Planned Fee 2023/24 £	Scale Fee 2023/24	Proposed Fee 2022/23 £
Scale fee (see Note 1)	199,671	199,671	55,050
Additional work not considered by the scale fee to comply with the requirements of ISA (UK) 315 (Revised). (see Note 2)	TBC	-	-
Additional work not considered by the scale fee to assess the Council's preparedness for the adoption of IFRS 16 and to consider related disclosures in the financial statements (see Note 2)	TBC	-	-
Total audit	TBC	199,671	55,050
Other non-audit services not covered above (Housing benefits) (see Note 3)	TBC	-	TBC
Total other non-audit services	TBC	199,671	TBC
Total fees	TBC	199,671	TBC

All fees exclude VAT

(1) As set out in the joint statement on updates to proposals to clear the backlog and embed timely audit issued by DHLUC, PSAA will use its fee variation process to determine the final fee the Council have to pay for the prior year, i.e. 2022/23 audit.

(2) The revision to ISA (UK) 315 will impact on our scope and approach, and require us to enhance the audit risk assessment process, better focus responses to identified risks and evaluate the impact of IT on key processes supporting the production of the financial statements. We expect to charge addition fee for this.

The scale fee also may be impacted by a range of other factors which will result in additional work, which include but are not limited to:

- Consideration of correspondence from the public and formal objections.
- New accounting standards, for example preparedness and additional disclosures in respect of IFRS 16.
- Non-compliance with law and regulation with an impact on the financial statements.
- VFM risks of, or actual, significant weaknesses in arrangements and related reporting impacts.
- The need to exercise auditor statutory powers.
- Modified financial statement opinions
- New identified risks and/or issues in year (e.g. system changes)
- Audit scope changes since the scale fees were set (e.g. group audit procedures)

(3) The 2021/22 Housing Benefits fee will be determined shortly. For the prior year 2022/23, the audit has commenced while no audit work has started yet for current year 2023/24. Therefore the fees for both years are yet to be determined.

Appendix C – Accounting and regulatory update

Future accounting developments

The following table provides a high level summary of the accounting development that has the most significant impact on the Council:

Name	Summary of key measures	Impact on 2023/24
IFRS 16 Leases	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ CIPFA have confirmed there will be no further delay of the introduction of the leases standard IFRS 16.▶ Assets being used by the authority under operating leases are likely to be capitalised along with an associated lease liability.▶ Lease liabilities and right of use assets will be subject to more frequent remeasurement.▶ The standard must be adopted by 1 April 2024 at the latest.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ The 2023/24 Statement of Accounts must disclose the impact the initial application of IFRS 16 is expected to have on the authority's financial statements.▶ The authority should make key IFRS 16 policy decisions in accordance with the Code before 1 April 2024.▶ Officers must implement robust systems to ensure all relevant data points, which could prompt a remeasurement or modification of the accounting entries, are captured in a timely manner.

Appendix C – Accounting and regulatory update (cont'd)

Regulatory update

The following table provides a high level summary of the regularity update that has the most significant impact on the Council:

Name	Summary of key measures	Impact on 2023/24
ISA (UK) 315 (Revised): Identifying and Addressing the Risks of Material Misstatement	<p>ISA 315 is effective from FY 2022/23 onwards and is the critical standard which drives the auditor's approach to the following areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Risk Assessment ▶ Understanding the entity's internal control ▶ Significant risk ▶ Approach to addressing significant risk (in combination with ISA 330) <p>The International Auditing & Assurance Standards Board (IAASB) concluded that whilst the existing version of the standard was fundamentally sound, feedback determined that it was not always clear, leading to a possibility that risk identification was not consistent. The aims of the revised standard is to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Drive consistent and effective identification and assessment of risks of material misstatement ▶ Improve the standard's applicability to entities across a wide spectrum of circumstances and complexities ('scalability') ▶ Modernise ISA 315 to meet evolving business needs, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ how auditors use automated tools and techniques, including data analytics to perform risk assessment audit procedures; and ▶ how auditors understand the entity's use of information technology relevant to financial reporting. ▶ Focus auditors on exercising professional scepticism throughout the risk identification and assessment process. 	<p>We will need to obtain an understanding of the IT processes related to the IT applications of the Council.</p> <p>We will perform procedures to determine if there are typical controls missing or control deficiencies identified and evaluated the consequences for our audit strategy.</p> <p>When we have identified controls relevant to the audit that are application controls or IT-dependent manual controls where we do not gain assurance substantively, we performed additional procedures.</p> <p>We also review the following processes for all relevant IT applications:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Manage vendor supplied changes ▶ Manage security settings ▶ Manage user access ▶ Manage entity-programmed changes ▶ Job scheduling and managing IT process

Appendix D – The Spring Report

A combined perspective on enhancing audit quality

The Spring Report ('The Report') was released by the Audit Committee Chairs' Independent Forum (ACCIF) on 2 June 2023 and is the first of its kind. The Report is the outcome from a series of discussions held with a group of experienced audit committee chairs, auditors from the top 6 firms, and executives from the Financial Reporting Council. The Report details the 9 key learnings that the group agreed on, proposing evolution not revolution, and is focused on getting the basics right first time leading to enhanced audit quality. The report considers key learnings covering the planning, execution, completion and reporting phases of the audit. The full list of key learnings can be found in the [report](https://accif.co.uk/report) (accif.co.uk).

Appendix E – Required communications with the Performance & Audit Scrutiny Committee

We have detailed the communications that we must provide to the Performance & Audit Scrutiny Committee.

Our Reporting to you

Required communications	What is reported?	When and where
Terms of engagement	Confirmation by the Performance & Audit Scrutiny Committee of acceptance of terms of engagement as written in the engagement letter signed by both parties.	The statement of responsibilities serves as the formal terms of engagement between the PSAA's appointed auditors and audited bodies.
Our responsibilities	Reminder of our responsibilities as set out in the engagement letter	The statement of responsibilities serves as the formal terms of engagement between the PSAA's appointed auditors and audited bodies.
Planning and audit approach	<p>Communication of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ The planned scope and timing of the audit ▶ Any limitations on the planned work to be undertaken ▶ The planned use of internal audit ▶ The significant risks identified <p>When communicating key audit matters this includes the most significant risks of material misstatement (whether or not due to fraud) including those that have the greatest effect on the overall audit strategy, the allocation of resources in the audit and directing the efforts of the engagement team</p>	Audit planning report - 30 May 2024 - Performance & Audit Scrutiny Committee
Significant findings from the audit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Our view about the significant qualitative aspects of accounting practices including accounting policies, accounting estimates and financial statement disclosures ▶ Significant difficulties, if any, encountered during the audit ▶ Significant matters, if any, arising from the audit that were discussed with management ▶ Written representations that we are seeking ▶ Expected modifications to the audit report ▶ Other matters if any, significant to the oversight of the financial reporting process ▶ Findings and issues regarding the opening balance on initial audits (delete if not an initial audit) 	Audit results report - November 2024 - Performance & Audit Scrutiny Committee

Appendix E – Required communications with the Performance & Audit Scrutiny Committee (cont'd)

Our Reporting to you

Required communications	What is reported?	When and where
Going concern	<p>Events or conditions identified that may cast significant doubt on the entity's ability to continue as a going concern, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Whether the events or conditions constitute a material uncertainty ▶ Whether the use of the going concern assumption is appropriate in the preparation and presentation of the financial statements ▶ The adequacy of related disclosures in the financial statements 	Audit results report - November 2024 - Performance & Audit Scrutiny Committee
Misstatements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Uncorrected misstatements and their effect on our audit opinion, unless prohibited by law or regulation ▶ The effect of uncorrected misstatements related to prior periods ▶ A request that any uncorrected misstatement be corrected ▶ Material misstatements corrected by management 	Audit results report - November 2024 - Performance & Audit Scrutiny Committee
Fraud	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Enquiries of the Performance & Audit Scrutiny Committee to determine whether they have knowledge of any actual, suspected or alleged fraud affecting the entity ▶ Any fraud that we have identified or information we have obtained that indicates that a fraud may exist ▶ Unless all of those charged with governance are involved in managing the entity, any identified or suspected fraud involving: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Management; b. Employees who have significant roles in internal control; or c. Others where the fraud results in a material misstatement in the financial statements ▶ The nature, timing and extent of audit procedures necessary to complete the audit when fraud involving management is suspected ▶ Matters, if any, to communicate regarding management's process for identifying and responding to the risks of fraud in the entity and our assessment of the risks of material misstatement due to fraud ▶ Any other matters related to fraud, relevant to Performance & Audit Scrutiny Committee responsibility 	Audit results report - November 2024 - Performance & Audit Scrutiny Committee

Appendix E – Required communications with the Performance & Audit Scrutiny Committee (cont'd)

Our Reporting to you

Required communications	What is reported?	When and where
Related parties	<p>Significant matters arising during the audit in connection with the entity's related parties including, when applicable:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Non-disclosure by management ▶ Inappropriate authorisation and approval of transactions ▶ Disagreement over disclosures ▶ Non-compliance with laws and regulations ▶ Difficulty in identifying the party that ultimately controls the entity 	Audit results report - November 2024 - Performance & Audit Scrutiny Committee
Independence	<p>Communication of all significant facts and matters that bear on EY's, and all individuals involved in the audit, integrity, objectivity and independence</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Communication of key elements of the audit engagement partner's consideration of independence and objectivity such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ The principal threats ▶ Safeguards adopted and their effectiveness ▶ An overall assessment of threats and safeguards ▶ Information about the general policies and process within the firm to maintain objectivity and independence <p>Communication whenever significant judgements are made about threats to integrity, objectivity and independence and the appropriateness of safeguards put in place.</p>	<p>Audit planning report - 30 May 2024 - Performance & Audit Scrutiny Committee</p> <p>Audit results report - November 2024 - Performance & Audit Scrutiny Committee</p>
External confirmations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Management's refusal for us to request confirmations ▶ Inability to obtain relevant and reliable audit evidence from other procedures 	Audit results report - November 2024 - Performance & Audit Scrutiny Committee
Consideration of laws and regulations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Subject to compliance with applicable regulations, matters involving identified or suspected non-compliance with laws and regulations, other than those which are clearly inconsequential and the implications thereof. Instances of suspected non-compliance may also include those that are brought to our attention that are expected to occur imminently or for which there is reason to believe that they may occur ▶ Enquiry of the Performance & Audit Scrutiny Committee into possible instances of non-compliance with laws and regulations that may have a material effect on the financial statements and that the Performance & Audit Scrutiny Committee may be aware of 	Audit results report - November 2024 - Performance & Audit Scrutiny Committee

Appendix E – Required communications with the Audit and Governance Committee (cont'd)

Our Reporting to you

Required communications	What is reported?	When and where
Internal controls	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Significant deficiencies in internal controls identified during the audit 	Audit results report - November 2024 - Performance & Audit Scrutiny Committee
Group audits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ An overview of the type of work to be performed on the financial information of the components ▶ An overview of the nature of the group audit team's planned involvement in the work to be performed by the component auditors on the financial information of significant components ▶ Instances where the group audit team's evaluation of the work of a component auditor gave rise to a concern about the quality of that auditor's work ▶ Any limitations on the group audit, for example, where the group engagement team's access to information may have been restricted ▶ Fraud or suspected fraud involving group management, component management, employees who have significant roles in group-wide controls or others where the fraud resulted in a material misstatement of the group financial statements 	<p>Audit planning report - 30 May 2024 - Performance & Audit Scrutiny Committee</p> <p>Audit results report - November 2024 - Performance & Audit Scrutiny Committee</p>
Representations	Written representations we are requesting from management and/or those charged with governance	Audit results report - November 2024 - Performance & Audit Scrutiny Committee
System of quality management	How the system of quality management (SQM) supports the consistent performance of a quality audit	Audit results report - November 2024 - Performance & Audit Scrutiny Committee
Material inconsistencies and misstatements	Material inconsistencies or misstatements of fact identified in other information which management has refused to revise	Audit results report - November 2024 - Performance & Audit Scrutiny Committee
Auditors report	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Key audit matters that we will include in our auditor's report ▶ Any circumstances identified that affect the form and content of our auditor's report 	Audit results report - November 2024 - Performance & Audit Scrutiny Committee

Appendix F – Additional audit information

Regulatory update

Our objective is to form an opinion on the Group's consolidated financial statements under International Standards on Auditing (UK) as prepared by you in accordance with International Financial Reporting Standards as adopted by the UK, and as interpreted and adapted by the Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting.

Our responsibilities in relation to the financial statement audit are set out in . We are responsible for forming and expressing an opinion on the financial statements that have been prepared by management with the oversight of the Performance & Audit Scrutiny Committee. The audit does not relieve management or the Performance & Audit Scrutiny Committee of their responsibilities.

Other required procedures during the course of the audit

In addition to the key areas of audit focus outlined in section 2, we have to perform other procedures as required by auditing, ethical and independence standards, company law and other regulations. We outline the procedures below that we will undertake during the course of our audit.

Page 99

Our responsibilities required by auditing standards

- ▶ Identifying and assessing the risks of material misstatement of the financial statements, whether due to fraud or error, design and perform audit procedures responsive to those risks, and obtain audit evidence that is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion
- ▶ Obtaining an understanding of internal control relevant to the audit in order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the Council's internal control
- ▶ Evaluating the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of accounting estimates and related disclosures made by management
- ▶ Concluding on the appropriateness of management's use of the going concern basis of accounting
- ▶ Evaluating the overall presentation, structure and content of the financial statements, including the disclosures, and whether the financial statements represent the underlying transactions and events in a manner that achieves fair presentation
- ▶ Obtaining sufficient appropriate audit evidence regarding the financial information of the entities or business activities within the Council's to express an opinion on the consolidated financial statements. Reading other information contained in the financial statements, including the board's statement that the annual report is fair, balanced and understandable, the Performance & Audit Scrutiny Committee reporting appropriately addresses matters communicated by us to the Performance & Audit Scrutiny Committee and reporting whether it is materially inconsistent with our understanding and the financial statements
- ▶ Maintaining auditor independence

Appendix F – Additional audit information (cont'd)

Other required procedures during the course of the audit

Procedures required by the Audit Code

- ▶ Reviewing, and reporting on as appropriate, other information published with the financial statements, including the Annual Governance Statement.
- ▶ Examining and reporting on the consistency of the Whole of Government Accounts schedules or returns with the Council's audited financial statements for the relevant reporting period in line with the instructions issued by the National Audit Office.

We have included in Appendix E a list of matters that we are required to communicate to you under professional standards.

Purpose and evaluation of materiality

For the purposes of determining whether the accounts are free from material error, we define materiality as the magnitude of an omission or misstatement that, individually or in the aggregate, in light of the surrounding circumstances, could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of the users of the financial statements. Our evaluation of it requires professional judgement and necessarily takes into account qualitative as well as quantitative considerations implicit in the definition. We would be happy to discuss with you your expectations regarding our detection of misstatements in the financial statements.

Materiality determines:

- ▶ The locations at which we conduct audit procedures to support the opinion given on the Group financial statements
- ▶ The level of work performed on individual account balances and financial statement disclosures

The amount we consider material at the end of the audit may differ from our initial determination. At this stage, however, it is not feasible to anticipate all of the circumstances that may ultimately influence our judgement about materiality. At the end of the audit we will form our final opinion by reference to all matters that could be significant to users of the accounts, including the total effect of the audit misstatements we identify, and our evaluation of materiality at that date.

Appendix G - Non-Compliance with Laws and Regulations (NOCLAR)

Non-Compliance with Laws and Regulations includes:

Any act or suspected act of omission or commission (intentional or otherwise) by the entity (including any third parties under the control of the entity such as subsidiaries, those charged with governance or management or an employee acting on behalf of the company), either intentional or unintentional, which are contrary to the prevailing laws or regulations

Management Responsibilities:

"It is the responsibility of management, with the oversight of those charged with governance, to ensure that the entity's operations are conducted in accordance with the provisions of laws and regulations, including compliance with the provisions of laws and regulations that determine the reported amounts and disclosures in an entity's financial statements."

ISA 250A, para 3

"The directors' report must contain a statement to the effect that... so far as the director is aware, there is no relevant audit information of which the company's auditor is unaware, and he has taken all the steps that he ought to have taken as a director in order to make himself aware of any relevant audit information and to establish that the company's auditor is aware of that information."

ISA 250A, para 3

"Management is responsible for communicating to us on a timely basis, to the extent that management or those charged with governance are aware, all instances of identified or suspected non-compliance with laws and regulations ..."

Audit Engagement Letter

Management's responsibilities are also set out in the International Ethics Standard Board of Accountants' International Code of Ethics (IESBA Code) Para 360.08

Auditor Responsibilities

[The International Ethics Standard Board of Accountants' International Code of Ethics \(IESBA Code\)](#) section 360 sets out the scope and procedures in relation to responding to actual or suspected non-compliance with laws and regulations.

Professional accountancy organisations who are members of the International Federation of Accountants (IFAC), such as the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales (ICAEW) are required to adopt the IESBA Code of Ethics.

We as your auditor are required to comply with the Code by virtue of our registration with ICAEW.

"If the auditor becomes aware of information concerning an instance of non-compliance or suspected non-compliance with laws and regulations, the auditor shall obtain:

An understanding of the nature of the act and the circumstances in which it has occurred; and Further information to evaluate the possible effect on the financial statements

The auditor shall evaluate the implications of the identified or suspected non-compliance in relation to other aspects of the audit, including the auditor's risk assessment and the reliability of written representations, and take appropriate action."

ISA 250A, paras 19 and 22

Page 101

Examples of Non-Compliance with Laws and Regulations (NOCLAR)

Matter

- ▶ Suspected or known fraud or bribery
- ▶ Health and Safety incident
- ▶ Payment of an unlawful dividend
- ▶ Loss of personal data
- ▶ Allegation of discrimination in dismissal
- ▶ HMRC or other regulatory investigation
- ▶ Deliberate journal mis-posting or allegations of financial impropriety
- ▶ Transacting business with sanctioned individuals

Implication

- ▶ Potential fraud/breach of anti-bribery legislation
- ▶ Potential breach of section 2 of the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974
- ▶ Potential breach of Companies Act 2006
- ▶ Potential GDPR breach
- ▶ Potential non-compliance with employment laws
- ▶ Suspicion of non-compliance with laws/regulations
- ▶ Potential fraud / breach of Companies Act 2006
- ▶ Potential breach of sanctions regulations

Appendix G - Non-Compliance with Laws and Regulations (NOCLAR) (cont'd)

What are the implications of NOCLAR matters arising?

Depending on the nature and significance of the NOCLAR matter the following steps are likely to be required, involving additional input from both management and audit.

This can have an impact on overall achievability of audit timeline and fees.

Across our portfolio of audits we have seen a steady increase in NOCLAR matters that need to be addressed as part of the audit over the past 3 years



Management response:

Timely communication of the matter to auditors (within a couple of days)

Determine who will carry out any investigation into the matter - in-house or external specialists or mix of both

Scope the investigation, in discussion with the auditors

Evaluate findings and agree next steps

Determine effect on financial statements including disclosures

Prepare a paper, summarising the outcome of the investigation and management's conclusions

Communicate the outcome to Those Charged With Governance (TCWG) and to us as your auditors. Report to regulators where required.

Key Reminders:

- ▶ Make sure that all areas of the business are aware of what constitutes actual or potential non-compliance and associated requirements
- ▶ Communicate with us as your auditors on a timely basis - do not wait for scheduled audit catch-ups
- ▶ Engage external specialists where needed
- ▶ Ensure that your investigation assesses any wider potential impacts arising from the matter, not just the matter itself.
- ▶ Plan upfront and consider any impact on overall accounts preparation and audit timeline - discuss the implications with us as your auditor

Audit response:

Initial assessment of the NOCLAR matter and its potential impact

Initial consultation with risk team to determine responsive procedures and the involvement of specialists

Understand and agree scope of management's investigation with support from specialists as needed

Evaluate findings and undertake appropriate audit procedures

Determine audit related impact including accounting and disclosure and audit opinion implications

Document and consult on the outcome of our procedures

Communicate the outcome with management, TCWG and where necessary other auditors within the group or regulators

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2023 to 2024 Performance report Quarter Four

Report number:	PAS/WS/24/009	
Report to and date(s):	Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee	30 May 2024
Cabinet member:	Councillor Diane Hind Cabinet Member for Resources Email: diane.hind@westsuffolk.gov.uk	
Lead officer:	Rachael Mann Director (Resources and Property) Tel: 01638 719245 Email: rachael.mann@westsuffolk.gov.uk	

Decisions Plan: This item is not required to be included in the Decisions Plan.

Wards impacted: All wards

Recommendation: It is recommended that Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee:

- Note the year end 2023 to 2024 revenue and capital positions as detailed in the report and appendices, and forward any relevant issues or comments to Cabinet for consideration.**

1. Context to this report

- 1.1 The Councils performance management framework seeks to give councillors, officers, partners, stakeholders and residents greater understanding of progress towards achieving the council's strategic priorities set out in [West Suffolk Council's Strategic Priorities 2024-28](#). In addition, it also gives an insight into the delivery of the broad range of day-to-day services to the residents and businesses of West Suffolk. Effective use of performance management information can support transformation and enable choices to be made about the use of resources.
- 1.2 This paper is part of that process. Financial performance information (monitoring against the approved budget with appropriate comment on any change) and key performance indicators sit alongside other elements of the council's performance framework that can be viewed on the [performance webpage](#).
- 1.3 The purpose of the performance management framework is to ensure that performance information supplied to the Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee, Cabinet and Leadership Team clearly shows:
- progress towards strategic goals
 - insight on initiatives that will ensure future progress
 - areas that require decisions and actions to keep on track to their goals
 - items with a significant level of risk associated with them
 - flexibility in approach allowing the escalation of performance successes and challenges
 - the relationship between performance indicators and financial delivery.

The performance management framework naturally develops and evolves over time to reflect the challenges and aims the council is facing and metrics can be changed or added to reflect this.

- 1.4 This report includes the full year end (1 April to 31 March) financial position for West Suffolk Council, prior to review by external audit. The budget against which the actual variances are measured against was set in February 2023. The majority of these variances have existed for a number of months and have therefore been reported previously to this Committee. The reports for the previous quarters can be found here:

[2023 to 2024 Performance Report Q1](#)

[2023 to 2024 Performance Report Q2](#)

[2023 to 2024 Performance Report Q3](#)

- 1.5 Where significant and ongoing variances have arisen and been reported during this financial year, where possible, these have been reflected in the budget and Medium-Term Financial Plan for 2024 onwards, including in the current year 2024 to 2025 budget that this committee will monitor during the course of the year.

[Medium Term Financial Plan](#)

- 1.6 As set out later in this report, despite major national and international impacts on public services budgets, such as inflation and cost of utilities, the **year-end outturn shows an overall balanced position**. This position includes the planned release of £0.8 million of top-up to the general fund, however not all of this is required to balance the outturn position and as such the remaining balance will be held within the general fund balance carry forward into 2024 to 2025. The year-end general fund balance is therefore £5.5 million, which is higher than the originally anticipated level of £5.0 million. Giving the Council a robust financial position going into 2024 to 2025.
- 1.7 Without this planned use of the general fund allowance in year, the **deficit would be £0.3 million (which is just under 0.5% of total income excluding housing benefits)**. The general fund is there to help meet predicted and unforeseen a impacts and variances to budget, including the national and international financial challenges which both the public and private sector are facing. By their very nature these are hard to predict and exactly quantify their impact and the general fund helps meet those needs- further detailed in **Appendix B**.

Income recovery

- 1.8 Council Tax covers less than a fifth of the cost of services by West Suffolk Council. As such, Government requires councils to raise income to deliver services. Around 70 per cent of West Suffolk Council's budget is funded locally with income from fees and charges adding to the money raised through council tax. Income generation for public services across the UK has been severely impacted over the last few years by the pandemic, the cost-of-living crisis, and increased inflation. This has impacted our communities and businesses, has increased demand on some of the council's services such as housing, and has also brought additional pressures on councils budgets up and down the country.
- 1.9 West Suffolk Council is not alone in continuing to face these issues, although there are good signs of recovery by services. The data collected during the year 2022 to 2023 helped inform a revised income budget level for a number of council income streams in the 2023 to 2024 budget. The year-end outturn position indicates that a number of these income streams are showing an improvement on

budget expectations going into 2024 to 2025, further details are available in **Appendix B**.

- 1.10 Performance of the council's income streams are a key part of in-year monitoring. They help inform our ongoing annual budget setting processes as we continue to understand if the impact of any changes in people's behavioural, are likely to be temporary or become more permanent. The council also looks at what is happening to other similar services and authorities across the United Kingdom to help inform its view.

Impact of inflation and wider economic conditions

- 1.11 In addition to the ongoing effects of income recovery, other global economic pressures continue to have a major impact on the council's finances. Significant increases in energy prices, coupled with the inflationary impact on commodities from the war in Ukraine, are all contributing towards the council's budgetary pressures, both in the current year 2023 to 2024 and across the medium term. A number of these had already been taken into account for the 2023 to 2024 budget.
- 1.12 These wider economic pressures can be seen in the year end outturn position for 2023 to 2024, particularly in the overspends on utilities and supplies and services. These pressures are not expected to improve in the short term and will be reviewed as the year progresses as part of our budget monitoring reported to this committee for the 2024 to 2025 period.
- 1.13 Global economic pressures have, however, had some positive impacts on the budget. Rising interest rates have resulted in increased investment income, and the more recent fall in fuel prices (still above those experienced prior to the cost of living crisis) has led to year end savings against the assumed unit rate used when setting the current year budget. See also **Appendix B**.
- 1.14 In addition, higher utility costs mean renewable measures that the council has invested in, such as Toggam Solar Farm, solar panels on buildings and battery charges bring in valuable income streams for the council for the delivery of services. In addition, Council initiatives such as Solar for Business have not only brought in income for the authority but have also helped businesses keep their electricity bills down and reduce their carbon emissions impact on the environment.
- 1.15 The council's approved budget for 2023 to 2024, which was set in February 2023, included a four per cent assumption in respect of the local government pay award. The pay award was subsequently agreed at an increase of £1,925 per annum for scale points 1 to 42,

and 3.88 per cent for scale point 43 and above. This impacts the budget by around £0.6 million per annum. The council continues to manage the impact of the pay award within the overall employment costs through in-year vacancy management and then within the overall budget position.

2. Quarter 4 Performance

2.1 This report shows the quarter 4 performance and year-end financial position for West Suffolk Council for 2023 to 2024.

2.2 The attached appendices detail the performance as follows:

Appendix A: Key performance indicators (KPI) dashboards.

These dashboards are also available in an interactive online format which can be viewed at the link below. They give performance information about a wide range of the council's business areas, grouped by Portfolio Holder.

[Appendix A – Performance dashboards](#)

Appendix B: Income and expenditure report

This appendix shows the revenue outturn position across the council, analysed across the various categories of income and expenditure.

Appendices C to D: Other Financial performance

These appendices contain the financial outturn positions for the council in respect of capital and earmarked reserves.

Appendix E: Strategic Risk Register

This appendix contains the revised West Suffolk Strategic Risk Register, further details are set out in section 7 of this report.

Exempt Appendix F: Debt still outstanding after 90 days

This appendix contains summary information regarding the current levels and types of debt still outstanding after 90 days owed to the council. **This appendix is exempt as it contains details of some individual debtor balances for review by this committee.**

Appendix G: Oflog briefing note – 'what we know so far'

A briefing note on 'Oflog – what we know so far', providing context on Oflog's activities.

Appendix H: Environment and Sustainability Reference Group (ESRG) quarterly Report

The Environment and Sustainability Reference Group (ESRG) has reviewed the progress against the actions being undertaken by the council under its agreed environment and climate change action plans.

3. Performance summary

- 3.1 Each of the dashboards at Appendix A contains commentary on the council's performance in quarter 4 of 2023 to 2024. These dashboards are also available in an interactive, online format at [Appendix A: Performance dashboards](#).
- 3.2 At the meeting of this committee there will be further opportunity for discussion and questions around the trends and patterns that this quarter's data is showing.
- 3.3 These dashboards are designed to be interactive, providing further insight and detail about the data. Therefore, members may find it more useful to use the interactive online dashboards instead of the PDF version supplied. In particular, the full commentary can be viewed on the online versions, which is not possible through the PDF versions.

Specific performance updates

- 3.4 At the meeting of PASC on 23 November 2023, members of the Committee requested a key performance indicator (KPI) on the number of planning appeals overturned and the cost of appeals for the council. This is now included on page 36 of the performance dashboards, alongside the percentage of major, minor and other planning appeals allowed out of all appeals, calculated on a one year rolling average.

Social media key performance indicators

- 3.5 The introduction of social media key performance indicators such as 'the number of followers of West Suffolk Council media channels' and the 'number of social media accounts reached by West Suffolk Council posts' can help track the council's reach and the number of accounts that follow our social media handles. These can be found on page 8 of the Performance dashboards. For West Suffolk Council we measure Facebook, X (formerly Twitter), Instagram, LinkedIn, YouTube and TikTok.
- 3.6 Social media reach is the number of people who see the Council's content on different platforms. Social media reach is important because it indicates how much exposure content gets, and how the content performs as well as what kind of content resonates with an

audience. By tracking reach we can evaluate posts, identify strengths and weaknesses, and optimise content for better results as well as provide benchmarking information.

- 3.7 'Followers' is the number of people who have subscribed to a social media channel. However, the number of people who see a post is not restricted to just followers or subscribers as messages are shared or posted into other groups.

Why do we use social media?

- 3.8 National trends show that most residents are more likely to get their information online and through social media. The Council has a digital by default policy which recognises this trend of more people wanting to engage with the council and its services online. While it is not the only tool we use to communicate, recognising that people get their information or engage with the council in other ways, it enables the use of more creative and illustrative content such as graphics, pictures, animations, and films which can better get across information. This content can also be shared by people easily. Equally, the Council shares content from partners and local organisations to help promote their campaigns and opportunities to engage with them.
- 3.9 Reaching audiences through social media is cost effective and can encourage people who might not otherwise visit the website or attend council meetings to participate in an online conversation. This can result in more behavioural changes. Social media sites like Facebook, Twitter, and TikTok serve as forums for discussion and as a means of facilitating dialogue and engagement among communities.
- 3.10 The Council has used social media platforms, such as TikTok to promote a campaign on elections and encourage residents to vote. This enables the council to inform audiences on recent legislative voting changes, such as the introduction of voter identification (ID). The Council engages with more than 65 community Facebook groups across West Suffolk, enabling the authority to engage with residents in their locality where they are having conversations The Council was recognised nationally as an example of good practice when using social media, such as TikTok.
- 3.11 Council meetings are also live streamed through the authority's YouTube channel to support participation in open democracy.

Examples of successful social media campaigns

- 3.12 During the May 2023 district elections, nationally, 0.25 per cent were not able to vote because of ID issues; in West Suffolk this was 0.1 per cent. In this case, the Council ran an extensive social media

campaign, in addition to the national communications from Government on the new ID requirements.

- 3.13 Since COVID, the Council has widely used social media to advise residents on changes to the date of their waste or recycling collection on bank holidays. The Council has seen a reduction in missed bins and complaints, as well as reduced use of pamphlets or leaflets and other materials that would otherwise generate waste. This has reduced costs over this time to the Council by at least £20,000.
- 3.14 West Suffolk Council also uses animations and films to better explain what the council is doing and how people can get involved or have their say. This includes films such as 'Dave's story' and how the council helped house him, as seen [here](#). This has helped raise awareness of what the Council is doing to help rough sleeping and prevent homelessness. This and similar social media campaigns has helped direct people to give support to the Looking For Change campaign run by Bury St Edmunds drop in which has generated funding to help people who used to be rough sleeping move on with their lives. Due to these campaigns and greater awareness the Council has seen reduced negative comments and complaints about what the Council is doing around this issue. and the use of StreetLink to report issues.
- 3.15 We actively support and encourage our communities with a number of grant opportunities such as the Community Chest Fund. By producing several [films](#) explaining the application process, and featuring local groups explaining in their own words how they had benefited from the grants we have helped other organisations apply for grants and have seen increased take up. Social media content such as film and animation can be easily shared in comparison to traditional media and can better explain issues in an accessible and engaging manner.
- 3.16 The Local Plan consultations has used a range of communications methods but during Covid this was predominantly online and through social media. The Council used well designed creatives to target various audiences online to raise awareness and encourage people to have their say. This saw the campaign for the Issues and Options engagement have a social media reach of 23,700 driving more than 7,000 click throughs to the consultation and a record 3,500 responses – more than the Council had received for a Local Plan consultation.
- 3.17 A survey of the recent consultation on the new Housing Strategy showed 63 per cent of respondents had heard about it through the Council's online channels (this figure does not include direct emails from the Council) as opposed to more traditional ways, such as word of mouth or newspaper articles.

Universal Credit, Housing Benefit and Pension Credit claimants by town

- 3.18 The requests made at PASC in November 2023 for KPIs regarding Universal Credit, Housing Benefit and Pension Credit claimants by town for individuals aged 18 – 65 and 65+ are now on page five of the Performance dashboards.

Staff vacancies

- 3.19 At the meeting of PASC on 25 January 2024, members of the Committee requested a KPI on the number of staff vacancies at the council. This is now included on page 22 of the performance dashboards.
- 3.20 The information contained in the commentary for this KPI is very important in understanding the situation. Of the 41 vacant posts, 12 have been recruited to with start dates either agreed or pending completion of pre-employment checks. A further 16 posts are currently in the process of being recruited to, with half of these being frontline operational roles. Of the remaining 13 posts, 4 are apprentice posts which are held corporately and reviewed and appointed to as services need them, including supporting career pathways. The other 9 vacant posts are on hold for various reasons with some being part of wider reviews and plans linked to Change and Service Improvement (CSI) reviews or new structures agreed through the budget.

Health and safety key performance indicators

- 3.21 Following the cessation of the Health and Safety Committee, health and safety KPIs are now included on page 23 of the Performance dashboards.

Key performance indicators by Strategic Priorities

- 3.22 At the meeting of PASC on 25 January 2024, members of the Committee requested that KPIs be presented by strategic priorities. This is now included in the index on page one of the performance dashboards.

Office for Local Government (Oflog) key performance indicators

- 3.23 At the meeting of PASC on 25 January 2024, members of the Committee requested that Office for Local Government KPIs be identified. This is now included in the title of relevant indicators.

Oflog briefing note – what we know so far

- 3.24 A briefing note on 'Oflog – what we know so far', providing context on Oflog's activities is attached at **Appendix G**.

KPIs removed

- 3.25 The following KPIs have been removed from the quarterly Performance dashboards with reasoning below:
- 3.26 Number of Universal Credit claimants – this has been replaced by the two new KPIs, 'number of residents aged 65+ in receipt of Housing Benefit and/or Pension Credit' and 'number of residents aged 18-64 in receipt of Housing Benefit or Universal Credit' per 1,000 head of population.
- 3.27 For Disabled Facilities Grants, the following KPIs have been deleted because the figures are already captured in the Fast Track or Mandatory grant figures, on page 12 of the dashboards:
- number of new, 'other' or to be determined cases (TBD) grant applications received
 - number of new, 'other' or to be determined cases (TBD) grant applications approved
 - the average time taken to process 'other' grant cases from received to works completed (weeks)

Environment and Sustainability Reference Group (ESRG) quarterly Report

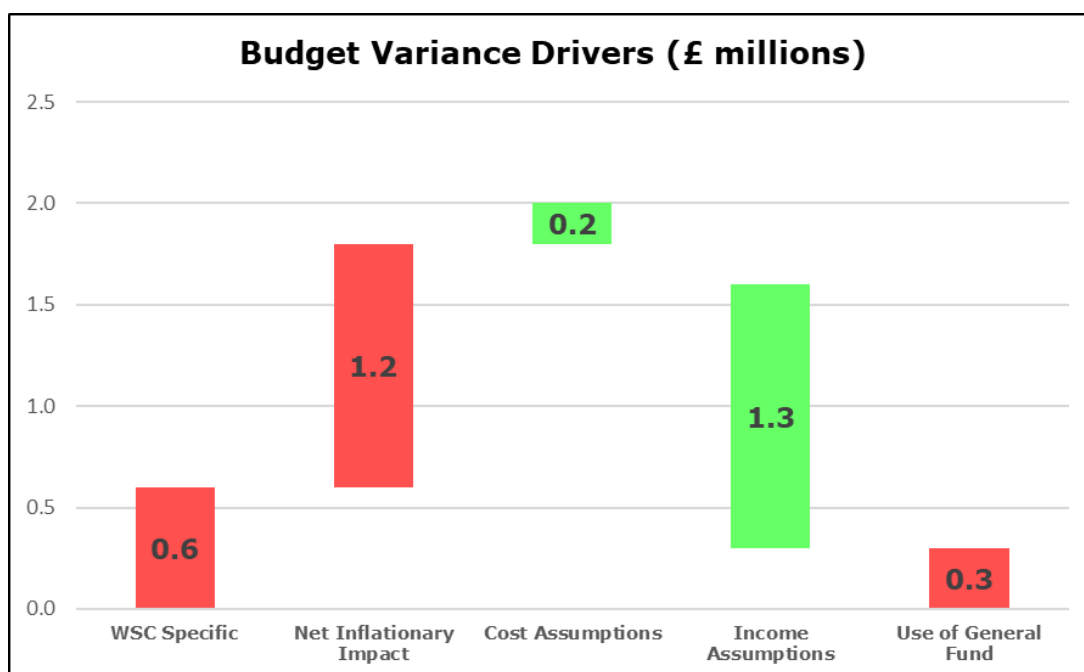
The Environment and Sustainability Reference Group (ESRG) has also reviewed the progress against the actions being undertaken by the council under its agreed environment and climate change action plans. The quarterly progress report can be viewed in **Appendix H**.

4. Financial outturn summary

- 4.1 The national and global inflationary challenges set out earlier in this report result in the year end **balanced outturn position** as at quarter 4. Without the planned general fund budget contribution, the remaining budget position would have been a deficit of £0.3 million (which is just under 0.5% of total income (excluding benefits)). This outturn position is made up of a number of variances to budget, further detailed in Appendix B. The council has been forecasting a balanced position all year; however, the outturn position is showing a higher year end general fund closing balance than reported at quarter 3 of £200,000 (from £5.3 million at quarter 3 to £5.5 million at quarter 4).
- 4.2 On 1 April 2023 the council's General Fund (its contingency reserve which represents around 25 per cent of the net budget) balance stood at £5 million. This is money put aside by the council as part of its prudent financial planning to help manage unforeseen or unprecedented issues that impact on the authority. At the year-end this balance has increased to £5.5 million (£0.8 million release of the planned top-up offset by the operating deficit of £0.3 million).

4.3 As laid out in section one reflecting the income recovery trends and inflationary pressures into the budget for the year has meant that year end variances can be split into income growth, inflationary pressures and specific, localised assumption changes.

4.4 The trends that have had an impact on the full year position include the agreed employer pay award (£0.6 million), higher business rates income (£0.6 million), improving forecasts for car parking income (£0.4 million) and trade waste (£0.2 million), increased costs of delivering the local plan (£0.1 million), higher external audit fees (£0.1 million), above assumption inflation of utility cost rises in our operational estate (£0.7 million before recharges to tenants) and the slow-down in the property market impacting planning, land charge, building control and s106 income (£0.4m). The relative impacts leading to the most adverse end of the range of results are shown in the graph below – red representing pressures and green representing positive impacts.



4.5 Of the variances against the budget that have come through in 2023 to 2024 there are a few that have the potential to continue into 2024 to 2025. These include the agreement of the new pay award for the coming year, continuing inflation in the utilities market and the weakened property market as seen in the last quarter of 2023 to 2024, which has impacted our planning and building control income.

4.6 The quarter 4 position also sees a positive variance on interest receipts from investments of the council’s cash balances - deposited mainly with the secure debt management office facility. Alongside this additional interest receipts income, the council is still utilising these internal cash balances to support its capital programme rather than externally borrowing. There has not been the need to take out any new external borrowing during the year, and in line with previous reports the additional

interest receipts alongside the saving on interest payable are both being contributed into the capital financing reserve – therefore not showing as a variance within the year end position. This reserve is an equalisation reserve and is available to be used during the later parts of the medium-term budgets as we start to borrow and in prudent anticipation of higher rate borrowing costs to those included in the original business cases.

Capital programme

- 4.7 The council spent **£13.0 million** of its **£48.5 million** capital budget for 2023 to 2024 (budget reduced following the decision on the Western Way Development). as a result of project timings, mainly the timing of investment of the 'Investing in our Growth' fund projects such as the Innovation units at Suffolk Business Park, and the use of the Barley Homes loan facility linked to the timing of developments. This in turn provided cash balances that have been reinvested for interest returns. Further detail by individual capital project can be found in **Appendix C**. Appendix C includes proposed carry forward of capital projects as a result of timings totalling £34.2m.

17/18 Cornhill, former Post Officer development

- 4.8 Building work started on this project in September 2020 with completion in March 2023. Despite construction challenges, uncertain markets and rising costs due to the pandemic, the project is set to deliver on its aims and on budget. The investment delivered on key outcomes to enhance the town centre. This includes widening and improving Market Thoroughfare so that it better connects between the arc and the historic town, encouraging footfall between the two areas. In St Andrews Street South, the project has created a new commercial frontage onto the street scene, and we are currently in advanced discussions with a prospective tenant. The longer-term aim is that this will act as a catalyst for improvements to St Andrews Street. At the same time the scheme has also protected and enhanced the Victorian Cornhill frontage, improving access with the aim to restore it back into economic use. On top of this, the project has provided much needed housing both on site with 12 market flats and a £460,000 s106 contribution towards the delivery of affordable housing in the district which is currently the subject of commercial negotiations.
- 4.9 The project is expected to break even across its project life subject to retail market values and has required less borrowing than originally planned. Since the original business case was agreed, the retail market has experienced a downturn following Covid. The indicators are that Bury St Edmunds is performing well against national trends, however, retail rental values and levels of demand for space from retailers remains lower compared to pre-Covid times. Both ground floor retail units have been actively marketed and we have received positive interest, although retailers remain cautious in the current market. As at 20 May 2024, 11 of

the 12 flats have been sold, with the final flat under offer and expected to exchange in the coming weeks.

4.10

The Final Account with the construction partner has been agreed and the total final capital spend, including the original purchase price (£1.7 million), was £10 million against an initial projection of £9.8 million. The £10 million has been funded in the main through flat sales (£4 million) and grants (£2.9 million) with balance of £3.1 million coming from external borrowing (the original business case assumed borrowing would be around £4.4 million, so a reduction of £1.3 million). The £3.1 million borrowing will be recovered from the income generated by the retail units, when let, with the expectation that across the project life these retail incomes will deliver on the cost neutral project outcome. Any initial shortfall, due to the reduced retail market values, is already being managed within the council's overall budget and medium-term plans as agreed at Council in February 2024.

Earmarked reserves

4.11

The council's balance on earmarked revenue reserves (reserves that have been held for specific purposes) at the end of the financial year is **£44.4 million**, against a budgeted closing balance of **£36.7 million**. The variance relates partly to timing of expenditure into the next financial year, driven by capital programme phasing as detailed above (£2.9 million), plus additional contributions to the capital project financing reserve. This is as a result of reduced borrowing and minimum revenue provision due to project timings (£1.2 million), additional contributions in respect of investment interest (£2.2 million) arising from improved interest rates and cash held, plus a number of smaller variances. These increased balances are expected to be utilised across the medium-term budgets, especially with interest rates remaining higher in the short term and external borrowing estimated to take place in the next 12 to 24 months whilst rates are still higher than expected in the longer term.

4.12

In addition to this, the council also received a backdated payment of VAT from Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC) totalling £645,000. This has been contributed to the Strategic Priorities and MTFS Reserve, whilst the £1.2 million interest element of the claim has been contributed to the capital project financing reserve.

4.13

Earmarked reserves are just that – they are earmarked for specific purposes, including for investment in the renewals of our waste fleet vehicles programme and investment in our operational and commercial properties. Details of the individual reserve balances and movements during the year can be found in **Appendix D**. It should be noted that these are the reserve balances as they stand at the end of 2023 to 2024. However, these reserves are earmarked for specific purposes across the council's Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) and should be viewed in the longer term context.

[COU.WS.24.003 Attachment D Appendix 3 - Earmarked Revenue Reserves.pdf \(westsuffolk.gov.uk\)](#)

5. Alternative options

- 5.1 In order for the council to be able to meet its strategic priorities it is essential that sufficient and appropriate financial resources are available.

6. Consultation and engagement

- 6.1 This report and the figures and commentary therein have been compiled by the Finance team in consultation with the relevant budget holders, services, Leadership Team and Portfolio Holder for Resources and Property.
- 6.2 The key performance indicator reporting arrangements have been developed through extensive consultation with service areas, Leadership Team and previous Portfolio Holders and will be continually further refined through the Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee.

7. Risks

- 7.1 The West Suffolk Risk Register is a document that records all known strategic risks that may impact the ability to deliver services and performance of West Suffolk Council. Each risk is described and the relative inherent impact and probability of the risk coming to pass is estimated. The actions and controls that are undertaken to mitigate this risk are then laid out resulting in a revised residual impact and probability estimate.
- 7.2 The West Suffolk Strategic Risk Register is updated regularly by the Risk Management Group. This group is comprised of Directors, service representatives and the Portfolio Holder for Resources and Property. Directors and/or service managers may be required to provide further information as requested by the group.
- 7.3 The Risk Management Group meets quarterly to assess the current risk ratings, update any mitigating actions or controls and review the wider environment to assess if any new risks need to be added.
- 7.4 Following the November 2023 PASC meeting, a further review was conducted of the Strategic Risk Register in the context of how we assess and rate risks. This review included an update to the Risk Management Toolkit which provides a framework for identifying,

assessing and rating risks. This is available in **Appendix Ei** – West Suffolk Risk Management Toolkit.

7.5 The aim of this process is to provide assurance that all strategic risk has been identified, and that there are mitigating actions and controls in place to reduce these risks to a level that is either acceptable or tolerable within the context of that particular risk.

7.6 At its most recent assessment on 3 April 2024, the group reviewed the residual risks - the risk level where the council is likely to be after mitigations. These assessments form the revised West Suffolk Strategic Risk Register at **Appendix E**.

7.7 The Register for December 2023 includes the following risks that still have a high residual risk (after mitigating actions and controls). These are:

- WS5 – Staff recruitment
- WS11 – Loss of a key employer or industry.
- WS12 - Partner/Public sector failure
- WS19 – Cyber security
- WS22 – Financial impact on individuals due to rising cost of living.

These risks remain high predominantly due to the wider economic and social environment, despite the actions that West Suffolk council has taken.

7.8 There have been two risks added in this latest Risk Register to reflect the upcoming impact of the recycling legislation and the wider governance issues that have been faced by councils that have issued s114 notices. These are:

- WS24 – Implementation of 'Simpler Recycling' linked to the requirements of the Government's Resource and Waste Strategy (RAWS) and the Environment Act 2021.
- WS25 – Governance.

7.9 A benchmarking exercise has been completed since the last report which compares our risk reporting against 5 other local authorities (across Suffolk, Norfolk and Cambridgeshire for some comparability of risk). The results of this exercise show that the manner of recording, reporting and rating risks are very similar. The methodology, committee structure, frequency and overall split of risks is comparable across those sampled.

7.10 We will continue to review our approach to strategic risks, keeping the committee updated, taking into considerations the views of the committee. We will also continue to review our methodology behind our risk assessment, rating and governance, including further

benchmarking of our process and reporting against other district councils.

8. Implications arising from this proposal

- 8.1 All implications arising from the proposals are covered within the report and its associated appendices.

9. Appendices

- 9.1 Appendix A – Performance indicators (also available in an online, interactive format at [Appendix A – Performance dashboards](#))
Appendix B – Income and expenditure report
Appendix C – Capital Programme
Appendix D – Earmarked reserves
Appendix E – Strategic Risk Register
Appendix Ei – West Suffolk Risk Management Toolkit
Appendix G: Oflog – what we know so far briefing note
Appendix H: Environment and Sustainability Reference Group (ESRG) quarterly Report

Exempt Appendix F – Aged debt over 90 days summary

If you experience any problems with accessing this document or any of the appendices, please email performance@westsuffolk.gov.uk.

10. Background documents

- 10.1 [Q1 Performance Report - 2022 to 2023](#)
[Q2 Performance Report - 2022 to 2023](#)
[Q3 Performance Report - 2022 to 2023](#)
[Q4 Performance Report - 2022 to 2023](#)

[Q1 Performance Report - 2023 to 2024](#)
[Q2 Performance Report - 2023 to 2024](#)
[Q3 Performance Report - 2023 to 2024](#)

[Council Agenda including 2023 to 2024 Budget and Council Tax Setting Report](#)

[Council Agenda including 2022 to 2023 Budget and Council Tax Setting Report](#)

1. Index

Understanding the dashboards

The majority of charts no longer include targets. This is part of the updated approach to performance management, where comparisons are made between years, or with national averages. Where targets are included, they are shown as yellow dotted lines. Further targets can be added if these are considered helpful.

Text is included alongside the graphs where service areas have provided additional commentary to explain or expand on the data.

Some charts are shown as 'YTD'. This means 'Year to date' and so the measures are cumulative from 1 April of the current reporting year.

The different colours represent different years. In some cases, comparisons are made between places instead of years on the chart, but years can be compared instead using the 'slicers' at the side of the charts. Where only one year of data is available, the slicer will only show one year.

If you have any problems accessing this document, please email performance@westsuffolk.gov.uk

Contents by Portfolio Holder

- Page 2 - 3 Cross-cutting: environmental performance
- Page 4 - 7 Cross-cutting: wider economic context
- Page 8 Cross-Cutting: social media
- Page 9 - 16 Housing
- Page 17 - 21 Resources
- Page 22 - 27 Governance and regulatory
- Page 28 - 30 Families and Communities
- Page 31 Growth
- Page 32 - 33 Leisure
- Page 34 - 37 Planning
- Page 38 - 40 Operations

Contents by strategic priority

Affordable, available and decent homes

- Page 9 - 12 Housing Options
- Page 13 - 17 Housing standards and public health
- Page 36 Housing supply

Sustainable growth

- Page 5 - 7 High streets and town centres
- Page 6 Skills
- Page 31 Business start ups

Environmental resilience

- Page 2 - 3 Council environmental performance
- Page 27 Energy generation
- Page 39 - 40 Waste and fly tipping

Thriving communities

- Page 30 Locality budgets
- Page 32 - 33 Leisure, culture and heritage

2. Cross-cutting: environmental performance

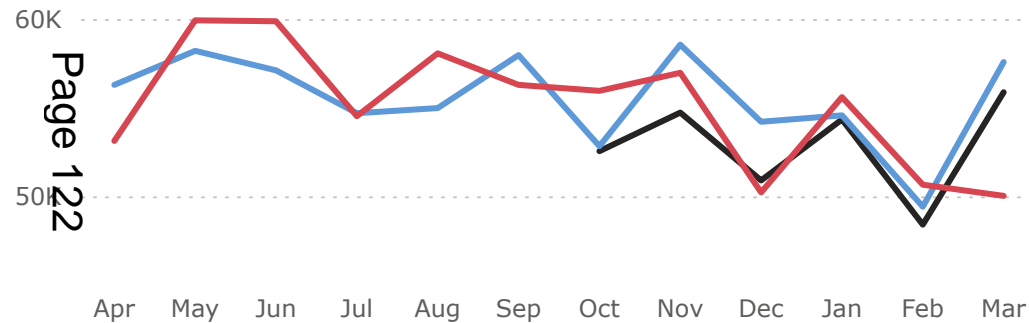


Latest Data Period:

March 2024

Amount of diesel used by fleet vehicles and equipment (litres)

Financial Year ● 21-22 ● 22-23 ● 23-24



Commentary or Summary

Petrol: used in strimmers and parking enforcement vehicles.

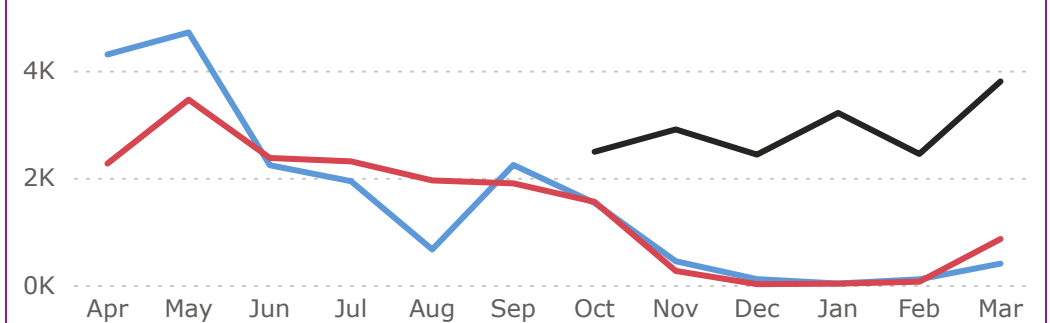
AdBlue: an additive used in newer vehicles to reduce exhaust tailpipe emissions (the low July 2022 figure was due to a system error).

Diesel: other fleet vehicles for example mowers, vans, lorries, refuse trucks etc. excludes red diesel.

Amount of red diesel used by grounds maintenance vehicles: Red diesel usage changed on 1 April 2022 because of the rules around the eligibility to use it. We were previously allowed to use red diesel in all our agricultural and depot

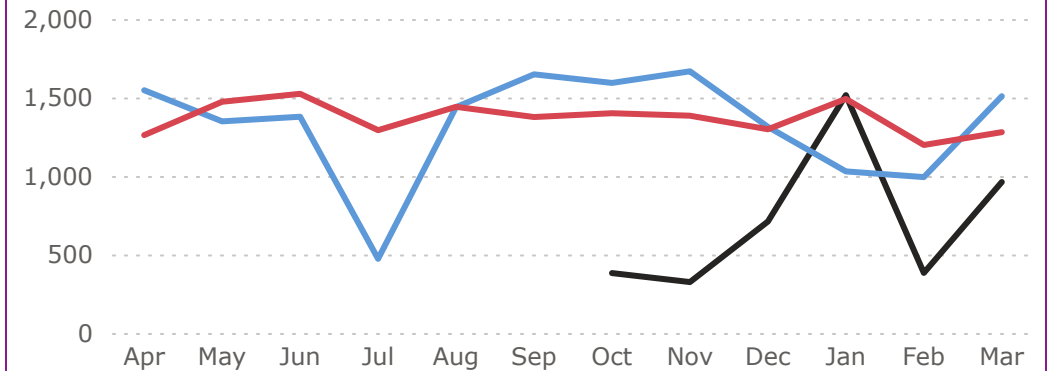
Amount of red diesel used by grounds maintenance vehicles (litres)

Financial Year ● 21-22 ● 22-23 ● 23-24



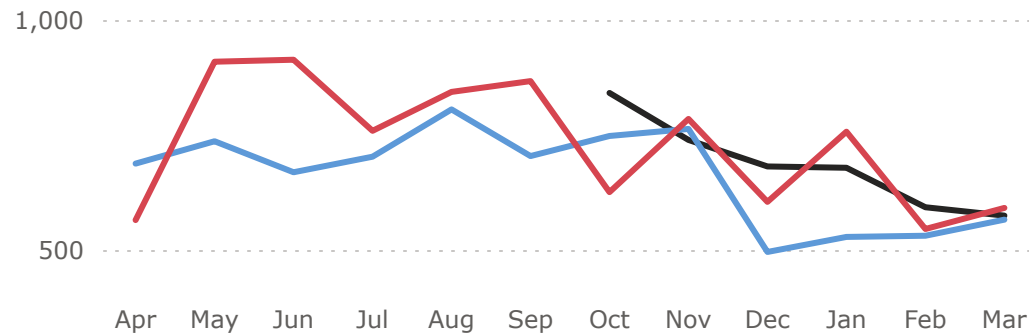
Amount of Ad blue used by fleet vehicles (litres)

Financial Year ● 21-22 ● 22-23 ● 23-24



Amount of petrol used by fleet vehicles and equipment (litres)

Financial Year ● 21-22 ● 22-23 ● 23-24



3. Cross-cutting: environmental performance

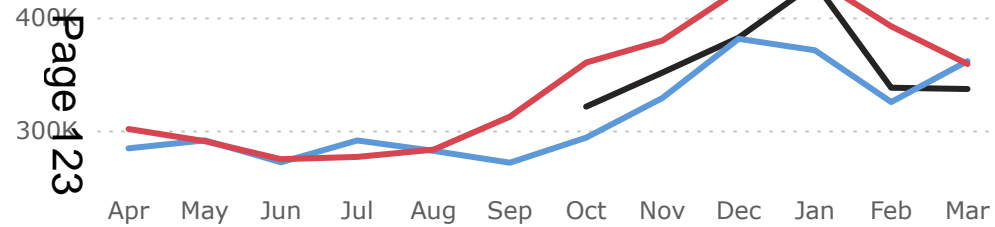


Latest Data Period:

March 2024

Amount of electricity consumed by five highest consuming council sites, where half hourly metering exists (kWh)

Financial Year ● 21-22 ● 22-23 ● 23-24



Commentary or Summary

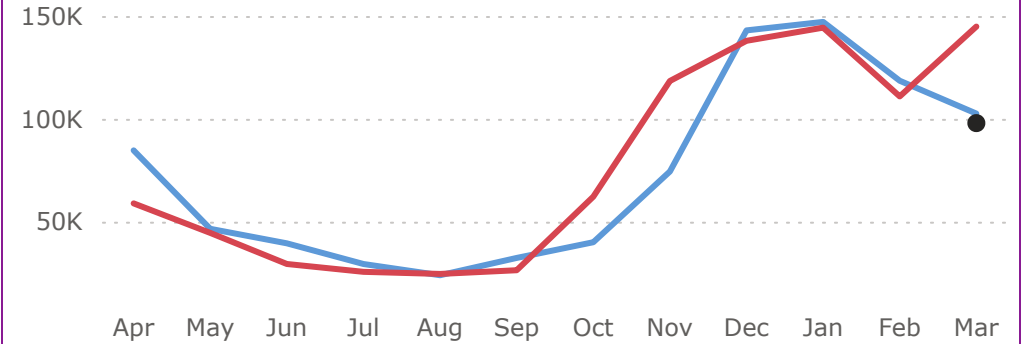
Amount of electricity consumed: This figure includes Mildenhall Hub.

Amount of gas consumed across five highest consuming sites: This data excludes Mildenhall hub where we are still waiting for the data to flow.

Amount of water consumed by five highest consuming sites: The Team have requested a quote for AMR installation of all four of the water meters at Abbey Gardens. More information on installation and consumption data to come.

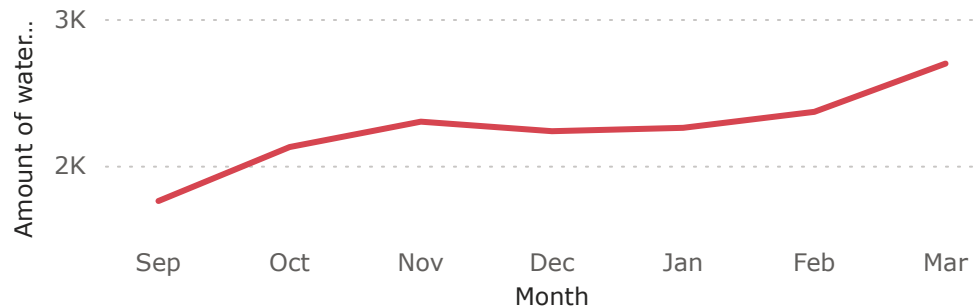
Amount of gas consumed by five highest consuming council sites, where half hourly metering exists (kWh)

Financial Year ● 21-22 ● 22-23 ● 23-24



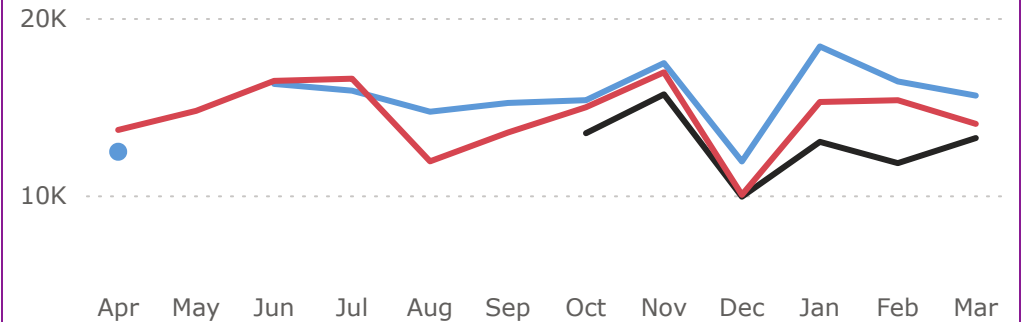
Amount of water consumed by five highest consuming sites where automatic meter reading exists (cubic meters)

Financial Year ● 23-24



Total business mileage by staff and councillors in own vehicles (miles) (one month lag)

Financial Year ● 21-22 ● 22-23 ● 23-24



4. Cross-cutting: wider economic context



Latest Data Period:

March 2024

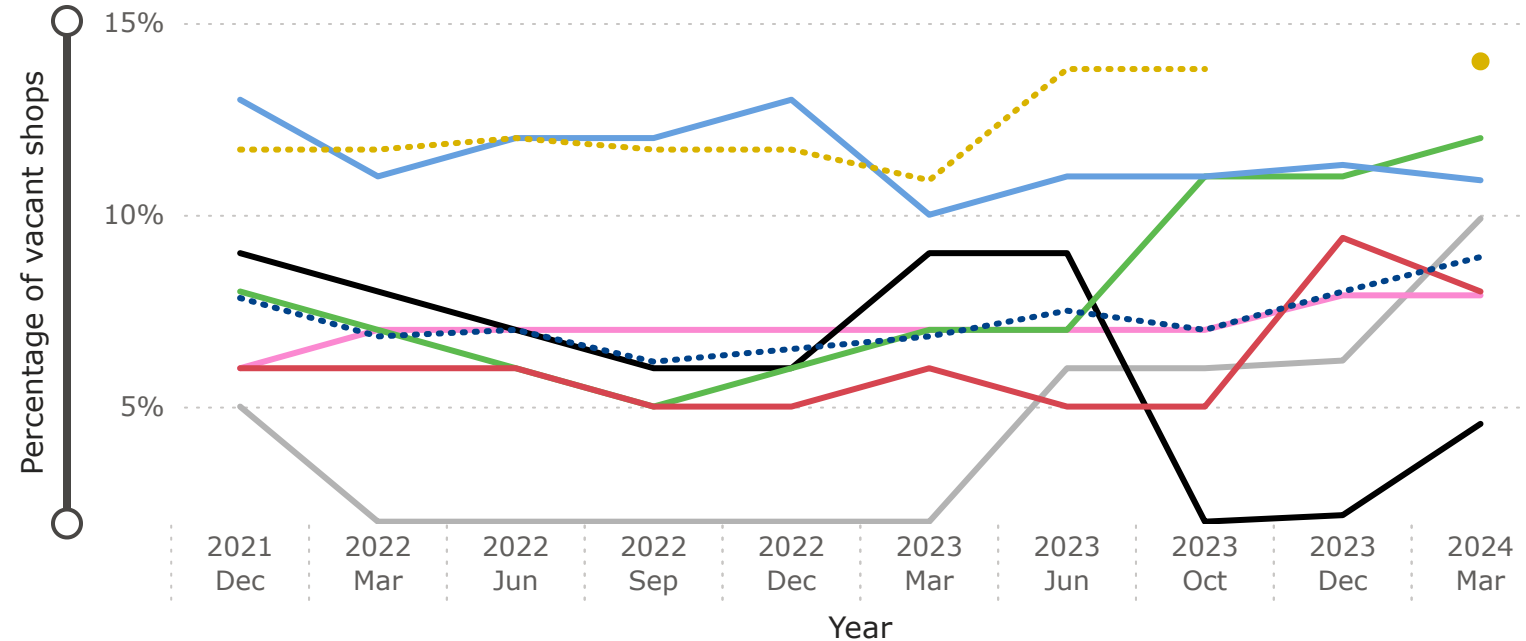
Commentary or Summary

Please note this information relates to the vacant units within the town centres of these settlements only and does not relate to shopping parades or other smaller retail provision.

Page 124

Percentage of vacant shops by town in West Suffolk

Location ● Brandon ● Bury St Ed... ● Clare ● Haverhill ● Mildenhall ● Newmarket ● UK ● West Suffolk



- Select all
 - Brandon
 - Bury St Edmunds
 - Clare
 - Haverhill
 - Mildenhall
 - Newmarket
 - UK
 - West Suffolk
-
- 21-22
 - 22-23
 - 23-24
 - 24-25

Month: All

(Blank)	May	Jul	Sep	Nov	Jan	Mar
Apr	Jun	Aug	Oct	Dec	Feb	

5. Cross-cutting: wider economic context

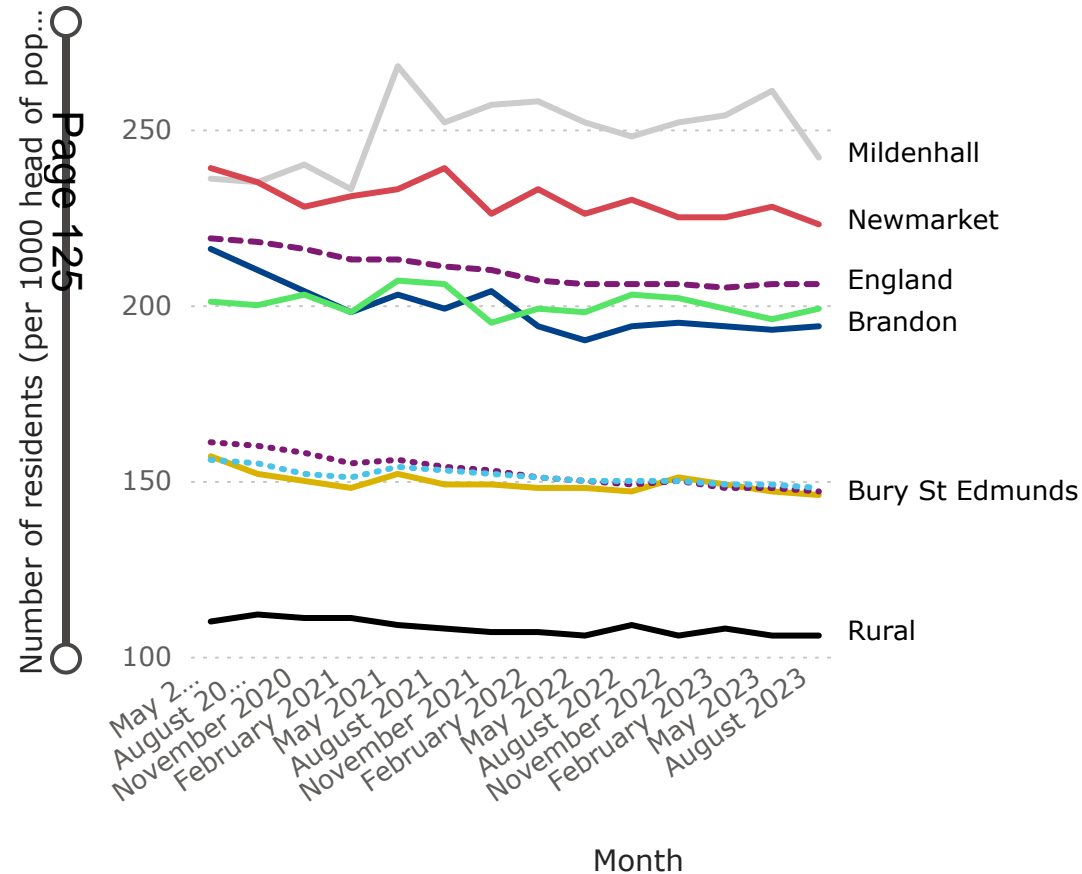


Latest Data Period:

March 2024

Number of residents (per 1000 head of population aged 65 plus) in receipt of Housing Benefit and/or Pension Credit

Location ● Brandon ● Bury St E... ● England ● Haverhill ● Mildenhall ▶



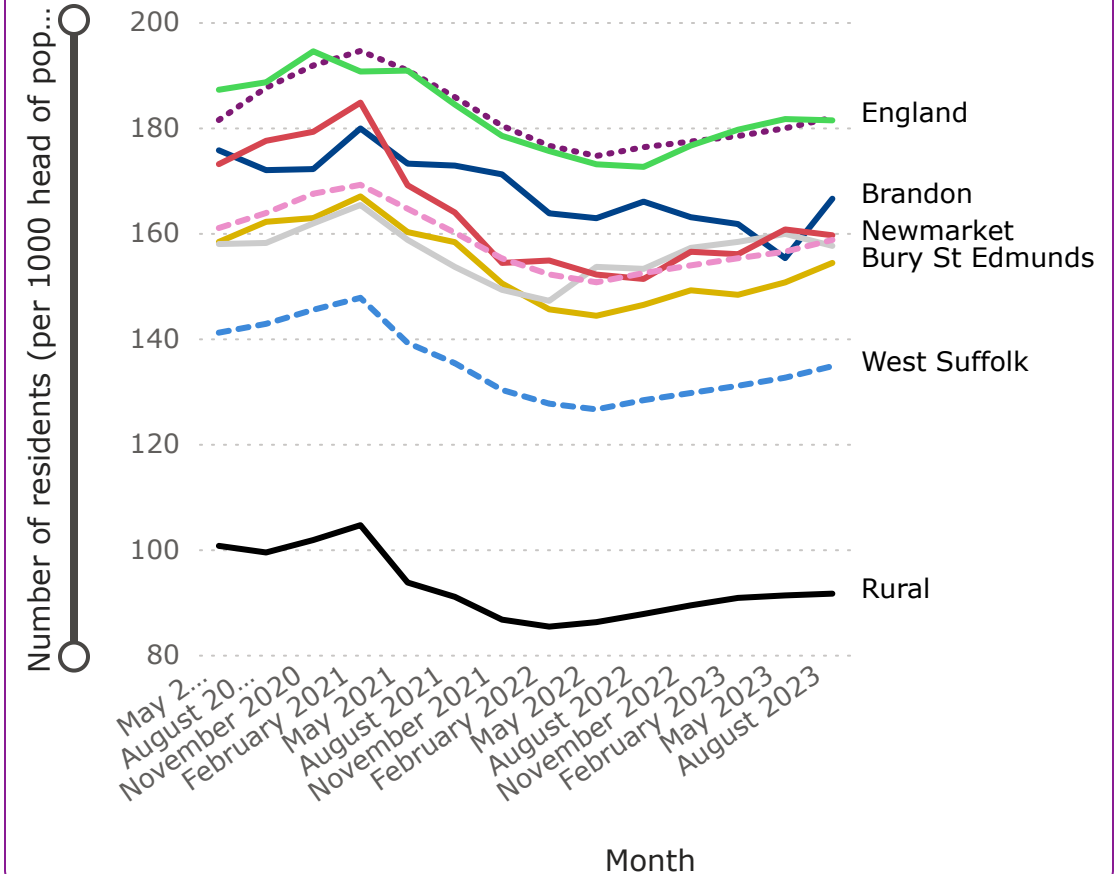
Commentary or Summary

These are new KPIs this quarter following a PASC request on 23 November 2023. To zoom in on the graphs and enlarge them in order to see more detail, please move the circles at the end of the vertical axis up and down to choose the areas of focus. You can also move the black line on the vertical axis up or down.

Please use the scroll on the horizontal axis to scroll across the months.

Number of residents (per 1000 head of population aged 18-64) in receipt of Housing Benefit or Universal Credit

Location ● Brandon ● Bury St E... ● England ● Haverhill ● Mildenhall ▶



6. Cross-cutting: wider economic context



Latest Data Period:

March 2024



Commentary or Summary

Footfall in BSE town centre: Data to come in due course. From June 2023, the footfall camera in Abbeygate Street experienced some technical issues, resulting in the camera being relocated to another nearby building.

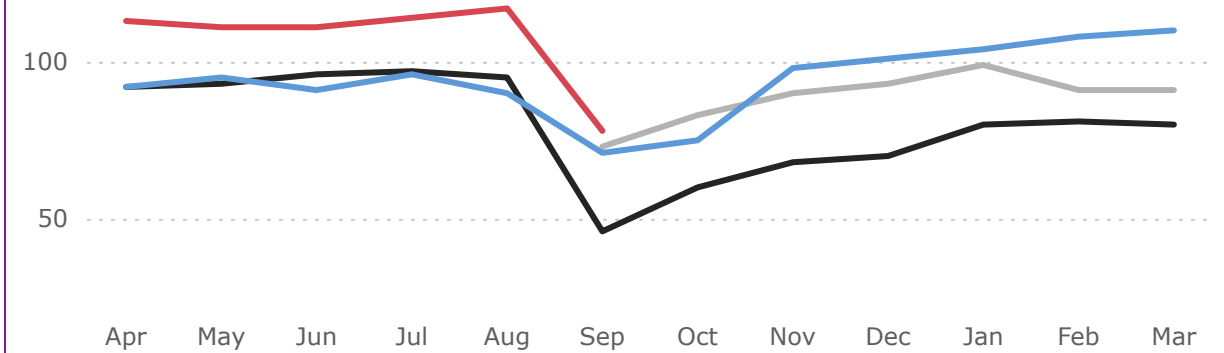
Unfortunately, the camera was not operational until mid-July. It was then discovered, at the end of August 2023, that the data being generated by the camera could not be accepted as 100% accurate. The BID is confident that the data being generated since the 1st October is credible. As a consequence of this, there is no footfall data for March to September 2023 inclusive.

NB: The footfall counter in Bury St Edmunds (Abbeygate Street) captures those

Page 126

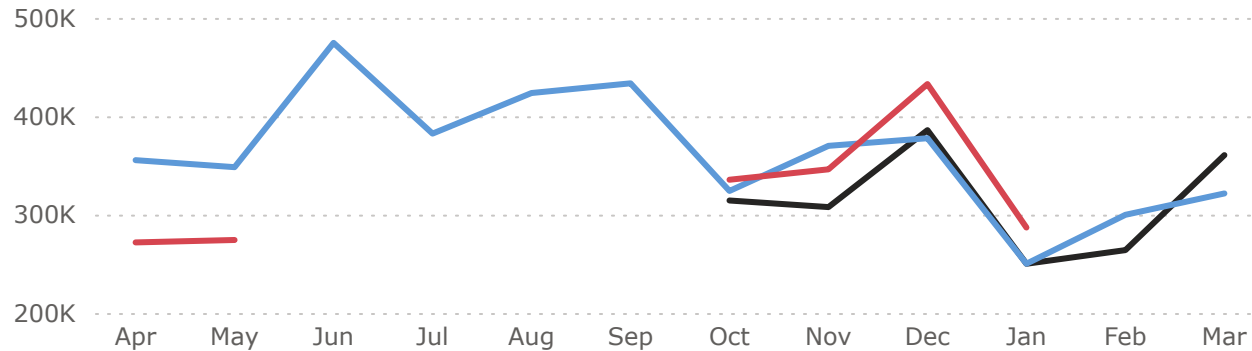
Number of NEETs (Not in Education, Employment or Training)

Financial Year ● 20-21 ● 21-22 ● 22-23 ● 23-24



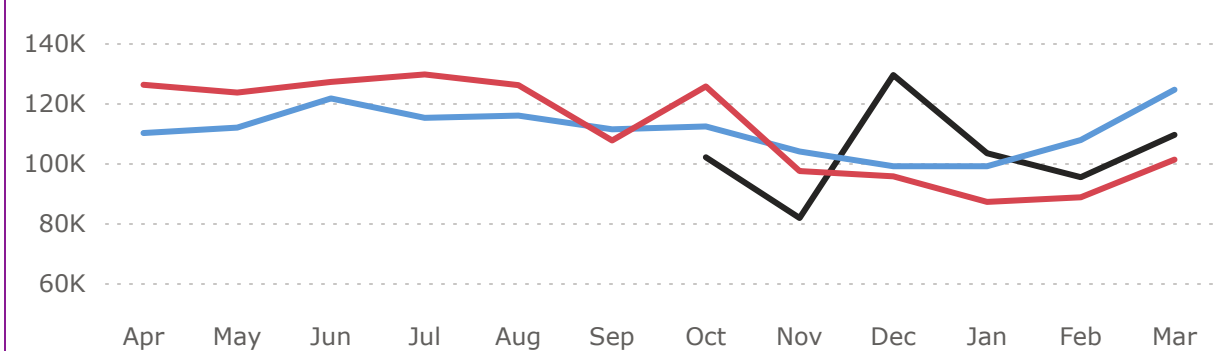
Footfall in Bury St Edmunds town centre

Financial Year ● 21-22 ● 22-23 ● 23-24



Footfall in Newmarket town centre

Financial Year ● 21-22 ● 22-23 ● 23-24



7. Cross-cutting: wider economic context



Latest Data Period:

March 2024



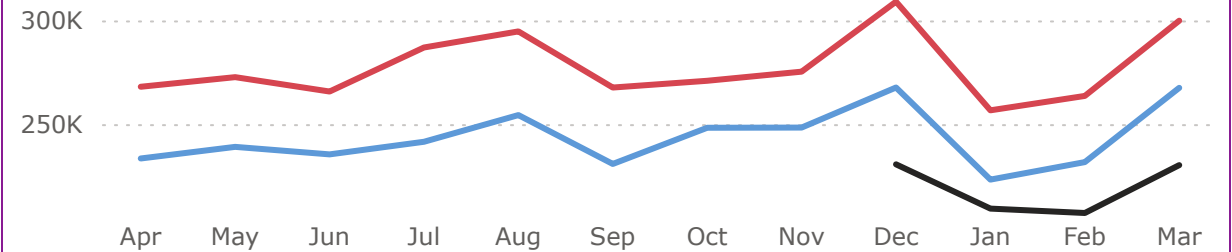
Commentary or Summary

Number of car parking events by town: The data are sourced from car parking event machine systems such as RingGo and Flowbird. Please note that the car parking data will have seasonal and event trends that affect car parking rates. These can include school holidays, adverse weather, and seasonal holidays.

Page 127

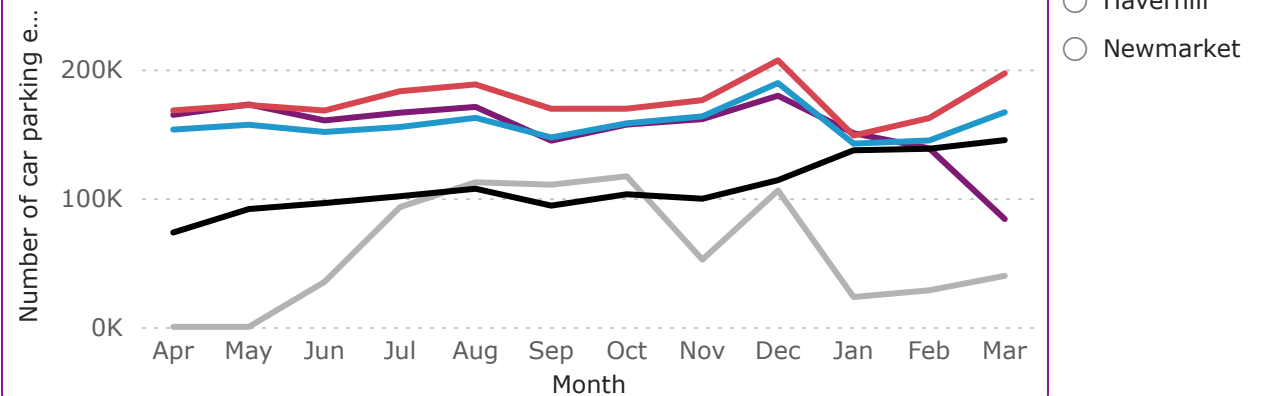
Number of car parking events in West Suffolk Council off-street car parks

Financial Year ● 21-22 ● 22-23 ● 23-24



Number of car parking events by town

Financial Year ● 19-20 ● 20-21 ● 21-22 ● 22-23 ● 23-24



8. Cross-cutting: social media



Latest Data Period:

March 2024

West Suffolk
Council

Commentary or summary

These are new KPIs this quarter and further information in understanding these metrics is provided in the PASC covering report. For West Suffolk Council we measure Facebook, X (formerly Twitter), Instagram, LinkedIn, YouTube and TikTok. Historical data to come in due course.

Number of social media accounts reached to WSC posts: Social media reach is the number of people who see the Council's content on different platforms. Social media reach is important because it indicates how much exposure content gets, and how your content performs as well as what kind of content resonates with your audience. By tracking reach we can evaluate posts, identify strengths and weaknesses, and optimise content for better results as well as provide benchmarking information.

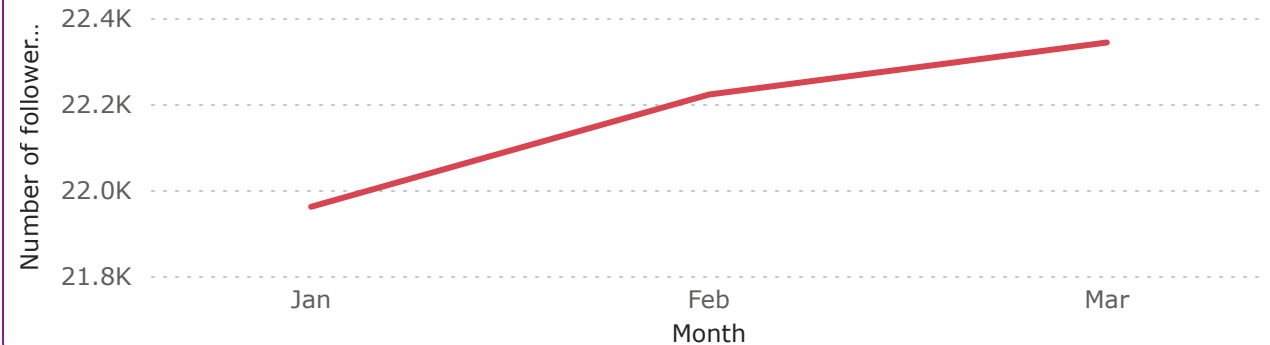
Number of followers to WSC social media channels: Followers is the number of people who have subscribed to a social media channel. However, the number of people who see a post is not restricted to just followers or subscribers as messages are shared or posted into other groups.

March saw a push on social media for the following campaigns and engagement:

- Elections
- Bin changes for holidays
- Recycling as part of an Easter campaign
- Engagement on Street Trading Policy
- Markets and Market Trader competition
- Dealing with anti-social behaviour

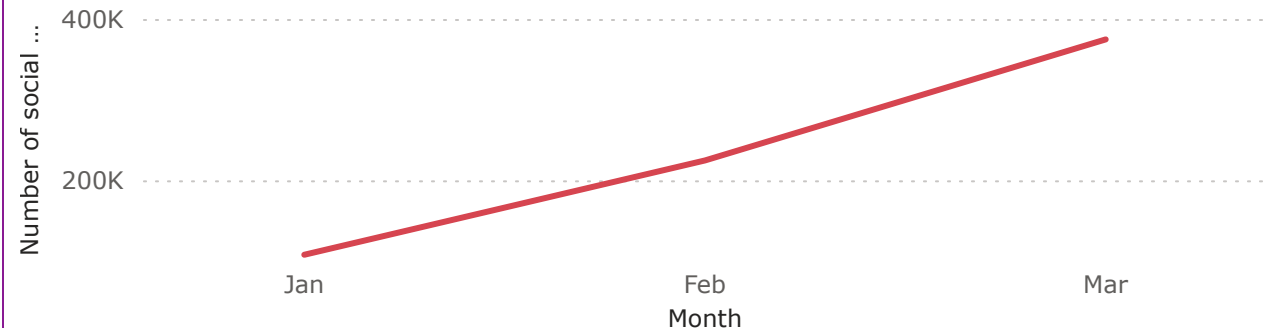
Number of followers of West Suffolk Council social media channels (YTD)

Financial Year ● 23-24



Number of social media accounts reached by West Suffolk Council posts (YTD)

Financial Year ● 23-24



9. Housing

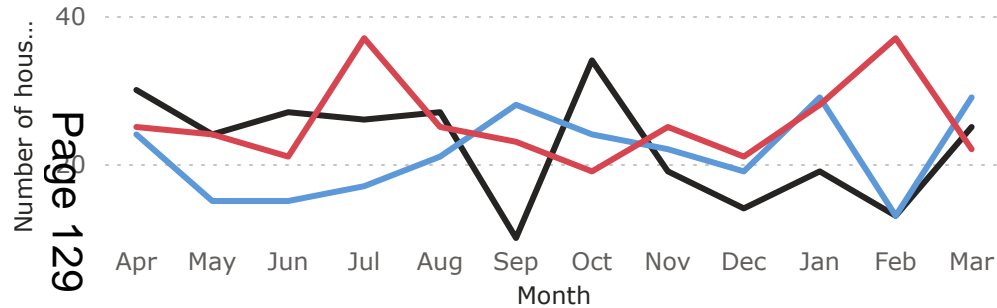


Latest Data Period:

March 2024

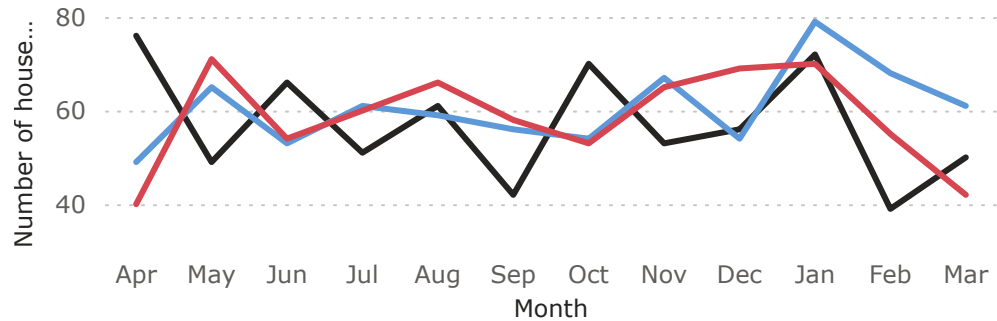
Number of households where the Prevention Duty ended - West Suffolk only

Financial Year ● 21-22 ● 22-23 ● 23-24



Number of households where the Relief Duty ended - West Suffolk only

Financial Year ● 21-22 ● 22-23 ● 23-24



Commentary or Summary

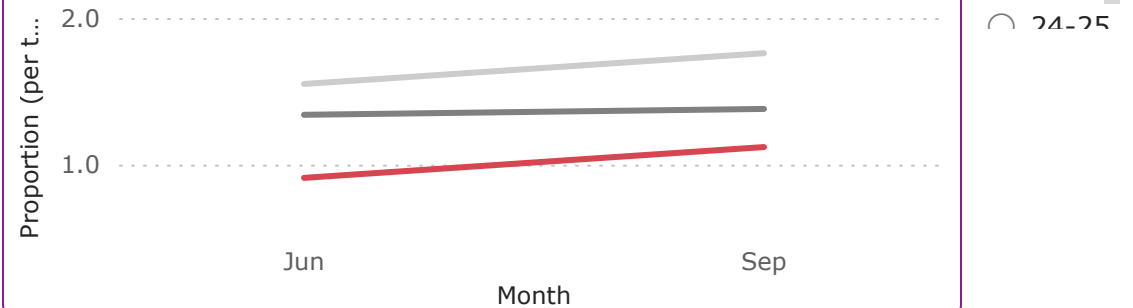
Prevention Duty:

A local authority must take reasonable steps to help the applicant secure accommodation that does not cease to be available for their occupation.

Relief Duty: A local authority must take reasonable steps to help the applicant secure accommodation that becomes available for at least six months.

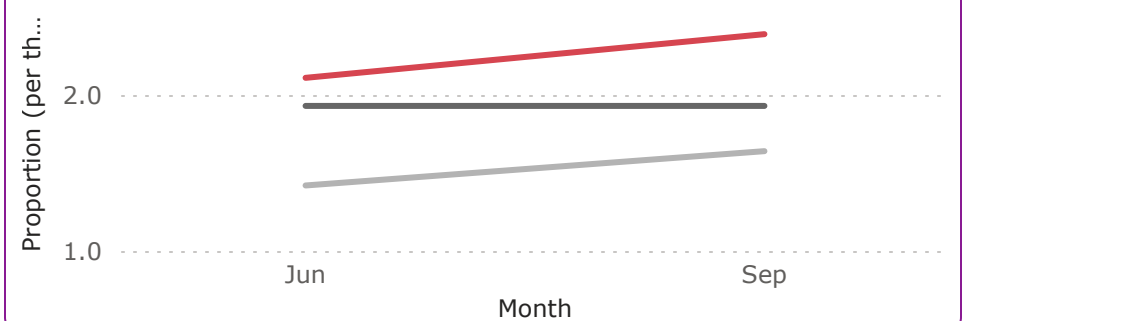
Proportion of households (per thousand) where Prevention Duty ended - comparisons

Location ● England 23-24 ● Suffolk 23-24 ● West Suffolk 23-24



Proportion of households (per thousand) where the Relief Duty ended - comparisons

Location ● England 23-24 ● Suffolk 23-24 ● West Suffolk 23-24



10. Housing

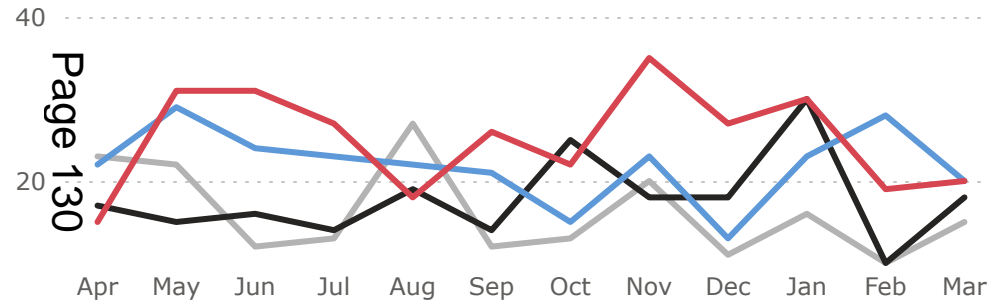


Latest Data Period:

March 2024

Number of households where the Main Homelessness Duty is owed (acceptances) - West Suffolk only

Financial Year ● 20-21 ● 21-22 ● 22-23 ● 23-24

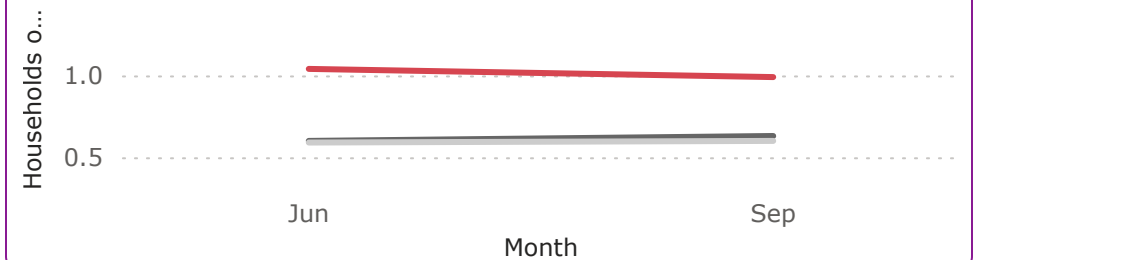


Commentary or Summary

Main Homelessness Duty: It is owed by a local authority to someone who is homeless, eligible, has a priority need and is not intentionally homeless.

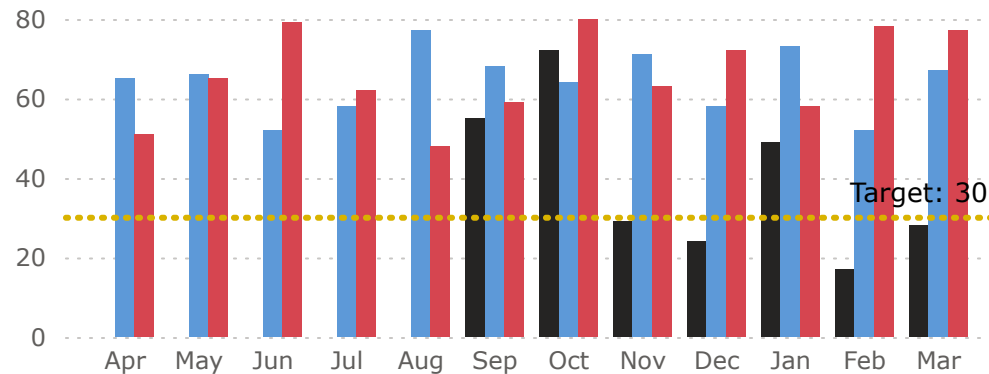
Proportion of households (per thousand) where the Main Homelessness Duty is owed (acceptances) - comparisons

Location ● England 23-24 ● Suffolk 23-24 ● West Suffolk 23-24



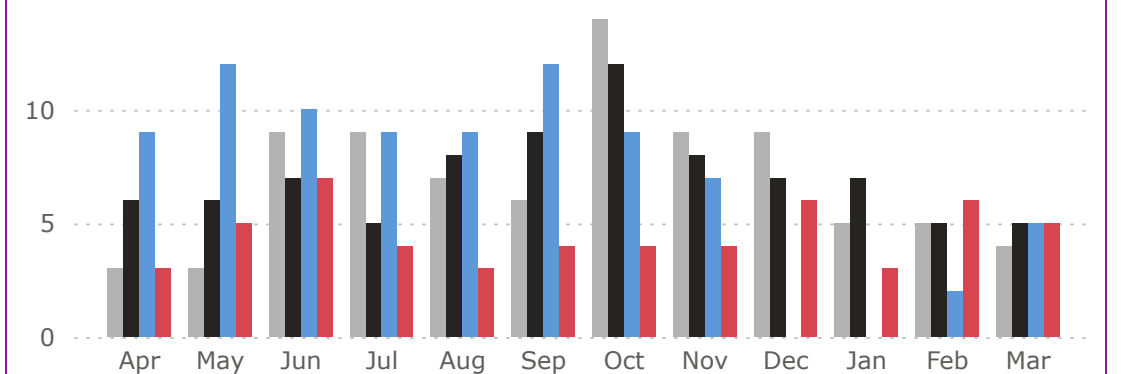
Number of Personalised Housing Plans created

Financial Year ● 21-22 ● 22-23 ● 23-24



Number of rough sleepers as at last day of the month

Financial Year ● 20-21 ● 21-22 ● 22-23 ● 23-24



11. Housing



Latest Data Period:

March 2024



Commentary or Summary

Home-link applications: Bars on the visual on the right is new applications that have been submitted by the customers and lines are the applications made live by staff once all the documents have come in from the customer on Home-Link. If the customer does not provide the documents within 28 days, their application is removed.

Number of Home Link applications submitted: We are noticing a rise in applications submitted primarily on affordability grounds, with more people struggling to afford existing accommodation.

Number of households housed into social housing: This is any application registered with West Suffolk on Home-Link that has been housed into a Social Housing property. This includes homeless households, supported accommodation move on, general household moves (for example for medical reasons, those lacking bedrooms, under occupation etc...).

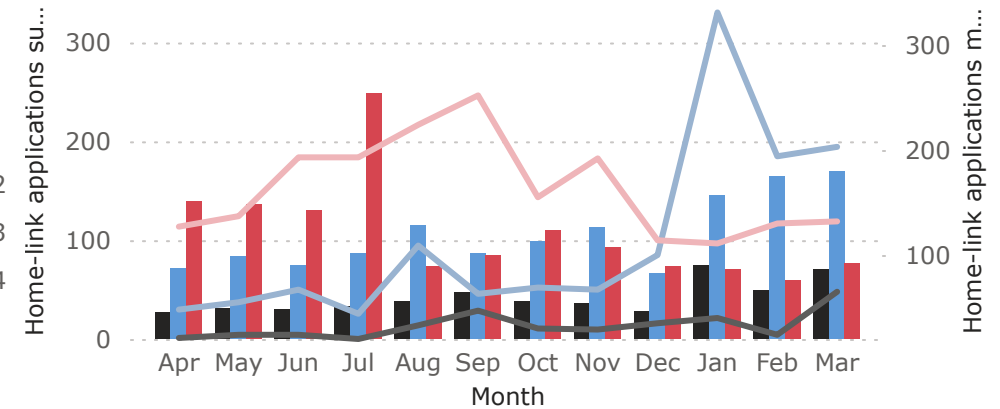
NB: There is no relationship between number of Home Link applications submitted and number of households housed into social housing as the number of households relies solely on the number of properties available advertised by the Registered Providers.

Number of Home-link applications submitted and Home-link applications made live

Applications submitted

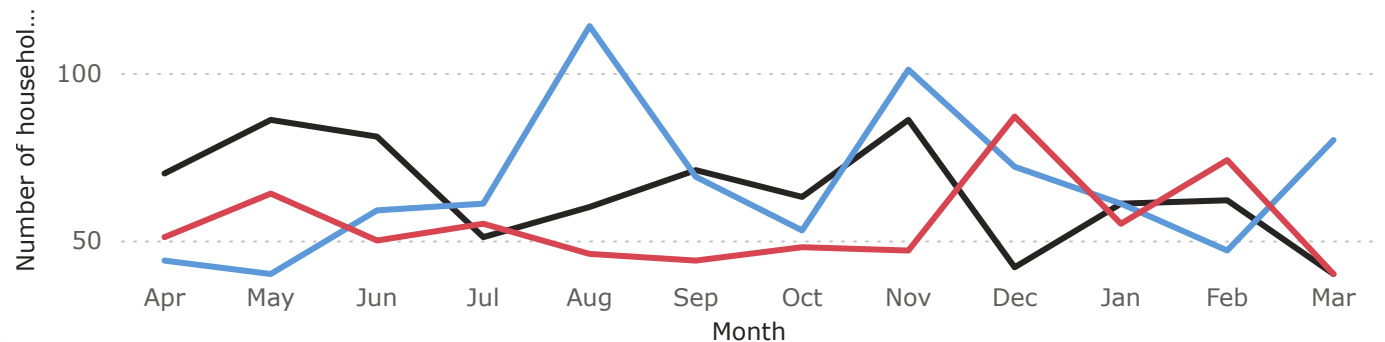
- 21-22
- 22-23
- 23-24

- Applications made live 21-22
- Applications made live 22-23
- Applications made live 23-24



Number of households housed into social housing

Financial Year ● 21-22 ● 22-23 ● 23-24



12. Housing



Latest Data Period:

March 2024

Commentary or Summary

Number of placements into temporary and emergency accommodation, including Bed and Breakfasts: These are new placements into B&Bs or temporary accommodation throughout the month, this will include movements between B&Bs and temporary accommodation.

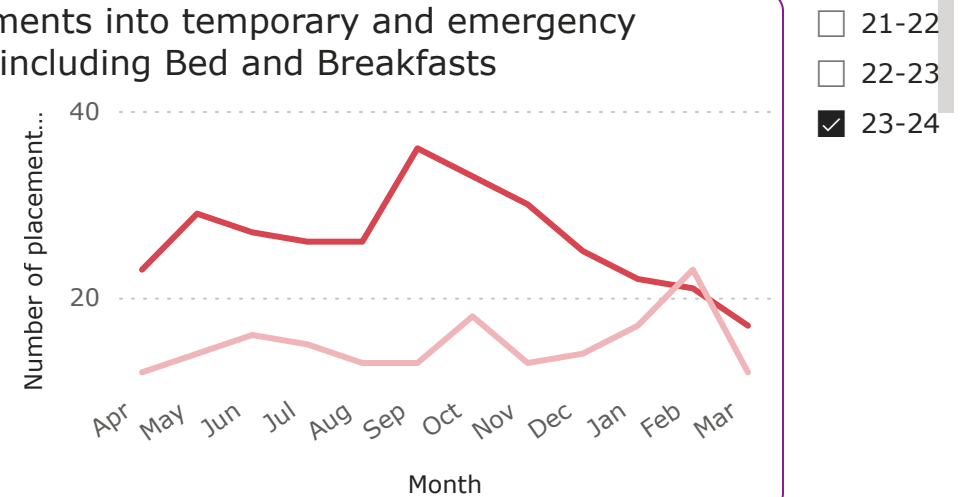
Regarding the increase in households in emergency accommodation, this is an indication of the number of households currently presenting as homeless and because some units of temporary accommodation are out of service due to improvement works.

Number of homelessness duties discharged into PRS: We have successfully provided financial assistance to support more applicants into the private rented

Number of placements into temporary and emergency accommodation, including Bed and Breakfasts

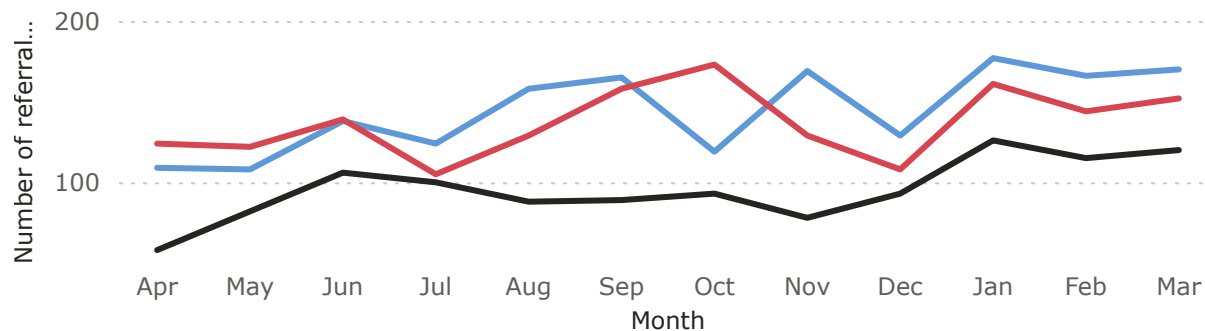
Placements by type

- Emergency accom, i...
- Temporary accom 23...



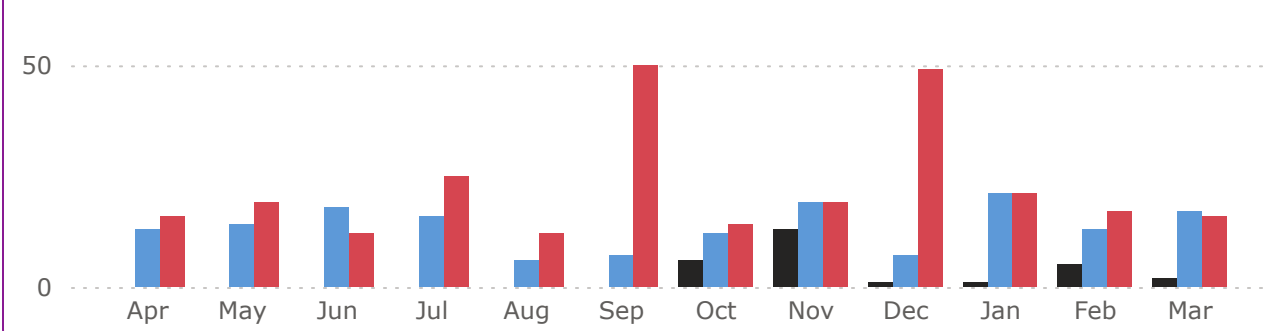
Number of referrals made to the Early Intervention team from third parties

Financial Year ● 21-22 ● 22-23 ● 23-24



Number of homelessness duties discharged into the private rented sector

Financial Year ● 21-22 ● 22-23 ● 23-24



13. Housing



Latest Data Period:

March 2024

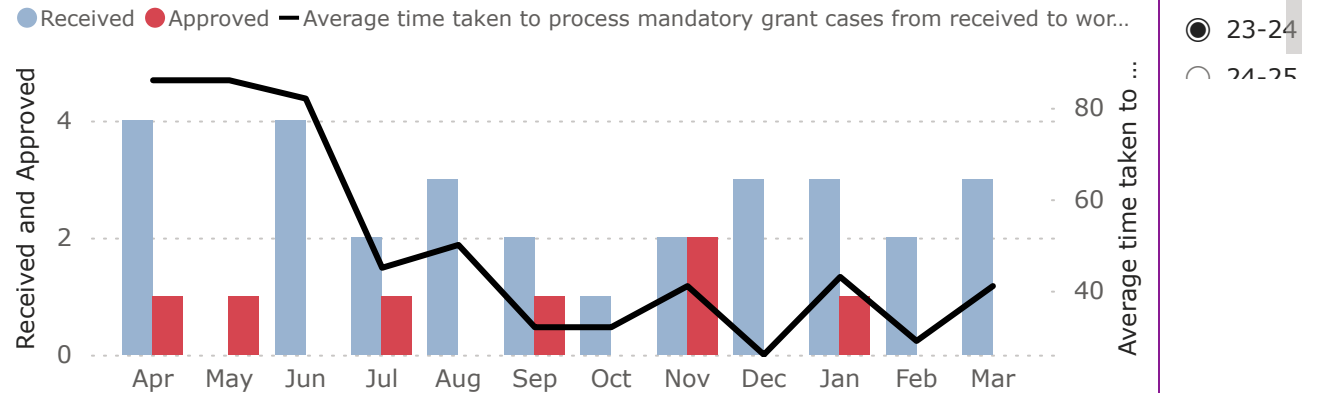
Commentary or Summary

Our expenditure for March 2024 was £186,650.98, making our cumulative total of DFG spend for this finance year **£1,668,887.25** giving an overspend of **£87,417.25** which is to be funded from the DFG underspend from previous years as agreed with the Service Manager.

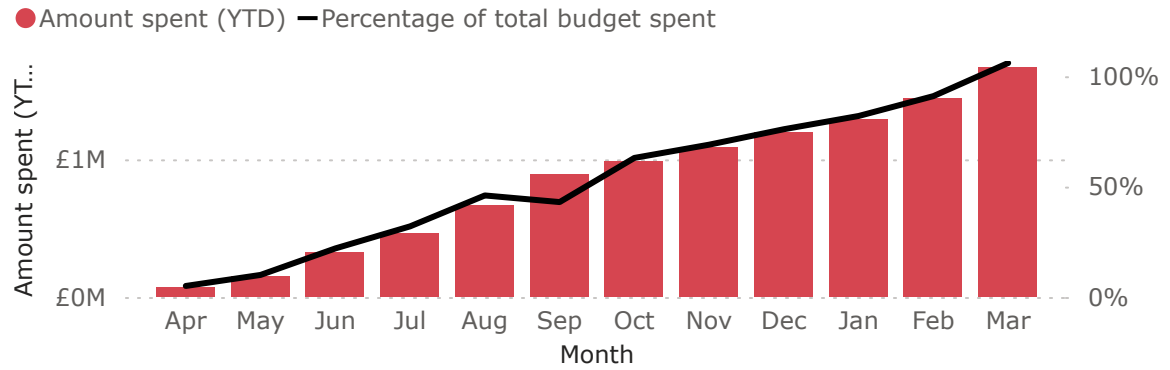
Our annual budget was increased by a further £126,923.00, following additional allocation from DLUHC, received from SCC giving us a total annual budget of **£1,581,460** from September 2023 onwards. Please note that these figures do not include any fees payable to Suffolk County Council for the ILS Front Door services, as despite several requests throughout the year, invoices were never submitted.

We have spent **106%** of the annual budget on 214 grants (13 Mandatory DFG. 195 discretionary Fast Track. 4 Discretionary Home Assistance and 2 Discretionary

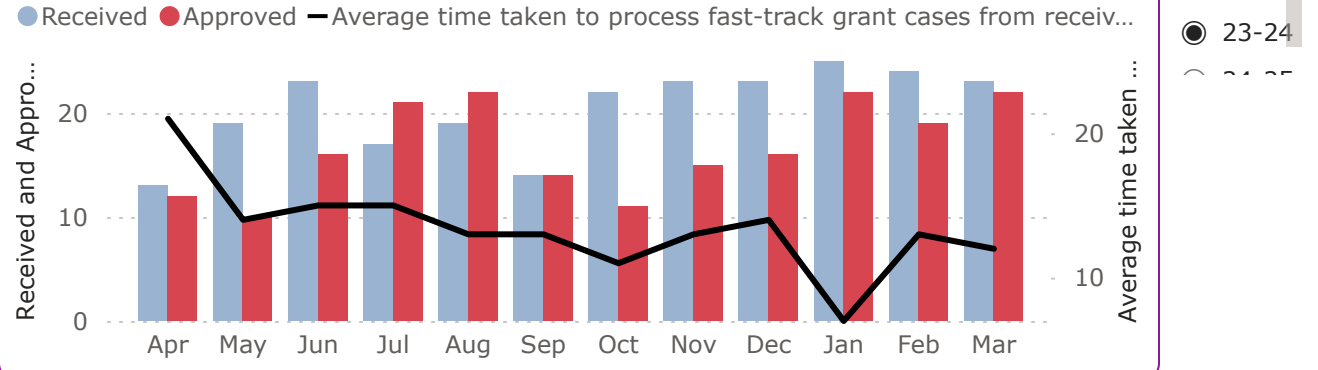
Number of Mandatory Disabled Facilities Grant applications received, approved and average time taken to process cases



Disabled Facilities Grant spend – amount and percentage of annual budget



Number of Fast Track Disabled Facilities Grant applications received, approved and average time taken to process cases



14. Housing



Latest Data Period:

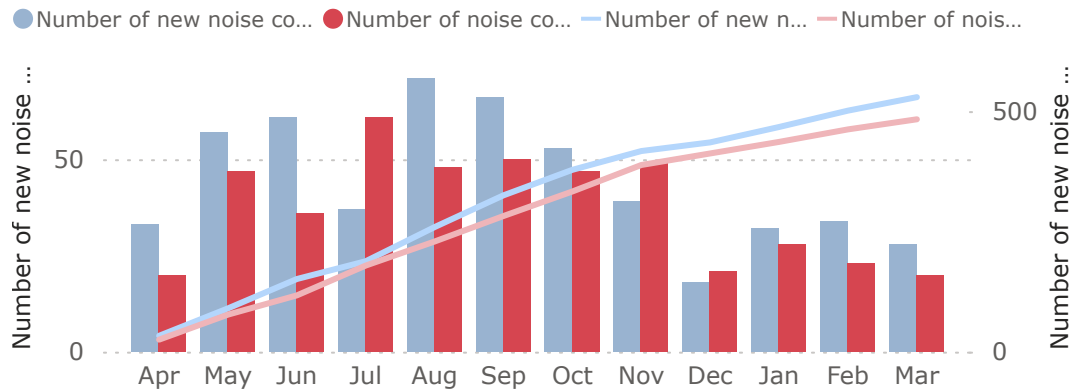
March 2024

Commentary and summary

Number of proactive HMO investigations carried out on previously unknown HMOs: 3 suspected HMOs were investigated and have been accounted for in the HMO complaint figures. Two of these properties were established as not being occupied as HMOs based on reasonable enquiries, and 1 was found to be a non-licensable HMO which was occupied by a live in landlord and 3 tenants.

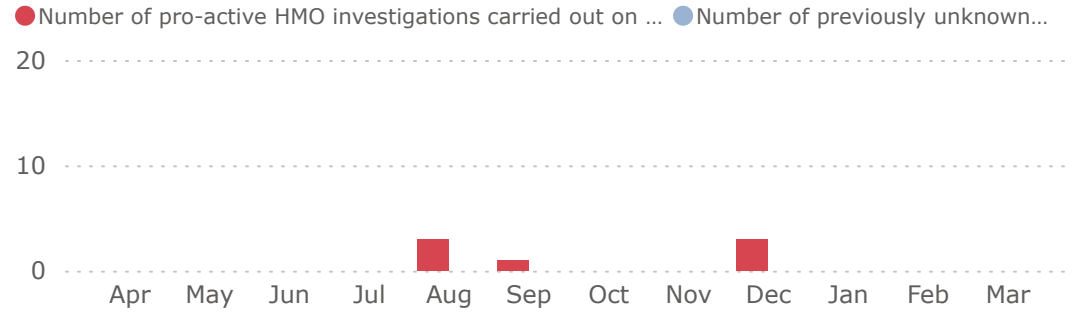
Number of previously unknown HMOs identified as a result of pro-active inspections brought up to standard: We are moving closer to the Safe Suffolk Renters HMO identification project. This project will use data to target areas of suspected HMOs. We are therefore anticipating a number of new enquiries. This month, a new non-licensable HMO was identified following a report from a previous tenant which requires some fire safety improvements. Once up to standard, the

Number of new noise complaints received and resolved within allocated timeframe (55 calendar days)



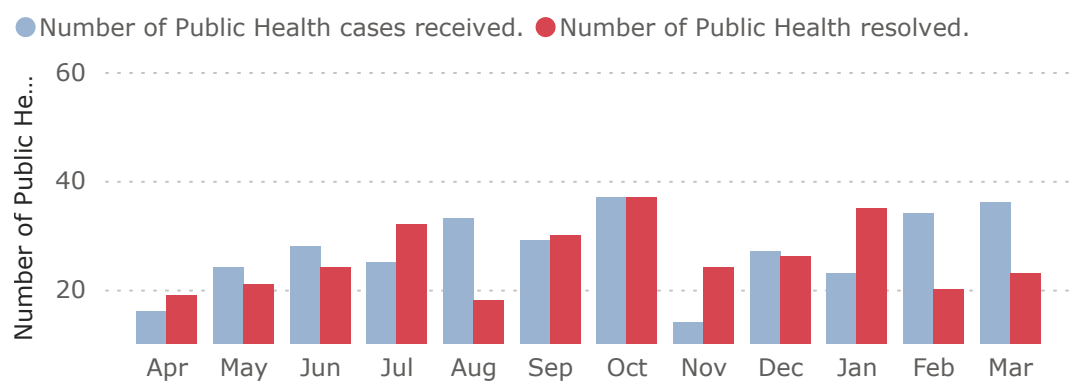
- 21-22
- 22-23
- 23-24

Number of proactive HMO investigations carried out on previously unknown HMOs (all types) and then brought up to standard



- 21-22
- 22-23
- 23-24

Number of Public Health cases received and resolved within allocated timeframe



- 21-22
- 22-23
- 23-24
- 24-25

15. Housing

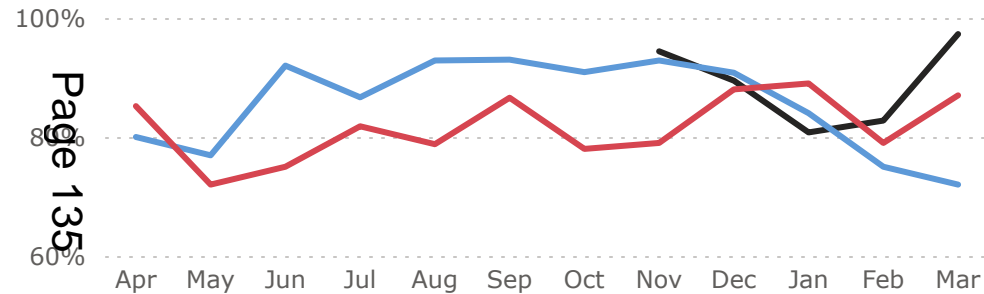


Latest Data Period:

March 2024

Percentage of housing complaints received that were resolved within the allocated timescales (45 calendar days)

Financial Year ● 21-22 ● 22-23 ● 23-24



Commentary or Summary

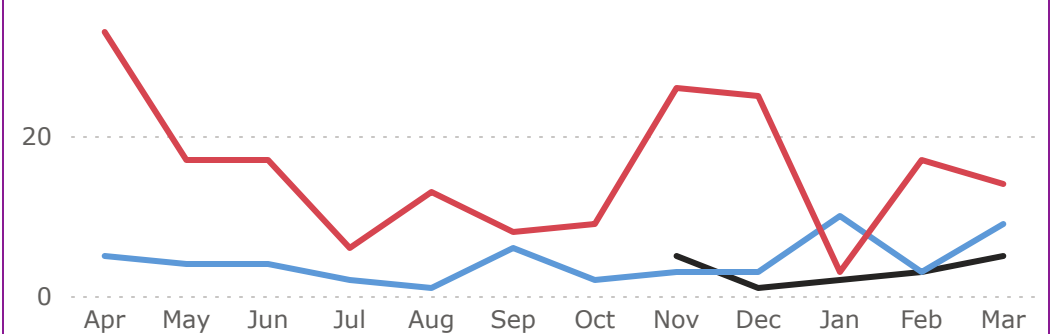
Number of Housing Health and Safety Rating System hazards are removed or reduced: 14 hazards were identified across 5 properties in March 2024. The majority of hazards were found within the private rented sector this month. The overall number of hazards has reduced slightly from last month. All Category 1 hazards have been escalated to ensure they are resolved.

% of housing complaints received and resolved: In March, 3 cases missed the required timeframe for resolution. Further details on these three cases can be seen below:

The first complaint was related to a private rented property which did not have

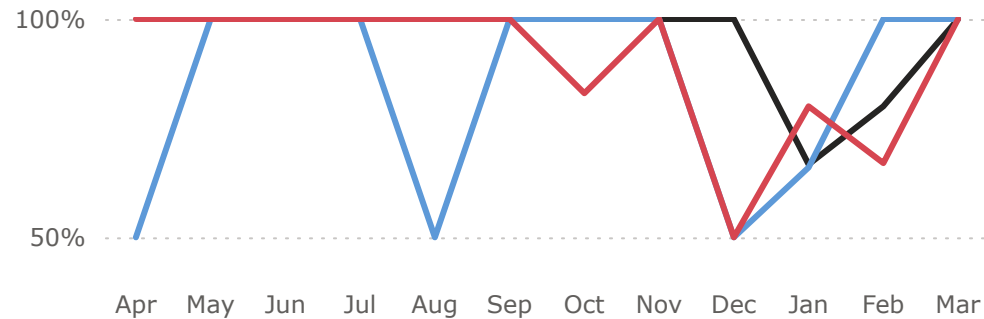
Number of Housing Health and Safety Rating System hazards removed or reduced

Financial Year ● 21-22 ● 22-23 ● 23-24



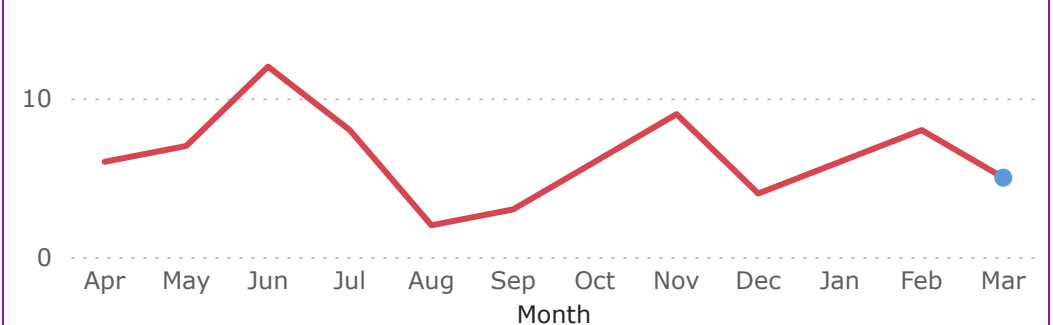
Percentage of HMO (all types) complaints received that were resolved within the allocated timescales

Financial Year ● 21-22 ● 22-23 ● 23-24



Number of damp and mould hazards identified through HHSRS

Financial Year ● 22-23 ● 23-24



16. Housing

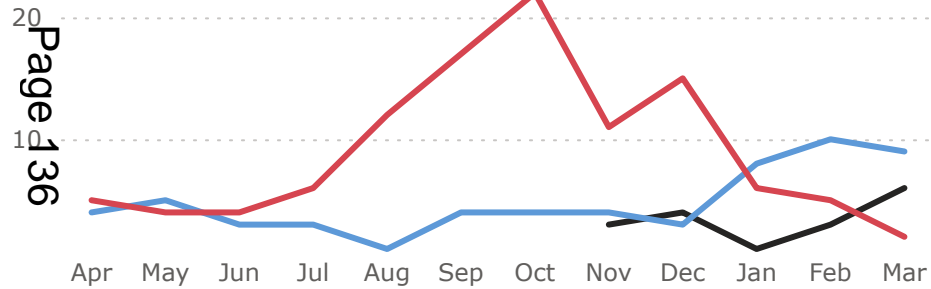


Latest Data Period:

March 2024

Number of licensable HMO (5+ people) licence and renewal applications currently being processed

Financial Year ● 21-22 ● 22-23 ● 23-24



Commentary or Summary

Number of HMOs (all types): 1 licensable HMO was removed from the Public Register following a notification that they were no longer required to be licensed. 1 non-licensable HMO was identified as no longer being an HMO and has been reverted back to single family let.

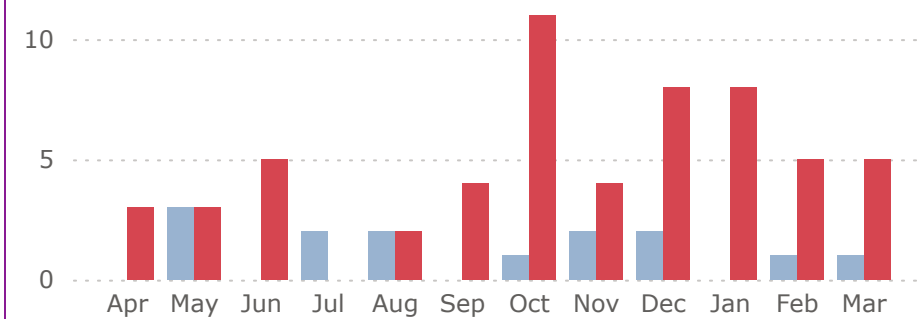
Number of licensable HMO inspections carried out:

5 Licensable HMOs were inspected. Two of these were identified as no longer requiring a HMO licence as they are currently operating as holiday lets, therefore the licences will be revoked and these properties removed from the Public Register.

Number of non

Number of licensable HMO (5+ people) inspections due and carried out

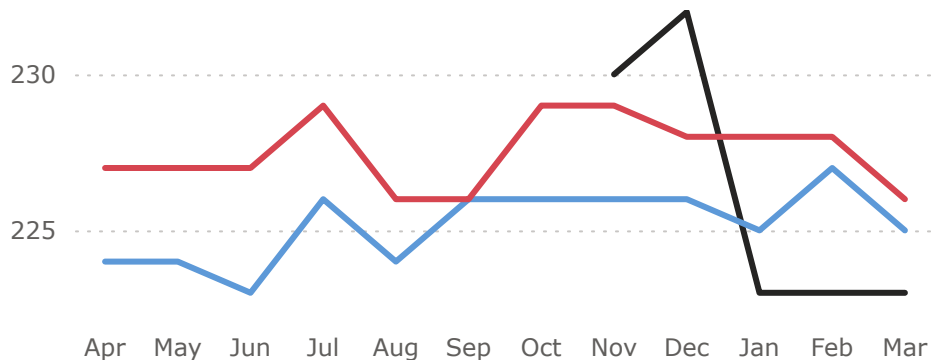
● HMO inspections due. ● HMO inspections carried out.



- 21-22
- 22-23
- 23-24
- 24-25

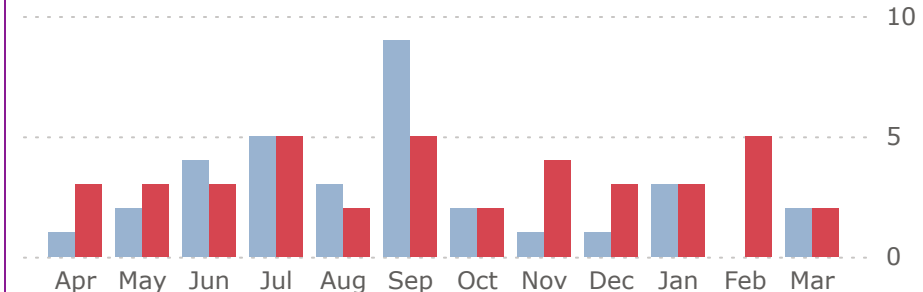
Number of HMOs (all types) in West Suffolk

Financial Year ● 21-22 ● 22-23 ● 23-24



Number of non-licensable HMO (3-4 people) inspections due and carried out

● HMO inspections due. ● HMO inspections carried out.



- 21-22
- 22-23
- 23-24

17. Resources



Latest Data Period:

March 2024

Commentary or Summary

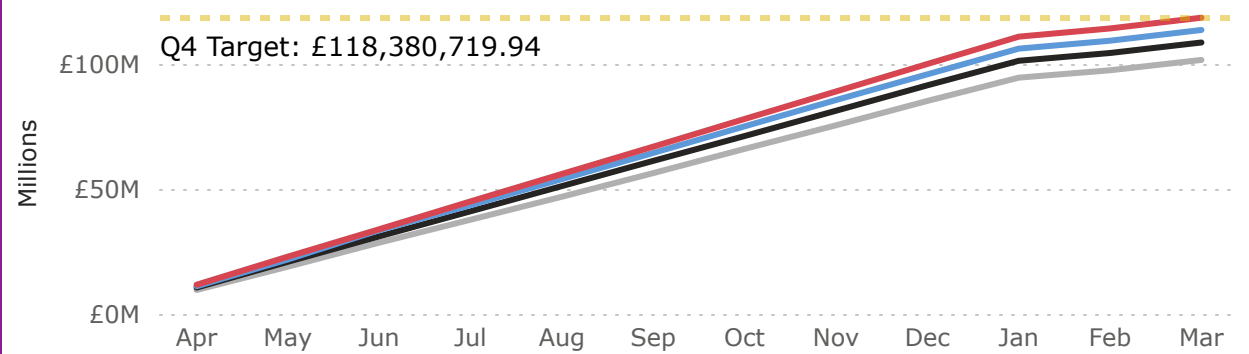
Percentage collection of Council Tax: This is a KPI monitored by the Office of Local Government and is the in year collection rate for its year. Percentage collection 0.05% behind at 97.10%, against the Q4 target of 97.15%.

Amount of Council Tax collected: West Suffolk collection at the end of Q4 was above target for the amount.

Page 137

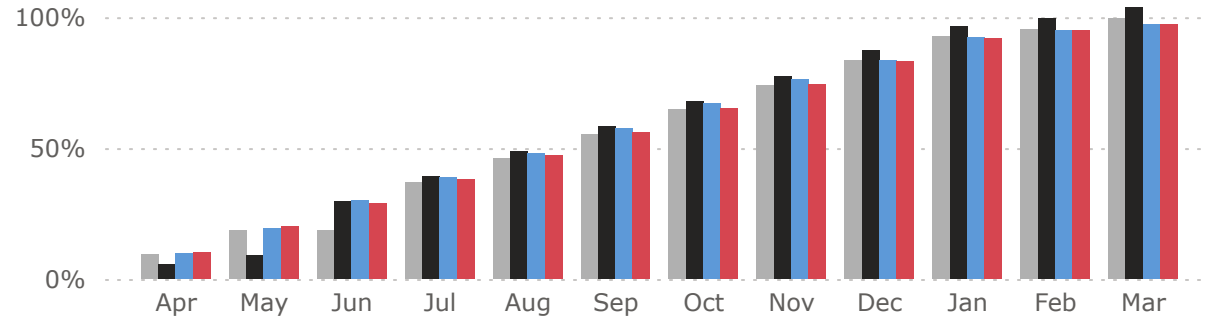
Amount of Council Tax collected (YTD)

Financial Year ● 20-21 ● 21-22 ● 22-23 ● 23-24



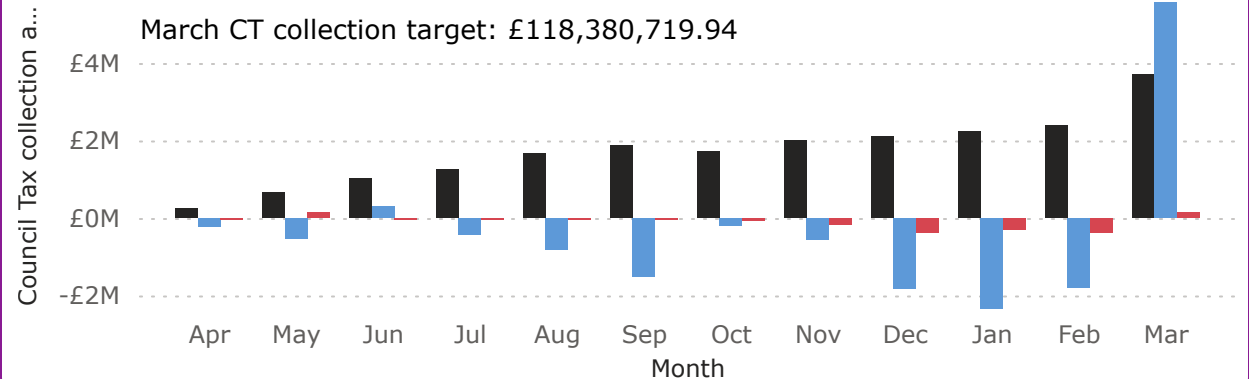
Percentage collection of Council Tax (in year collection rate) (KPI monitored by Oflog)

Financial Year ● 20-21 ● 21-22 ● 22-23 ● 23-24



Council Tax collection against target

Financial Year ● 21-22 ● 22-23 ● 23-24



18. Resources

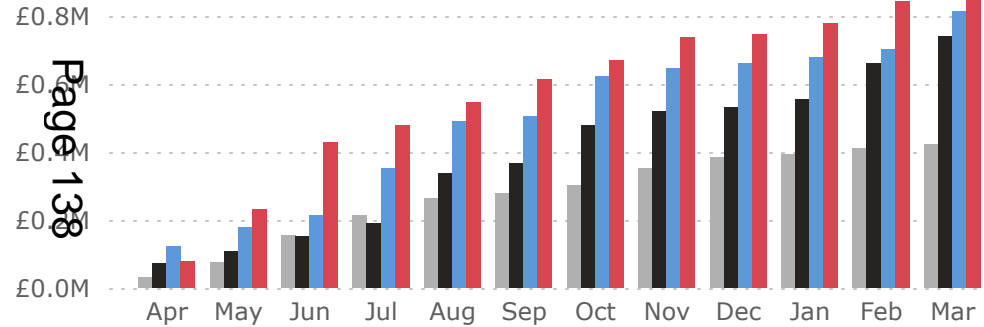


Latest Data Period:

March 2024

Value of fraud identified by the ARP team (YTD)

Financial Year ● 20-21 ● 21-22 ● 22-23 ● 23-24



Commentary or Summary

Fraud identified by ARP team:

ARP are tasked with identifying and preventing fraud in the following areas:

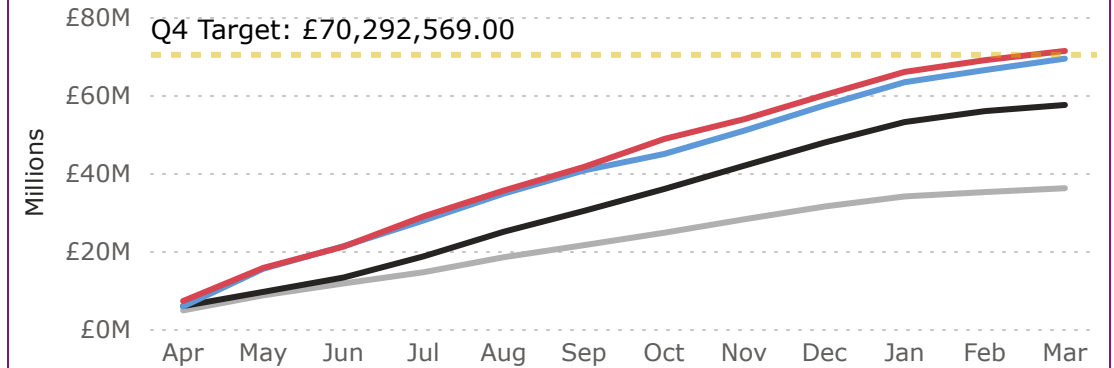
- Local Council Tax Support
- Single Person Discount
- Council Tax
- Non Domestic Rates.

Fraud identified has increased year on year, with the biggest proportion being Council Tax Single Person Discount.

Percentage collection of business rates: This is a KPI monitored by the Office of Local Government and is the in year collection rate for its year.

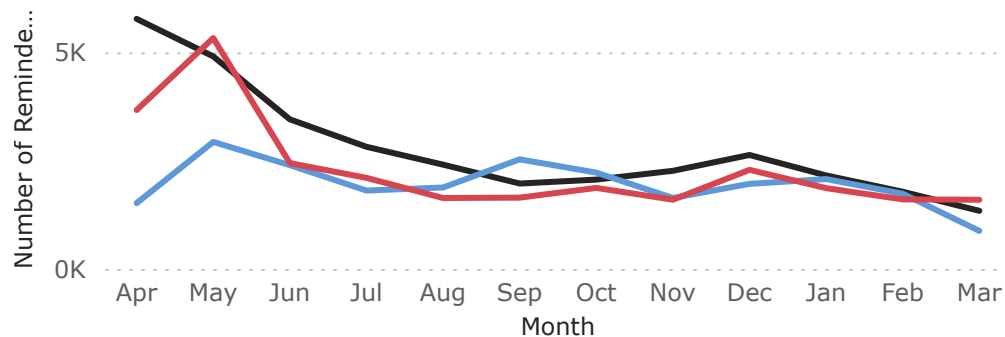
Amount of business rates collected (YTD)

Financial Year ● 20-21 ● 21-22 ● 22-23 ● 23-24



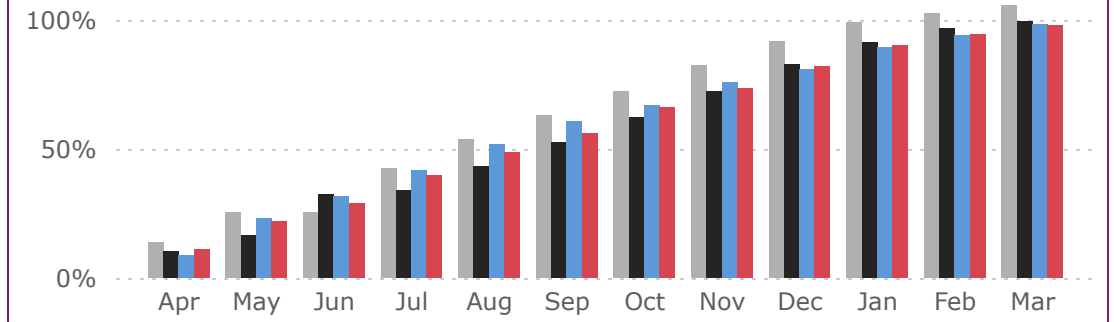
Number of Reminders and Summonses issued for Council Tax

Financial Year ● 21-22 ● 22-23 ● 23-24



Percentage collection of business rates (in year collection rate) (KPI monitored by Oflog)

Financial Year ● 20-21 ● 21-22 ● 22-23 ● 23-24



19. Resources



Latest Data Period:

March 2024



Commentary or summary

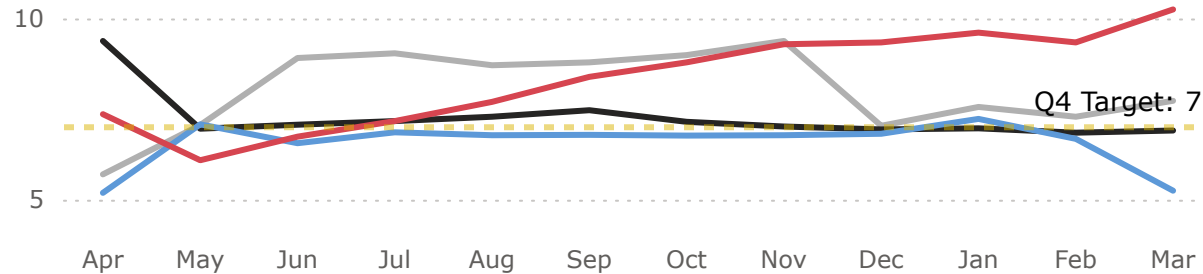
Days taken to process Housing Benefit and Council Tax Reduction claims:

The days taken to process Housing Benefit and Council Tax Reduction claims are both above the Q4 target at the end of March.

In January 2024, we carried out an ARP wide focus day which resulted in over 4,000 processes being completed ahead of the end of the financial year, and another is planned for May to deal with the impact of annual benefit assessments and billing. We are also carrying out specific target days for benefits to reduce the amount of outstanding new claims. We continue to monitor the impact of UC Migration and utilise our dual trained officers to concentrate resources where needed.

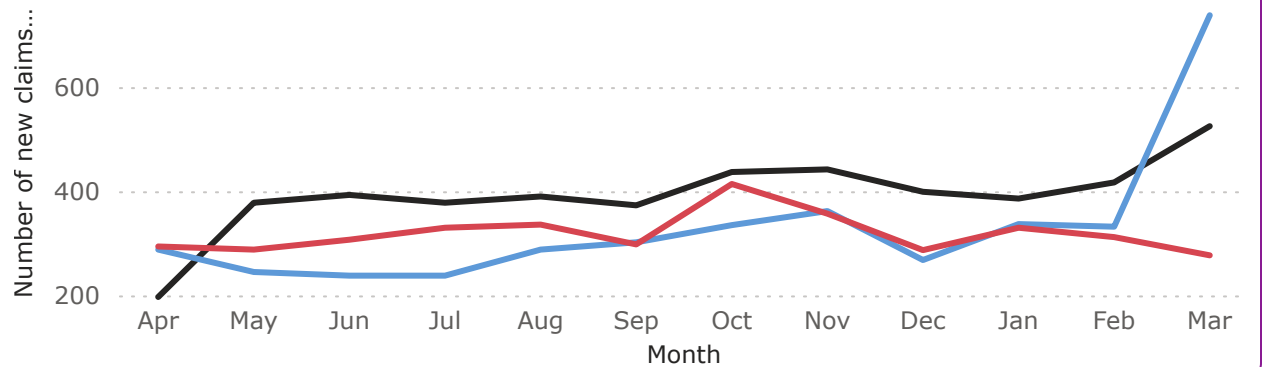
Days taken to process Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme claims

Financial Year ● 20-21 ● 21-22 ● 22-23 ● 23-24



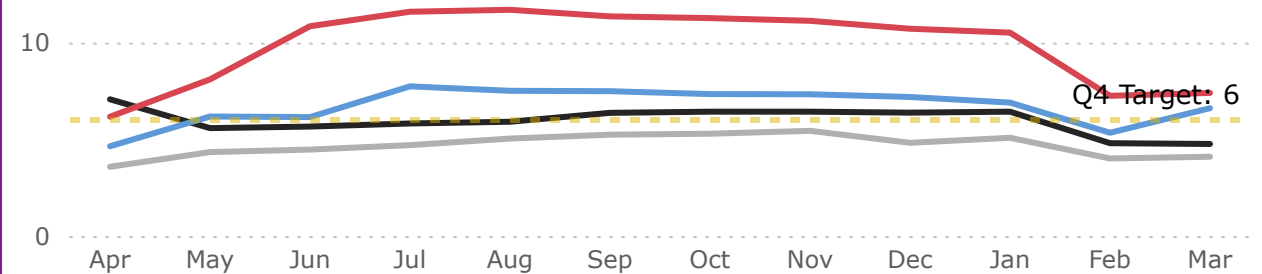
Number of new claims for Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme

Financial Year ● 21-22 ● 22-23 ● 23-24



Days taken to process Housing Benefit claims

Financial Year ● 20-21 ● 21-22 ● 22-23 ● 23-24



20. Resources

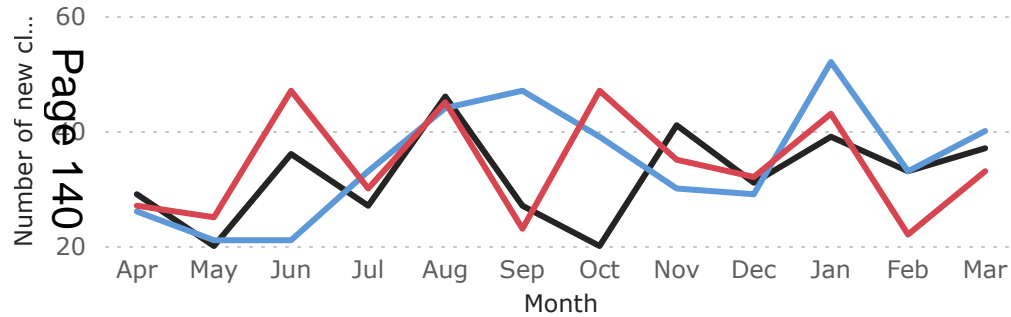


Latest Data Period:

March 2024

Number of new claims for housing payments for temporary accommodation

Financial Year ● 21-22 ● 22-23 ● 23-24



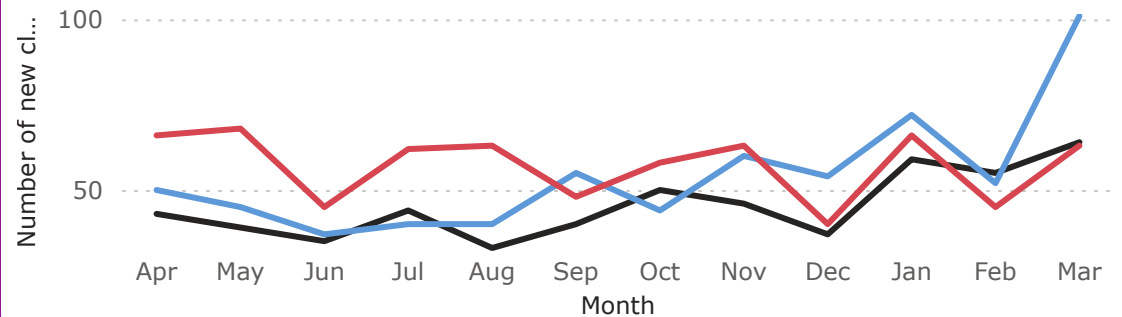
Commentary or Summary

Number of e-forms received: This figure reflects the total number of e-claims received for all partners combined within the Anglia Revenues Partnership and includes 37,488 Energy Rebate Applications. The breakdown by partner council is not yet available.

Number of telephone calls received by the Recovery Team: Team are picking up calls from customers because of these residents receiving reminders and summonses.

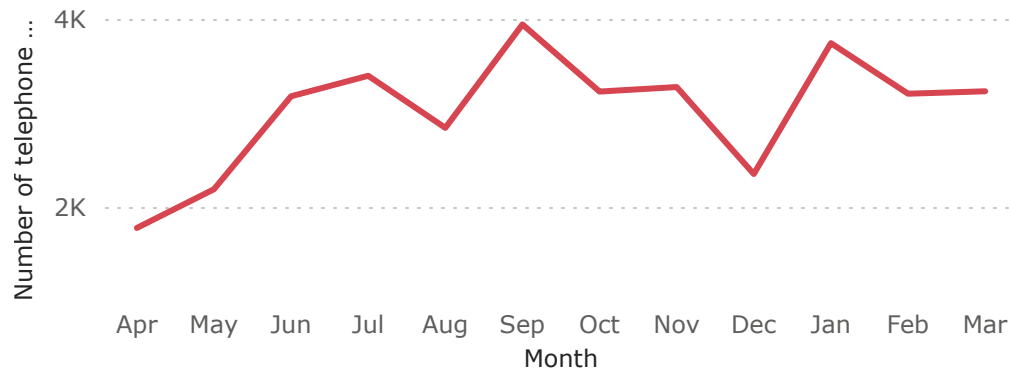
Number of new claims for Discretionary Housing Payment or Exceptional Hardship Fund

Financial Year ● 21-22 ● 22-23 ● 23-24



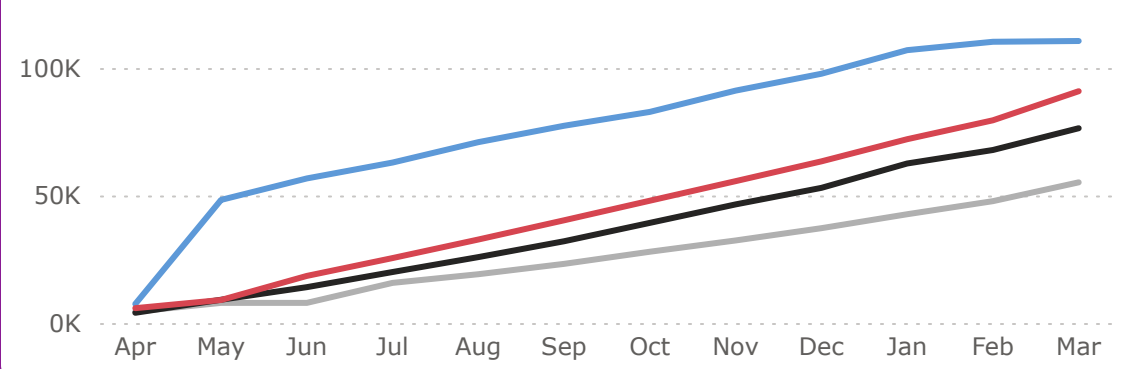
Number of telephone calls received by the Recovery Team

Financial Year ● 23-24



Number of e-forms received (YTD)

Financial Year ● 20-21 ● 21-22 ● 22-23 ● 23-24



21. Resources



Latest Data Period:

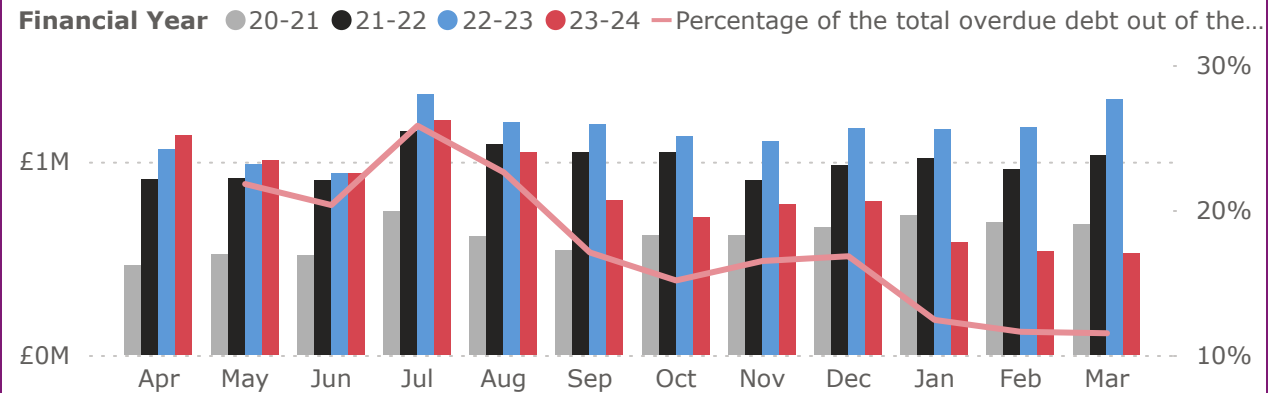
March 2024

Commentary or Summary

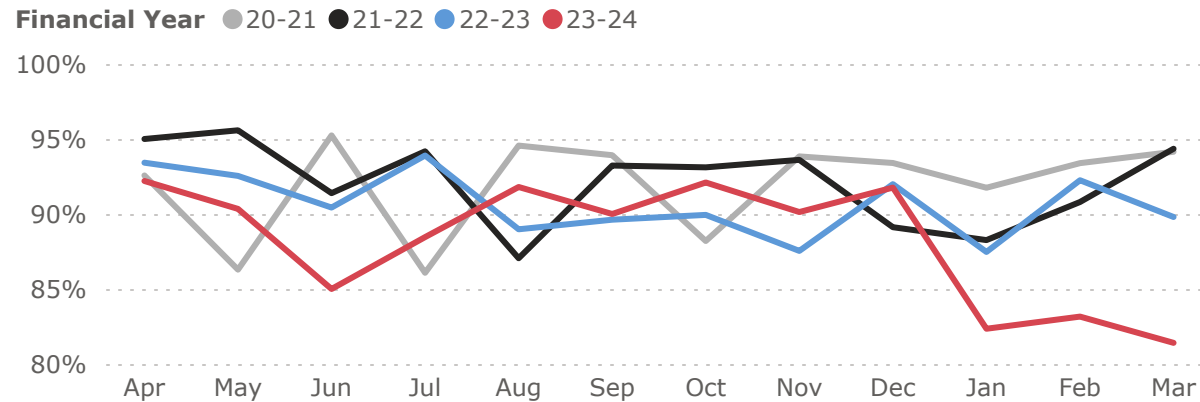
Total amount of debt over 90 days: Aged debt has come down again slightly since February, but significantly since Q3 due to implementation of payment plans within our commercial property portfolio and the settlement of some public sector partner recharges within the facilities service area.

Percentage of undisputed invoices paid within 30 days: On average, it took 16 days for invoices to arrive, and 12 days for invoices to be approved onto Agresso. We will be looking into invoices received without purchase orders and investigate ways to improve the days taken for invoices to be processed onto Agresso in line with the current OCR system.

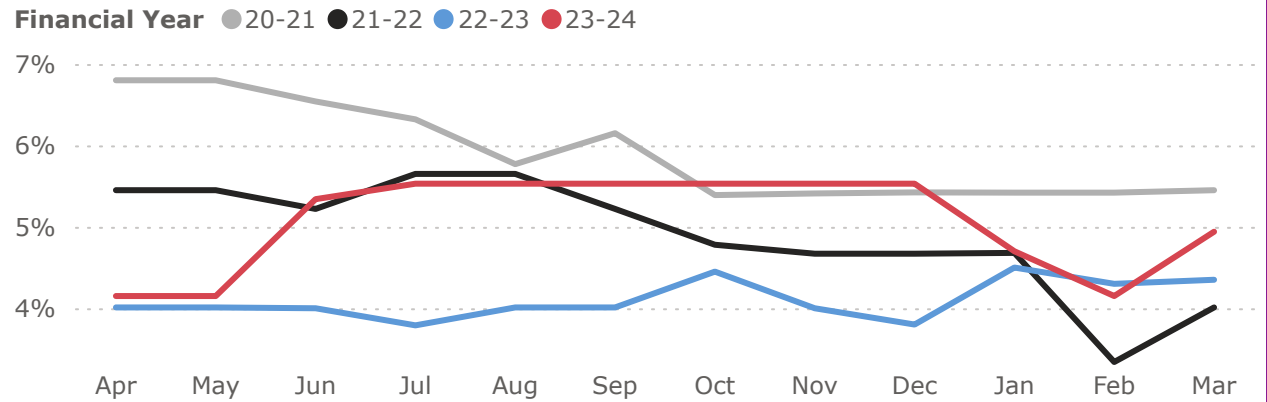
Amount of debt over 90 days old



Percentage of undisputed invoices paid within 30 days



Percentage of void properties across entire commercial estate



22. Governance and Regulatory

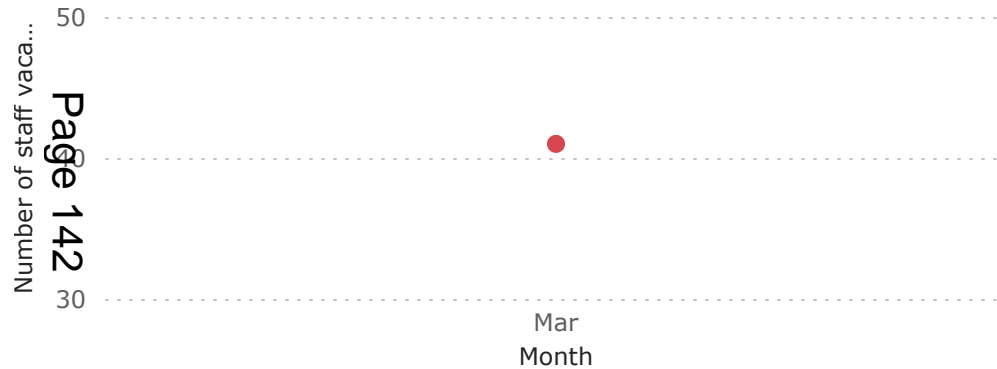


Latest Data Period:

March 2024

Number of staff vacancies

Financial Year ● 23-24



Page 142

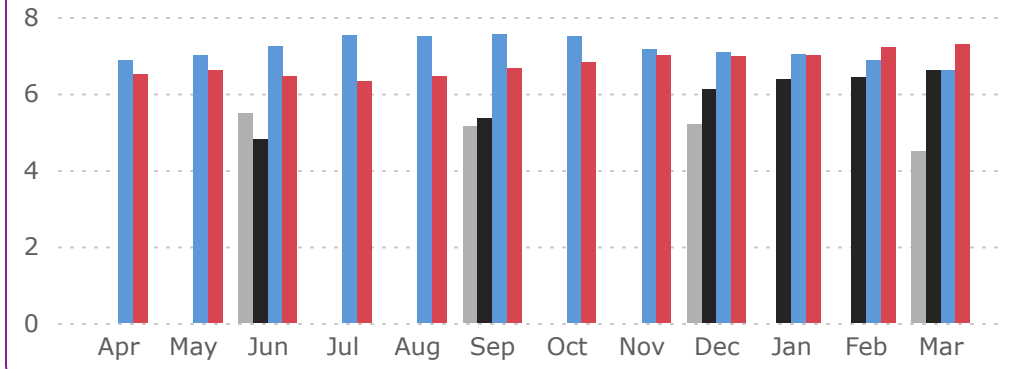
Commentary or Summary

Number of staff vacancies:
This is a new KPI this quarter.

Of the 41 vacant posts, 12 have been recruited to with start dates either agreed or pending completion of pre-employment checks. A further 16 posts are currently in the process of being recruited to, with half of these being frontline operational roles. Of the remaining 13 posts, 4 are apprentice posts which are held corporately and reviewed and appointed to as services need them, including supporting career pathways. The other 9 vacant posts are on hold for various reasons with some being part of wider reviews and plans linked to CSI changes or new structures agreed through the budget.

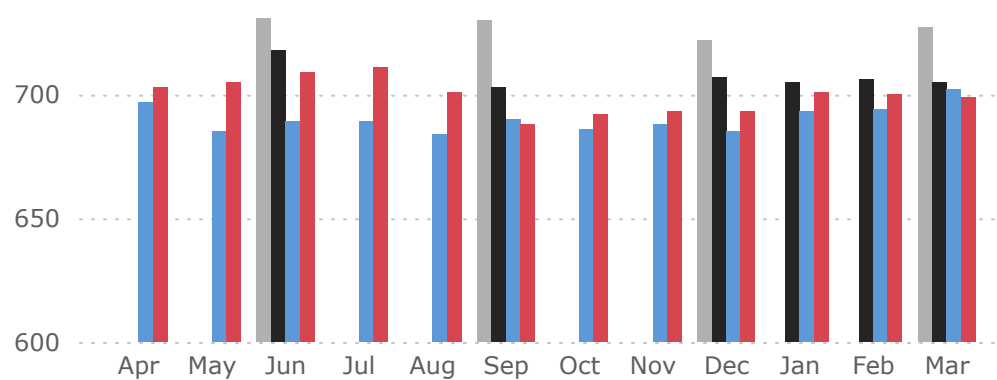
Average number of sick days lost per FTE per year

Financial Year ● 20-21 ● 21-22 ● 22-23 ● 23-24



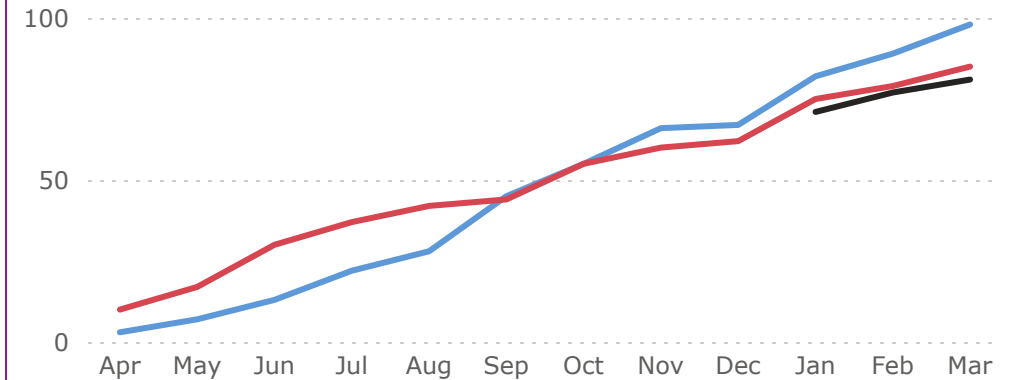
Number of current employees (head count)

Financial Year ● 20-21 ● 21-22 ● 22-23 ● 23-24



Number of new starters (YTD)

Financial Year ● 21-22 ● 22-23 ● 23-24



23. Governance and Regulatory

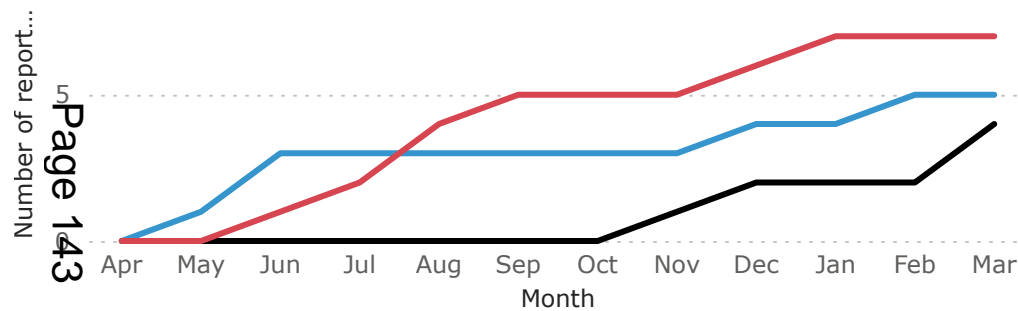


Latest Data Period:

March 2024

Number of reported incidences involving staff injuries, diseases and dangerous occurrences (YTD)

Financial Year ● 21-22 ● 22-23 ● 23-24



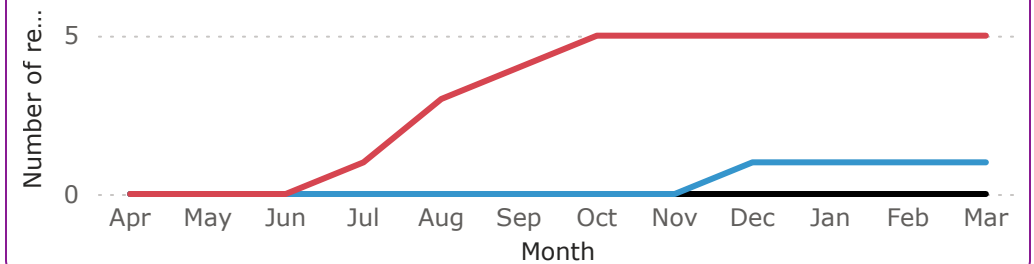
Commentary or Summary

These are new KPIs this quarter, following the caesation of the Health and Safety Committee.

Number of Fire Risk Assessments completed: High number in March as we were able to include more than one visit and carry out the H&S audit and FRA at the same time on some days.

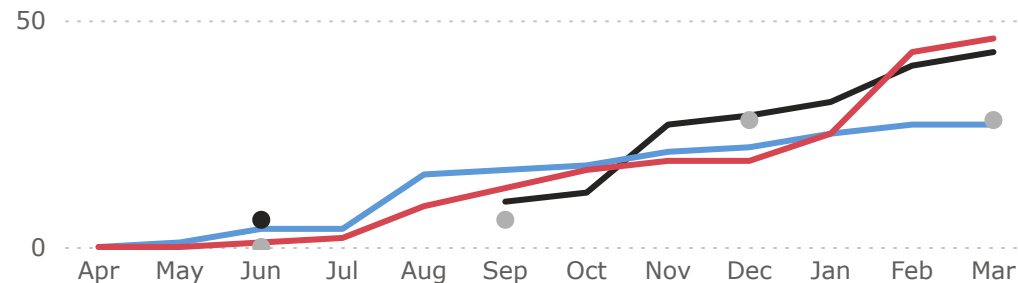
Number of reported incidences involving member of public injuries, diseases and dangerous occurrences (YTD)

Financial Year ● 21-22 ● 22-23 ● 23-24



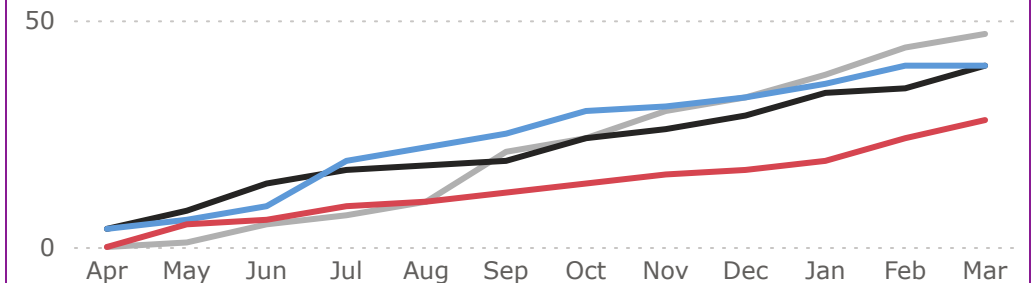
Number of audits and Fire Risk Assessments completed (YTD)

Financial Year ● 20-21 ● 21-22 ● 22-23 ● 23-24



Number of incidents of violence at work (includes verbally aggressive behaviour and physical abuse) (YTD)

Financial Year ● 20-21 ● 21-22 ● 22-23 ● 23-24



Page 143

24. Governance and Regulatory



Latest Data Period:

March 2024



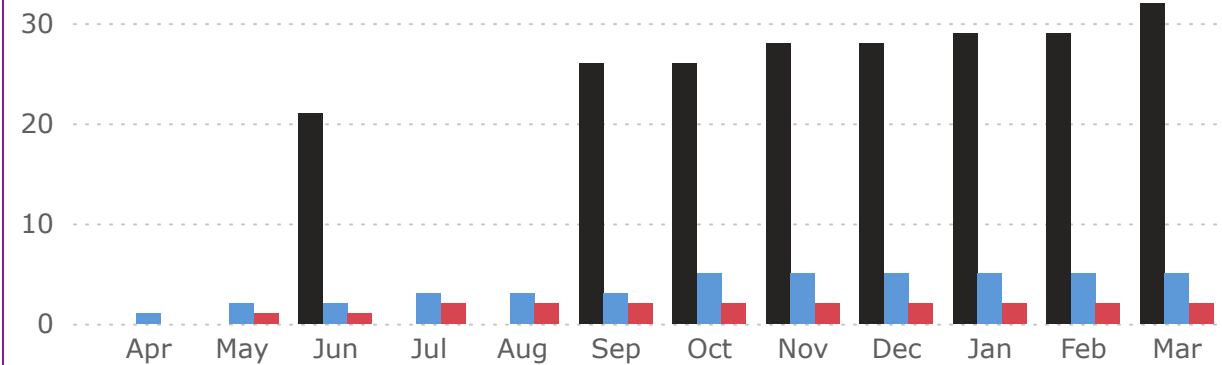
Commentary or Summary

Canvass: A revised electoral register is published on 1 December each year following the annual canvass. In 2020 the canvass approach was reformed nationally and now involves national and local data matching, e-comms via text and email, postal forms, telephone canvassing and door knocking by canvassers. We achieved a canvass completion rate of 98 per cent of properties for both the 2020 and 2021 annual canvass.

Number of unscheduled elections and referendums held YTD: One held in Freckenham in June 2023 and another in Brandon in July 2023.

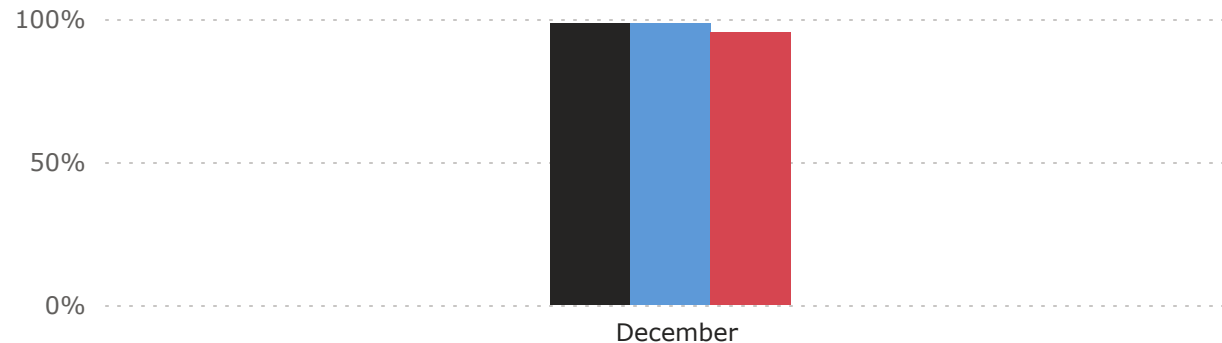
Number of unscheduled elections and referendums held (YTD)

Financial Year ● 21-22 ● 22-23 ● 23-24



Percentage overall canvass completion

Financial Year ● 21-22 ● 22-23 ● 23-24



25. Governance and Regulatory



Latest Data Period:

March 2024



Commentary or Summary

Number of outstanding routine food hygiene inspections due: 174 outstanding inspections as of end of March 2024. These outstanding inspections only factor in food businesses with a food hygiene rating already.

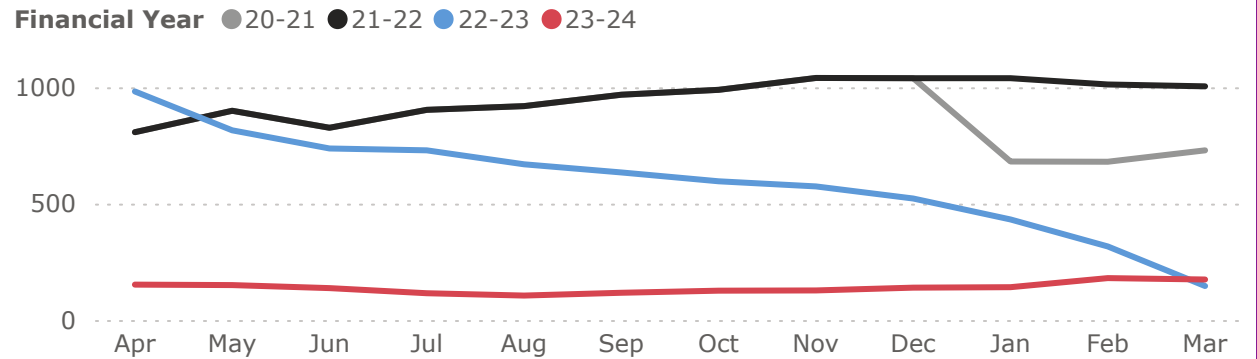
Food hygiene inspection activity by the CEH team is being carried out in accordance with the Food Standards Agency's Code of practice. However, there will always be a rolling number of outstanding inspections as every month new ones become due.

We always aim to have zero inspections, in line with the FSA expectations, but this is not realistic. We, therefore, approach the inspection programme on a risk basis and ensure that higher risk premises are inspected as a priority, which will inevitably leave some outstanding lower risk inspections. We will be using the council's CSI tools to maximise resource and free up capacity as far as possible. We are also conscious of the need to ensure that there is sufficient resource and priority available for other areas of the service which also pose a risk to health.

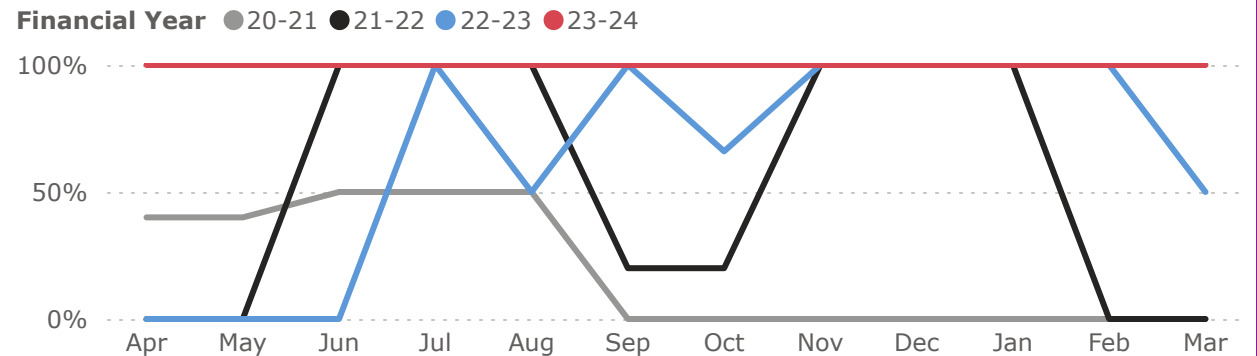
However there will always be a number of rolling number of outstanding as every month new ones become due. There is no tolerance level for how many we can have outstanding, technically we shouldn't have any but this is almost impossible to achieve with existing and new inspection numbers as well as the large variety of other work the team do alongside food inspections.

The Team have been prioritising some health and safety accident investigations in addition to the health and safety project over the summer which has impacted. We have also been prioritising a health and safety issue at a site which is taking considerable time. Animal welfare issues (enforcement/legal action work) of 3 cases is currently ongoing. Work to build and maintain the Assure Database as part of an

Number of outstanding routine food hygiene inspections due (Food Safety Service Plan)



Percentage of poor rated food businesses (given rating between 0 and 2) brought to compliance (equivalent to 3 to 5 rating) with council interventions within three months



26. Governance and Regulatory



Latest Data Period:

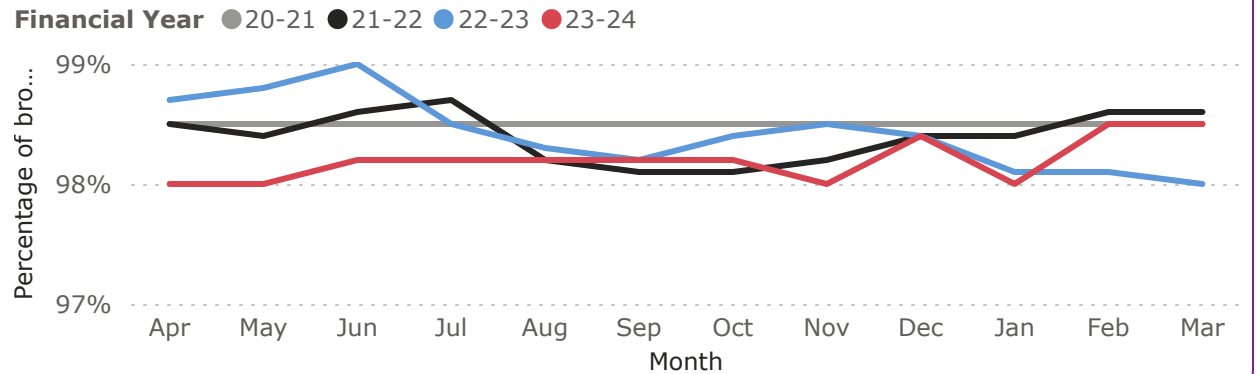
March 2024

Commentary or Summary

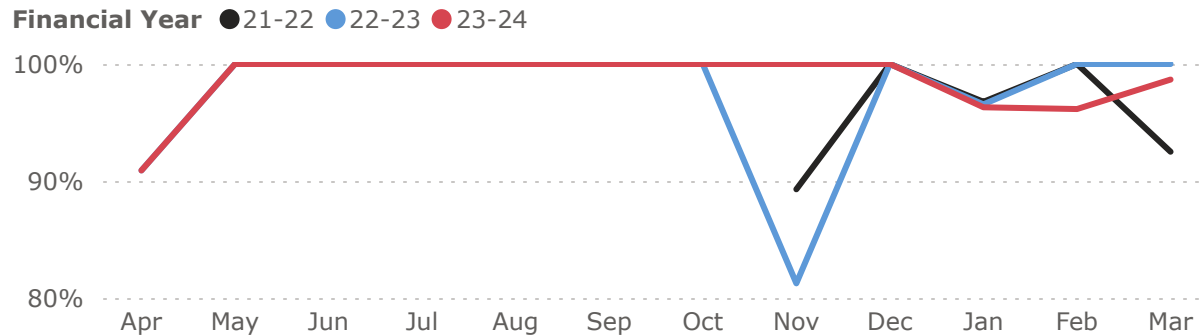
Percentage of broadly compliant food businesses: This figure continues to compare favourably with both Regional (98%) and National (96.9%) figures.

Page 146

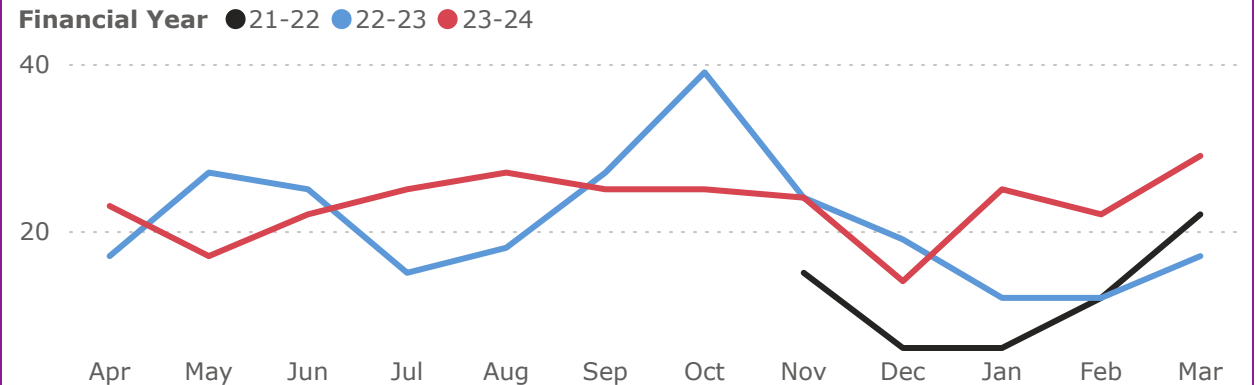
Percentage of broadly compliant food businesses (given rating between 3 and 5)



Percentage of complaints and incidents regarding West Suffolk food businesses resolved within three months



Number of new food premises applying for a new registration licence



27. Governance and Regulatory



Latest Data Period:

March 2024

Commentary or Summary

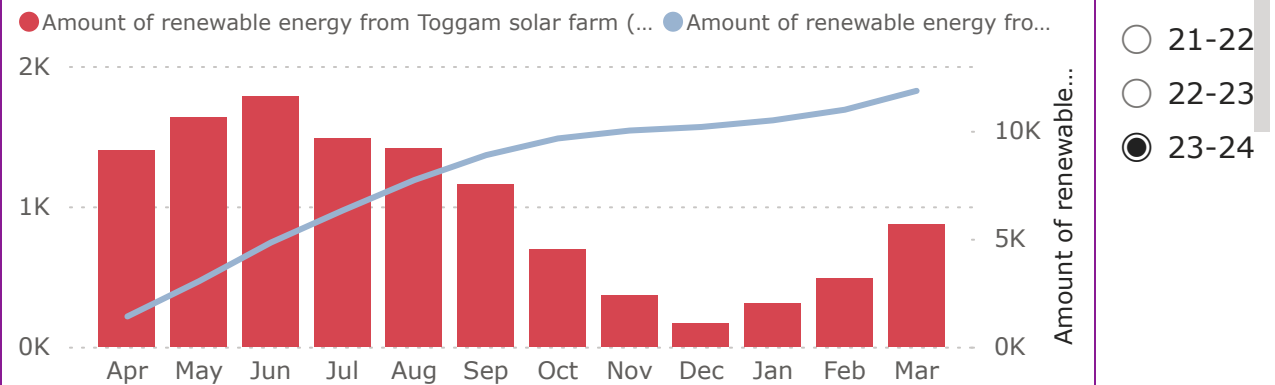
Amount of renewable energy from Toggam solar farm YTD: The solar farm generated 4% above the target for one year.

Capacity of solar installations completed by the council YTD: 24 installations completed this year. This includes Solar for Business.

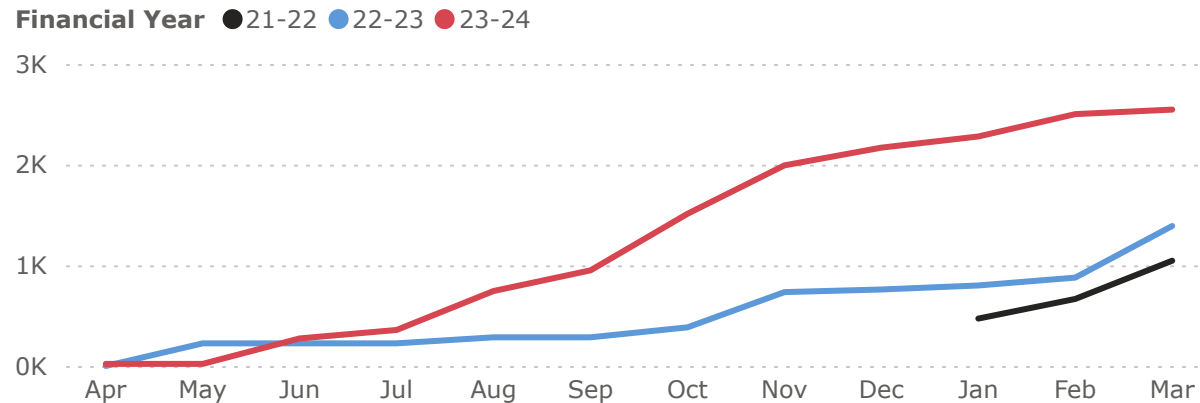
Amount of renewable energy from other WS investments: This includes Solar for Business. Our biggest customers include West Suffolk College, Caps Cases and Utsurge.

Page 147

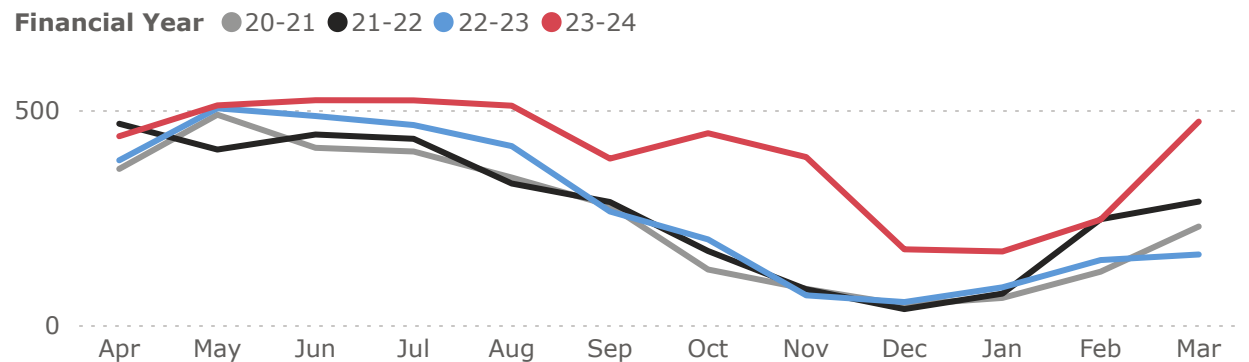
Amount of renewable energy from Toggam solar farm (MWh)



Capacity of solar installations completed by the council (YTD) (kW)



Amount of renewable energy from other West Suffolk investments (MWh)



28. Families and Communities



Latest Data Period:

May 2024



Commentary or Summary

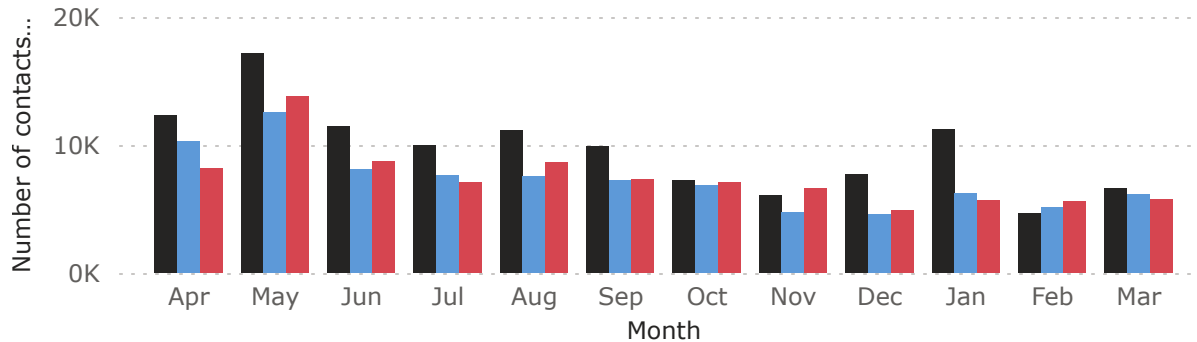
Number of contacts - phone: Three busiest lines were Housing, Waste & Planning lines accounting for 57% of all calls answered in Q4.

Face to face: 1,401/1,974 people who attended the office in Q4 had appointments. WSC accounted for 354 of the expected visitors. 360 WSC visitors do not have appointments. The majority of those attending without appointment over the quarter were housing and ARP (Council Tax) customers.

Online or email: We received 6,999 emails in Q4. Housing, Planning & Parking Permits accounted for 49% of all emails. 9,928 online forms were completed. Elections IER data, Housing and Residential Parking Permits being the most

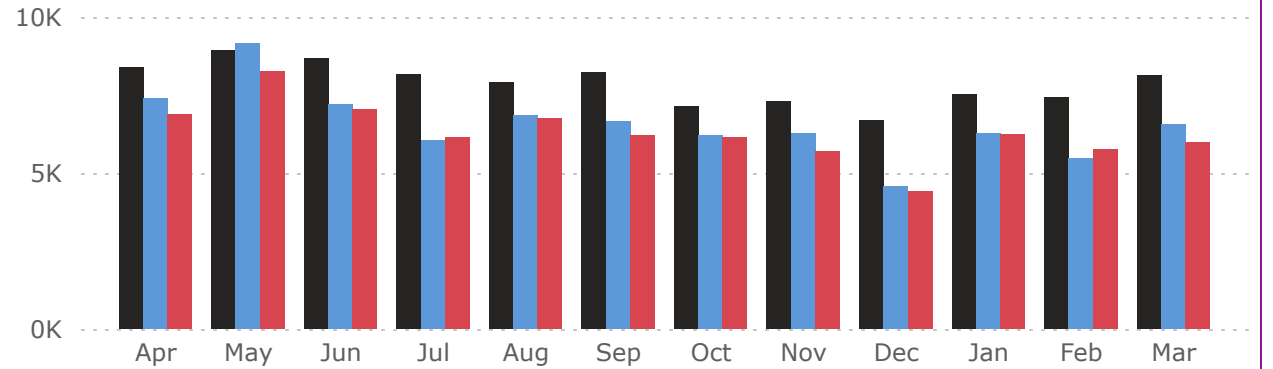
Number of contacts received - online or email

Financial Year ● 21-22 ● 22-23 ● 23-24



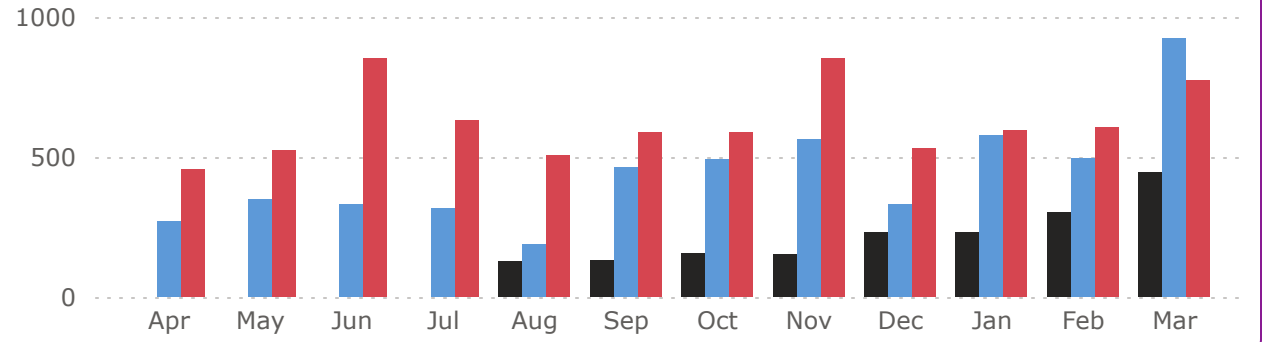
Number of contacts received - phone

Financial Year ● 21-22 ● 22-23 ● 23-24



Number of contacts received - face-to-face

Financial Year ● 21-22 ● 22-23 ● 23-24



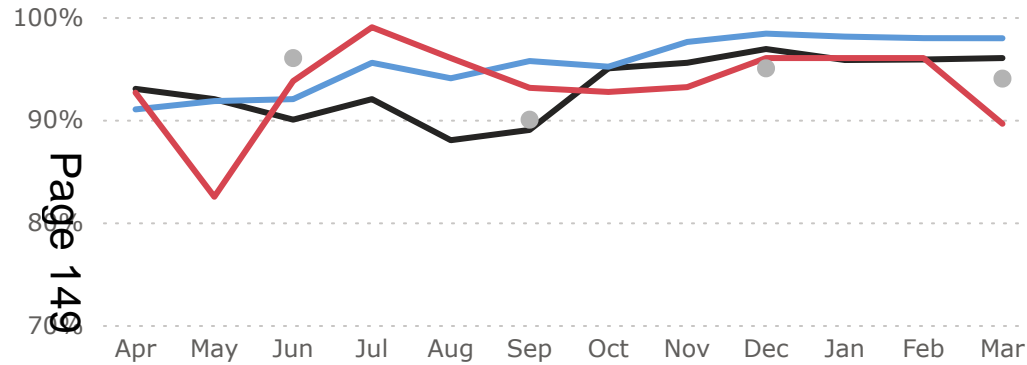
29. Families and Communities



Latest Data Period:
May 2024

Percentage of phone calls answered

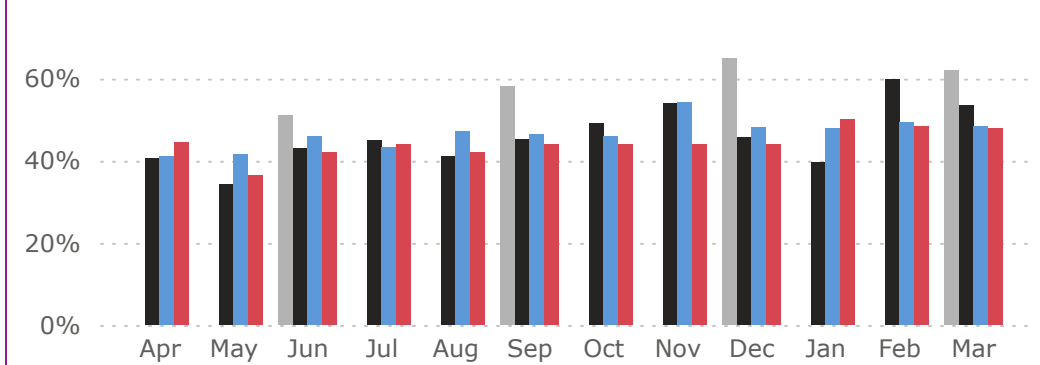
Financial Year ● 20-21 ● 21-22 ● 22-23 ● 23-24



Commentary or Summary

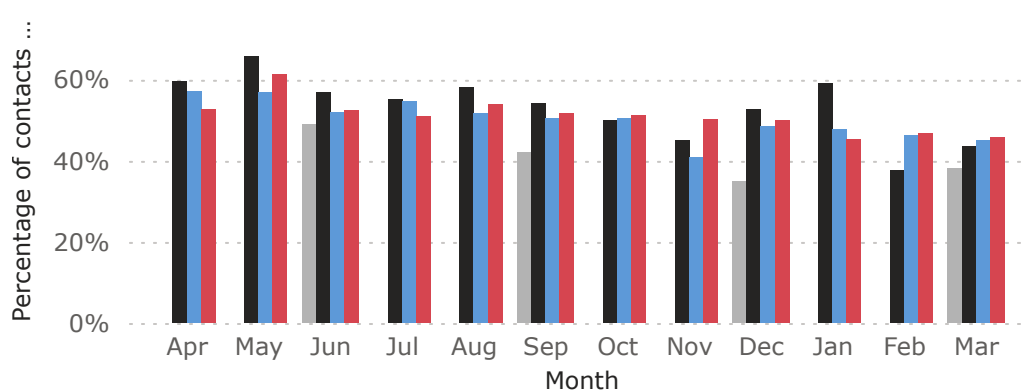
Percentage of contacts received- phone

Financial Year ● 20-21 ● 21-22 ● 22-23 ● 23-24



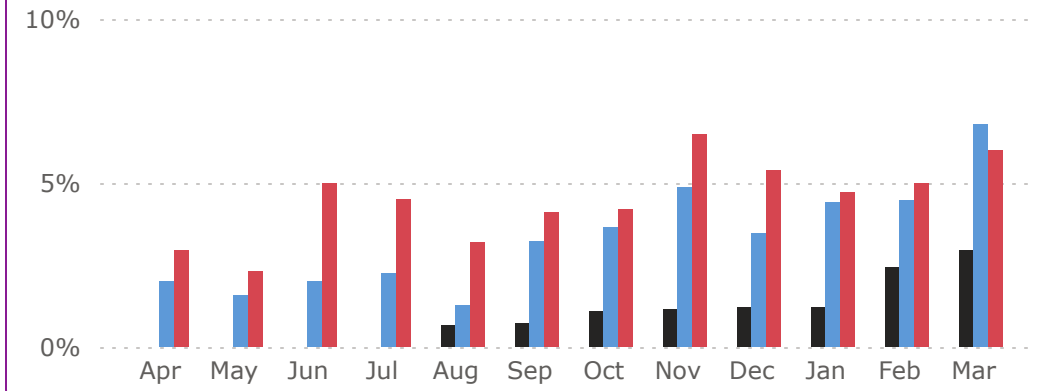
Percentage of contacts received - online or email

Financial Year ● 20-21 ● 21-22 ● 22-23 ● 23-24



Percentage of contacts received - face-to-face

Financial Year ● 20-21 ● 21-22 ● 22-23 ● 23-24



30. Families and Communities



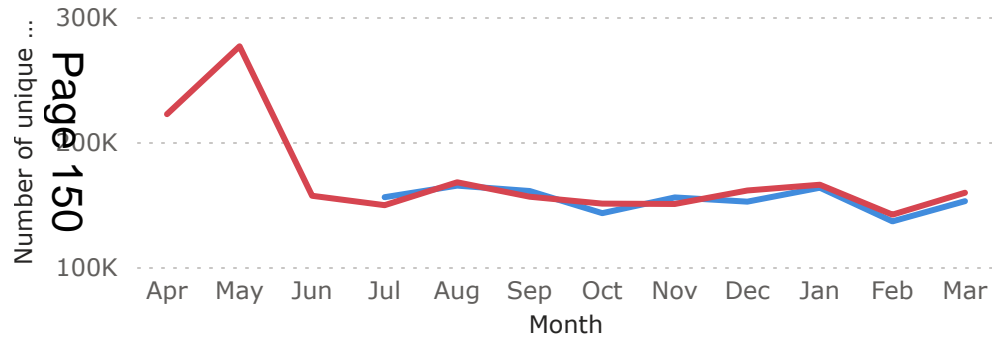
Latest Data Period:

May 2024



Total number of page views to West Suffolk Council website

Financial Year ● 22-23 ● 23-24



Commentary or Summary

Total page views and unique users to West Suffolk Council website:

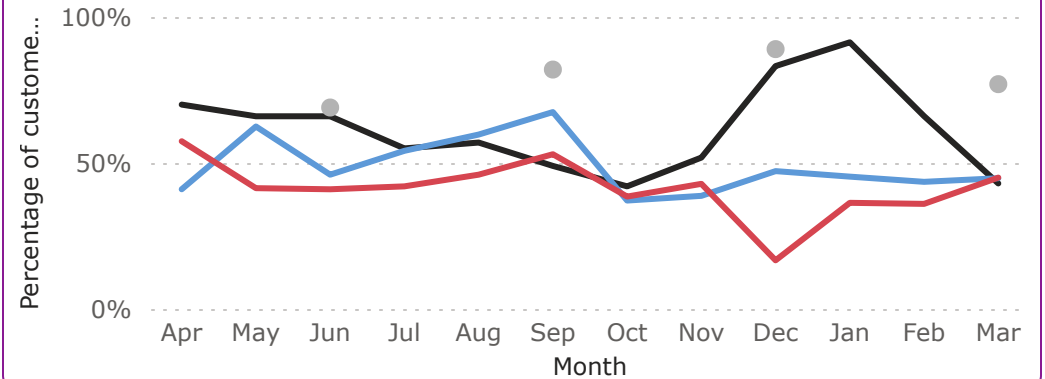
These figures do not include electronic forms (for example garden waste). Where a customer clicks on a link to an externally hosted form direct from an email or social media, it will not be included in these figures.

There are several factors for the drop in views and users:

- People may not be accepting cookies
- Some of the processes are simplified so people do not need to visit several times (for example, taxi licensing)
- Increasing social media posts mean that visitors may not always need to visit our website for information

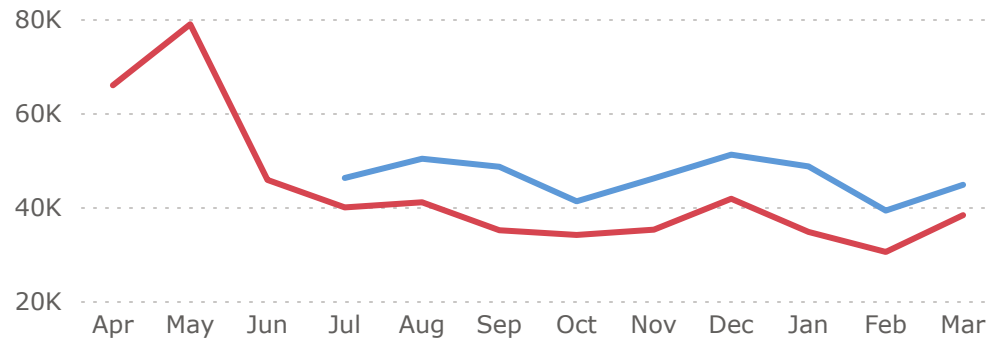
Percentage of customers satisfied with service received

Financial Year ● 20-21 ● 21-22 ● 22-23 ● 23-24



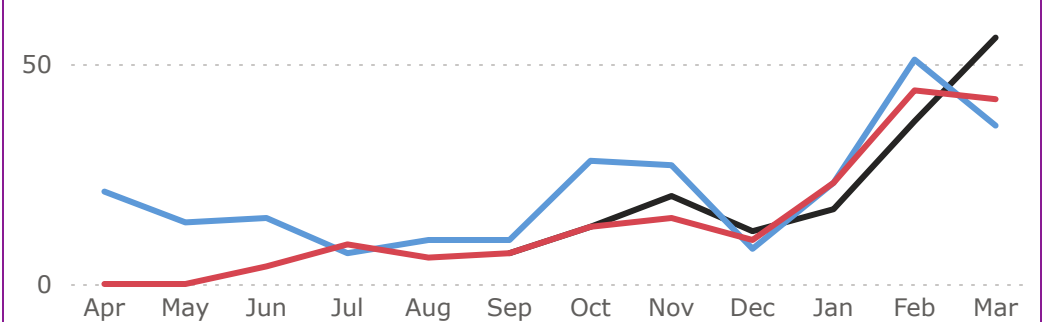
Number of unique users of the West Suffolk Council website

Financial Year ● 22-23 ● 23-24



Number of locality budget applications processed by the team

Financial Year ● 21-22 ● 22-23 ● 23-24



31. Growth



Latest Data Period:

March 2024

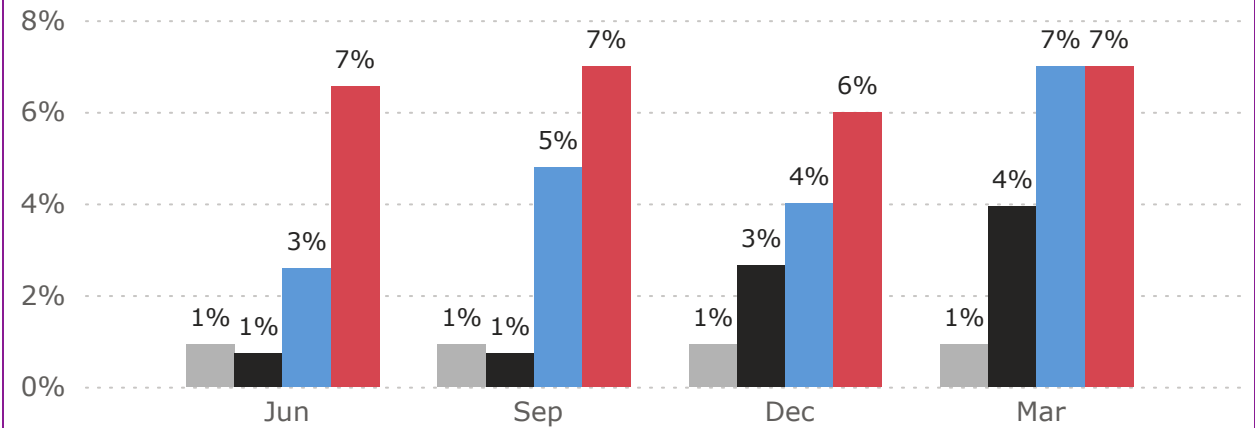
Commentary or Summary

Percentage of businesses that are new start-ups in West Suffolk: The number of start-up businesses across west Suffolk rose slightly in Q4 2024, showing 1,345 businesses compared to 1,054 in the previous Q3. This is not unusual and is consistent with previous years. Overall, Q4 2024 has generated an increase of 291 new start-up businesses since Q3 2023.

Page 151

Percentage of businesses that are new start-ups in West Suffolk

Financial Year ● 20-21 ● 21-22 ● 22-23 ● 23-24





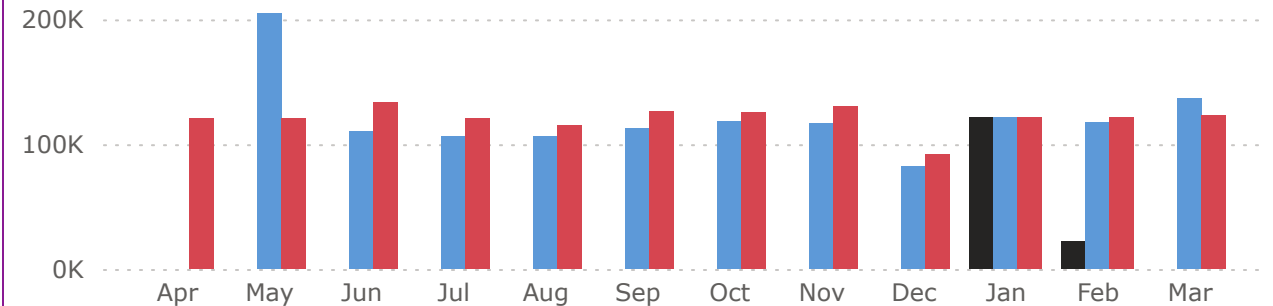
Latest Data Period:
March 2024

Commentary or Summary

Page 152

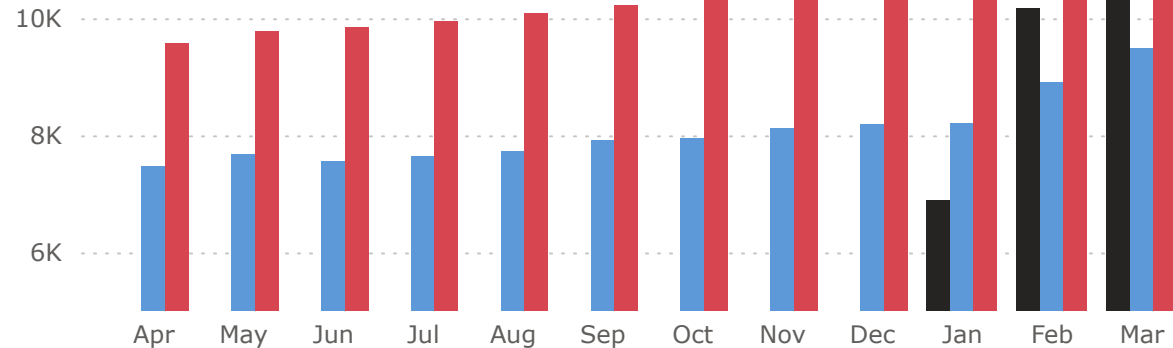
Number of non-membership admissions to Abbeycroft

Financial Year ● 21-22 ● 22-23 ● 23-24



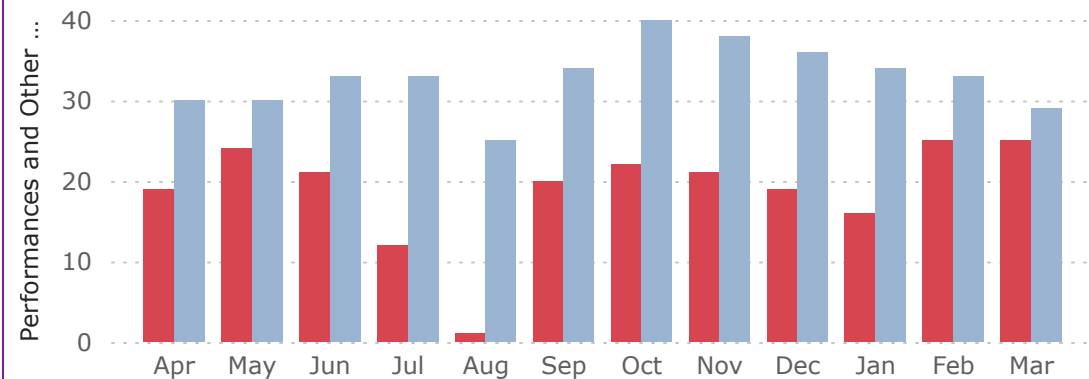
Number of Abbeycroft memberships

Financial Year ● 21-22 ● 22-23 ● 23-24



Number of performances and other events at The Apex

● Performances ● Other events



- 21-22
- 22-23
- 23-24



Latest Data Period:

March 2024

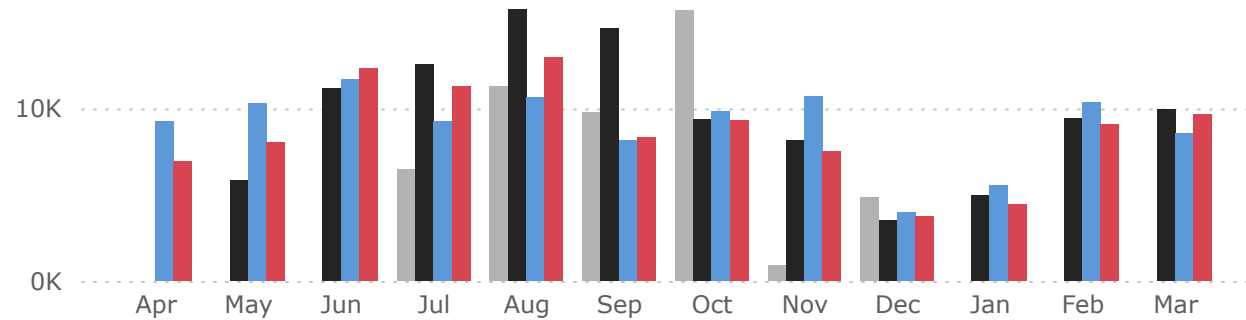
Commentary or Summary

Visitors to the Abbey Gardens, Moyses Hall and West Stow are recorded by a pedestrian counter. Visitors to Brandon Country Park, East Town Park and Nowton Park are recorded by a traffic data device that assumes two people per car, this does not take account of visitors that use other methods of transport including on foot.

Page 153

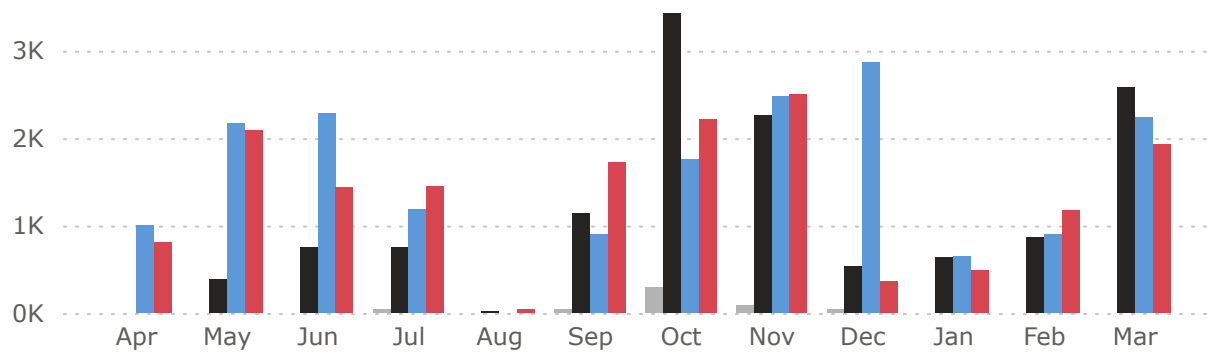
Number of visitors to West Suffolk heritage sites

Financial Year ● 20-21 ● 21-22 ● 22-23 ● 23-24



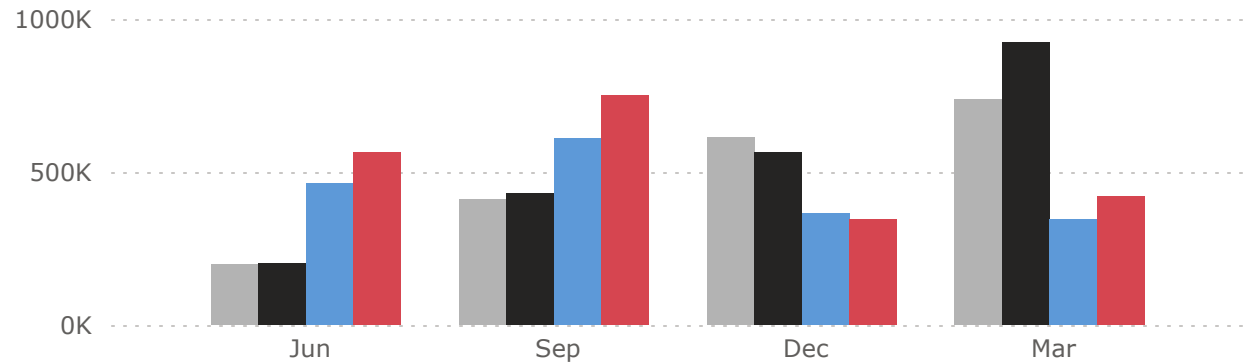
Number of visits from school pupils to West Suffolk heritage sites

Financial Year ● 20-21 ● 21-22 ● 22-23 ● 23-24



Number of visitors to West Suffolk parks

Financial Year ● 20-21 ● 21-22 ● 22-23 ● 23-24



34. Planning



Latest Data Period:

March 2024

Commentary or Summary

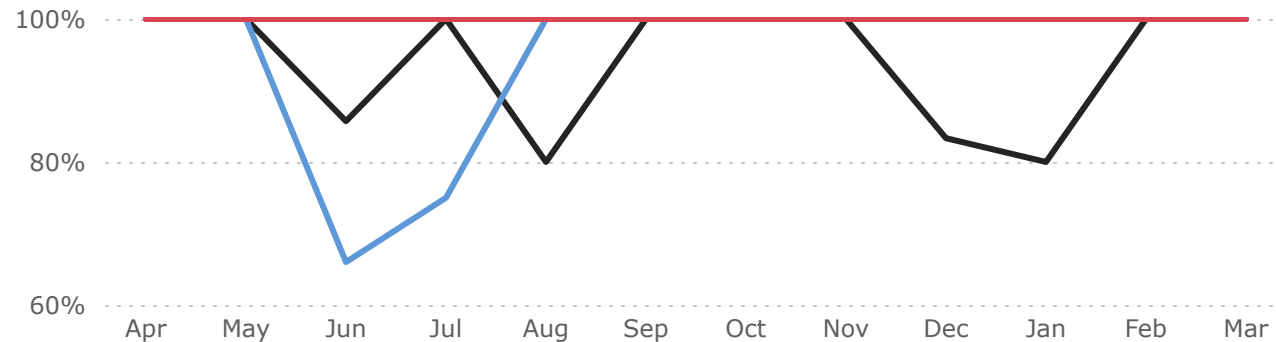
1 major planning application was determined in March. Both were determined in target and required an extension of time.

18 minor planning applications were determined, 12 were determined on target. 6 were not determined on target. 5 applications were determined within 8 weeks, 7 required an extension of time. 2 applications without an EOT were not determined in target.

58 other planning applications were determined. 54 were determined on target. 4 were not determined on target. 39 were determined within 8 weeks, 15 required an extension of time. 1 application without an EOT was not determined in target.

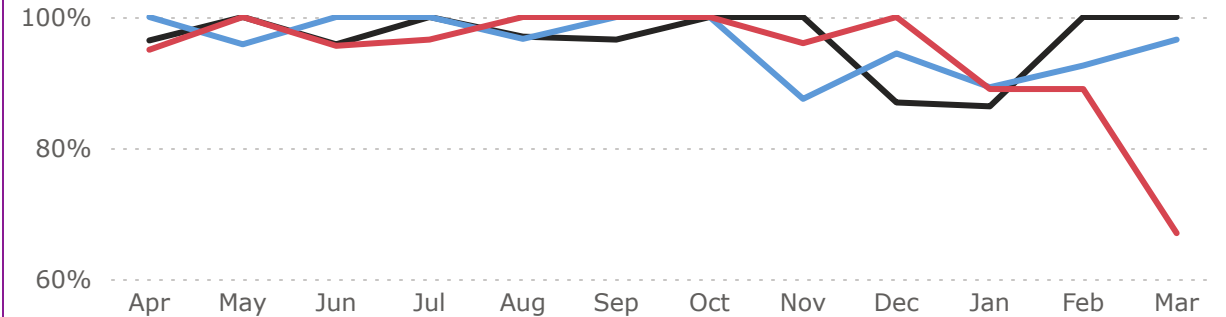
Percentage of major planning applications determined within the agreed timescales (KPI monitored by Oflog)

Financial Year ● 21-22 ● 22-23 ● 23-24



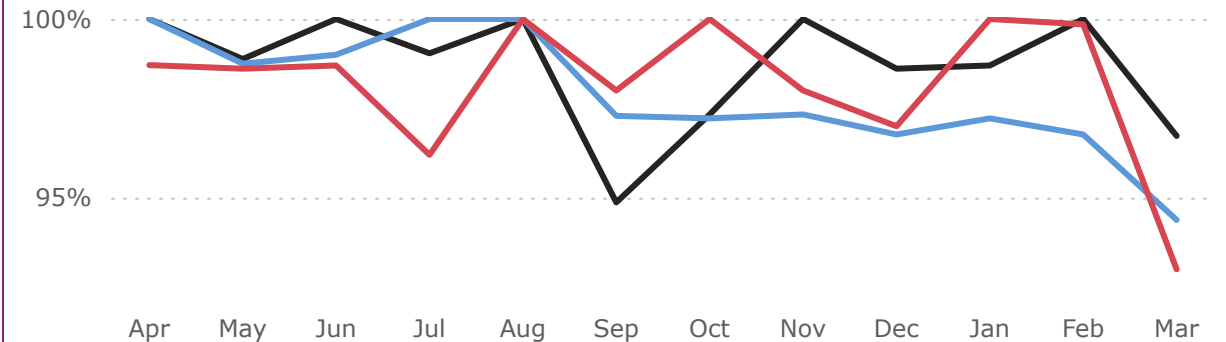
Percentage of minor planning applications determined within the agreed timescales (KPI monitored by Oflog)

Financial Year ● 21-22 ● 22-23 ● 23-24



Percentage of other planning applications determined within the agreed timescales (KPI monitored by Oflog)

Financial Year ● 21-22 ● 22-23 ● 23-24



35. Planning



Latest Data Period:

March 2024

Commentary or Summary

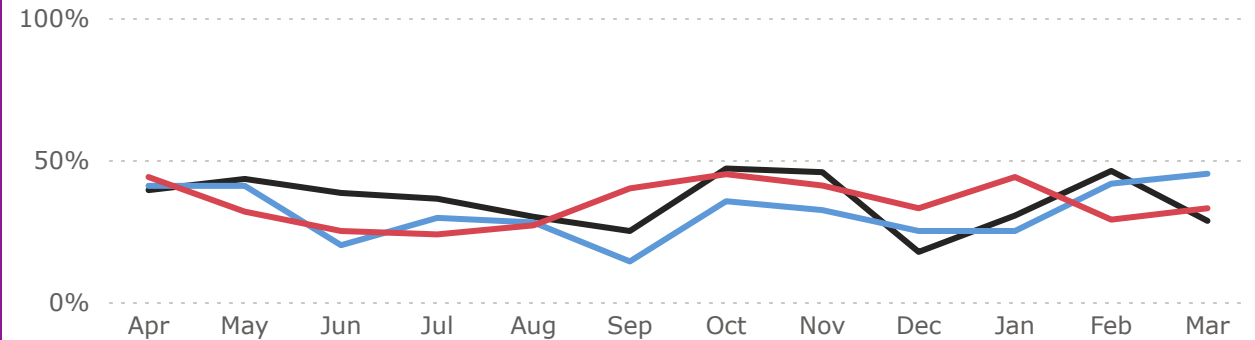
% of major and minor applications with pre- application advice: 21 major and minor applications were received in March, 7 of those had a pre-app. It should be noted that the percentage of pre-applications does not take into account the relative complexity of pre-application requests. Neither does it reflect the fees received (which are linked to complexity).

% applications with pre-app advice: 157 applications were received this month. 39 of these had pre-app advice of which 26 were valid first time.

% of applications without pre-app advice: 118 applications did not have pre-app advice of which 78 were valid first time.

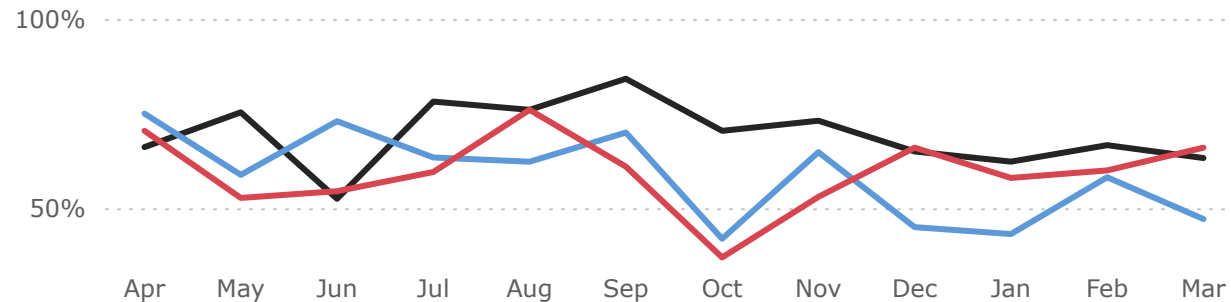
Percentage of major and minor applications with pre-application advice.

Financial Year ● 21-22 ● 22-23 ● 23-24



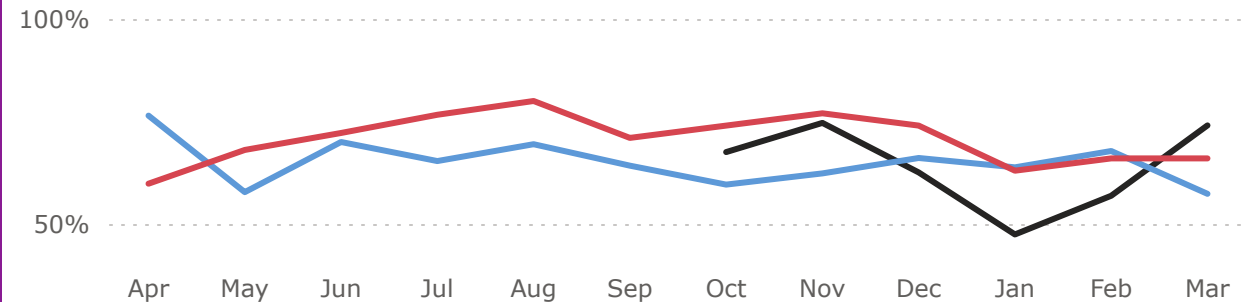
Percentage of applications with pre-application advice that are right first time out of all received

Financial Year ● 21-22 ● 22-23 ● 23-24



Percentage of applications without pre-application advice that are right first time out of all received

Financial Year ● 21-22 ● 22-23 ● 23-24



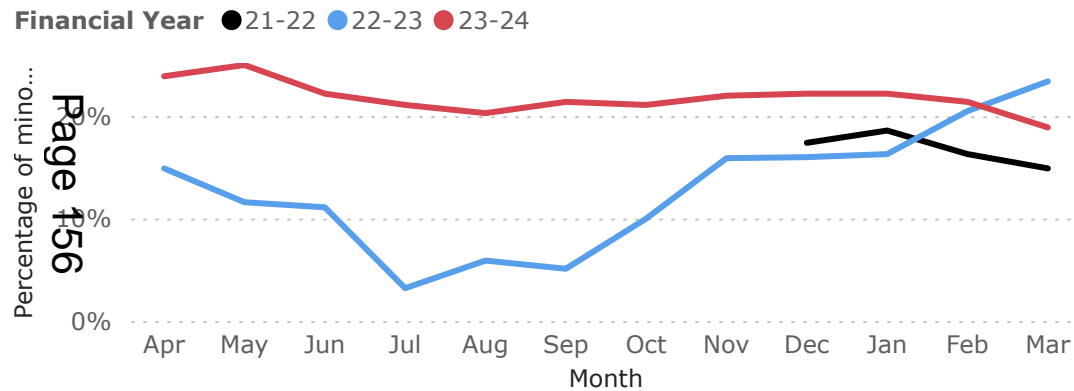
36. Planning



Latest Data Period:

March 2024

Percentage of minor/other appeals allowed out of all appeals (KPI monitored by Oflog)

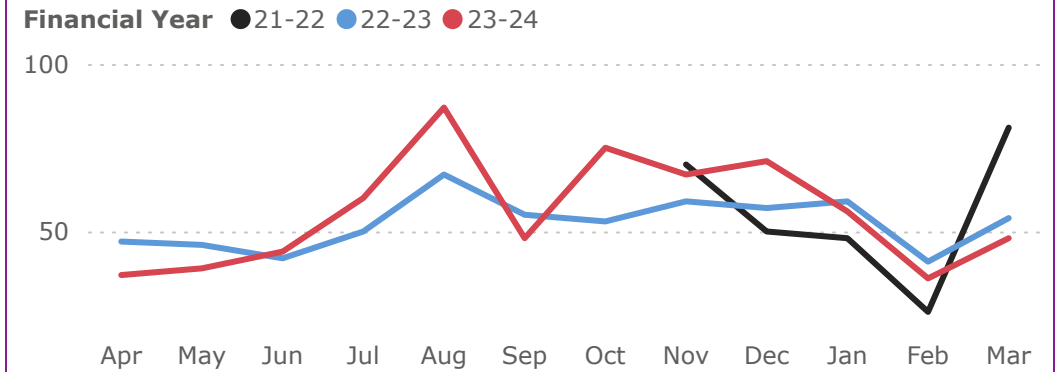


Commentary or Summary

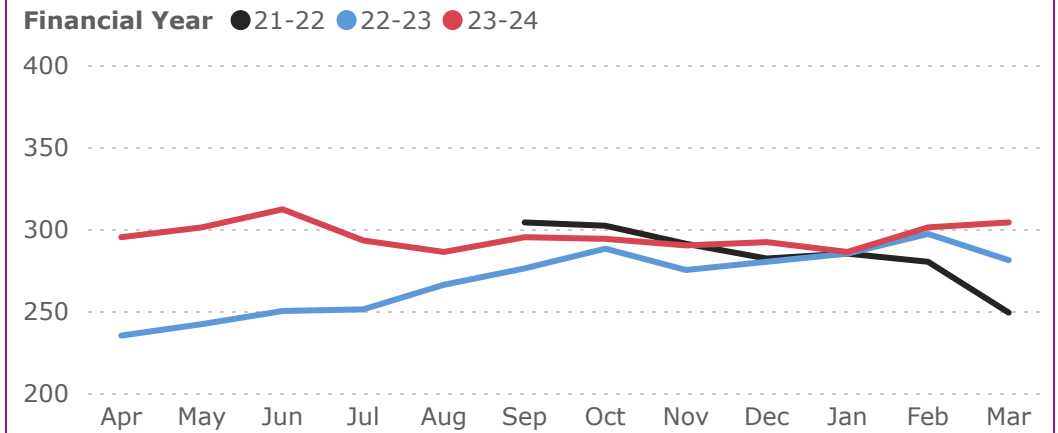
Percentage of planning appeals allowed out of all appeals: Both are new KPIs this quarter calculated on a one year rolling average split by major applications and minor/other applications. The numbers of appeals are small so the figures can easily fluctuate.

Number of planning appeals allowed: At the Performance Audit and Scrutiny Committee in November 2023, a councillor requested further information on the number of appeals allowed by the

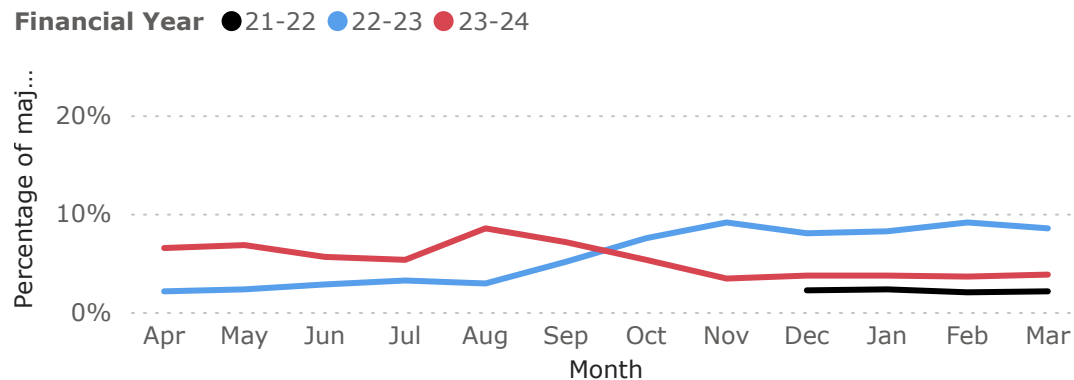
Number of applications not monitored by DLUHC which are included on government returns



Number of open planning enforcement cases



Percentage of major appeals allowed out of all appeals (KPI monitored by Oflog)



37. Planning



Latest Data Period:

March 2024

Commentary or Summary

The number of net additional dwellings completed (YTD): Lower than at an equivalent point in previous years as no major strategic sites are being delivered at a high rate.

The annual target of 806 dwellings is not met for 2023/24. However, it has exceeded its housing requirement in the previous two monitoring years therefore overall meeting its housing delivery target. The emerging Local Plan will provide more housing growth once adopted.

The number of affordable dwelling units built on sites of 10 or more in Q4 2023-24 was **33**. This figure is a total of the affordable, intermediate, and social rent.

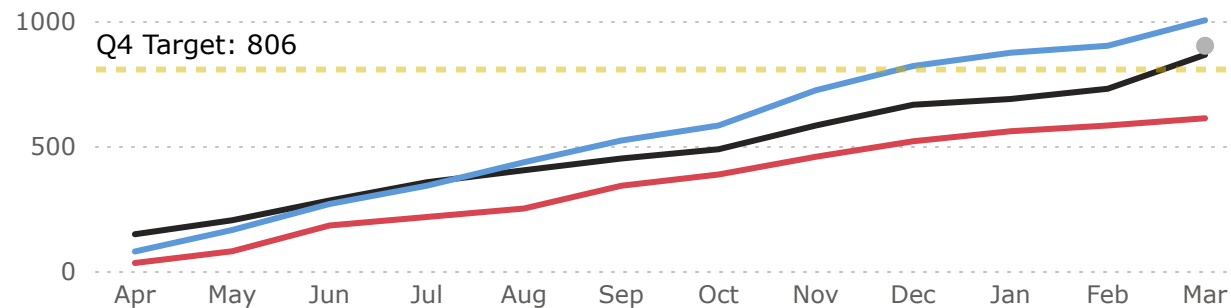
Percentage of affordable dwelling units completed on sites of 10 or more units

Financial Year ● 21-22 ● 22-23 ● 23-24



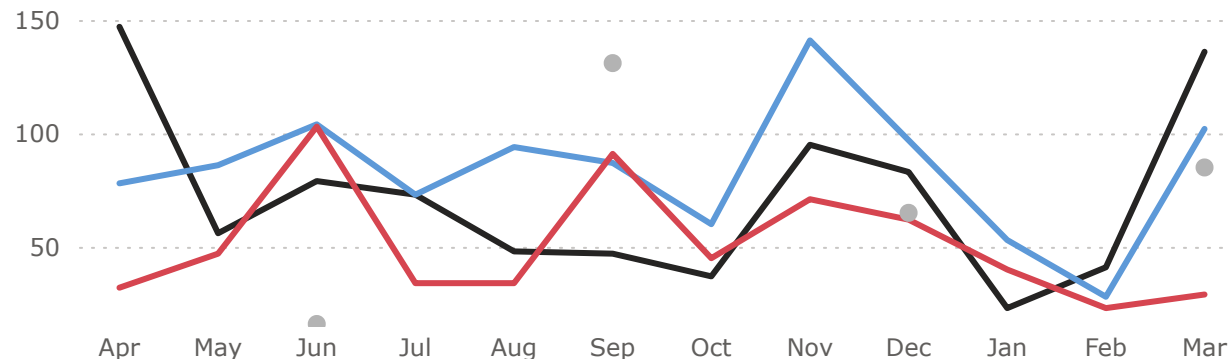
Number of net additional dwellings completed (YTD) (one month lag)

Financial Year ● 20-21 ● 21-22 ● 22-23 ● 23-24



Number of dwelling units completed (one month lag)

Financial Year ● 20-21 ● 21-22 ● 22-23 ● 23-24



38. Operations



Latest Data Period:

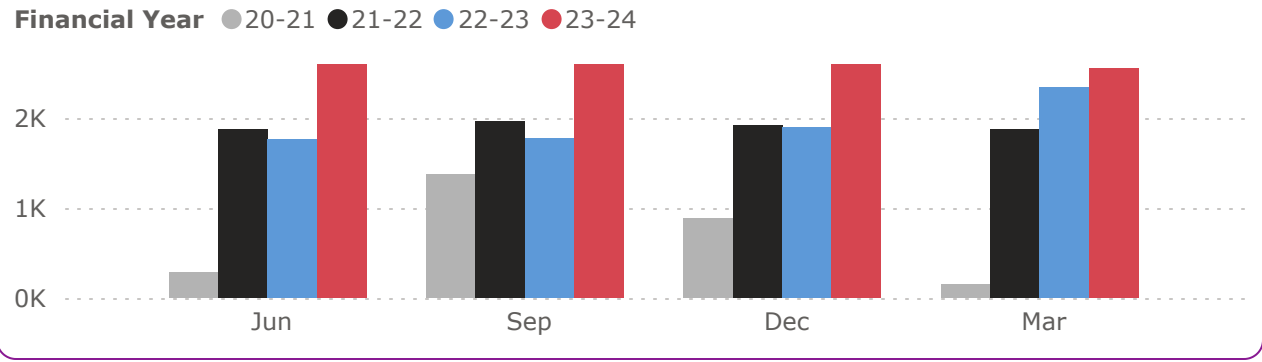
March 2024

Commentary or Summary

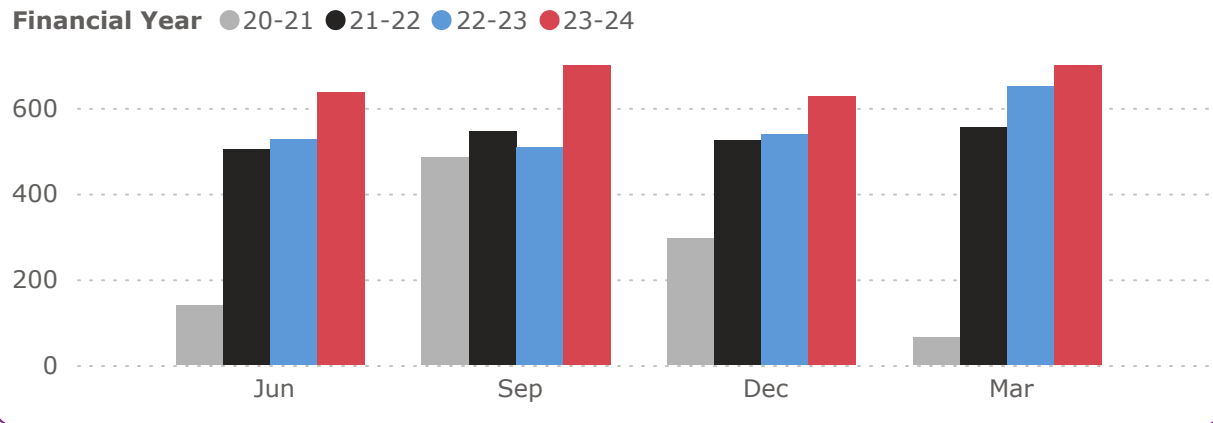
Number of tree related public enquiries: We are seeing a gradual reduction in the number of tree enquiries and this correlates with the team being fully staffed and the effort that is being made to catch up with the cyclical tree inspection regime. These inspections and resulting works are picking up issues which are reducing the need for the public to report them through to us.

Page 158

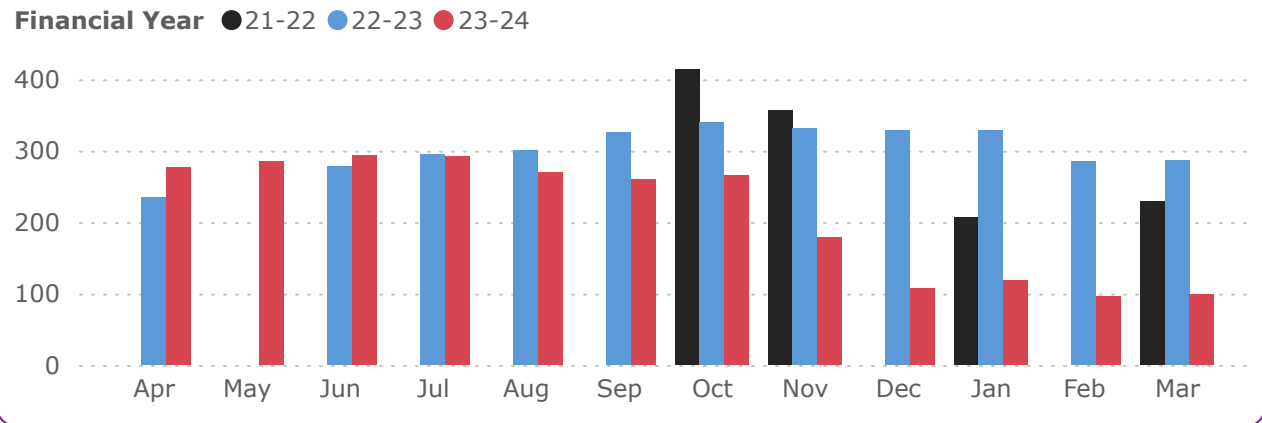
Number of hours contributed to green and heritage spaces by volunteers



Number of registered volunteers



Number of tree-related public enquiries



39. Operations



Latest Data Period:

March 2024

Commentary or Summary

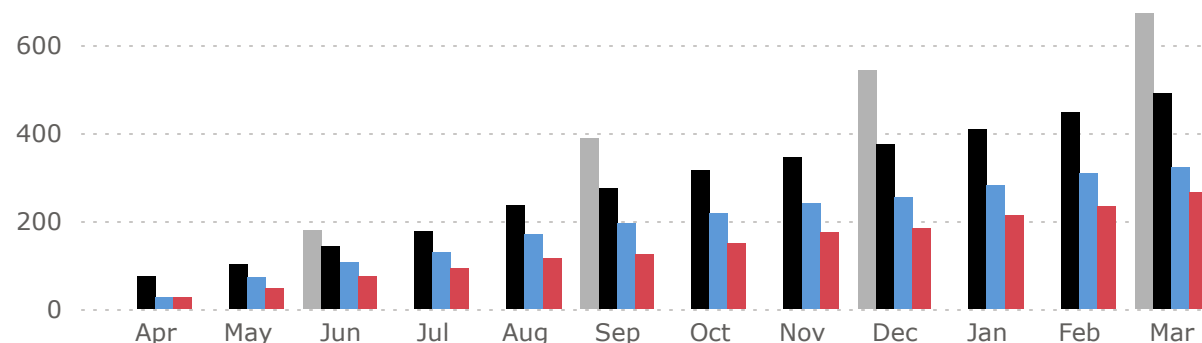
Percentage of household bins successfully collected: The percentage of household bins collected as scheduled is above 99.9% and have remained consistent throughout the year. This is based on emptying just under 5.18 million household bins throughout 2023/24 - recycling, residual and garden bins.

Flytipping: Q4 has seen an increase in the number of fly tipping incidents, with a significant rise in the number of reported incidents during March, which included several large scale incidents on both public and private property. Unfortunately most instances contained no evidence to trace those responsible.

Overall 2023/24 has seen the number of fly tipping incidents decline from those recorded in the previous year (from 322 to 264), a decrease of 18% which is also

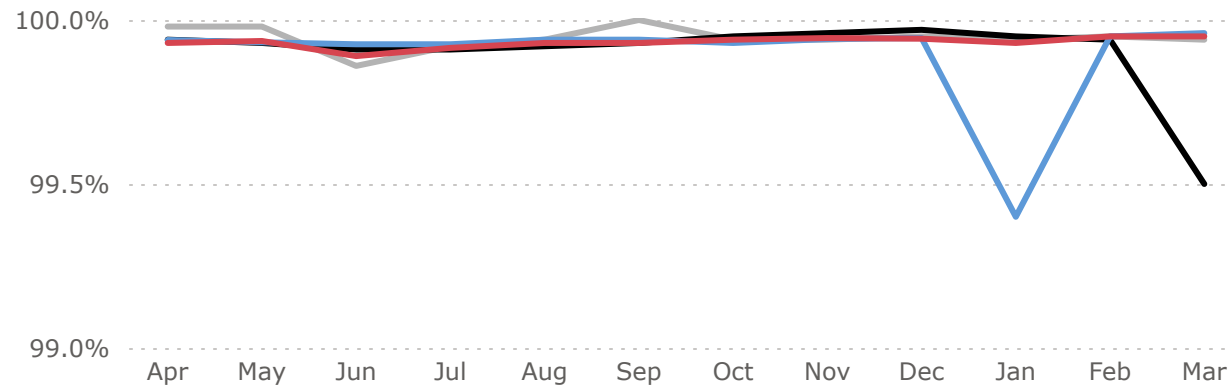
Number of fly tipping incidents recorded (YTD)

Financial Year ● 20-21 ● 21-22 ● 22-23 ● 23-24



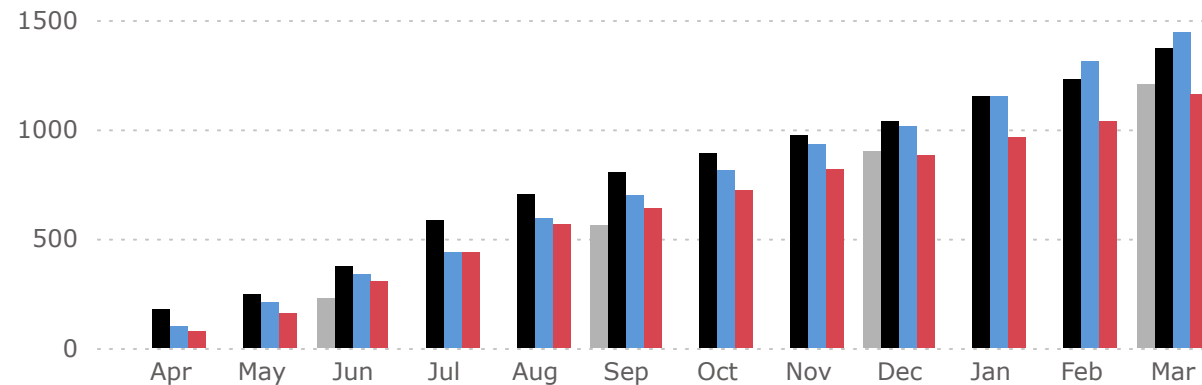
Percentage of household bins successfully collected

Financial Year ● 20-21 ● 21-22 ● 22-23 ● 23-24



Number of actions taken to combat fly tipping (YTD)

Financial Year ● 20-21 ● 21-22 ● 22-23 ● 23-24



40. Operations

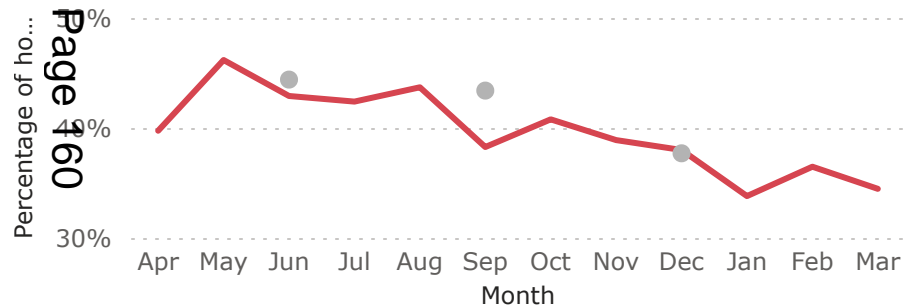


Latest Data Period:

March 2024

Percentage of household waste recycled and/or composted (one month lag) - comparisons (KPI monitored by Oflog)

Location ● 23-24 Suffolk ● 23-24 West Suffolk



- 20-21
- 21-22
- 22-23
- 23-24

Commentary or Summary

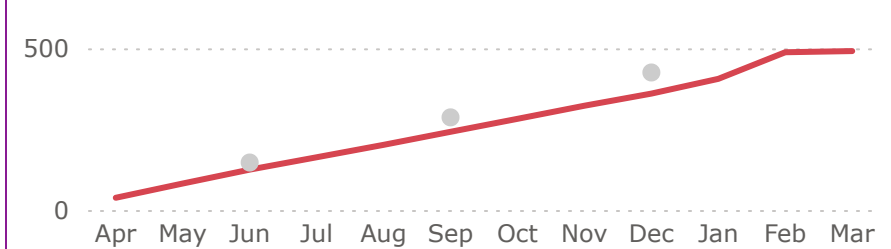
Average amount of residual waste per household (YTD): The figures used are estimated. The reduction in the amount of waste recycled and composted is consistent with the seasonal reduction in the amount of garden waste collected.

There was only a marginal increase (1%) in the amount of household residual waste (black bin) collected since 2022/23 despite an increase on 1,300 households.

Percentage of household waste recycled and/or composted: This KPI is benchmarked against England quarterly figures

Average amount of residual waste per household - KG (YTD - one month lag) - comparisons (KPI monitored by Oflog)

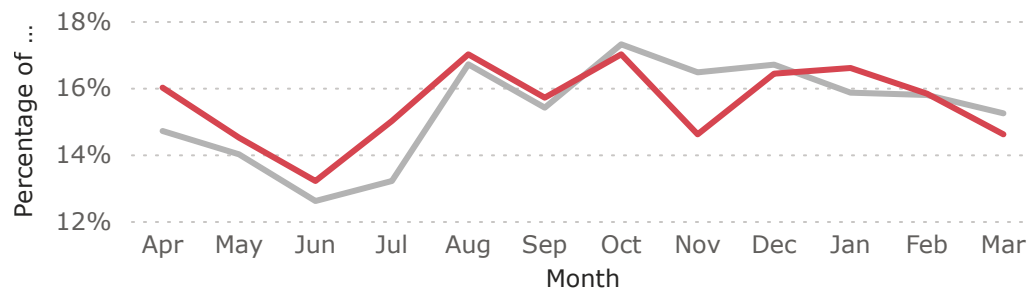
Location ● Suffolk 23-24 ● West Suffolk 23-24



- 20-21
- 21-22
- 22-23
- 23-24

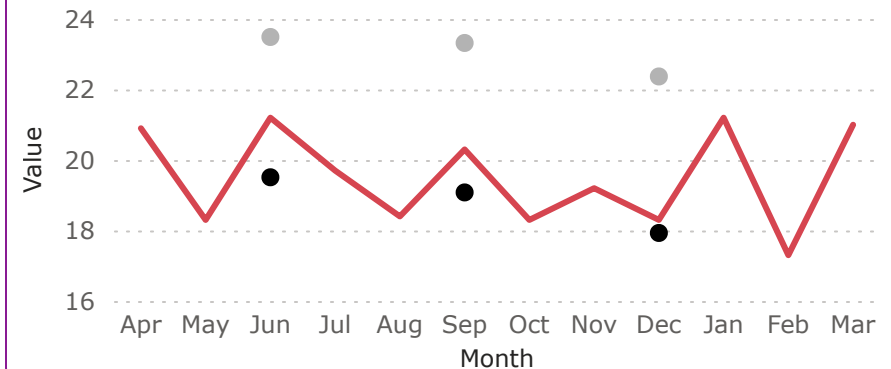
Percentage of material delivered to the recycling facility which is 'prohibited' (contamination rate) - comparisons (KPI monitored by Oflog)

Location ● Suffolk 23-24 ● West Suffolk 23-24



Average amount of residual waste per person (KG) - comparisons

Location ● 21-22 England ● 21-22 Suffolk ● 21-22 West Suffolk



- 20-21
- 21-22

Appendix B - income and expenditure - year end revenue outturn against budget - March 2024

	Year end revenue outturn £	Annual revenue budget £	Net (positive) or negative variance £	Outturn variance notes - figures in brackets represent underspends or additional income achieved.
Transfer payments: Net (Income) and expenditure on Benefits	38,010	38,010	0	<p>Net Benefit position in line with budget</p> <p>Overall gross budgets comprises: £25,006,000 rent allowance payments, £726,000 temporary accommodation rent rebates and £169,000 discretionary housing payments, mostly funded by government subsidy and recovery of overpayments.</p> <p>The year-end position is a deficit of £186,000 which has been covered by a contribution from the Housing Benefits Equalisation reserve, and includes: £70,000 rent allowances subsidy shortfall due to average subsidy rate of 98.27 per cent against a budget of 98.4 per cent. £272,000 temporary accommodation rent rebates subsidy shortfall due to average subsidy rate of 51.51 per cent compared to a budget of 80 per cent. This is due to the council's current refurbishment programme of its temporary accommodation and the subsequent need to use bed and breakfast accommodation for which a lower subsidy rate is received from the government. (£159,000) additional overpayment recovery. £3,000 other minor variances</p>
Total Net Benefits (income) or expenditure:	38,010	38,010	0	
Income from Business Rates	(6,980,083)	(6,400,600)	(579,483)	<p>Net overall Business Rate income higher than budgeted</p> <p>The forecast year end position includes: £292,000 section 31 grants (provided by Central Government to compensate for national reliefs awarded such as small business rates relief and retail hospitality relief) lower than budgeted (£909,000) increased share of Suffolk pool income as a result of lower than budgeted business rates income across Suffolk authorities including West Suffolk (agreed sharing of business rate benefits across Suffolk authorities) (£283,000) increased local share of growth due to the final tariff adjustment relating to the 2023 revaluation. £305,000 increased levy payable to Suffolk pool (proportion of business rate benefit payable to the pool in accordance with statutory provisions).</p>

Appendix B - income and expenditure - year end revenue outturn against budget - March 2024

	Year end revenue outturn £	Annual revenue budget £	Net (positive) or negative variance £	Outturn variance notes - figures in brackets represent underspends or additional income achieved.
Income from Formula Grant (Business Rate Retention Scheme), Council Tax and New Homes Bonus Grant	(16,828,053)	(16,828,053)	0	Formula Grant income in line with budget Grants received by the council, based on the annual local government finance settlement. These include the following: (£4,693,000) Business Rate Retention scheme income (£815,000) New Homes Bonus grant (£183,000) Services grant (£11,137,000) Council Tax income (net of Parish demand)
Income from other grants	(3,816,872)	(3,743,506)	(73,366)	Other grant income slightly higher than budgeted: The Budget and year-end outturn position includes the following grants: (£82,000) Department of Works and Pensions Grant (£120,000) COVID-19 outbreak management funding, utilised for public health protection (£34,000) Household Support Fund grant, used for supporting Housing Options initiatives (£972,000) Homelessness Prevention Grant, used to fund Housing Options Services (£483,000) Rough Sleeping Initiative, used for Housing Options Outreach Services (£420,000) Revenue Support Grant, non-specific grant utilised to support the net cost of services (£1,137,000) Funding Guarantee Grant, government funding to ensure that councils will see a 3% increase in their core spending power (£203,000) Rural Services Delivery Grant, additional grant reflecting the rural nature of the council (£252,000) Non-Domestic Rates Cost of Collection Allowance, to contribute towards administering the scheme (£309,000) Council Tax Collection Fund Surplus, arising from council tax collected being more than originally budgeted in previous years estimates (£27,000) Biodiversity Net Gain grant, utilised towards planning resources in order to ensure new developments fulfil the statutory planning obligations (£28,000) Redmond Review grant, utilised towards increased costs of external audit All of the above are fully committed for utilisation against services during the year
Total income from external grants, business rates and council tax:	(27,625,008)	(26,972,159)	(652,849)	

Appendix B - income and expenditure - year end revenue outturn against budget - March 2024

	Year end revenue outturn £	Annual revenue budget £	Net (positive) or negative variance £	Outturn variance notes - figures in brackets represent underspends or additional income achieved.
Income from external contributions and reimbursements	(5,369,537)	(4,708,819)	(660,718)	<p>Overall external contributions income higher than budgeted</p> <p>Income higher than budgeted: (£440,000) reimbursement for increased utilities and other costs from other partner organisations sharing our offices due to increased costs (£113,000) increased overall contribution from Suffolk County Council in respect of costs at several shared locations (£115,000) increased donations in respect of leisure and cultural sites (including Abbey Gardens and The Apex)</p> <p>Income lower than budgeted: £12,000 income from Suffolk County Council. This is due to reduced Net Recycling Performance Payments (RPPs) £22,000. These are based on prices for recycled materials which are traded worldwide, net of the operational costs. Operating costs have increased, and in addition lower material values have contributed to lower net RPP income overall. Also includes £18,000 reduced Tree Maintenance income. Offset with (£23,000) additional income re: Council Tax Administration, plus some additional income for parks and play provision. £17,000 Planning Section 106 monitoring contributions from developers. These are dependent on number, complexity and timings of planning applications. I</p> <p>Plus several other smaller income variances</p>
Income from Service Level Agreements (SLAs)	(1,070,299)	(1,076,694)	6,395	<p>Income slightly lower than budgeted</p> <p>Includes service level agreements for the provision of ICT, payroll, facilities and financial services to outside bodies. The small shortfall in income relates to cemetery services provided</p>
Income from ticket sales, commission and memberships	(2,059,246)	(1,932,067)	(127,179)	<p>Income higher than budgeted</p> <p>Income from tickets sales has recovered well from the effects of the pandemic and have exceeded the budget for the current year, the year end increase comprising: (£95,000) increased ticket sales income, after taking account of artists' fees (£10,000) net increased commission on catering and general sales (£22,000) increased booking fees and other Apex income</p>
Income from other Leisure sales	(464,519)	(451,803)	(12,716)	<p>Income slightly higher than budgeted</p> <p>(£25,000) increased income from West Stow Country Park</p> <p>This is offset to an extent by £13,000 lower income than budgeted from event hire at the Apex</p>

Appendix B - income and expenditure - year end revenue outturn against budget - March 2024

	Year end revenue outturn £	Annual revenue budget £	Net (positive) or negative variance £	Outturn variance notes - figures in brackets represent underspends or additional income achieved.
Income from Planning Fees	(1,357,695)	(1,624,484)	266,789	Income lower than budgeted Year-end income of (£1,358,000) is made up of: (£1,265,000) Planning Application Fees - £235,000 lower than budgeted (15.7 per cent of the budget) (£93,000) Income from Planning Performance Agreements and Pre-application fees - £32,000 lower than budgeted
Income from Building Regulation Fees	(293,771)	(374,390)	80,619	Income lower than budgeted Whilst income continues to recover, the current slowing down of the housing market due to rising interest rates and other economic factors is affecting the forecast year end position. Hourly rates were reviewed for 2023 to 2024, built into our projections, as are income streams such as the initial planning fees for the larger projects commissioned by the Council. The service is also reviewing the potential implications of the Building Safety act
Income from Refuse collection and sales of scrap materials	(4,897,845)	(4,726,624)	(171,221)	Income higher than budgeted Year end income of (£4,898,000) is made up of: (£1,661,000) Garden Waste Collection - (£63,000) higher than budget (£2,972,000) Trade Waste Collection - (£116,000) higher than budget (£61,000) Bulky Waste Collection (fridges, metal and scrap) - £7,000 lower than budget (£156,000) Sales of Scrap Materials collected - (£39,000) higher than budget (£14,000) Replacement Bin fees - £4,000 lower than budget (£33,000) Other fees (including street cleansing and clinical waste) - £36,000 lower than budget
Income from Car Parking	(7,702,274)	(7,341,574)	(360,700)	Income higher than budgeted Since the COVID-19 lockdown restrictions, we have seen reduced numbers in our car parks. Whilst these are gradually recovering, it is still not clear if there are now lower levels of activity in the Bury St Edmunds central car parks due to longer term behavioural change, shorter term impacts from the cost of fuel or lower available disposable income This will continue to be closely monitored on an ongoing basis; however, it is uncertain how quickly this trend will develop, and how any customer behavioural changes will impact on our income in the short and medium term This lower income expectation was factored into the 2023 to 2024 budget. The final year end outturn position is higher than our budgeted amount for town centre parking (£313,000), and slightly above budget for our leisure sites by around (£48,000)

Appendix B - income and expenditure - year end revenue outturn against budget - March 2024

	Year end revenue outturn £	Annual revenue budget £	Net (positive) or negative variance £	Outturn variance notes - figures in brackets represent underspends or additional income achieved.
Income from Solar Farm and other energy initiatives	(4,007,731)	(3,910,430)	(97,301)	<p>Income higher than budgeted Income from the Toggam Solar Farm for 2023 to 2024 is (£3,318,000), which is (£98,000) higher than the budget. This is based on generation from April to January of 11,851 Mwh against a target of 11,500 mwh.</p> <p>Income from feed-in tariffs and fuel energy was slightly lower than the budgeted amount of £690,000 by £1,000</p>
Income from Licensing	(494,601)	(451,732)	(42,869)	<p>Income higher than budgeted Licensing income levels are generally showing signs of recovery, with the final year end position showing an increase of around (£42,000). This is primarily from Premises Licences (£26,000) and Taxi and Hackney Carriage licences (£15,000), plus some other minor increases</p>
Income from Markets	(261,320)	(266,700)	5,380	<p>Income lower than budgeted Market income has struggled to recover to pre-pandemic levels.</p> <p>This lower income expectation was factored into the 2023 to 2024 budget, however at the year end market fees still came in lower than anticipated</p>
Income from other sales	(3,830,398)	(1,949,044)	(1,881,354)	<p>Overall income higher than budgeted</p> <p>Income higher than budgeted: (£1,800,000) backdated leisure VAT claim going back multiple years plus interest, contributed to the Strategic Priorities and MTFs Reserve (VTA) and Capital Financing Reserve (Interest) (£95,000) Vehicle Workshop income, partly offset by increased costs of spare parts and materials (£43,000) Electric Vehicle Charger income (£35,000) Car Park RinGo administration income</p> <p>Income lower than budgeted: £94,000 Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) income, as a result of an increasingly competitive sales market. Options are currently being pursued by the service in order to maximise income going forward. £46,000 forecast shortfall in Land Charges income, based on current levels. This is currently being affected by the slowdown in the housing market, and is in addition to the £70,000 reduction as part of the 2023 to 2024 budget setting process, reflecting the migration of Local Land Charges (LLC1) income to HM Land Registry. £51,000 CCTV income lower than budgeted as a result of review of facilities with partners</p> <p>plus several smaller positive variances across the services</p>

Appendix B - income and expenditure - year end revenue outturn against budget - March 2024

	Year end revenue outturn £	Annual revenue budget £	Net (positive) or negative variance £	Outturn variance notes - figures in brackets represent underspends or additional income achieved.
Income from Rentals	(7,136,014)	(7,040,941)	(95,073)	<p>Overall income higher than budgeted</p> <p>Income higher than budgeted: (£142,000) improved income expectations from land, temporary accommodation and other property</p> <p>Income lower than budgeted: £47,000 Shop rental income lower than budgeted (including vacancies and reduced backdated rent review at Ehringhausen Way, Haverhill)</p>
Income from investment interest and dividends received	(3,748,434)	(1,465,275)	(2,283,159)	<p>Income higher than budgeted</p> <p>Overall interest on investments during the year was (£2,928,000), an improvement of (£2,213,000) on the budget of £715,000. This was due to higher balances being held during the year than originally anticipated and improved rates (our average return rate was 4.9 per cent against the budgeted 3.25 per cent) due to increases in the Bank of England base rate.</p> <p>The year end position also includes an additional (£300,000) over the assumed budgeted dividend from Barley Homes. This has been offset to an extent by £40,000 lower dividend expectation from Verse, (£11,500) share dividend income, and £208,000 lower Barley Homes loan interest receivable as a result of timing of the development pipeline</p> <p>The net overall increase in income has been transferred to the Capital Financing reserve in anticipation of future interest rate and investment fluctuations</p>
Total income from Sales, contributions and reimbursements:	(42,693,685)	(37,320,578)	(5,373,107)	
Total income (excluding Benefits):	(70,318,693)	(64,292,737)	(6,025,956)	

Appendix B - income and expenditure - year end revenue outturn against budget - March 2024

	Year end revenue outturn £	Annual revenue budget £	Net (positive) or negative variance £	Outturn variance notes - figures in brackets represent underspends or additional income achieved.
Expenditure - total cost of employment	31,873,815	31,274,391	599,424	<p>Employment costs higher than budgeted</p> <p>This heading includes basic pay and associated oncosts such as employers national insurance and pension, plus costs of agency staff, recruitment, training and so on. It also includes an allowance of around 2.5 per cent to allow for vacancies and recruitment timings during the year.</p> <p>The salary budget for 2023 to 2024 allowed for a pay award assumption of 4 per cent. The final award of £1,925 for scale points 1 to 43, and 3.88 per cent from points 44 upward, leads to a cost increase of around £577,000. This is mitigated to an extent by close vacancy management and recruitment, offset with increased anticipated spend on overtime and agency costs within services</p>
Percentage of total spend	45.7%	49.3%	9.5%	
Expenditure - premises costs	7,837,454	6,986,829	850,625	<p>Overall spend higher than budgeted</p> <p>Spend higher than budgeted</p> <p>£509,000 Electricity higher than budgeted mainly due to increase in overall unit rates once the new Ofgem line loss allowance is factored in. £102,000 Gas higher than budgeted, due to increased unit and standing charges. £77,000 Water higher than budgeted.</p> <p>It should be noted that a large proportion of these utility costs are recharged to the council's tenants and partners, as reflected in income from external contributions and reimbursements.</p> <p>£60,000 increased facility services charges £34,000 increased Service Charges, including costs for new Car Park Fire Alarm System (£48,000) £54,000 Other premises costs (including £62,000 insurance costs).</p> <p>Spend lower than budgeted:</p> <p>(£38,000) Grounds Maintenance costs lower than budgeted (£27,000) Repairs and maintenance of buildings and facilities, after allowing for reserve funding and some rechargeable elements to partners and other bodies</p>
Percentage of total spend	11.2%	11.0%	13.4%	

Appendix B - income and expenditure - year end revenue outturn against budget - March 2024

	Year end revenue outturn £	Annual revenue budget £	Net (positive) or negative variance £	Outturn variance notes - figures in brackets represent underspends or additional income achieved.
Expenditure - transport and related costs	1,766,992	2,012,210	(245,218)	<p>Overall spend lower than budgeted</p> <p>Spend lower than budgeted: (£290,000) Vehicle fuel, due to the lower overall fuel prices over the full year. (£14,000) underspend on other vehicle costs, including insurances, vehicle hire, tyres, MOTs, maintenance and so on</p> <p>Spend higher than budgeted: £60,000 spare parts - external, used in order to generate additional vehicle workshop income</p>
Percentage of total spend	2.5%	3.2%	-3.9%	
Expenditure - supplies and services costs	12,027,355	11,257,858	769,497	<p>Spend higher than budgeted £124,000 increase in External Audit fees over budget, resulting from Public Sector Audit Appointments (PSAA) audit scale fee uplift £180,000 fees paid for VAT advice in respect of the £1.4m Leisure claim - see also income, funded from the Capital Financing Reserve £118,000 Planning Place Services consultancy. Provision of ecology, landscape and arboricultural advice £109,000 fees in respect of planning appeals, barrister support and representation £144,000 additional costs for computer maintenance agreements, mainly relating to cloud migration £128,000 Tools and equipment purchase and hire as a result of inflationary pressures £59,000 events equipment, offset with additional income £50,000 Subscriptions and other contributions (including £11,000 additional drainage board precepts) mainly as a result of inflationary pressures) £35,000 general goods and material purchases, resulting from inflationary pressures £39,000 Services for rent and lease renewals advice and marketing, resulting in additional estates income £83,000 Supplies and Services efficiencies - savings achieved by underspends in other supplies budgets</p> <p>Spend lower than budgeted: (£334k) reduced Bad Debt Provision</p> <p>Plus a number of smaller variances</p>
Percentage of total spend	17.2%	17.8%	12.1%	

Appendix B - income and expenditure - year end revenue outturn against budget - March 2024

	Year end revenue outturn £	Annual revenue budget £	Net (positive) or negative variance £	Outturn variance notes - figures in brackets represent underspends or additional income achieved.
Expenditure - third Party Payments, for example provision of services by other organisations that could be performed in-house.	3,114,841	2,955,763	159,078	<p>Spend higher than budgeted £31,000 increased costs for Haverhill Waste transfer station, reflecting inflationary pressures £33,000 increased costs for Mildenhall Hub, including postal costs which are recharged to partners £39,000 Off and On Street Parking, additional transaction fees, reflecting increased income assumptions £27,000 increased Security, £16,000 at Bury Bus Station, £8,000 for Off-street Car Parks, plus £3,000 District Highways Services £18,000 Gypsy and Travellers Study £75,000 Babergh and Mid Suffolk Civil Parking Enforcement income recharges, reflected in higher income collected</p> <p>Spend lower than budgeted: (£99,000) Suffolk County Council waste tipping charges as a result of reduced tonnages Plus a number of smaller variances across various services</p>
Percentage of total spend	4.5%	4.7%	2.5%	
Expenditure - capital costs, for example interest on borrowing, Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP).	2,294,200	2,294,200	0	<p>These costs are tied in with our projected borrowing and Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) requirements during the year, and as such will fluctuate depending on capital project timings: (£1,337,000) Interest on borrowing lower than budgeted £148,000 Minimum Revenue Provision higher than budgeted</p> <p>Net underspend of (£1,189,000) transferred to the Capital Financing Equalisation Reserve pending future required utilisation as projects develop</p>
Percentage of total spend	3.3%	3.6%	0.0%	

Appendix B - income and expenditure - year end revenue outturn against budget - March 2024

	Year end revenue outturn £	Annual revenue budget £	Net (positive) or negative variance £	Outturn variance notes - figures in brackets represent underspends or additional income achieved.
Net expenditure - contributions to or (from) reserves (excluding employee-related and premises contributions which are included under their respective expenditure headings)	10,850,356	6,642,911	4,207,445	<p>Net overall contributions to reserves higher than budgeted</p> <p>Increased contributions to reserves: £1,800,000 contribution to SP and MTFS (£645,000) and capital financing reserve (£1,155,000) in respect of backdated Leisure VAT claim, see also (£180,000) reserve monies utilised to fund VAT advice on this matter £3,445,000 contribution to capital financing reserve in respect of increased investment interest as detailed above, plus additional Barley Homes £300,000 dividend budgeted for 2024 to 2025 £100,000 contribution to Invest to Save Reserve in respect of timings of Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil fuel implementation, for future net zero project utilisation £97,000 Abbey Gardens Donation to earmarked reserve £185,000 Off Street Car parking contribution as a result of capital recharge to external partner £83,000 Civil Parking Enforcement as a result of increased income</p> <p>Increased contributions from reserves: (£180,000) VAT advice in respect of Leisure claim (£39,000) Abbey Gardens, donations reserve monies utilised towards special events (£127,000) Housing Options funding for increased accommodation and other costs</p>
Percentage of total spend	15.6%	10.5%	66.4%	
Total expenditure (excluding Benefits):	69,765,013	63,424,162	6,340,851	
Net (surplus) or deficit:	(515,670)	(830,565)	314,895	
Transfers to(from) General Fund				
Transfer to General Fund	830,565	830,565	0	Approved contribution to General Fund in respect of 2022 to 2023 budgeted replenishment required
Part utilisation of General Fund	(314,895)	0	(314,895)	Additional contribution from the General Fund reserve to fund net pressures in year. General Fund balance at 31 March 2024 is £5.516 million (the agreed minimum policy level is £5 million)
Final year end variance after funding:	0	0	0	

Description	Revised Budget for Year £	Actual Spend Year to date £	Over/(under) Spend For Year £	Proposed Carry Forward £	Notes	Total Project Budget 2023 to 2027 £	Project Funding
Resources and Property							
Previous Western Way development project	0	(1,514,717)	(1,514,717)	0	Report to Council (CAB/WS/23/041) in September 2023 approved the cancellation of the scheme. Capitalised costs from the 2022 to 2023 financial year to be reversed and funded from Strategic Priorities & MTFS reserve, along with spend incurred in 2023 to 2024 - total up to £2.4 million as per report.	0	Borrowing
Olding Road Site - Immediate Works	1,000,000	83,015	(916,985)	916,985	Report to Council (CAB/WS/23/041) in September 2023 approved a budget of up to £1 million to cover the cost of any immediate works to the Olding Road site which will add value to the asset and / or reduce holding costs. £83k spent to secure electrical export capacity from the site over and above the standard amount. Work progressing on decommissioning fuel storage on old depot site and remediation works.	1,000,000	Borrowing
Abbeycroft Leisure loan	500,000	0	(500,000)	500,000	Original loan facility agreed of £1m. Initial loan drawdown of £250,000 was made in July 2022. Second £250,000 was drawn down in March 2023.	500,000	Borrowing
Smartpay Set Up Costs	2,588	0	(2,588)	0	Upgrade to cash receipting system. Project now complete.	2,588	Revenues Reserves
Mildenhall Hub	100,000	38,532	(61,468)	61,468	Building is open and operational. Final account has been agreed and recharges made to partners. We are still working to the original delegation of cost neutral scheme at year 5 as per Overview and & Scrutiny committee report OS/WS/23/003. Budget relates to final elements of the original capital investment.	100,000	Borrowing
Asset Management Plan - Property							
Property Asset Management Plan.	0	0	0	0	Planned works programme. Funds moved into the appropriate projects when scoped. Funds now fully allocated for the current financial year.	3,979,500	Revenue Reserves

Description	Revised Budget for Year £	Actual Spend Year to date £	Over/(under) Spend For Year £	Proposed Carry Forward £	Notes	Total Project Budget 2023 to 2027 £	Project Funding
Net Zero Plan - Asset Management Investment	933,957	195,691	(738,266)	738,266	Investment in the council's properties and vehicles in respect of energy saving and generation initiatives. Year 2 of the original 4 year project. We are working towards a 2 per cent net return after borrowing towards council services, from investment in asset management and Electric Vehicle (EV) Fleet as well as extension of the solar for business scheme in the project below. This includes projects like installing solar panels, heat pumps as well as improving insulation, lighting, and roofs on our own properties to make them more energy efficient.	2,433,957	Borrowing
Parkway Multi-storey Car Park, Bury St Edmunds - structural works	691,375	677,239	(14,136)	14,136	Part of planned works programme. Awaiting final invoices.	691,375	Revenue Reserves
West Stow Visitors Centre - roof renewal	13,875	10,785	(3,090)	3,090	Part of planned asset management works programme. Project is now complete but awaiting final invoices and retention sum.	13,875	Revenue Reserves
Athenaeum - south store building roof renewal	75,000	82,430	7,430	0	Part of planned asset management works programme. Planning was approved early June, started on site early 2024.	75,000	Revenue Reserves
Haverhill Leisure Centre - replace rooflights and cladding	0	4,204	4,204	0	Project complete - just awaiting final retention payment.	0	Revenue Reserves
Moreton Hall Community Centre Improvements	0	32,116	32,116		Further electrical and mechanical work undertaken in the year.	0	Revenue Reserves
Units 2&3 Highbury Road Brandon	81,981	(4,147)	(86,128)	0	Part of planned asset management works programme prior to re-let. Project now complete but awaiting final invoices.	81,981	Revenue Reserves
Provincial House, Haverhill, urgent repair works & Phase 1 of Landlord Alterations	953,407	1,016,010	62,603	0	Landlord works to be funded primarily from the lease surrender premium held by the council.	953,407	Revenue Reserves
Provincial House - Phase 2 Landlord alterations	900,000	715,725	(184,275)	121,672	Part of planned asset management works programme prior to re-let. Carry forward £100k as expected to be completed next financial year.	900,000	Revenue Reserves
West Stow Country Park - sewage treatment plant	50,000	0	(50,000)	0	Project no longer going ahead.	50,000	Revenue Reserves
West Front and St Mary's Churchyard, Bury St Edmunds - Samson's Tower roofing works	48,980	50,967	1,987	0	Part of planned asset management works programme. Project is now complete but awaiting final invoices and retention sum.	48,980	Revenue Reserves
The Guineas Public Toilets, Newmarket - Refurbishment	340,000	321,687	(18,313)	0	Part of planned asset management works programme. Project complete, awaiting retention payment.	340,000	Revenue Reserves

Description	Revised Budget for Year £	Actual Spend Year to date £	Over/(under) Spend For Year £	Proposed Carry Forward £	Notes	Total Project Budget 2023 to 2027 £	Project Funding
Abbey Gardens Toilets, Bury St Edmunds	160,000	0	(160,000)	160,000	Part of planned asset management works programme. Project currently on hold linked to wider lottery bid, works expected to start	160,000	Revenue Reserves
Recreation Ground Toilets, Haverhill - Roof Renewal	30,000	0	(30,000)	30,000	Part of planned asset management works programme. Project not yet started, to be programmed in new financial year, carry forward requested.	30,000	Revenue Reserves
11 Hollands Road, Haverhill - Roof renewal and refurbishment	160,000	159,371	(629)	0	Part of planned asset management works programme prior to re-let. Works completed, awaiting retention payment.	160,000	Revenue Reserves
The Lodge, Brandon Country Park refurbishment	140,000	154,692	14,692	0	Part of planned asset management works programme prior to re-let. Works complete.	140,000	Revenue Reserves
80 Valley Way, Newmarket - internal refurbishment	36,751	36,751	0	0	Part of planned asset management works programme. Project now complete.	36,751	Revenue Reserves
Electric Vehicle (EV) Charging - Olding Road Car Park	32,960	32,960	0	0	Project now complete.	32,960	Revenue Reserves
57 Eastern Way, Bury St Edmunds - refurbishment	200,000	0	(200,000)	200,000	Works likely to commence in the next financial year.	200,000	Revenue Reserves
Families and Communities							
Customer Access project	71,658	0	(71,658)	71,658	This is for the next phase of CCP and then Granicus. The customer contact centre is due to be upgraded in early August.	71,658	Capital Receipts
Abbotts House - Refurbishment	450,000	507,642	57,642		Refurbishment of temporary accommodation units funded from a combination of housing funds, net zero funds and building maintenance funds.	450,000	Borrowing / Revenue Reserves / Capital Receipts
Cobblers Court	341,500	342,977	1,477		Purchase of temporary accommodation, with additional costs for some renovation work including converting a downstairs office into an additional room.	341,500	Capital Receipts / Borrowing
Local Authority Housing Fund	1,263,620	1,657,970	394,350		To be used for temporary accommodation. Funded from the Local Authority Housing Fund (LAHF) - higher level of grant received than budgeted, so overspend covered by this.	341,150	Grant / Borrowing

Description	Revised Budget for Year £	Actual Spend Year to date £	Over/(under) Spend For Year £	Proposed Carry Forward £	Notes	Total Project Budget 2023 to 2027 £	Project Funding
Human Resources, Governance and Regulatory Services							
Private Sector Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs)	1,909,209	1,668,877	(240,332)	0	Recent fast track developments in the service should have ensured that works are approved and completed more quickly. Funded externally.	4,609,209	Grant Funding
Community Energy Plan and Net Zero Plan	3,036,998	2,041,323	(995,675)	995,675	The revised budget comprises £1.25 million Net Zero investment, £0.5 million Community Energy Plan plus the unspent budget from the previous financial year. The council continues to invest in this project in line with the expected pipeline.	6,036,998	Borrowing/ Revenue Reserves
Decarbonisation Initiatives Fund	1,000,000	101,967	(898,033)	898,033	Report to Council (CAB/WS/23/040) 19 September 2023 approved a budget of up to £1 million to set up a Decarbonisation Initiatives Fund, with the first call on the fund to be a grant scheme for the upgrade of streetlights owned by town and parish to light-emitting diode (LED) lanterns. First payment to Mildenhall Town Council made in March 2024. Carry forward requested into 2024 to 2025	1,000,000	Revenue Reserves
Operations							
Car Parking Improvements	224,388	0	(224,388)	224,388	Projects are allocated when identified during the year, and budgets moved as appropriate.	224,388	Revenue Reserves
Car parking improvements:	80,000	0	(80,000)	80,000	Improvements being funded from the Car Park Reserve.	80,000	Revenue Reserves
Newmarket Car parking improvements					Currently still in planning phase to understand the full resurfacing requirements before work commences. Works likely to commence in the next financial year.		
Car parking improvements:	145,831	153,281	7,450	(7,450)	Improvements being funded from the Car Park Reserve. Works commenced at the end of July 2023 and are now completed.	145,831	Revenue Reserves
Ram Meadow, Bury St Edmunds improvements							
Car parking improvements:	0	5,021	5,021	0		0	
Moreton Hall, Bury St Edmunds improvements							

Description	Revised Budget for Year £	Actual Spend Year to date £	Over/(under) Spend For Year £	Proposed Carry Forward £	Notes	Total Project Budget 2023 to 2027 £	Project Funding
Car parking improvements: Electric Vehicle (EV) charging points	14,571	0	(14,571)	14,571	Additional EV charging points are currently being scoped out.	14,571	Revenue Reserves
Car parking improvements: Car park in Clare (subject to business case)	100,000	1,340	(98,660)	98,660	Improvements being funded from the Car Park Reserve. Currently at the feasibility stage, and working towards the full business case.	100,000	Revenue Reserves
Car parking improvements: St Andrews resurfacing work project	0	9,897	9,897	0	Improvements being funded from the Car Park Reserve.	0	
Car parking improvements: Supply and refurbishment of CCTV cameras at Parkway Multi-Storey Car Park	28,431	28,431	0	0	Improvements being funded from the Car Park Reserve.	28,431	
Car parking improvements: Parkway Multi-Storey Car Park, Bury St Edmunds - resurfacing	70,000	75,150	5,150	0	Improvements being funded from the Car Park Reserve.	70,000	
Olding Road Depot - CCTV Install	18,488	18,488	0	0	Installation of CCTV cameras around the Olding Road Depot site.	528,488	Revenue Reserves
Vehicle and plant purchases	1,367,598	1,282,728	(84,870)	84,870	In line with the vehicle replacement programme.	5,271,398	Revenue Reserves
Net Zero Plan - Electric Vehicle fleet investment	538,322	143,863	(394,459)	394,459	Funds the additional cost of replacing vehicles with electric versions	1,048,322	Revenue Reserves
Audio-Visual Equipment, West Suffolk House	169,682	101,809	(67,873)	0	Audio Visual Equipment installed in the West Suffolk House Conference Room to enable hybrid meetings. Partially funded by Suffolk County Council.	169,682	Contributions/ Revenue Reserves
Vehicle Wash Down Area at West Suffolk Operational Hub (WSOH)	100,000	1,870	(98,130)	0	To create an alternative lorry wash down area at WSOH for smaller vehicles and plant. Funded from the original WSOH budget.	100,000	Borrowing
Community Sports Facility - Moreton Hall, Bury St Edmunds	1,552,500	0	(1,552,500)	1,552,500	The project partners are finalising the legal details. The project relates to the Skyliner project completed in 2016 to 2017	1,552,500	Capital Receipts
Asset Management Plan - Leisure							
Leisure Asset Management Plan	0	0	0	0	Projects are allocated when identified during the year, including ongoing review of leisure projects to ensure reserve is not over utilised.	900,000	

Description	Revised Budget for Year £	Actual Spend Year to date £	Over/(under) Spend For Year £	Proposed Carry Forward £	Notes	Total Project Budget 2023 to 2027 £	Project Funding
Babwell Meadows Landscaping	28,074	0	(28,074)	28,074	Project under review. Now expecting this to commence in the next financial year.	28,074	Revenue Reserves
Hardwick Heath, Football pitch relocation and play area renewal	4,390	4,390	0	0	Project completed.	4,390	
Mildenhall Hub - Creation of a Pump Track	130,000	151,199	21,199	0	Project completed	130,000	Revenue Reserves
Abbey Gardens Yard - Removal of Asbestos and other H&S Issues	38,134	38,134	0	0	Project completed	38,134	
St Johns Close Recreation Ground, Mildenhall - renewal of MUGA	60,000	58,120	(1,880)	0	Project completed	60,000	Revenue Reserves
West Stow - Car Park refurbishment	143,000	2,318	(140,682)	140,682	Initial preparatory works completed in 2022 to 2023 (£7,000), remainder of project now likely to be completed next financial year.	143,000	
Flying Fortress - Water Fountain	6,593	6,593	0	0		6,593	Grant Funded
Abbey Gardens - new items of play equipment	15,000	24,434	9,434	0	Project completed	15,000	S106 Funded
Henry Close, Haverhill - Play area renewal (£59k) part S106 funded	41,894	19,731	(22,163)	0	Contract has been awarded to contractor. Work commenced in October 2023.	41,894	Revenue Reserves
St James Park, BSE - Play area renewal (£60k) part S106 funded	70,590	70,590	0	0	Project completed.	70,590	Revenue Reserves
Peterhouse Close, Mildenhall, Play area renewal (£60k)	60,582	60,582	0	0	Project completed.	60,582	Revenue Reserves
Granby Street, Newmarket - Play area renewal (£35k) part S106 funded	54,729	33,465	(21,264)	0	Project completed.	54,729	Revenue Reserves / S106 Funding
Gainsborough Recreation Ground, BSE - Replacement play equipment (£30k)	31,611	31,611	0	0	Project completed.	31,611	Revenue Reserves
Knee high railing replacement, Alderton Close, Haverhill	0	22,042	22,042	0	Project completed.	0	Revenue Reserves
Planning and Growth							
Traveller Sites	6,970	84,224	77,254	0	Project relates to works to enable a site in Bury St Edmunds, funded in part by external grant.	6,970	Grant Funded
Barley Homes.	6,700,000	1,393,795	(5,306,205)	5,306,205	Work continues to progress on future pipeline sites. Loan drawdown of £800,000 to Barley Homes in March 2024. Timing of drawdowns linked to development pipeline.	12,950,000	Capital Receipts

Capital Programme forecast year end position - March 2024

Appendix C



Description	Revised Budget for Year £	Actual Spend Year to date £	Over/(under) Spend For Year £	Proposed Carry Forward £	Notes	Total Project Budget 2023 to 2027 £	Project Funding
High Street, Haverhill - improvements	693,000	0	(693,000)	693,000	External grant funded. Fund to be carried forward as work continues on scoping project with members.	693,000	Grant Funded
Investing in our Growth Agenda	16,266,147	298,136	(15,968,011)	15,968,011	Fund to be used for investments identified that ensure a balanced blend of return which provide wider strategic, place-shaping, social and economic benefits. Carry forward relates to agreed project timings and uncommitted balance.	19,266,147	Borrowing
17 to 18 Cornhill, Bury St Edmunds - renovation	10,792	157,940	147,148	0	Works commenced in September 2020. Completion occurred in March 2023, with first flat sales at the end of March 2023. Final account agreed with contractor, finalising total project spend. Overall this results in the project coming in on budget and the delivery of the residential and retail units as per the business case.	10,792	Borrowing
Haverhill Research Park - loan facility	586,818	0	(586,818)	586,818	Epicentre building that loan was being used to fund is complete - only potential further call on facility is capitalisation of interest. Value of loan drawdown is £2,913,182, from a total loan facility of £3.500,000.	586,818	Borrowing
Suffolk Business Park - Incubation Units	4,598,716	267,663	(4,331,053)	4,331,053	Report to Cabinet and Council (CAB/WS/21/052) - currently working through design stages.	12,100,000	Borrowing
Totals:	48,480,710	12,960,912	(35,519,798)	34,206,824		81,312,824	

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Reserve description	2023 to 2024 Opening balance £	2023 to 2024 Net budgeted movement to or (from) reserve £	2023 to 2024 Budgeted closing balance £	2023 to 2024 Net movement to or (from) reserve £	2023 to 2024 Closing reserve balance £	2023 to 2024 Year end variance (over) / under utilised £	Variance notes (variances in brackets denote greater reserve usage than budgeted)
Strategic reserves.							
Strategic Priorities and Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) reserve.	5,316,430	(2,726,751)	2,589,679	(1,087,028)	4,229,402	1,639,723	<p>This reserve is primarily comprised of monies received in respect of the New Homes Bonus grant (and associated element of the Funding Guarantee funding), set aside as agreed to support the delivery of the council's priorities and medium term financial strategy. The grant(s) for 2023 to 2024 totalling £1,756,000 has been contributed to this reserve in full.</p> <p>The year end balance is £1,694,000 higher than budgeted, the main variances are: £106,000 lower Sports and Leisure Centre utilisation, due to timings of utility support for Leisure provision £41,000 lower utilisation on Locality budgets and LifeLink, balances carried forward to 2024 to 2025 £898,000 lower utilisation on the Decarbonisation capital project due to timings £645,000 backdated Leisure VAT claim contributed to the reserve, the interest on this has been contributed to the Capital Financing and Interest Equalisation reserve (see below).</p>
Investing in our Growth Agenda reserve.	691,304	(123,850)	567,454	(126,396)	564,908	(2,546)	<p>This reserve was set up in order to support the delivery of the council's growth agenda, current utilisation is primarily for staffing cost.</p>

Reserve description	2023 to 2024 Opening balance £	2023 to 2024 Net budgeted movement to or (from) reserve £	2023 to 2024 Budgeted closing balance £	2023 to 2024 Net movement to or (from) reserve £	2023 to 2024 Closing reserve balance £	2023 to 2024 Year end variance (over) / under utilised £	Variance notes (variances in brackets denote greater reserve usage than budgeted)
Business Rates Retention Pilot: place-based reserve.	1,633,053	(90,512)	1,542,541	(90,512)	1,542,541	0	<p>This reserve was set up to hold the benefit from the Suffolk 100 per cent business rate retention pilot in 2018 to 2019. To be utilised against projects as agreed by the district and county leaders in West Suffolk. This reserve is largely committed across the medium term financial strategy.</p> <p>Utilisation of this reserve during the year is as budgeted, and is in respect of: (£91,000) Lifelink project, representing the remaining funds from the original (£500,000) allocated to this project from Pilot monies</p>
Financial planning reserves.							
Invest to save reserve.	4,619,262	367,074	4,986,336	410,760	5,030,022	43,686	<p>The year end balance is higher than budgeted due to:</p> <p>(£32,000) funding for transformational review staffing costs (£53,000) funding for cost of change</p> <p>£100,000 additional contribution to this reserve in respect of Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil (HVO) fuel implementation timings, for future utilisation £37,000 lower funding for Legal Case Management System implementation</p>

Reserve description	2023 to 2024 Opening balance £	2023 to 2024 Net budgeted movement to or (from) reserve £	2023 to 2024 Budgeted closing balance £	2023 to 2024 Net movement to or (from) reserve £	2023 to 2024 Closing reserve balance £	2023 to 2024 Year end variance (over) / under utilised £	Variance notes (variances in brackets denote greater reserve usage than budgeted)
Business Rates Retention equalisation reserve.	7,714,967	(300,504)	7,414,463	(259,254)	7,455,713	41,250	<p>This reserve is intended to neutralise the impact of any fluctuations in growth or reductions in Business Rates income under the Business Rates Retention Scheme, primarily relating to statutory timing differences and appeal costs.</p> <p>The year end balance is higher than budgeted as a result of a surplus on the Levy distribution, contributed to the reserve.</p>
Housing Benefits equalisation reserve.	581,921	0	581,921	(186,308)	395,613	(186,308)	<p>This reserve is utilised in order to smooth out the effect of variations between the amounts of Housing Benefits paid out and subsequently grant funded by Department of Works and Pensions (DWP).</p> <p>The year end balance is lower than budgeted as a result of additional utilisation required during the year. See appendix B for further information.</p>

Earmarked reserves year end outturn position - March 2024

Appendix D



Reserve description	2023 to 2024 Opening balance £	2023 to 2024 Net budgeted movement to or (from) reserve £	2023 to 2024 Budgeted closing balance £	2023 to 2024 Net movement to or (from) reserve £	2023 to 2024 Closing reserve balance £	2023 to 2024 Year end variance (over) / under utilised £	Variance notes (variances in brackets denote greater reserve usage than budgeted)
Capital project financing reserve.	6,548,067	0	6,548,067	4,216,389	10,764,456	4,216,389	<p>This Reserve was set up in order to facilitate the capital financing requirements of the council, and to account for fluctuations and timing differences in the expected spend profile and interest rates. Fund will be utilised in the medium to longer term towards the increased cost of borrowing.</p> <p>The increased balance at the year end is due to higher contributions relating to savings in interest payable budgets in year whilst the council's treasury management approach utilises internal funds, offset slightly by contributions to cover the risks associated with some key strategic projects such as the timing of rental income or holding costs. An additional one off £1,154,000 has also been contributed to this reserve in respect of interest from HMRC on the backdated Leisure VAT claim (backdated over multiple years).</p>
Self insured reserve.	363,175	0	363,175	4,259	367,434	4,259	Monies set aside to provide funds in order to finance any high insurance excesses that may arise.
Election reserve.	306,506	(140,000)	166,506	(155,832)	150,674	(15,832)	Monies set aside each year in order to fund the local elections when required.
Planning reserve.	306,413	23,627	330,040	(97,384)	209,029	(121,011)	Monies set aside in order to fund the Local Plan and other planning-related expenditure.

Earmarked reserves year end outturn position - March 2024

Appendix D



Reserve description	2023 to 2024 Opening balance £	2023 to 2024 Net budgeted movement to or (from) reserve £	2023 to 2024 Budgeted closing balance £	2023 to 2024 Net movement to or (from) reserve £	2023 to 2024 Closing reserve balance £	2023 to 2024 Year end variance (over) / under utilised £	Variance notes (variances in brackets denote greater reserve usage than budgeted)
Service delivery reserves.							
Computer and telephone equipment reserve.	89,354	0	89,354	38,334	127,688	38,334	Monies set aside for major ICT hardware refreshes and software purchases and upgrades.
Office equipment reserve.	321,373	(51,316)	270,057	(47,241)	274,132	4,075	Monies set aside to purchase significant replacement items of office equipment.
Anglia Revenues Partnership reserve.	748,813	4,616	753,429	(84,311)	664,502	(88,927)	Government grant monies received by the Anglia Revenues Partnership (ARP) for specific purposes which are held in reserve due to timings of receipts and usage. Year end balance is forecasted to be lower than budgeted as a result of funding the ARP deficit for 2023 to 2024.
Vehicle, plant and equipment reserve.	1,195,210	1,001,878	2,197,088	1,565,758	2,760,968	563,880	This reserve is utilised to fund the council's vehicle replacement programme. Year end balance higher than budget due to additional transfer from the Trade Waste Service, relating to an external contribution for skip replacement, plus lower capital project utilisation due to timings of vehicle purchases. See also appendix C.
Waste management reserve.	172,242	(34,850)	137,392	(28,948)	143,294	5,902	This reserve includes monies set aside for purchases related to the Waste and Street Scene service, including wheeled bins and associated equipment.

Earmarked reserves year end outturn position - March 2024

Appendix D



Reserve description	2023 to 2024 Opening balance £	2023 to 2024 Net budgeted movement to or (from) reserve £	2023 to 2024 Budgeted closing balance £	2023 to 2024 Net movement to or (from) reserve £	2023 to 2024 Closing reserve balance £	2023 to 2024 Year end variance (over) / under utilised £	Variance notes (variances in brackets denote greater reserve usage than budgeted)
Building repairs reserve property.	5,163,006	(1,557,333)	3,605,673	(1,229,056)	3,933,950	328,277	Higher closing balance than budgeted, mainly as a result of timings of capital spend (see also Appendix C).
Industrial unit service charge reserve.	113,977	0	113,977	6,821	120,798	6,821	This reserve holds monies received in respect of service charges which are intended to be utilised on specific industrial estate works.
Car Park development reserve	943,083	(742,130)	200,953	246,841	1,189,924	988,971	This reserve holds monies set aside from parking income which are intended to be utilised on car park improvements and developments. The year end balance is higher than budgeted due to timings on Off-Street parking initiatives (see also appendix C).
Industrial rent reserve.	591,724	(253,407)	338,317	(269,704)	322,020	(16,297)	Monies set aside to meet lost lease income on the former Co-op building at Jubilee Walk, Haverhill, plus Provincial House, Haverhill works premium. The year end position is lower than budgeted as a result of funding Provincial House holding costs.
Building repairs reserve leisure.	260,761	(75,075)	185,686	4,227	264,988	79,302	This reserve is utilised in order to fund the smaller Leisure Capital programme items. Higher year end balance than budgeted due to project timings (see also appendix C).

Reserve description	2023 to 2024 Opening balance £	2023 to 2024 Net budgeted movement to or (from) reserve £	2023 to 2024 Budgeted closing balance £	2023 to 2024 Net movement to or (from) reserve £	2023 to 2024 Closing reserve balance £	2023 to 2024 Year end variance (over) / under utilised £	Variance notes (variances in brackets denote greater reserve usage than budgeted)
Abbey Gardens donation reserve.	38,766	0	38,766	58,234	97,000	58,234	Monies held for the improvement of the Abbey Gardens, Bury St Edmunds. The year end balance is higher than budgeted as a result of additional donations received during the year.
Newmarket Stallion statue reserve.	20,809	0	20,809	0	20,809	0	Monies held for the maintenance and repair of the Newmarket Stallion statue.
Housing Options reserve.	1,828,499	(165,976)	1,662,523	(24,145)	1,804,354	141,831	This reserve holds the funding received from the Flexible Homelessness Support Grant and is utilised to fund the Housing Options team and associated expenditure. Year end balance higher than budgeted due to lower utilisation within the service than anticipated as a result of staff vacancies and lower spend on some supplies and services.
Section 106 reserves.							
Commutated maintenance reserve.	1,360,138	(82,930)	1,277,208	(63,747)	1,296,391	19,183	Monies received from developers in order to maintain additional play areas and public open space adopted.
Public Service Village reserve.	79,699	(32,960)	46,739	(37,253)	42,446	(4,293)	Section 106 monies to be utilised to fund the council's Green Travel scheme and associated initiatives. Utilisation during the year relates to provision of Electric Vehicle (EV) Chargers.
Section 106 monitoring officer reserve.	6,543	(8,084)	(1,541)	(6,544)	(1)	1,540	This reserve is utilised in order to fund the Section 106 Monitoring Officer post.

Earmarked reserves year end outturn position - March 2024

Appendix D



Reserve description	2023 to 2024 Opening balance £	2023 to 2024 Net budgeted movement to or (from) reserve £	2023 to 2024 Budgeted closing balance £	2023 to 2024 Net movement to or (from) reserve £	2023 to 2024 Closing reserve balance £	2023 to 2024 Year end variance (over) / under utilised £	Variance notes (variances in brackets denote greater reserve usage than budgeted)
Section 106 revenue reserve.	80,287	0	80,287	0	80,287	0	Monies held in respect of revenue Section 106 contributions received. No movement in the year.
Other reserves.							
Gershom Parkington reserve.	585,892	2,258	588,150	2,455	588,347	197	Monies received from the Gershom Parkington Trust in order to maintain and develop the council's horological collection.
Reserves totals:	41,681,274	(4,986,225)	36,695,049	2,760,415	44,441,689	7,746,640	

West Suffolk Strategic Risk Register 2023/24 - March 2024

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WS1	10-Jul-14	Financial	Director & Portfolio Holders-Resources and Property	Financial management	Failure in specific areas to achieve projected income, or expenditure exceeds the approved budgets (revenue or capital).		C	1) Monthly monitoring reports (revenue and capital) to budget holders and Leadership Team. Quarterly revenue and capital monitoring reports to PASC.	Director - Resources & Property	Ongoing	
							C	2) Business rate retention income and localising of Council tax being monitored monthly by Finance and ARP	Director - Resources & Property	Ongoing	
							C	3) Regular meetings between budget holders and Resources and Performance business advisors/partners	Service Managers / Business Partners / Advisers	Ongoing	
							C	4) Scrutiny of financial reports by LT and Members through Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee	LT	Ongoing	
							A	5) Ongoing financial system upgrade/development in order to take advantage of latest budget planning / monitoring functionality.	LT	Ongoing	
							A	6) Continue to review and strengthen the overall Performance Management Framework. E.g. KPI's, PDRs, (also see WS18),Risk management, Project monitoring, Financial Reporting.	LT	Ongoing	
							C	7) Regular updates of projects, assessment of any additional risks associated with new projects.	LT	Ongoing	
							C	8) Monitoring of investment decisions and original business cases targets/outcomes through Business Partner Model. Will also seek external advice when relevant.	Director - Resources & Property	Ongoing	
							C	9) Longer term financial planning across MTFS. To include implications of Fair Funding review.	Director - Resources & Property	Ongoing	
							A	10) Utilise Suffolk wide Business Rates monitoring and forecasting tool to assist with control #2 above. Input from Economic Development included to improve accuracy.	Director - Resources & Property	Ongoing	
WS2	10-Jul-14	Financial	Director & Portfolio Holders-Resources and Property	Financial planning	Failure to deliver a sustainable Medium Term Financial Strategy, especially in view of continued financial uncertainty around areas such as Comprehensive Spending Review, localisation of Business Rates, increased service demand, and use of reserves. Over reliance on any one particular MTFS theme such as behaving more commercially or being an investing authority		A	1) Annual Budget preparation focus on MTFS and key uncertainties including Fair Funding Review, New Homes Bonus Business Rate Retention.Delivery on six MTFS themes.	LT	Ongoing	
							C	2) Demand trends and financial implications validated as part of budget setting. Using monitoring reports to identify trends.	Service Managers / Business Partners / Advisers	Ongoing	
							C	3) Medium Term Financial Strategy update - including review of assumptions, sensitivity analysis and review of reserve and balance levels	Director - Resources and Property	Ongoing	
							C	4) Scrutiny of financial reports by LT and Members through Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee	LT	Ongoing	
							C	5) Monitor Government statements on future of local government funding and lobby as necessary.	LT	Ongoing	
							C	6) New investment proposals to be considered through the Councils governance and decision making process including challenge by Business Partners.	LT	Ongoing	
							C	7) Use of data and intelligence in forecasting future scenarios.	LT	Ongoing	
							A	8) Utilise Suffolk wide Business Rates monitoring and forecasting to assist with forecasting and financial planning across the MTFS.	Director - Resources and Property	Ongoing	
							A	9) Analysis of the official Review Reports for all local authorities that have issued s114 notices (Croydon, Thurrock and Woking with Birmingham to come) to take on board all lessons learned.	Senior Management Team	Ongoing	

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WS3	10-Jul-14	Customer	Chief Executive	Maintain and promote our public image, maintain effective communications	Lack of public trust and confidence in the council leads to a poor reputation. The council needs to champion its area and be a trusted part of the community. It is vital therefore in making sure people access services, which often means the handling of sensitive information, that the council has a strong reputation. This is also the case in working with communities to deliver growth or large projects as well as in times of crisis, when the council must be a trusted source of information. Therefore the council needs a good reputation to enter positive partnerships with others, or secure funding. This could also potentially impact on our ability to recruit staff in competitive market.		C	1) Monitor and measure media coverage through daily media alerts and, where appropriate, provide a robust response.	Service Manager (Strategic Communications)	Ongoing	
							C	2) Public stakeholders and partners have a range of channels including news and social media to disseminate information about West Suffolk services and strategic priorities and address errors or misrepresentation.	Service Manager (Strategic Communications)	Ongoing	
							C	3) Close liaison with local and national partners on coordinated communications on multi-agency issues.	Service Manager (Strategic Communications)	Ongoing	
							C	4) Train and support staff and Members in proactive communications, liaising with the media and using social media platforms.	Service Manager (Strategic Communications)	Ongoing	
							C	5) Deliver strategic communications plan and work with them to engage appropriately with communities to encourage channel shift.	Service Manager (Strategic Communications)	Ongoing	
							A	6) Ensure that appropriate communications planning and support are identified for strategic projects as per individual project plans	Service Manager (Strategic Communications)	Ongoing	
							C	7) Carry out timely and proportionate consultation that is available in an accessible format for everyone who wants to give us their views on a particular matter.	Service Manager (Corporate Policy)	Ongoing	
WS4	10-Jul-14	Customer	Director & Portfolio Holders- Families & Communities	Adopt technological advances in managing the customer journey	Service delivery methods do not meet customer needs or expectations with potential to damage the council's reputation; customer expectations need to be understood and managed; council not appreciating and/or delivering methods of contact and response time which are expected by customers.		C	1) Continue to develop new web presence with full digital by default capability. Ensure that staff, councillors and external support/advisory services are aware of the councils' digital offer and benefits for use.	Director - Families & Communities	Ongoing	
							A	2) Working in the wider Suffolk system to enhance the customer experience.	Director - Families & Communities	Ongoing	
							C	3) Clear and consistent public communications to explain changes to services and establish realistic expectations of service levels. Ensure the customer journey delivers the Councils strategies, policies and procedures.	Service Manager (Strategic Communications) and Service Manager (Customer & Digital)	Ongoing	
							A	4) Continue to explore technological options to support customer service delivery.	All Service Managers	Ongoing	
WS5	10-Jan-24	Professional	Director & Portfolio Holders - Human Resources, Legal & Democratic Services	Staff Recruitment	Ineffective recruitment strategies which impact in particular on hard to fill posts and lack of skilled individuals applying for skilled roles which could impact on delivery of services and high levels of performance.		A	1) Horizon scanning to anticipate changes and trends to establishment	Service Manager (HR, H&S and L&D)	Ongoing	
							C	2) Keeping up to date on national trends for hard to recruit roles.	Service Manager (HR, H&S and L&D)	Ongoing	
							A	3) Workforce planning meetings review data linked to turnover and progress around recruitment plans on a monthly basis and consider any mitigating action that may be required to support services, such as redeployment. HR team exploring ways to review, streamline and speed up the recruitment process, including the introduction of a new approach to on-boarding which is in development.	Service Manager (HR, H&S and L&D)	Ongoing	
							A	4) Continue to implement apprenticeships and career pathways, graduate trainees and support the intern programme.	Director - HR, Governance and Regulatory	Ongoing	
							C	5) Salary benchmarking undertaken to ensure salaries are competitive. Maintain focus on strong employer brand.	Director - HR, Governance and Regulatory	Ongoing	

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WS6	10-Jan-24	Professional	Director & Portfolio Holders - Human Resources, Legal & Democratic Services	Staff engagement across the organisation including trust, morale, health and wellbeing.	Lack of engaged, motivated and appropriately skilled staff could prevent delivery of services and high levels of performance. Failure to have motivated staff with appropriate workloads and work-life balance could reduce the ability of the organisation to deliver effectively for communities.		A	1) Workforce strategy in place, focussing on promoting a flexible and agile workforce, supporting health and well-being, integrating diversity and inclusion and developing talent management linked to performance management.	Service Manager (HR, H&S and L&D)	Ongoing	
							C	2) Leadership development programme for band 7/8 staff in place.	Service Manager (HR, H&S and L&D)	Ongoing	
							A	3) Regularly evaluate outcome of Performance Reviews to identify talent management to inform succession planning. PDR scheme focuses on performance, pay progression and career progression.	Service Manager (HR, H&S and L&D)	Ongoing	
							A	4) Annual workforce monitoring data presented to the West Suffolk Joint Staff Consultative Panel and Joint Negotiation Meeting for feedback, review and collective consideration of any actions required.	Director - HR, Governance and Regulatory	Ongoing	
							C	5) Staff surveys undertaken at periodic timeframes to review and monitor staff feedback.	Director - HR, Governance and Regulatory	Ongoing	
							A	6) Review of learning and development programme has been undertaken with an associated action plan in place.	Director - HR, Governance and Regulatory	Ongoing	
							C	7) Well-being programme in place, supported by a network of champions, with well-being initiatives regularly launched and communicated to staff.	Director - HR, Governance and Regulatory	Ongoing	
							C	8) Established a range of support networks – including the Managers peer network and youth network groups and regular organisational engagement sessions facilitated by a life-coach.	Director - HR, Governance and Regulatory	Ongoing	
							C	9) Annual staff awards process in place.	Director - HR, Governance and Regulatory	Ongoing	
							C	10) Staff briefings and blogs led by CEO.	Director - HR, Governance and Regulatory	Ongoing	
							C	11) Corporate induction process in place for all employees.	Director - HR, Governance and Regulatory	Ongoing	
							C	12) Employee benefit programme in place, including EAP.	Director - HR, Governance and Regulatory	Ongoing	
WS7	10-Jul-14	Technological/Professional/Financial	Service Manager (Corporate Policy) / All Directors & Portfolio Holders	Project management	Key strategic outcomes not being delivered due to projects failing to be completed on time. Budgets are overspent due to delays. Peaks and troughs in resource demands for support services are not managed, resulting in unmanageable workloads for e.g. IT team, exacerbating the delays.		A	1) Maintain and develop an efficient programme and project management framework understanding timetabling and interdependencies between projects and programmes (led by Service Manager Corporate Policy).	Service Manager Corporate Policy	Ongoing	
							A	2) Maintain oversight of corporate project matrix at Leadership Team, to manage demands on services and resource appropriately.	Service Manager Corporate Policy	Ongoing	
							A	3) Training and support to staff involved in corporate projects including key project management skills.	L&D team/Service Manager Corporate Policy	Ongoing	
							C	4) Project support and resources to be included in future Project Initiation Documents and project business cases, including support services such as: ICT, Finance, Legal and Property	LT and All Service Managers	Ongoing	
							C	5) Early identification of Corporate capacity / priorities as part of business plan / project initiation. Review of programmes to assist with prioritisation.	LT	Ongoing	
							C	6) Carry out Project Close Out Reports, Project Assurance, Benefit Realisation reviews and Project Health Checks as appropriate.	LT and All Service Managers	Ongoing	
WS8	10-Jul-14	Technological	Director & Portfolio Holders- Families & Communities	ICT Development	Development of ICT across services and systems not being delivered. Failure to keep Business Applications current.		A	1) Management of ICT infrastructure, software, systems and applications through the ICT Programme Board	Director - Families & Communities	Ongoing	
							A	2) Continued management and development of infrastructure, software, systems and applications enabling alignment and integration as appropriate including remote working.	Service Manager (Customer & Digital)	Ongoing	
							C	3) Regular review of software, systems and applications for strategic fit and resources/skills capacity through ICT Programme Board.	Service Manager (Customer & Digital)	Ongoing	
							A	4) Develop the council's digital framework to ensure there are links to wider integration between systems and services.	Service Manager (Customer & Digital)	Ongoing	

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WS9	10-Jul-14 (a)	Social/Political	Director & Portfolio Holders- Families & Communities	Deliver; Thriving Communities	Opportunities being missed to create or influence: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • provision of appropriate services, benefits and support for West Suffolk residents. • ability to improve their physical and mental health and wellbeing through sport, physical and cultural activities, as well as access to health services. In particular, protect and develop 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. 		A	Continued consideration of community chest and approach to grant funding.	Director (Families and Communities)	Ongoing	
							C	2) Families and Communities Officers continue to work closely with Councillors on a variety of projects and initiatives.	Service Manager (Families & Communities)	Ongoing	
							A	3) Community Chest funds are subject to quarterly monitoring and reported to Grant Working Party. Locality Budgets are allocated by Councillors but supported by Families and Communities Officers. Portfolio Holder and F&C officers continue to remind Cllrs to allocate funding before financial year end.	Service Manager (Families & Communities)	Ongoing	
							A	4) Families and Communities monitor and evaluate the impact of initiatives/projects in localities. Including qualitative (in the form of case studies) and quantitative information.	Service Manager (Families & Communities)	Ongoing	
							A	5) Extensive ongoing partnership work, including County Lines, homelessness and refugees. West Suffolk Council is a partner in the West Suffolk Alliance which includes health and care partners.	Director (Families and Communities)	Ongoing	
							C	1) Work with partners who provide support and grant funding for new and growing businesses and promote opportunities on social media and through our networks.	Director - Planning and Growth	Ongoing	
	C	2) Allocate sufficient employment land in the Local Plan to meet need.	Director - Planning and Growth	Ongoing							
	C	3) Work with partners on initiatives and events to support our high streets and include policies in our local plan which protect and enhance	Director - Planning and Growth	Ongoing							
	C	4) Work with partners who are responsible for delivering infrastructure which supports Growth such as Suffolk County Council and Transport East	Director - Planning and Growth	Ongoing							
	C	5) Work with Suffolk County Council to support the transition for the changes required by government to NALEP.	Director - Planning and Growth	Ongoing							
	A	6) Preparation and delivery of West Suffolk Local Plan.	Director - Planning and Growth	Ongoing							
	A	7) Support partners delivery of business startup activities at existing start up premises, deliver capital project for Advanced Manufacturing and Engineering at the Suffolk Business Park.	Director - Planning and Growth	Ongoing							

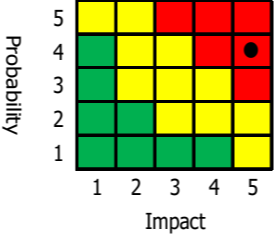
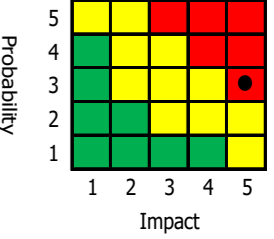
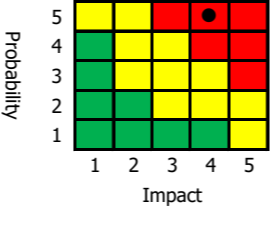
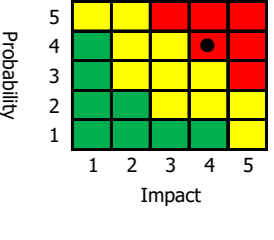
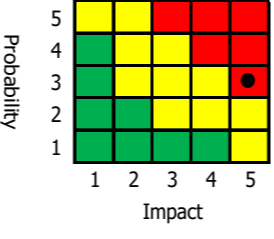
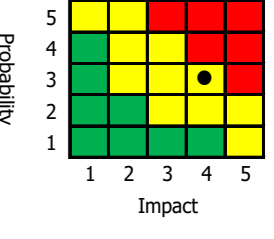
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Page 191	(c)		Director & Portfolio Holders - Growth, Families & Communities and Planning.	Deliver; Affordable, available and decent homes	Opportunities being missed to create or influence the provision of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> planning powers to significantly increase the supply of affordable housing in West Suffolk, particularly for social rent, and explore other options for increasing provision. options to address the specific market conditions in West Suffolk that make it challenging for local people to afford to buy or rent. 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 		C	1) Review West Suffolk Housing Strategy. Preparation of Implementation Plan and delivery.	Director - Planning and Growth	Ongoing							
							C	2) West Suffolk Choice Based Lettings Scheme regularly reviewed to reflect changes in legislation. Operation of scheme monitored through Choice Based Letting Management Board.	Service Manager (Housing Options)	Ongoing							
							A	3) Ensure effectiveness of West Suffolk Lettings Partnership to ensure that the package of support provided meets the needs of the landlords and local housing market, particularly in light of Universal Credit and cost of living challenges.	Service Manager (Housing Options)	Ongoing							
							A	4) Disabled Facilities Grants process and ILS reviewed with partners in order to introduce a more comprehensive service, maximising the opportunities to support vulnerable residents in their homes.	Service Manager (Regulatory)	Ongoing							
							A	5) Proceed with business plan and report on progress for Barley Homes (Group) Ltd to build open market, private rented and affordable housing.	Director - Planning and Growth	Ongoing							
							A	7) Preparation and delivery of West Suffolk Local Plan - Housing policies.	Director - Planning and Growth	Ongoing							
							A	8) Monitor and actively promote high standards in the private rented sector and take appropriate action where standards are not being met, to tackle disrepair, poor housing conditions and criminal landlords.	Service Manager (Regulatory)	Ongoing							
							A	9) Ensure all HMOs are licensed and inspected according to necessary timeframes and pursue landlords of unlicensed houses in multiple occupation	Service Manager (Regulatory)	Ongoing							
							(d)	Strategic Directors	Deliver; Environmental resilience	Opportunities being missed to create or influence the provision of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> environmental improvements that support progress to net zero, including by working in partnership with businesses, residents and others. Work to implement actions to adapt to climate change in West Suffolk, in line with the third National Adaptation Programme. improved public and active travel opportunities in West Suffolk and work to reduce the impact of heavy goods vehicles in communities. 			A	1) Continue to implement and review the Council's Environment and Biodiversity Action plans.	Strategic Director	Ongoing	
													C	2) Review and report on environmental activity through the Council's Environmental Management group, the Environment and Sustainability Reference Group and Cabinet.	Strategic Director	Ongoing	
A	3) Work as part of the Suffolk Climate Change Partnership and Suffolk Climate Change Moard to jointly deliver projects identified through the Suffolk Climate Emergency Plan to reduce carbon emissions.	Strategic Director	Ongoing														
A	4) Through the Town and Parish Forum support local communities to consider their responses to the National Adaption Duty.	Strategic Director	Ongoing														
A	5) The emerging Local Plan includes a policy which seeks to address climate change through sustainable design and construction with a fabric first approach to achieve carbon standards for all new homes.	Strategic Director	Ongoing														
WS10	10-Jul-14	Political/ Partnership/ Legislative	Chief Executive / Directors & Portfolio Holders	Adapt to new public sector models, explore opportunities with partners	The council fails to deliver better services for public sector customers (regardless of the organisation), fails to close its budget gap due to missing opportunities for new sources of funding and opportunities for savings through economies of scale and better integration; or fails to take account of wider changes in national and local legislations, policy and structure proposals.		C	1) Keep a watching brief on, and disseminate information on new policies (i.e. the Environment Bill, Resource & Waste Strategy), funding models and opportunities through DLUHC, RSN, LGA, EELGA etc.	LT	Ongoing							
							C	2) Maintain good relationships with public sector partners, e.g. ICB, SPSL, ARP authorities, etc to hear of, and take opportunities arising from opportunities for partnership working.	Chief Executive and Directors	Ongoing							
							C	3) Robust business cases for identified opportunities.	LT	Ongoing							
							C	4) Keeping a watching brief on the new/changing National policies with Suffolk colleagues, including local government funding changes, county deal working and changes to healthcare governance and proposed structural changes for local government in Suffolk and the wider East Anglia area.	Chief Executive and Directors	Ongoing							
							A	5) Lead the integration and rationalisation of the public estate through membership, and local leadership, of the Government's One Public Estate Programme.	Director	Ongoing							
							A	6) Explore shared services opportunities with other Local Authorities.	LT	Ongoing							

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WS11	10-Jul-14	Social/Economic	Director & Portfolio Holders - Growth	Loss of a key employer or employment cluster.	Failure to retain major employers in the area and the economic impact that it would have		A	1) Liaison with the key employers to understand issues and opportunities by: coordinating and attending the West Suffolk Business Forum; organising the West Suffolk Business Festival (which provides opportunities for engagement with key employers); arranging visits to key employers for Leadership Team; promoting the ED team as a key point of contact for businesses and as a result responding to concerns and issues raised; and meeting and supporting business leaders in conjunction with the New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership Growth Hub advisors.	Director - Planning and Growth	Ongoing	
							C	2) Preparation and delivery of Local Plan - Employment policies and allocations.	Director - Planning and Growth	Ongoing	
							C	3) Understand skills shortage and requirements by linking business to education providers and encourage businesses to take on apprentices.	Director - Planning and Growth	Ongoing	
							A	4) Help businesses access third party funding.	Director - Planning and Growth	Ongoing	
							A	5) Regular liaison with key employment clusters to enable the council to respond quickly to changing circumstances.	Director - Planning and Growth	Ongoing	
							A	6) In the worst case scenario (actions 1 - 5 ineffective) the ED team liaises with key partners such as Job Centre Plus and West Suffolk College to mitigate the impact of downsizing/restructuring.	Director - Planning and Growth	Ongoing	
WS12	10-Jul-14	Partnership/Economic	Directors & Portfolio Holders	Partner / Public Sector failure	Partners or partnerships failing or under strain; cost shunting (transfer of costs between partners); partnerships not achieving desired outcomes.		C	1) Ensure robust SLA (Service Level Agreement) & Joint Venture arrangements are in place. Ensure good due diligence procedures are used.	All Directors	Ongoing	
							C	2) Regular monitoring of arrangements / outcomes.	All Directors	Ongoing	
							A	3) Regular meetings with key partners, including Suffolk Resilience Forum, fortnightly Suffolk CEO meetings and supporting groups to discuss impact and potential response of the Suffolk wide system.	All Directors	Ongoing	
							C	4) Understand the cumulative impact of complex partnership delivery arrangements.	CEO and LT	Ongoing	
							A	5) Develop robust governance arrangements for council owned companies. Barley Homes Business Plan under review in detail as part of regular reporting.	LT	Ongoing	
							A	6) Continue to work with health and other partners to develop the integrated delivery of health and leisure.	LT	Ongoing	
WS13	10-Jul-14	All	Director & Portfolio Holders	Service failure through unplanned events	Failure to respond adequately to both internal and external clients due to unforeseen events.		A	1) Services must have a workable, up to date Business Continuity Plan in place.	All Directors/All staff	Ongoing	
							C	2) Combined West Suffolk Business Continuity Plan is in place for major identified threats, regularly reviewed and practised.	LT	Ongoing	
							C	3) Appointed officers within each service to be responsible for the continuity plans.	All Appointed Officers	Ongoing	
								Please also see WS14 - Breach of data protection and information security and WS19 Cyber Security.		Ongoing	
							A	5) Adoption of lessons learned from Carillion and Capita issues. Procurement and contract management policies updated.	LT	Ongoing	

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WS14	10-Jul-14	Information	Director & Portfolio Holders	Breach of data protection and information security	Failure to ensure the accuracy and control of data. Not using good practice when handling data. Damage to council's reputation. Damage to individuals. Avoid legal challenge. Prevent potential claims for compensation. Financial penalty for failing to comply with GDPR		C	1) Information governance group coordinates councils' approach to risks.	Director	Ongoing	
							C	2) Regular monitoring to ensure information is held securely, including physical checks and provision of advice and guidance.	Service Manager (Internal Audit),	Ongoing	
							A	3) Improve staff and member communication on good practices and data security.	Service Manager (Strategic Communications)	Ongoing	
							A	4) Monitoring changes in service delivery and customer engagement to identify potential data protection and information security risks, along with potential action to mitigate these.	All SMs	Ongoing	
							A	5) Use of Information Sharing Agreements and Data Protection Impact Assessments where there are changes to data processing practices (including sharing of data).	Director - HR, Governance and Regulatory	Ongoing	
WS15	10-Jul-14	Social\ Customer	Chief Exec, Director & Portfolio Holders - Resources & Property	Service Performance	Risk of individual services having below par performance levels and possible dips in performance while establishing new service models.		C	1) Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee (PASC) receive comprehensive performance monitoring report.	Director - Resources & Property / R&P Business Partners	Ongoing	
							A	2) Early identification, reporting and monitoring of potential problem areas.	Service Managers / Business Partners / Advisers	Ongoing	
							C	3) Strengthen the overall Performance Management Framework. E.g. Balanced Scorecards, PDRs, Risk management, Project monitoring, Financial Reporting.	LT	Ongoing	
							C	4) Use PDR's to aid early identification of potential problem areas.	Line Managers	Ongoing	
							A	5) - Implications of implementing Business Continuity Plan on service delivery understood and communicated.		Ongoing	
								Please also see WS7 - Poor Project Management and WS5 - Staff Retention		Ongoing	
WS16	10-Jul-14	Social	All Directors & Portfolio Holders	Demographic changes	Unable to meet the demands created by population changes (caused by growth, ageing, diversity, employment) including the impact on infrastructure and other related service provision.		C	1) Key services (planning, housing and waste) use forecasting models (e.g. East of England forecasting model, POPGROUP) to build population change into future Strategic Planning, Service Planning and Policy Development.	Director - Families and Communities/ Planning /Growth/Operations	Ongoing	
							A	2) Monitor, research and analysis around demographics through DLUHC, ONS, LGA, LGC and other sources and share key findings with relevant services.	Service Manager (Corporate Policy)	Ongoing	
							A	3) Attend meetings of Suffolk Office of Data and Analytics Partnership Management Group to share best practice around population monitoring and forecasting. NB particular attention needs to be paid to population forecasts not being able to deal accurately with USAFE population.	Service Manager (Corporate Policy)	Ongoing	
WS17	10-Jul-14	Physical	Director & Portfolio Holders - Human Resources, Legal & Democratic Services	Implementation of the Corporate Health and Safety Policy	Failure to ensure the safety and well being of staff and councillors in all contexts. Failure to provide safe and healthy environment for visitors and the general public. Risk of HSE (Health & Safety Executive) prosecutions. Damage to civic and democratic processes due to abuse and intimidation (in person and online).		C	1) Corporate Health and Safety strategy, objectives and implementation plans in place for all internal and external functions performed by the Council, including democratic processes and engagement. Zero tolerance of abuse and intimidation.	Service Manager (HR, H&S and L&D)	Ongoing	
							C	2) Full risk assessments, safe systems of work, toolbox talks carried out for high risk activities in dangerous environments for operations and families and communities teams.	Director - Operations, Director - Families & Communities	Ongoing	
							A	3) Well being programme in place.	Service Manager (HR, H&S and L&D)	Ongoing	
							C	4) Requirement for all staff to complete online H&S training and members to complete appropriate H&S induction programme.	Service Manager (HR, H&S and L&D)	Ongoing	
							A	5) Communications, guidance and protocols issued to staff and councillors. Adopt national guidance of LGA in terms of councillor safety and positive community engagement (Debate not Hate campaign).	Service Manager (HR, H&S and L&D)	Ongoing	
							A	6) Appropriate insurances in place and regularly reviewed.	Service Manager (HR, H&S and L&D)	Ongoing	
							C	7) Continue a programme of health and safety audits according to H&S Risk. Keep council's constitution under review in relation to safe democratic processes.	Service Manager (HR, H&S and L&D)	Ongoing	

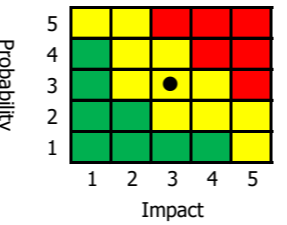
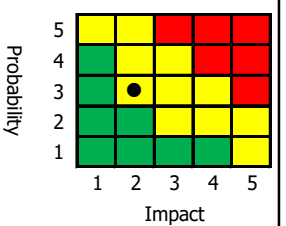
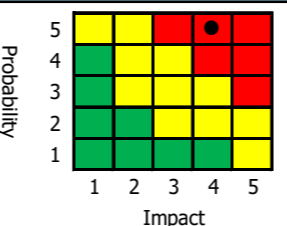
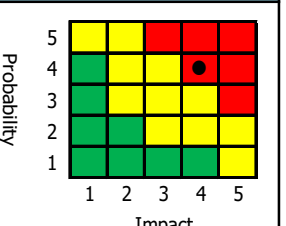
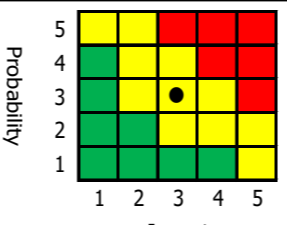
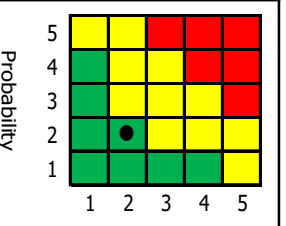
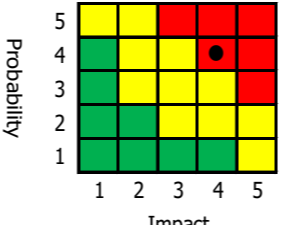
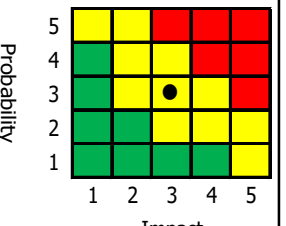
West Suffolk Strategic Risk Register 2023/24 - March 2024

Type: A = Action, C = Control

RISK ID NUMBER	Date risk added to register	Type	Current Owners	Title	Description - What are we trying to avoid? Why is this important	WS Inherent Risk	Type	Summary of Controls / Actions - What we are doing / need to do to prevent it.	Who is responsible for the actions	Ongoing or Time Limited?	WS Residual Risk
WS18	10-Jul-14	Social	Service Manager & portfolio Holders- Strategic Housing	Safeguarding children and vulnerable adults	Failing, or being unable, to recognise and respond appropriately to (and/or escalate) safeguarding matters that could lead to a deterioration in individuals circumstances and potentially challenge to the Council's policies and procedures.		A	1) Working in Countywide safeguarding partnership - external annual S11 Audit of Council procedures and the annual self-assessment.	Director - Jill Korwin	Ongoing	
							C	2) Safe recruitment procedures are adopted for all staff recruitment.	Director - HR, Governance and Regulatory	Ongoing	
							A	3) Regular staff and member training and briefing sessions taking place included as part of induction and training programme.	Service Manager-HR, Legal & Dem services	Ongoing	
							A	4) Ensure the Council has an up to date Safeguarding Policy that reflects legislative requirements.	Designated Safeguarding Lead (Strategic Director)	Ongoing	
							A	5) Develop toolkit for Staff and Councillors to deal with vulnerable individuals	Designated Safeguarding Lead (Strategic Director)	Ongoing	
WS19	06-Oct-17	Technological	Directors & Portfolio Holders	Cyber Security	Failure to appropriately protect West Suffolk's systems and Services from Cyber Attack		A	1) User Education & Awareness - Update Info Sec training to include more detail on data protection and introduce new education programme for all staff. Carry out regular training exercises to test processes in realistic scenarios	Service Manager - Customer & Digital Services, HR Business Partner	Ongoing	
							A	2) User Education & Awareness - Info Sec policy to be reviewed and disseminated to all staff (inc ARP) - and to be reviewed regularly	Service Manager - Customer & Digital Services, HR Business Partner	Ongoing	
							A	3) Incident Management - Business continuity planning card to be finalised, tested and disseminated.	Service Manager (Customer & Digital) and Strategic Director - Alex Wilson	Ongoing	
							A	4) Incident Management - Review of Business Continuity Plan to be finalised with the plan then agreed and published - this requiring a revisit of each service area to agree operational procedures and where stored to provide assurance that arrangements are in place in event of an incident	Service Manager (Customer & Digital), HR Business Partner, and Strategic Director - Alex Wilson	Ongoing	
							A	6) Secure Configuration - Carry out a user access / change control process for key systems, given that many are internet based. Security of systems operated for the Council by third parties kept under review/incorporated into procurement processes.	Service Manager - Customer & Digital Services, HR Business Partner, Service Manager - IT	Ongoing	
							C	7) Monthly testing of the Council PSN compliance including the checking and monitoring of new and existing staff profiles. No tolerance approach adopted.	Service Manager (Customer & Digital)	Ongoing	
							A	5) Share information with businesses and business representatives about issues the Council is aware of that could impact on them and link them to sources of information	Service Manager Economic development	Ongoing	
A	2) Review suppliers and identify those that could be at risk in the current environment and make appropriate contingencies	All ADs	Ongoing								
A	3) Monitor impact in partnership with NALEP and other Suffolk LAs and identify new issues and respond accordingly.	Director	Ongoing								
A	4) Continue to maximise the use of renewables in all Council buildings.	Director- Resources & Property	Ongoing								

West Suffolk Strategic Risk Register 2023/24 - March 2024

Type: A = Action, C = Control

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WS21	03-Apr-19	Environmental	Directors & Portfolio Holders	Environmental impact of Council's activities	Failure to address this could increase the emissions the Council generates, thus failing to improve environment and address climate change and damage the reputation and increase costs of the Council.		A	1) Monitor activity and produce an annual Environmental Statement	Environment and Climate Change Task group	Ongoing	
							A	2) Implement and track the Climate Change Action Plan including the Net Zero 2030 plan and the Council's Carbon Budget.	Environment and Climate Change Task group	Ongoing	
							A	3) Implement and track the Council's £9m Decarbonisation Fund.	Director	Ongoing	
							A	4) Continue to maximise the opportunities from external funding to address climate change challenges.	Director	Ongoing	
							A	5) Environment and Climate Change Action Plan to be followed and specific actions and controls within to be monitored and included in regular performance management (WS15)	Relevant Service Leads	Ongoing	
WS22	03-Apr-19	Economic	Directors & Portfolio Holders	Financial Impact on individuals due to rising cost of living, inflation etc.	Failure to address the challenges posed by increased demand on services as a result of increased personal debt in the region.		A	1) Monitor and report on outstanding debt position relating to UC, HB and CT through the Anglia Revenues Partnership.	Service Manager - Finance & Performance	Ongoing	
							A	2) Monitor and report on demand in relation to the housing element of the Household Support Fund (HSF) which is allocated from SCC to West Suffolk.	Service Manager - Housing Options	Ongoing	
							A	3) Response to increasing demand built in to Suffolk-wide cost of living and and poverty strategy work. Will need to monitor the future provision of the Household Support Fund which is allocated from central government to SCC and used to fund a number of schemes , such as Local Welfare Assistance Scheme.	Director - Families & Communities	Ongoing	
WS23	09-Jun-23	Political	Directors & Portfolio Holders	Administration Transition	Failure to address the administrative and organisational challenges posed by significant change in the political leadership of the council.		A	1) Full member induction programme with individual service area training as required.	LT/Members	Complete	
							A	2) National protocol for new administration followed and delivered.	LT/Members	Complete	
							A	3) Programme for development of strategic priorities, corporate plan and MTFS established	LT/Members	On going	
WS24	24-Apr-24	Legislative	Director Operations & Portfolio Holder	Implementation of 'Simpler Recycling' linked to the requirements of the Government's Resource and Waste Strategy (RAWS) and the Environment Act 2021	Failure to introduce the required changes in terms of a separate, weekly food waste collection and revised kerbside recycling (inc. glass, cartons) by the legally mandated deadlines of April 2025 for commercial waste and April 2025 for domestic waste. This includes the financial risk to the council that Government and Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) payments will not cover the costs of providing the expanded waste services we are legally obligated to introduce and a potential loss in commercial waste income.		A	1) Continue to engage with Government in terms of responding to consultations and through lobbying as an individual council and collectively through the Suffolk Waste Partnership (SWP) and professional bodies like LARAC, DCN and others.	Director - Operations	Time Limited to April 2025 deadlines	
							A	2) Continue to press Government for timely information on the financial implications and support for Simpler Recycling.	Director - Operations	Time Limited to April 2025 deadlines	
							A	3) Work collectively with the SWP to manage the project in terms of waste collection and disposal. This includes sharing resources to deliver change which is common to all Suffolk's councils and leverage funding to support the project through the Suffolk Public Sector Leaders (SPSL)	Director - Operations	Time Limited to April 2025 deadlines	
							A	4) Develop clear and consistent public communications to explain changes to services and engender their support in making the new waste collections systems work.	Director - Operations	Time Limited to April 2025 deadlines	
							A	5) Engage with our commercial customers in good time to inform them of the upcoming changes. Develop a range of trade waste options to support and retain our customers from the earlier implementation date of April 2025.	Director - Operations	Time Limited to April 2025 deadlines	
							A	6) Develop a range of approaches for the recruitment of additional staff in what is a tough, local recruitment market (particularly for frontline staff).	Director - Operations	Time Limited to April 2025 deadlines	
							A	7) Ensure we have an adequate level of resources to deliver the significant changes brought about by Simpler Recycling and adopt the full range of project management tools and support available through the wider organisation.	Director - Operations	Time Limited to April 2025 deadlines	

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Stage 1: Identify the risk

- Consider the 13 categories of risk (as per UK Gov Orange Book 2023)
- Discuss with colleagues and group
- Examine trends
- Analyse previous problems
- Consider experiences from other organisations

Risk Category	Description Category of Risk
Strategy	Risks arising from identifying and pursuing a strategy, which is poorly defined, is based on flawed or inaccurate data or fails to support the delivery of commitments, plans or objectives due to a changing macro-environment (e.g. political, economic, social, technological, environment and legislative change).
Governance	Risks arising from unclear plans, priorities, authorities and accountabilities, and/or ineffective or disproportionate oversight of decision-making and/or performance.
Operations	Risks arising from inadequate, poorly designed or ineffective/inefficient internal processes resulting in fraud, error, impaired customer service (quality and/or quantity of service), non-compliance and/or poor value for money.
Legal	Risks arising from a defective transaction, a claim being made (including a defence to a claim or a counterclaim) or some other legal event occurring that results in a liability or other loss, or a failure to take appropriate measures to meet legal or regulatory requirements or to protect assets.
Property	Risks arising from property deficiencies or poorly designed or ineffective/inefficient safety management resulting in non-compliance and/or harm and suffering to employees, contractors, service users or the public.
Financial	Risks arising from not managing finances in accordance with requirements and financial constraints resulting in poor returns from investments, failure to manage assets/liabilities or to obtain value for money from the resources deployed, and/or non-compliant financial reporting.
Commercial	Risks arising from weaknesses in the management of commercial partnerships, supply chains and contractual requirements, resulting in poor performance, inefficiency, poor value for money, fraud, and/or failure to meet business requirements/objectives.
People	Risks arising from ineffective leadership and engagement, suboptimal culture, inappropriate behaviours, the unavailability of sufficient capacity and capability, industrial action and/or non-compliance with relevant employment legislation/HR policies resulting in negative impact on performance.
Technology	Risks arising from technology not delivering the expected services due to inadequate or deficient system/process development and performance or inadequate resilience.
Information	Risks arising from a failure to produce robust, suitable and appropriate data/information and to exploit data/information to its full potential.
Security	Risks arising from a failure to prevent unauthorised and/or inappropriate access to the estate and information, including cyber security and non-compliance with General Data Protection Regulation requirements.
Project/Programme	Risks that change programmes and projects are not aligned with strategic priorities and do not successfully and safely deliver requirements and intended benefits to time, cost and quality.
Reputational	Risks arising from adverse events, including ethical violations, a lack of sustainability, systemic or repeated failures or poor quality or a lack of innovation, leading to damages to reputation and or destruction of trust and relations.

Stage 2: Assess the risk

Threats	Consider events or situations that could exploit or trigger known or unknown vulnerabilities. (<i>Threats are generally Natural, Human or Environmental</i>)
Vulnerabilities	Consider weaknesses in control, either identified or perceived, that could allow the threat to be realised.
Risks	Where there is a threat that can be realised through a vulnerability, this should be considered as a risk and recorded.

Stage 3: Rate the risk

Consider the **probability** of the event happening over a period of time.
Consider the **impact** on the Authority of an event being realised.

PROBABILITY x IMPACT + RISK RATING

PROBABILITY

Descriptor	Level	Probability for planning for the event happening over the period of one year
Probable	5	≥ 90%
Likely	4	≥ 50% and < 89%
Possible	3	≥ 20% and < 49%
Unlikely	2	≥ 1% and < 19%
V. Unlikely	1	< 1%

IMPACT ON THE AUTHORITY OF AN EVENT BEING REALISED

Descriptor	Level	Financial	Reputation	Legal	Personnel	Asset	Technology
Severe	5	≥ £1M	Irrecoverable	Major legal or regulatory sanction	Death	Massive irrecoverable damage / total loss	No alternative manual fall-back
Significant	4	≥ £250K	Legally damaging (civil or criminal)	Significant legal or regulatory sanction	Permanent avoidable disability	Major damage / significant loss	Manual fall-back available in the short term
Moderate	3	≥ £50K	Perception	Some legal or regulatory sanction	Sever injury / hospitalisation	Moderate damage	Manual fall-back available in the medium term
Minor	2	≥ £25K	Perception	Some legal or regulatory notification	First Aid required	Minor damage	Manual fall-back available in the long term
Insignificant	1	≥ 1K	None	No legal or regulatory consequences	None	None	Manual fall-back available indefinitely

RISK RATING MATRIX

Probability	5	5	10	15	20	25
	4	4	8	12	16	20
	3	3	6	9	12	15
	2	2	4	6	8	10
	1	1	2	3	4	5

RISK RATING DEFINITIONS

Risk Rating	Level of Risk	Action required to mitigate risk
≥ 15	HIGH	Immediate action required to transfer, treat, tolerate or remove the risk
≥ 5 and <15	MEDIUM	Some degree of planned action required to transfer, treat, tolerate or remove the risk
< 5	LOW	No further action required – continue monitoring the situation

Stage 4 : Control the risk

Assess the current controls in place to establish whether they are Effective, Partially Effective or Ineffective.

Develop SMART actions to control the risk by:

- Transferring the risk
- Treating the risk
- Tolerating the risk
- Removing the risk

Any Service risks that are HIGH or any common risks that could aggregate into a Strategic Risk must be escalated to the Strategic Risk Register Group for review.

Stage 5: Monitor the risk

Risks should be regularly reviewed and reported through:

- Strategic Risk Register Group meetings
- Performance, Audit & Scrutiny Committee meetings

Risk ratings and relevance must be reassessed regularly or whenever a trigger event occurs, such as:

- Risk scenario changes
- A new risk is identified
- There is a significant change in working practice, environment or system

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Briefing note: Role of the Office of Local Government (Oflog)

Background

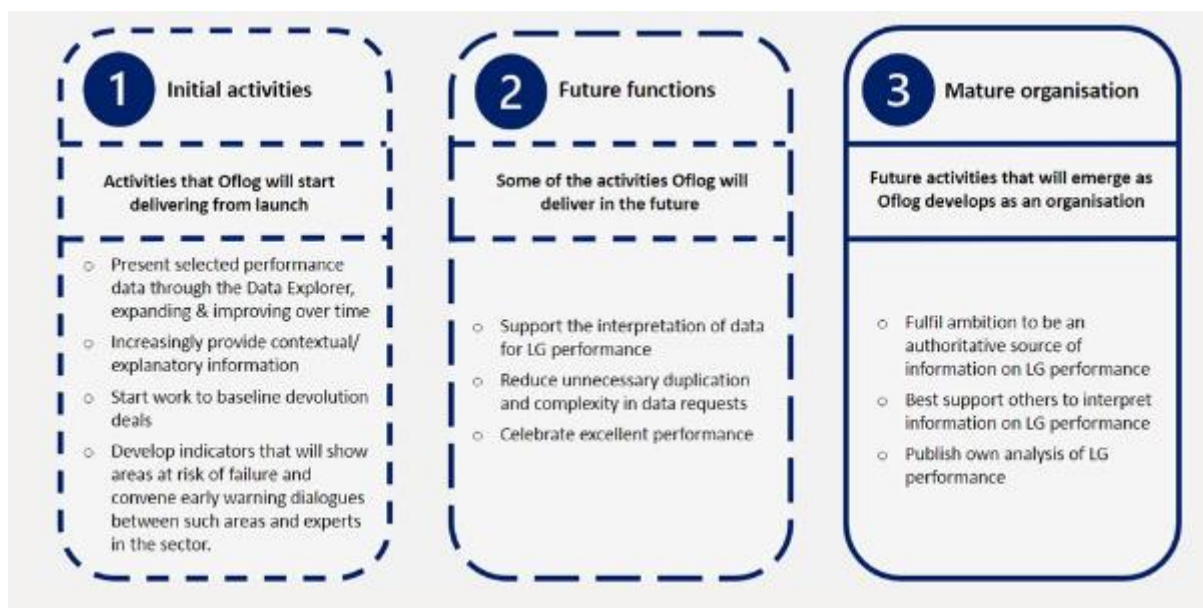
1. On 4 July 2023, Michael Gove announced the establishment of [Oflog](#) – the Office for Local Government - through his [speech to the LGA](#), a [written ministerial statement](#) and a [policy document](#). New draft [Best Value guidance](#) was also published for consultation, and the [Local Authority Data explorer](#) launched.

What does Oflog do?

2. At its launch, Oflog was announced as being 'a new performance body focused on local government in England. It will provide authoritative and accessible data and analysis about the performance of local government and support its improvement' in order to 'help all councils succeed'.
3. The organisation's aim is to 'collate, analyse and publish existing data about the relative performance of councils' and devolution deals. In particular, it publishes data in a clear and accessible way on the **Local Authority Data Explorer**.
4. Oflog's stated purpose is also to 'recognise and celebrate' ingenuity and imagination in the 'best' local authorities to make sure 'local leaders get the credit they deserve' and to 'showcase the best in class so others can learn from them'. Where councils are identified as at risk of potential failure, Oflog 'convenes dialogue between councils and expert local leaders to explore the issues in more detail'.

Why did the Government create Oflog?

5. The Government created Oflog in order to:
 - help **councillors** and the **public** and **media** have the information they need to scrutinise local decisions more effectively.
 - ensure **council leaders can compare themselves** against their peers and find examples of good practice.
 - allow **central government and partners** to identify where there might be challenges and a need to step in and give support. (The Secretary of State spoke about the need for DLUHC to 'respond to the warning signs').
6. Another driver for Oflog's creation was devolution, so that where councils are given more freedom, this is matched through accountability and 'checks and balances in the system'.
7. The Government stated that Oflog is not an attempt to micro-manage councils or recreate the Audit Commission. It also made clear that Oflog is a maturing organisation, and that its activities will evolve over time – see graphic below:



Local Authority Data Explorer (LADE)

8. In the Oflog policy document, the Government says that the current 'dispersal' of the data collected on local government performance 'limits its collective value and use', saying that instead there needs to be an organisation that can locate itself at the centre, synthesising the data, making it more accessible and useful, without increasing the current burden on councils.
9. So far, the [LADE](#) only covers adult skills; adult social care; finance; planning; roads and waste management (drawing on existing data from the Single Data List and Local Government Transparency Code), but these will be expanded to cover the breadth of what councils do and the metrics will be improved over time.
10. The LADE uses 'median absolute deviation' – i.e. each council is shown in terms of how far from the median for all English councils it deviates. In its initial stages, Oflog will not be looking at data on the **impact** of services, but the ambition is, however, to transition as soon as possible to an outcomes-based approach to performance that focuses on impact.
11. The indicators that Oflog measure are included in West Suffolk's Key Performance Indicator dashboards that are scrutinised by Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee on a quarterly basis.

New Best Value guidance

12. Councils are subject to the 'Best Value Duty' which requires local authorities to 'make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness' (under the Local Government Act 1999).
13. Councils are required to have regard to statutory guidance issued by the Secretary of State on the Best Value Duty (under s26 of the 1999 Act). Previous

guidance documents were issued in [2011](#) and 2015 (in relation to how councils worked with the VCSE).

14. The [Best Value statutory guidance](#) sets out seven themes of 'good practice for running an authority to secure continuous improvement and provide value for money'. This includes the characteristics of a well-functioning council and those used to identify challenges that could indicate failure.
15. The seven themes are:
 - Continuous improvement
 - Leadership
 - Governance
 - Culture
 - Use of resources
 - Service delivery
 - Partnerships and community engagement
16. These themes are then expanded upon in a lot of detail in the draft document, with indicators of what 'good' looks like and what indicators of potential failure are, and then guidance is given on how the Government will intervene in failing authorities.

Oflog draft Corporate plan

19. The draft corporate plan of Oflog (published in February 2024 and covering the period 2024 to 2027), outlines the organisation's objectives and strategies to fulfil its remit. Since its launch Oflog has engaged with various sector colleagues to shape its plans and ensure alignment with the goals set by the Secretary of State in February 2024.
20. Oflog's purpose remains to enhance the performance of local government, ensuring efficient delivery of services and prudent use of taxpayers' money. It aims to address three key gaps in the current system:
 - i) Inform: Oflog seeks to increase understanding of local authority performance data among citizens, civil society, and local government itself. This involves making data easily accessible and providing clear explanations of its limitations.
 - ii) Warn: Oflog aims to identify local authorities at risk of serious failure early on, helping prevent crises before they escalate. This involves both desk-based analysis and direct engagement with local authorities.
 - iii) Support: Oflog will provide support to help local authorities improve their performance, productivity, and value for money. This includes identifying and promoting best practice and helping authorities make better use of data.
24. Oflog will not engage in lobbying or arbitrate funding disputes between local authorities and the government. It also lacks regulatory powers and will not conduct routine inspections. Oflog also cannot intervene directly in the affairs of

a local authority, as regulatory powers remain vested in the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC). Oflog will also not develop policies to enhance the system of external audit for local authorities. This responsibility lies with other entities within the system, including DLUHC and the Financial Reporting Council (FRC).

25. The organisation will operate independently, with oversight from its Chair. It will collaborate closely with the local government sector and other relevant stakeholders.
26. The business plan for 2024 to 2025 includes initiatives to achieve these objectives, such as expanding the Data Explorer to cover more metrics and conducting Early Warning Conversations with at-risk authorities. Oflog's activities will be governed by DLUHC, with oversight from an appointed Board and regular reporting on progress.

Next steps for West Suffolk Council

17. Officers are keeping abreast of developments with Oflog and will update Members on any further information about how it will operate.

Environment and Sustainability Update, April 2024

Update from Environment and Sustainability Reference Group.
(ESRG)

Page 205



Synopsis

The progress against the delivery of commitments in the Net Zero Carbon 2030 strategy will be reported on a quarterly basis through the council's Scrutiny function. The aim is to provide reporting of progress that is transparent, easily accessible to the community and ensures accountability to residents.

This report provides an up-to-date summary of overall progress and performance on the delivery of commitments set out in the Environment and Sustainability Action Plan.

The progress updates on commitments are organised according to the five different programme workstreams that are responsible for the delivery of actions. These workstreams are:



Biodiversity



Housing (retrofit)



**Community and
Communications**



Planning and Regulation



Corporate Action

Notable tasks and projects

The following report is not a replacement for the adopted Environment and Climate Change Action Plan. Any new or revised actions agreed as a result of this update will be reflected in the action plan going forward. Once any potential next steps are agreed by the Group and/or Cabinet as applicable, timescales, resource implications, etc will be identified.

Workstream	Notable task or project	January 2024 update
Biodiversity	Increase tree cover	120-130 semi-mature trees have been received and are now planted in their locations onsite.
	Green Flag status	Green Flag management plans are currently being updated. Applications submitted for Abbey Gardens, Nowton Park, East Town Park, Brandon Country Park, West Stow & Aspal Close. We have received further details of the October Field Wormwood plant (<i>Artemisia campestris</i>) survey undertaken by the Breckland Flora Group at College Heath Road. There are now 416 plants at the site, which is an increase from 41 in 2019.
	Green equipment	Abbey Gardens are investigating and completed the purchase of two electric powered Hayter lawnmowers.

Communities and Communications	Air quality community initiatives	<p>DEFRA updated advice on Bonfires on their webpage (clean air day in December references log burners).</p> <p>Great Barton Air Quality action plan (AQAP) update consultation launched 20 December 2023 and ended 22 January 2024. AQAP subsequently renewed.</p>
	Solar for business	2023/24 has been the most successful year for new solar installations with 2MW (5000 solar panels) installed to date. West Suffolk College was the main beneficiary.
	Reverse Vending Machines Pilot	<p>Trial launched on 9 February 2024 in Newmarket, where two of the machines are located (The Guineas shopping centre and Newmarket Leisure Centre). Two more machines are installed in Bury St Edmunds (one at West Suffolk College).</p> <p>West Suffolk: trailblazer initiative to boost recycling</p>
	Reduce waste and improve recycling	<p>Glass – rebranded Christmas campaign started 8 December.</p> <p>Work ongoing with collection crews and housing associations to reduce contamination issues at communal properties.</p> <p>In January 2024, council got involved with 'Buy nothing new' month. Social media campaign by Keep Britain Tidy.</p>
	SCC Walking and Cycling funding	Suffolk County Council is leading on this initiative, and we are awaiting the completion of consultation analysis. A priority area for West Suffolk is "East to West", Bury St Edmunds.
	Community events	<p>In collaboration with Suffolk Community Partnership a community Networking Event was held in Bury St Edmunds in November. The events were for volunteer and environmental groups across to encourage networking and information sharing.</p> <p>The Environment Management Officer has been attending events held across west Suffolk inc. Go Green Events Hosted by West Suffolk College, Green Careers Event at Sybil Andrews Academy.</p>

Corporate Action	Green Travel Plan	Survey complete. New actions have been formulated based on the analysis.
	EV charging at depots	We continue to work with suppliers to reach an agreement on next steps. New supplier selected.
	Renewable Energy at Council sites	Results from the Sport England bid announced by February 2024 - Bury St Edmunds Leisure Council was awarded the £35,000
	Decarbonisation Initiatives Fund	As of 11 January, 12 applications received for LED conversion of parish council owned lights. Contractors engaged for commissioning assessments. The WSC grants are likely to cover over 1600 lights in total, and carbon dioxide savings from converting those lights is estimated at over 200 tonnes per year.
Housing (retrofit)	Retrofit programmes	420 properties have been upgraded with a grant investment total of £2.48 million in 2020.
	Housing Improvement Loans Scheme	Following up the request for a West Suffolk scheme and/or to build on the current schemes, a scoping document has been developed and includes a rationale and options appraisal.
Planning and Regulatory	Planning Application Checklist	<p>The Planning Application Checklist cannot be brought into force until there has been a review of the local validation requirements.</p> <p>Since the new year, the Planning team has been reviewing the local validation requirements with a view to consulting on a new list this year.</p> <p>As part of that review, we are looking at the design checklists, considering changes to building regulations, national policies, and the emerging local plan.</p>
	Local Plan	The Local Plan was agreed to move forward to pre-submission (Regulation 19) consultation at Full Council in December. The consultation was held between 30 January 2024 and 12 March 2024.

Overall summary of progress

Overview of the progress on delivery of commitments set out in the Action Plan since the last report to Cabinet.

Key progress highlights

- Preparations are now being made for Anglia in Bloom in 2024.
- Signage content and layout are currently being produced to update the current signage at Aspal Close Nature Reserve, Beck Row.
- A grass cutting review has been undertaken on the request of Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The review has been finalised and is being distributed to Town and Parish Councils.
- The Great Barton Air Quality Action Plan (AQAP) has been updated for a further five years, and a consultation completed on 22 January 2024. The responses are being analysed and the decision to renew will be brought to Cabinet on 6 February 2024.
- The Green Travel survey is complete, and responses have been analysed.
- Following the development of new signage at West Suffolk House, the Mildenhall Hub and Haverhill House, an intranet post was published to inform staff on correct recycling practices. The waste and recycling intranet page was also updated.
- The funding bid has been made to Sport England to cover various decarbonisation measures in our leisure centres. The results were announced in February 2024.
- Working with our partners, we are now promoting the Suffolk Climate Action Community Match Funder - [Suffolk Climate Action Community Match Funder – Green Suffolk](#)
- All eligible councils are now signed-up to take part in the Council's Decarbonisation Initiatives Fund to town and parish councils to convert their streetlights to LED. Next steps are the completion of grant agreements followed by retrospective grant payments and the commissioning of contractors.
- Guidance notes for Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) have been published. Currently reviewing options.
- A total £18.5m has been awarded to deliver energy efficiency improvements to low-income households across all tenures in Suffolk. Summary of domestic retrofit progress for properties in West Suffolk:

Scheme	Grant spend	Number of properties upgraded	Number of measures
LAD1a	£485,700	50	50
LAD1b	£1,493,028	141	141
LAD2	£328,924	47	47
LAD3	£945,315.87	108	108
HUG1	£705,317.12	46	46
SHDF	£355,700.75	37	46
Total	£4,313,986	429	438

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Internal Audit Annual Report 2023 to 2024

Report number:	PAS/WS/24/009	
Report to and date:	Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee	30 May 2024
Cabinet member:	Councillor Diane Hind Cabinet Member for Resources Email: diane.hind@westsuffolk.gov.uk	
Lead officer:	Jon Snares Service Manager (Internal Audit) Tel: 01284 757239 Email: jon.snares@westsuffolk.gov.uk	

Decisions Plan: This item is not required to be included in the Decisions Plan.

Wards impacted: Not applicable.

Recommendation: It is recommended that the Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee note the contents of the:

1. Internal Audit Annual Report 2023 to 2024.
2. Annual Fraud Report 2023 to 2024.

1. Context to this report

- 1.1 It is vital for our communities continued confidence and the smooth and proper running of a local authority that thorough, open and transparent auditing takes place. This internal audit annual report is part of that process, together with the annual governance statement, to help inform those who have responsibility for the council's framework of risk management, control and governance processes.
- 1.2 The conclusions of this report should give our residents and councillors confidence in our processes and that the council has a good bill of health in how it works and manages risk as well as looking at ways of improving. In essence this should be seen as a very positive result and is confirmation that overall, controls and processes have continued to work well.
- 1.3 Internal auditing is an independent and objective assurance and consultancy function designed to add value and improve an organisation's operations. It helps an organisation accomplish its objectives by bringing a systematic, disciplined approach to evaluate and improve the effectiveness of risk management, control and governance processes. A professional, independent and objective internal audit service is one of the key elements of good governance.

2. Proposals within this report

- 2.1 The Public Sector Internal Audit Standards govern internal audit within the public sector. These standards require the Service Manager Internal Audit to provide an annual report to those charged with governance which includes an opinion on the adequacy and effectiveness of the council's framework of risk management, control and governance processes. The internal audit annual report at **Appendix A** gives an overview of the work carried out during the year which forms the basis of this opinion.
- 2.2 The annual audit opinion, included at **Appendix A**, has been split into the four constituent elements of governance, risk, internal control, and financial control, with a specific conclusion drawn on each, as well as the direction of travel.
- 2.3 The council recognises that fraud, theft and corruption are an ever-present threat to the resources available in the public sector. The purpose of the annual fraud report at **Appendix B** is to demonstrate West Suffolk's progress in developing and maintaining an anti-fraud and anti-corruption culture and publicise the action taken where fraud or misconduct have been identified.

3. Alternative options that have been considered

- 3.1 The Public Sector Internal Audit Standards require that an annual internal audit report is provided to those charged with governance. It is also good practice to provide an annual fraud report. No alternative options were considered.

4. Consultation and engagement undertaken

- 4.1 These reports were produced in consultation with the Leadership Team.

5. Risks associated with the proposals

- 5.1 Risks are covered within the reports at Appendices A and B.

6. Implications arising from the proposals

- 6.1 Any implications arising are covered at Appendices A and B.

7. Appendices referenced in this report

- 7.1 Appendix A - Internal Audit Annual Report 2023 to 2024
7.2 Appendix B – Annual Fraud Report 2023 to 2024

8. Background documents associated with this report

- 8.1 None

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Internal Audit Annual Report 2023 to 2024



Contents

1. Introduction	3
2. Annual opinion	4
Performance against the approved audit plan	4
How the annual audit opinion has been formed.....	4
Audit opinion definitions	6
Risk definitions	7
Annual opinion	8
Governance.....	9
Risk	9
Internal control.....	10
Financial control	12
3. Scope of our work, any restrictions on this scope, organisational independence, and non-audit roles	13
4. Added value work.....	14
5. Fee earning work.....	15
6. Other significant work.....	16
7. Quality assurance	18
8. Performance against key indicators	19
9. Glossary of terms	19

Jon Snares – Service Manager (Internal Audit) - jon.snares@westsuffolk.gov.uk

This report has been prepared solely for the use of councillors and management of West Suffolk Council. Details may be made available by internal audit to specified external organisations, including external auditors, but otherwise the report should not be used or referred to in whole or in part without prior consent. No responsibility to any third party is accepted as the report has not been prepared and is not intended for any other purpose. The matters raised in this report are only those that came to our attention during the course of our work – there may be weaknesses in governance, risk management and the system of internal control that we are not aware of because they did not form part of our work programme, were excluded from the scope of individual audit engagements, or were not brought to our attention.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 West Suffolk Council is responsible for establishing and maintaining appropriate risk management processes, control systems and governance arrangements. Internal audit plays a vital role in providing independent risk-based and objective assurance and insight on how these arrangements are working. Internal audit forms part of West Suffolk Council's assurance framework.
- 1.2 Council services recognise that while they may be delivering a good service they can always improve or look for best practice. They will therefore often proactively engage with internal audit to help achieve this and therefore audit activity in service areas demonstrates the council's culture of continuous improvement.
- 1.3 The purpose of the Internal Audit Annual Report is to meet the Service Manager Internal Audit's annual reporting requirements as set out in the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards (the 'Standards') which govern how internal audit teams operate in the public sector, and the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015. In particular to:
- include an opinion on the overall adequacy and effectiveness of the council's governance, risk, and control framework, and therefore the extent to which the council can rely on it
 - inform how the audit plan was discharged and the overall outcomes of the work undertaken that supports the annual audit opinion
 - include a statement on conformance with the Standards and the results of the internal audit quality assurance processes
 - draw attention to any issues particularly relevant to the council's annual governance statement.
- 1.4 The Service Manager Internal Audit is responsible for effectively managing the internal audit activity in accordance with the Standards, which are mandatory, and encompass the Core Principles for the Professional Practice of Internal Auditing, the Definition of Internal Auditing, the Code of Ethics, and the Standards themselves.
- 1.5 New Global Internal Audit Standards (GIAS) were published in January 2024 with implementation required in the public sector by April 2025. These new Standards will govern how internal audit teams operate in both the public and private sector. For the year 2023 to 2024 internal audit work was completed to comply with the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards, for subsequent years we will be following the Global Internal Audit Standards.
- 1.6 In the coming months, following further expected guidance from the Institute of Internal Auditors and the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy, we will be working towards implementation of these new Standards. This further guidance is expected to include a checklist which we will use to measure current compliance with the GIAS and consider what further work is needed to achieve compliance by 1 April 2025.

- 1.7 An update on progress towards implementing the new Global Internal Audit Standards will be presented to the Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee in November 2024 as part of the Internal Audit Mid-Year Progress Report 2024.

2. Annual opinion

Performance against the approved audit plan

- 2.1 All of the work included in the approved 2023 to 2024 audit plan has been completed, with the exception of the planned review and update of the Internal Audit Charter. This review has been delayed due to the expected guidance based on the new Global Internal Audit Standards not yet being released. When the guidance is available our Charter will be reviewed and revised as necessary and presented to the Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee for approval.
- 2.2 We consider that sufficient work has been undertaken in support of the annual audit opinion as set out below.

How the annual audit opinion has been formed

- 2.3 The main sources of assurance contributing to the 2023 to 2024 audit opinion are those gained from the audit work carried out during the year which is detailed in the sections below including:
- audit work under each audit opinion category
 - added value work
 - work on the 2023 to 2024 Annual Governance Statement including review of the assurance framework
 - grant assurance work
- 2.4 Assurances can also be gained from the following sources:
- counter-fraud work as set out in our Annual Fraud Report 2023 to 2024 at **Appendix B**, including consideration of the circumstances around the bank mandate fraud and failed fraud attempts covered in that appendix
 - consideration of committee and other reports for any areas affecting governance, risks, or controls
 - attendance at officer working groups and managers meetings to understand current risks and actions being taken
 - audit knowledge of council processes and initiatives
 - internal audit seeks to comply with the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards. We have established quality working procedures including review mechanisms for work undertaken, and annual self-assessment of adherence to these procedures. An external assessment carried out in March 2023, the full report of which was reported to the Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee in June 2023, confirmed that we do comply with the Standards.

- assurances received from external parties – these include IT accreditations for example confirmation of compliance with the National Cyber Security Centre’s Cyber Essentials and Cyber Essentials Plus schemes which help to guard the council against cyber-attack.

Audit opinion definitions

<p>Good assurance</p>	<p>A sound system of governance, risk management and control exists, with internal controls operating effectively and being consistently applied to support the achievement of objectives in the area audited.</p> <p>No significant (medium risk) or fundamental (high risk) issues have been raised.</p> <p>An audit opinion of 'good' assurance will only be issued where sufficient relevant, reliable and timely evidence has been subject to recent audit review or testing.</p>
<p>Reasonable assurance</p>	<p>There is a generally sound system of governance, risk management and control in place.</p> <p>Some significant (medium risk) issues, non-compliance or scope for improvement were identified which may put at risk the achievement of objectives in the area audited; or</p> <p>Sufficient relevant, reliable and timely evidence may not be available and/or may not have been subject to recent audit review or testing to justify a 'good' opinion.</p>
<p>Limited assurance</p>	<p>Fundamental (high risk) and/or significant (medium risk) gaps, weaknesses or non-compliance were identified, and improvement is required to the system of governance, risk management and control to effectively manage risks to the achievement of objectives in the area audited; or</p> <p>Sufficient relevant, reliable and timely evidence may not be available and/or may not have been subject to recent audit review or testing to justify a 'reasonable' opinion.</p>
<p>No assurance</p>	<p>Immediate action is required to address fundamental (high risk) and significant (medium risk) gaps, weaknesses or non-compliance identified. The system of governance, risk management and control is inadequate to effectively manage risks to the achievement of objectives in the area audited; or</p> <p>Sufficient relevant, reliable and timely evidence may not be available and/or may not have been subject to recent audit review or testing to justify a 'limited' opinion.</p>

Note: audit opinions are

- evidence-based and levels of assurance awarded take into account not just control issues or risks raised, but also the adequacy of evidence which has been subject to audit review and testing, and are
- subject to the professional judgement of the Service Manager Internal Audit

Risk definitions

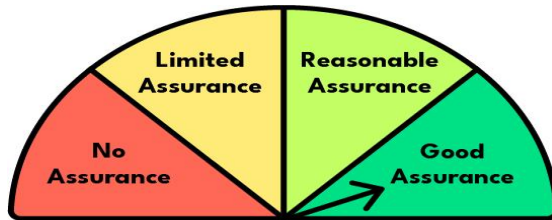
Risk	Definition
High	A fundamental control process, or statutory obligation, creating the risk that significant fraud, error or malpractice could go undetected.
Medium	A control process that contributes towards providing an adequate system of internal control.
Low	These issues would contribute towards improving the system under review.

- 2.5 In order to make the annual audit opinion informative and transparent, the opinion has been split into the four constituent elements of governance, risk, internal control, and financial control, and a specific conclusion drawn on each.
- 2.6 It should be noted that an opinion of 'reasonable assurance' for any of the four opinion elements should be interpreted as a good result and indicates that in general controls and processes are fit for purpose and working well, while recognising that there are opportunities for further improvements.
- 2.7 We have also included a direction of travel (see below) for each element of the audit opinion to highlight our view of whether the adequacy and effectiveness of arrangements has changed compared to the previous year.

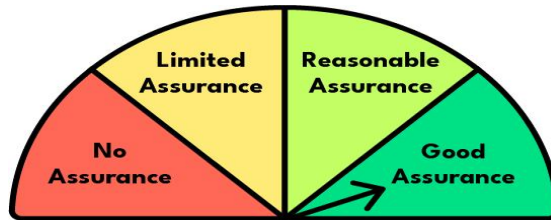
Annual opinion

2.8 For the twelve months ended 31 March 2024, based on the work undertaken and information from any other sources of assurance as explained above, the Service Manager Internal Audit’s opinion on the adequacy and effectiveness of West Suffolk Council’s arrangements for governance, risk, internal control and financial control is as set out below.

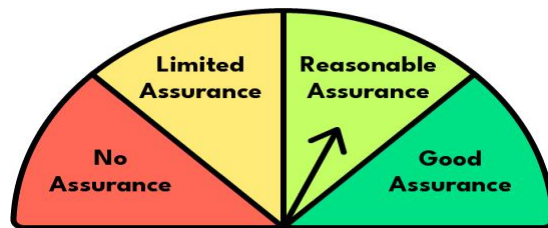
Governance



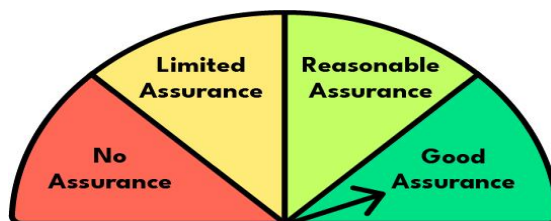
Risk



Internal Control



Financial Control



Governance

- 2.9 Governance comprises the systems, processes, culture, and values by which West Suffolk Council is directed and controlled and through which it accounts to, engages with, and where appropriate, leads its communities.
- 2.10 Each year local authorities are required to reflect on how their governance arrangements have worked, identifying any significant governance issues that should be drawn to the attention of the public, in the interests of accountability and transparency. This results in the production of an annual governance statement.
- 2.11 Work on the 2023 to 2024 West Suffolk Annual Governance Statement (AGS) is at an advanced stage, and no significant governance issues are expected to be disclosed for the period to 31 March 2024.
- 2.12 The bank mandate fraud previously reported to this committee in November 2023, with further details provided in January 2024, and summary details in the Internal Audit Annual Fraud Report 2024, has also been referred to in the AGS. Actions have been taken to ensure the risk of any similar future frauds is minimised and this demonstrates the council's zero tolerance to fraud.
- 2.13 The Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee helps to ensure that governance arrangements are working effectively through considering reports that come before them, including consideration and approval of the AGS.
- 2.14 **Governance opinion.** Governance arrangements continue to be robust and the opinion remains the same as for 2022 to 2023 and is assessed as **good assurance**.

Risk

- 2.15 Good risk management is part of the way we work. It is about taking the right risks when making decisions or where we need to encourage innovation in times of major change – balancing quality, cost, and affordability. This puts us in a stronger position to deliver our goals and provide excellent services.
- 2.16 Work during the year in this area on which the annual audit opinion on risk is based, included:
- carrying out an audit on the identification and management of operational risks within services to provide assurance that operational risks are being effectively managed in support of the achievement of organisational objectives. The audit concluded that the services have a good awareness of their current and emerging operational risks and appropriate responses to these risks are chosen. An audit opinion of **reasonable assurance** was given, and only one audit recommendation was raised, that being that a standardised approach to recording and monitoring of risks within operational service areas be adopted. This was agreed by management and a follow up audit was subsequently undertaken at a later date to monitor the successful implementation of this recommendation. The follow up audit noted that a plan was in place to implement this recommendation by the end of May 2024, and subsequent discussions have identified that significant progress has been made to achieve this.

- consideration of the adequacy of risk management around council projects as part of internal audit's ongoing project assurance work.
- attending the Strategic Risk Management Group meetings during the year to gain assurance over, and feed into as necessary, the strategic risk management process. This has included a review of the strategic risk register in the context of how risks are rated and assessed, and an initial update to the Risk Management Toolkit which provides a framework for identifying, assessing and rating risks. The Risk Management Group has also benchmarked our recording and reporting of risks with a number of other councils.
- The conclusion drawn from the above work was that risk management arrangements for projects and strategic risks are effectively managed, clearly evidenced, and have continued to operate as expected during the period. An opinion of **good assurance** would therefore be appropriate for these elements of the council's risk management.
- ongoing audit consideration of management's approach to, and mitigation of, risk as an integral part of all our audit work, and awareness of management activities.
- consideration of relevant reports presented to Leadership Team.

2.17 **Risk opinion.** The opinion is assessed as **good assurance**. This is an increase in the assurance level awarded compared to 2022 to 2023 when a reasonable assurance opinion was given.

Internal control

2.18 This takes into account the outcomes of our work during 2023 to 2024. As our audit plans include different activities each year assurance may vary from year to year. However, the assurance level still gives insight into the council's control environment.

2.19 Results of the 2023 to 2024 reviews were as follows:

- Anglia Revenues Partnership Enforcement – this audit was undertaken by the East Suffolk Council internal audit team on behalf of the five councils working together as the Anglia Revenues Partnership. A number of actions have been raised including controls over system access, payment collections, enforcement and monitoring arrangements. An opinion of **reasonable assurance** was given.
- Disabled facility grant from the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities – this audit was carried out to provide assurance to both West Suffolk Council and Suffolk County Council that for the year 2022 to 2023, the conditions of the disabled facility grant allocated to, and spent by West Suffolk Council, have been complied with. An audit opinion of **good assurance** was given, with no recommendations arising.
- Council tax billing, housing benefit and local council tax reduction scheme - this audit was undertaken by the West Suffolk Council internal audit team

on behalf of the five councils working together as the Anglia Revenues Partnership. A number of recommendations were made and covered areas such as controls over discounts and exemptions, credits and refunds, and systems access. An opinion of **reasonable assurance** was given.

- Recovery of council tax and housing benefit overpayments - this audit was undertaken by the West Suffolk Council internal audit team on behalf of the five councils working together as the Anglia Revenues Partnership. No new recommendations were made, however some recommendations from the previous audit remained to be completed including improving the timeliness of authorising write-offs. An opinion of **reasonable assurance** was given.
- Non-domestic rates (NDR) – this audit was undertaken by the East Suffolk Council internal audit team on behalf of the five councils working together as the Anglia Revenues Partnership. Most systems reviewed were functioning adequately, with only a small number of actions agreed including timeliness of write-offs and evidencing of reconciliations to usefully improve arrangements further. An audit opinion of **reasonable assurance** was given.
- Private water supplies - this was the first time this area had been audited and was undertaken to provide assurance that the council is discharging its obligations, with regard to the private water supplies regulations. This audit review was given a **reasonable assurance** opinion, and a few actions were raised including relating to inspections, data quality and record keeping, and monitoring arrangements.
- Control of ICT assets - ICT are responsible for the purchase and issuing of the ICT equipment within the council, this includes, but is not limited to, laptops, iPhones, monitors and tablets. A **reasonable assurance** opinion was given. Inventory processes and arrangements for secure storage of ICT assets were found to be well managed, a small number of actions were agreed relating to increasing awareness around procedures and the leavers process.
- Confidential waste service follow up audit – this review highlighted that progress against one action from the original audit remains outstanding, regarding the tendering of the contract for the confidential waste supplier. A new target date has been set whereby management have agreed to a formal quotation procedure being undertaken before the current agreement expires in June 2024.
- Payment card industry data security standards follow up audit – this review has confirmed that the remaining action from the original audit report has now been closed off due to processes now being in place to capture training, and ongoing improvement is being seen. A compliance review of the training records will be incorporated into periodic audit work.
- Geographic information system (GIS) follow up audit - this review confirmed that one action had been completed whilst the remaining action, relating to review and management of data on the GIS system, remains outstanding. A new GIS Officer is now in place and has been tasked with addressing this action.

- Tree Management and Inspections follow up audit – this review has confirmed that the remaining actions from the original audit report have all now been implemented.
- Procurement Cards follow up audit – this review confirmed guidance and terms of use have been revised but has yet to be issued to card holders, and a new target date has been agreed for this action.
- Civil Parking Enforcement follow up audit – this review confirmed that two out of the four agreed actions had been completed, the remaining two revolving around actions in respect of the service level agreement.

2.20 **Internal Control opinion.** The opinion remains the same as for 2022 to 2023 and is assessed as **reasonable assurance**.

Financial control

2.21 Our audit work includes providing assurance over our key financial systems. This work is also of particular interest to the external auditor when planning and performing their audit of the council's annual statement of accounts.

2.22 During the year the following reviews were carried out and opinions issued:

- Treasury management – this audit covered controls relating to the management of the council's short-term and long-term investments with approved organisations to achieve the best possible rate of return. Audit work undertaken resulted in a **good assurance** opinion being given, with no recommendations arising.
- General ledger – this audit was undertaken to provide assurance that financial transactions are correctly recorded including ensuring their completeness and integrity, to provide a robust basis for managing the council's finances including preparation of the council's annual statement of accounts. A **good assurance** opinion was given and one action was agreed where unallocated funds within the suspense account and variances within the bank reconciliations need to be promptly investigated and corrected.
- Payroll – the audit covered controls focusing on starters, leavers, amendments, overtime and system access. A **good assurance** opinion was given, no actions were raised, and there were no actions to follow up from the previous audit.
- Car parks cash handling – this audit was carried out to provide assurance that effective controls are in place over car parking cash collection, retention and banking systems. A **good assurance** opinion was given with two actions agreed, including clear recording of coinage that has not been recognised by the parking cash machines.
- Creditors – this audit was undertaken to provide assurance that payments made are valid, authorised, accurate and timely, in respect of goods and services received by the council. A **reasonable assurance** opinion was given with a small number of actions agreed, including that Finance Business Partners work with their respective services to remind them of the need to raise orders at the point of ordering.

- Debtors – an audit review was carried out, with the focus on raising of invoices and credit notes, data quality and debt recovery, and the follow up of actions from the previous year’s audit in respect of write-offs and debt reporting. A **reasonable assurance** opinion was given. A small number of actions were agreed, the main action being reminding and working with services as to their responsibilities around debt recovery.
- VAT – an audit was undertaken to provide assurance that VAT returns are correctly reconciled and balanced. No recommendations were raised within the report and a **good assurance** opinion was given

2.23 **Financial Control opinion.** The opinion remains the same as for 2022 to 2023 and is assessed as **good assurance**.

2.24 In arriving at the opinions above, consideration has been given to the circumstances around the bank mandate fraud. In particular, it has been recognised that the control environment is generally good and the council has not previously been defrauded in this way. Also, although extremely disappointing this was a fraud which was made possible by the particular circumstances in play, and swift action was taken to minimise the risk of any such fraud in the future. The effectiveness of this action was confirmed by subsequent audit work, including work most recently undertaken between April and May 2024 which confirmed that controls are operating as intended.

3. Scope of our work, any restrictions on this scope, organisational independence, and non-audit roles

- 3.1 Our risk-based 2023 to 2024 internal audit plan, approved by the Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee in June 2023, was prepared taking into account the critical activities and key risks to support the basis of the annual internal audit opinion.
- 3.2 The work of internal audit supports the delivery of all the council’s priorities by promoting probity, integrity, accountability, efficiency and effective management of public funds. The achievement of corporate priorities is dependent on the council making efficient and effective use of its resources and in operating robust and transparent governance arrangements. The audit plan sets out a series of risk-based work that will provide assurance over the adequacy of the arrangements established to mitigate risks that may threaten the delivery of the council’s priorities.
- 3.3 Where issues have been raised as a result of audit work undertaken actions have been agreed with management to address any findings raised. Progress against these actions, where not already followed up in 2023 to 2024, will be followed up by internal audit as part of our 2024 to 2025 work plan. For the main financial systems audits, which are undertaken every year, agreed actions will normally be followed up as part of the following year’s audit. In respect of other audits, agreed actions will be followed up after the agreed target dates for that audit have been reached.

- 3.4 In carrying out our work we identified no unexpected restrictions to the scope of our work. Also, we have not experienced any impairment to our independence or objectivity during the conduct and delivery of the 2023 to 2024 audit plan.
- 3.5 The Public Sector Internal Audit Standards require internal audit to confirm to the Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee at least annually the organisational independence of the audit activity. Internal audit effectively achieves this through the Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee's involvement in the following:
- approval of the risk-based internal audit plan
 - receiving communications from the Service Manager Internal Audit on internal audit activity relative to the audit plan and other matters
 - approval of the internal audit charter - this formally defines our statutory role, responsibility, status and authority within the council - as and when required.
- 3.6 The Standards require specific safeguards to be in place where the Service Manager Internal Audit has responsibilities for matters beyond internal auditing. The most significant ongoing area relevant to us is in respect of financial due diligence work, mainly undertaken by the Service Manager Internal Audit. Should any independence issues arise in relation to this or any other of our work the matter would be referred to the Section 151 Officer.

4. Added value work

- 4.1 These are pieces of work identified by management and internal audit which are designed to provide support or advice to management including reviewing relevant arrangements on behalf of management and assisting where appropriate in making improvements. The nature of this work means that it will not always result in a report being issued.

Added value work carried out during the year included the following:

Budget monitoring

- 4.2 This work was carried out to provide assurance over the adequacy and effectiveness of the council's budget monitoring arrangements. A number of suggested improvements were made in relation to budget responsibilities, monitoring, and reporting, including the production of guidance for staff to refer to around monitoring and reviewing budgets; and consideration of whether further improvements could be made to budget monitoring reports sent to each service.

Ordering and stock control (workshop and depot)

- 4.3 This piece of audit work focused on a review of stock control regarding workshop spare parts, tools, equipment, refuse bins purchases and fuel. A number of actions for improvement were suggested, including a more corporate approach could be considered for procurement opportunities within the Operations Directorate; and service level agreements and contracts with

external customers should include an annual review of prices to take into consideration inflation.

Software as a Service (SaaS)

- 4.4 This audit work considered how Software as a Service (SaaS) is currently procured and aimed to provide advice to strengthen the current process. The main output from this piece of work was to produce a draft guidance document offering advice to help service areas who are responsible for procuring their own software.

Note: Software as a Service (SaaS) is a method of software delivery and licensing in which cloud-based software is purchased via a subscription and accessed via the internet rather than bought and installed on on-premise server hardware.

Performance Management

- 4.5 A change in the reporting of performance management occurred in quarter four of 2021 to 2022 – this refreshed the indicator set, changed the route through the organisation and the way performance is displayed, removed most targets and 'Red Amber Green' (RAG) ratings, and provided comparisons with previous years. Our review, which aimed to confirm that the appropriate data is being used to report on, concluded that the services do use the reported data to improve performance, and no fundamental issues were identified including no concerns over data quality for the sample of KPIs reviewed.

Payroll IT System Migration

- 4.6 We undertook a piece of work to review the planning and managing of the project for moving the payroll IT system to a cloud based solution. The project was found to have been delivered on time, with the transfer of the data having gone well.

Change and service improvement programme

- 4.7 We have continued to provide capacity and skills into the corporate change and service improvement programme. This has included undertaking work within the Cemeteries, Licensing, and Property Helpdesk service teams to analyse demand and processes, to inform service improvements, redesign and efficiencies. A separate report on the outcomes of the change and service improvement work was produced, and considered by the Leadership Team and Senior Management Team.

5. Fee earning work

- 5.1 Internal audit has continued to undertake fee earning work during 2023 to 2024 which brings in approximately £11k of income. This work consists of the audit of the council tax billing and benefits, and overpayments recovery, systems at the Anglia Revenues Partnership (ARP) on behalf of East Cambridgeshire District Council and Breckland Council.

6. Other significant work

6.1 Other key work undertaken during 2023 to 2024 included:

Annual governance statement

6.2 Feeding into the production of the West Suffolk Annual Governance Statement 2022 to 2023, and commencement of work on the 2023 to 2024 statement.

Financial due diligence

6.3 During the year internal audit responded to 28 requests for financial due diligence or other related financial advice including assessments of organisations' financial suitability to undertake specified contracts for the council.

Grant assurance work

- 6.4 Energy Bills Support Scheme Alternative Funding (EBSS AF). A package of energy bills support was provided by the Government to support eligible recipients for meeting costs related to the use of energy in 2022 to 2023. The Energy Bills Support Scheme (EBSS) provided a discount on energy bills of £400 for most households and was delivered through domestic electricity suppliers. However there are a number of households who pay for their electricity in a different way, such as through a commercial intermediary and have not received support through the EBSS. The EBSS AF provided a non-repayable payment of £400 to eligible households who did not receive the main EBSS payment automatically. This scheme was jointly administered by the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero (DESNZ) and the Anglia Revenues Partnership on behalf of West Suffolk Council, with payments being made by the West Suffolk Council finance team. Internal audit carried out a high-level review to provide assurance of the process to issue the payments; there were no issues to report.
- 6.5 Alternative Fuel Payment (AFP). In autumn 2022, the Government announced the AFP scheme. The AFP provides £200 of support for households who did not automatically receive support through their energy supplier as, for example, they do not have a direct relationship with the supplier or do not have a gas connection. The scheme targets households that use alternative fuels as the main source of heating such as heating oil, bottled gas, liquid petroleum gas, wood or other solid fuel to heat their homes. This scheme was jointly administered by the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero (DESNZ) and Anglia Revenues Partnership on behalf of West Suffolk Council, with payments being made by the West Suffolk Council finance team. Internal audit carried out a high-level review to provide assurance of the process to issue the payments; there were no issues to report.
- 6.6 Green Homes Grant (Home Upgrade Grant). This was a Government scheme to help homeowners and landlords in England cover the cost of certain energy saving home improvements. Internal audit provided positive assurance to the Department for Energy Security & Net Zero (DESNZ) that the grant conditions have been complied with.
- 6.7 UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) and Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF).

The Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) have awarded funds to support implementation of its Levelling Up White Paper, known as the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF). The Government's stated aim for the fund is to build pride in place and increase life chances across the UK. This fund of £1.9m for the council is to provide funding to public or private organisations, procure services or in house provision for the period 2022 to 2025.

Additional funding, of £753.7k through the Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF) which is an addendum to the UKPSF) has also been received. This provides capital funding to help address the extra needs and challenges facing rural areas.

Ongoing work by internal audit continues to provide assurance that the council has in place the processes to ensure proper administration of the financial affairs relating to the funds to enable routine sign off by the S151 Officer.

COVID-19 related grants

- 6.8 Internal audit resource has continued to be assigned to ongoing work to support processes in respect of COVID-19 related grants to businesses, by:
- monitoring the recovery of monies in respect of businesses which were identified post-payment as not being eligible for the grant payments received. For ineligible grant payments where the council has followed the recovery procedures as required by the Department of Business and Trade (formally BEIS) but has been unsuccessful in recovery, the debts have been passed to the Department of Business and Trade to collect;
 - providing the necessary information as requested by external organisations, including Government departments.
- 6.9 Community Outbreak Management Fund. Positive assurance was provided to Suffolk County Council that the funds issued to West Suffolk Council to manage and control the outbreak of COVID-19 in the community were spent in accordance with the conditions of the grant.
- 6.10 Test & Trace Contain Outbreak Management Fund. Positive assurance was provided to the Government that the expenditure incurred was used appropriately to mitigate against and manage local outbreaks of COVID-19.

National Fraud Initiative (NFI) and other proactive anti-fraud work

- 6.11 Internal audit co-ordinates the council's participation in this biennial exercise, run by the Cabinet Office, which matches electronic data within and between public and private sector bodies to prevent and detect fraud.
- 6.12 Internal audit also communicates fraud alerts to service areas to raise awareness of current threats.
- 6.13 Further information on both of the above can be found at **Appendix B**.

West Stow accounts

- 6.14 Similar to previous years, internal audit act as the appointed Independent Examiner of the West Stow Anglo Saxon Village Trust 2022 to 2023 accounts. There were no matters of concern.

Other

- 6.15 Ongoing advice and assistance provided to service areas and the S151 Officer.

7. Quality assurance

- 7.1 We recognise the importance of meeting customer expectations as well as conforming to the UK Public Sector Internal Audit Standards (the 'Standards'). We continually focus on delivering high quality audits, seeking opportunities to improve where we can.
- 7.2 We are committed to training and developing internal audit staff, with training provision continually reviewed through the appraisal process and regular one-to-one meetings.
- 7.3 The Standards require that internal audit 'must develop and maintain a 'quality assurance and improvement programme' that covers all aspects of the internal audit activity'. This quality assurance and improvement programme is designed to check internal audit's conformance with the Standards and the profession's code of ethics and also assess its efficiency and effectiveness and identify any areas for improvement.
- 7.4 Currently, West Suffolk Council's internal audit quality assurance and improvement programme consists of the following elements:
- an external assessment to independently assess compliance with the Standards every five years. An external assessment of internal audit was conducted in March 2023, with very positive results, including confirming that the team complies with the Standards;
 - a quality review process is undertaken for each individual audit. These reviews examine all areas of the work undertaken, from initial planning through to completion and reporting;
 - customer satisfaction questionnaires are issued with audit reports for completion by the service area subject to audit; and
 - quality assurance checks by the internal audit team to ensure the Standards are consistently followed.
- 7.5 We aim to comply with the Standards and the Institute of Internal Auditors Code of Ethics in all our work and we are not aware of any significant areas of non-conformance.

8. Performance against key indicators

8.1 Internal audit's performance is measured and monitored throughout the year using a range of indicators.

8.2 Performance against relevant indicators is summarised below:

Performance indicator	2021 to 2022	2022 to 2023	2023 to 2024
Percentage completion of Priority 1 work within the approved Audit Plan	93%	97%	100%
High risk actions implemented or satisfactory/reasonable progress made by target date	100%	100%	No high risk actions in period
Average number of days from fieldwork completion to issue of draft report	5 days	2 days	5 days
Average number of days from receipt of final management comment to issue of final report	6 days	2 days	2 days
Percentage of satisfactory (or better) ratings received from customers on individual audits	100%	100%	100%

9. Glossary of terms

Significance: the relative importance of a matter within the context in which it is being considered, including quantitative and qualitative factors, such as magnitude, nature, effect, relevance and impact. Professional judgment assists internal auditors when evaluating the significance of matters within the context of the relevant objectives.

Internal audit annual opinion: the Service Manager Internal Audit's view, based on internal audit work undertaken and any other relevant assurances, of the adequacy and effectiveness of the council's arrangements for governance, risk and control.

Governance: governance comprises the arrangements (including political, economic, social, environmental, administrative, legal, and other arrangements) put in place to ensure that the outcomes for intended stakeholders are defined and achieved.

Risk: the possibility of an event occurring that will have an impact on the achievement of objectives. Risk is measured in terms of impact and likelihood.

Control: any action taken to manage risk and increase the likelihood that established objectives and goals will be achieved.

Impairment: impairment to objectivity may include personal conflict of interest, scope limitations, restrictions on access to records, personnel and properties and resource limitations.



Annual Fraud Report 2023 to 2024

Contents

Annual Fraud Report 2023 to 2024.....	1
1. Introduction	2
2. The Risk of Fraud.....	2
3. Policies and Procedures	2
4. Corporate Fraud, Theft, Bribery and Corruption Arrangements	3
5. Internal Audit.....	4
6. Reported Frauds and Suspicions	4
7. National Fraud Initiative	6
8. Anglia Revenues Partnership (ARP) Fraud Arrangements	8
Council Tax Reduction Scheme.....	8
Housing Benefit.....	9
Single Person Discount Fraud.....	10
Social Housing Fraud	10
Other Fraud Activity.....	11
9. Failure to Prevent	11
10. Fighting Fraud and Corruption Locally.....	11
11. CIPFA Code of Practice – Managing the Risk of Fraud and Corruption.....	12

1. Introduction

- 1.1 West Suffolk Council spends millions of pounds of public money each year on essential local services. It is essential that we continue to protect and preserve our ability to provide these services by ensuring assets are protected against risk of loss or damage.
- 1.2 This report summarises the work which has taken place during 2023 to 2024 to prevent and detect fraud, theft and corruption. The council aims to show its commitment to minimising the risk of fraud, theft and corruption and deter any would-be fraudsters by publishing this information.

2. The Risk of Fraud

- 2.1 Fraud, theft and corruption are an ever-present threat to the resources available in the public sector. They are costly, in terms of both reputational risk and financial losses.
- 2.2 The council's mitigating controls include:
 - clear policies and procedures
 - access to specialist and qualified staff to investigate potential areas of fraud
 - active participation in the National Fraud Initiative (NFI)
 - a sound internal control environment as demonstrated by internal and external audit opinions.
- 2.3 Whilst there are mitigating controls in place to manage the risks of fraud, theft and corruption, in common with other public sector bodies these risks cannot be completely eradicated, particularly bearing in mind that fraud is becoming ever more complex and harder to detect. West Suffolk Council recognises the vulnerability to fraud and key fraud risk areas and takes positive action to minimise those risks. Emphasis is placed on preventative and early detection work in areas at greatest risk of fraud.

3. Policies and Procedures

- 3.1 The council has a range of interrelated policies and procedures to provide a corporate framework to counter fraudulent activity. These include:
 - Codes of Conduct for Members and Officers
 - Code of Corporate Governance
 - Constitution – including Contract and Financial Procedure Rules
 - Anti-Fraud and Anti-Corruption Policy

- Whistleblowing Policy
- Anti-Money Laundering Policy
- Recruitment and selection procedures

3.2 Reviews of the Anti-Fraud and Anti-Corruption Policy and Anti-Money Laundering Policy were undertaken in 2022 to 2023 to update references to recent guidance and current legislation.

3.3 Policies are also supported with eLearning training modules which includes anti-bribery and corruption, fraud awareness and anti-money laundering.

4. Corporate Fraud, Theft, Bribery and Corruption Arrangements

4.1 West Suffolk's Anti-Fraud and Anti-Corruption Policy applies to all West Suffolk Council activities and is in place to minimise the risk to the council's assets and good name, promote a culture of integrity and accountability in councillors, employees, and all those that the council does business with, and enhance existing procedures aimed at preventing, discouraging, detecting, and investigating fraud and corruption.

4.2 Fraud awareness messages are published on the intranet to increase staff awareness. This can include topics such as council tax and council tax reduction scheme fraud, mandate fraud, supplier fraud, direct debit indemnity fraud, business rates fraud, housing benefit fraud, money laundering awareness, and bribery awareness. Where appropriate, messages are also posted on the council's social media accounts to alert the public to scams.

4.3 A series of fraud awareness messages was published on the intranet during International Fraud Awareness week in November 2023. These included insider threats such as: polygamous working, where an employee is in full time employment at more than one organisation; and offboarding, where employees are not returning ICT related equipment upon leaving their employment.

4.4 Internal audit receives and takes action on regular alerts from the National Anti-Fraud Network – an organisation recognised as a centre of good practice dedicated to protecting the public purse from fraud, abuse and error. Fraud trend data received from organisations such as Trading Standards, Action Fraud, City of London Police, CIFAS (the UK's fraud prevention community) and local intelligence sources concerning local and national fraud threats are circulated to service areas to further increase staff awareness to take relevant steps in the prevention of fraud.

4.5 Proactive work includes:

- considering fraud risks within internal audit work undertaken

- specific fraud risk assessments in place for grants as required, for example UK Shared Prosperity Fund, Rural England Prosperity Fund and Sustainable Warmth home energy grants
- quarterly review of creditor payment data to employee data, such as bank account or address, to determine if conflicts of interest have been reported and payments are appropriate
- quarterly review to identify duplicate invoice payments

4.6 Emerging fraud trends and concerns are shared with ARP partners and local authorities.

4.7 The Anglia Revenues Partnership (ARP) provides the revenues and benefits service on behalf of five partner authorities, including West Suffolk. The ARP has a dedicated fraud team which internal audit liaises with on a regular basis.

5. Internal Audit

5.1 Fraud and corruption risks are identified as part of the annual audit planning process and flexibility is included within the annual internal audit work plan to undertake irregularity investigative work, coordination of the National Fraud Initiative (NFI) data matching exercise and proactive anti-fraud and anti-corruption work, including raising awareness.

5.2 The internal audit team is a member of the Suffolk Counter Fraud Group which aims to:

- identify and share emerging national and local fraud risks
- explore the sharing and matching of data within Suffolk authorities to identify fraud and error
- share best practice and explore joint working for proactive counter fraud exercises

5.3 Internal audit also attends fraud prevention webinars to maintain knowledge on local authority fraud threats.

6. Reported Frauds and Suspensions

6.1 The internal audit team has a responsibility to investigate suspected irregularities resulting in potential loss to West Suffolk resources and monies, or money laundering concerns. The activity for 2023 to 2024 includes:

6.1.1 Mandate fraud, sometimes known as 'payment diversion fraud' or 'business email compromise', occurs when someone purporting to be from a genuine supplier contacts the council with a request to change bank account details that payments are made to. If the request is actioned, the payments will then be made to the fraudster's bank account.

In July 2023 the council was subject to a bank mandate fraud resulting in payment of approximately £52,000 being made to a fraudster who had taken control of the genuine email account of a supplier. This cyber-attack of its email account was unknown to the supplier or the council at the time. While this incident was extremely regrettable many organisations are unfortunately affected by such scams, and this was the first time the council had been defrauded in this way.

This fraud incident was previously reported to the Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee in the [Internal Audit Mid-Year Progress Report 2023-24](#) with additional information as requested by members provided in the [Internal Audit Report on Bank Mandate Fraud](#) in January 2024.

Internal audit quickly carried out an investigation which covered the circumstances around the fraud, what controls are in place to assist in the prevention of mandate fraud, where these controls had failed, and what actions should be taken to reduce the risk of any such further frauds. Internal audit also confirmed that staff were not involved in perpetrating the fraud.

Follow up work was undertaken by internal audit in November 2023, and this confirmed that a number of actions had been taken to reduce the risk of any similar future fraud. This was reported to the January 2024 PASC meeting, and recommendations made by the committee were also carried out, including looking at further ways with the bank to prevent this from happening. Further audit work specifically focused on this area was also undertaken between April and May 2024 to provide assurance that controls relating to bank account changes are being followed and operating as intended. This audit work concluded that appropriate controls relating to creditor bank account changes are in place and are being followed, including service areas undertaking the required checks and finance validating the changes prior to payments being made.

It is worth noting that in an average month, the council can receive around 750,00 inbound emails, a significant number of which are picked up and blocked by firewalls and filters as unwanted or malicious before staff even see them, and that over 5,000 emails a month can specifically be phishing attempts (when criminals use scam emails, text messages or phone calls to trick their victims).

- 6.1.2 Over the year, the daily routines undertaken by the Finance Team identified suspicious entries on two bank accounts. Enquiries established that fraudulent cheques, printed with the council's bank account and sort code, had been presented to the value of £41,916.

The cheques did not originate from the council and are counterfeit, detailing other organisations as the payer, do not have the approved signatory and have cheque numbers which are not consistent with the council's cheque stock.

The bank accounts that these transactions are from do not issue cheques.

The timely identification of this resulted in no financial loss to the council and additional controls as suggested by the bank are being introduced to reduce future attempts, including removal of cheques being cashable at all on a number of our accounts.

- 6.1.3 Credit card chargebacks were received for a council tax account, these are transactions reported as unauthorised by the cardholder.

The council's Finance Team identified that numerous cards had been used in attempts to pay the council tax bill, with some payments being successful.

Joint working between Finance, Internal Audit and ARP identified that the move-in notification, payment, and move-out notification for the council tax account occurred in a short space of time. This resulted in the account going into credit and refunds being requested by the fraudster.

It appears that cloned cards had been used to make these payments and there was no loss to the authority or the genuine cardholders for whom chargebacks were received from.

ARP identified a number of council tax accounts had been opened in the fraudsters names across the country. The relevant authorities were alerted to this fraud.

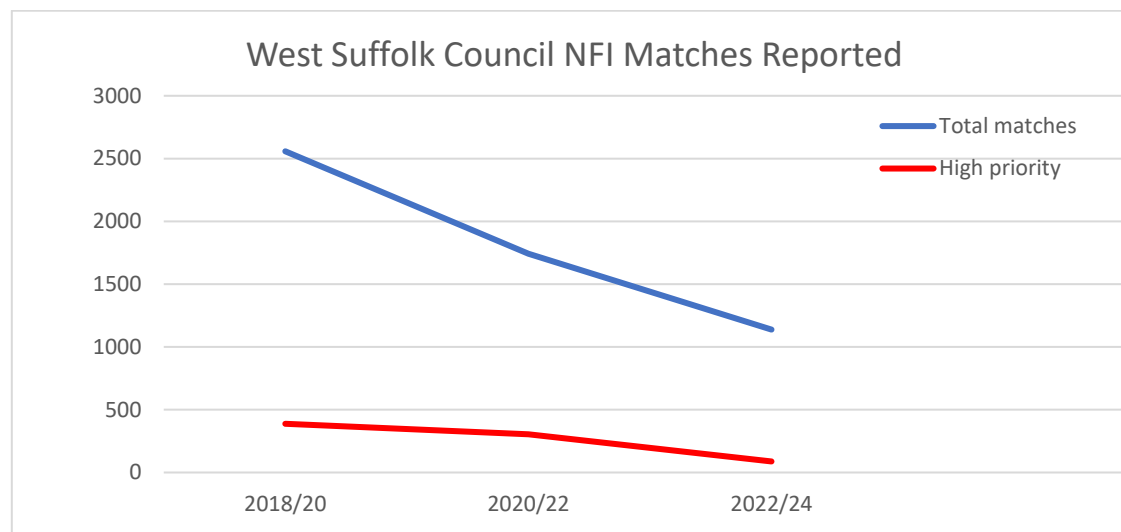
- 6.1.4 Salary mandate fraud occurs when someone purporting to be the employee contacts HR or Payroll with a request to change bank account details that salary payments are made to. Five such attempts were detected and prevented.

- 6.1.5 Three fraud referrals were received from the SCC fraud reporting portal, these were related to housing benefit and council tax concerns and subsequently referred to ARP for investigation.

7. National Fraud Initiative

- 7.1 The National Fraud Initiative (NFI) is a mandatory exercise run by the Cabinet Office to match and compare electronic data within and between public and private sector bodies to prevent and detect fraud and error. The NFI works with around 1,100 organisations from across the UK, including police authorities, fire and rescue authorities, NHS, local authorities, housing associations, Department of Work and Pensions (DWP), HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) and a number of other public sector bodies. Where a match in data is found, this indicates that there may be an inconsistency in the application, claim or payment which needs further investigation.
- 7.2 The main exercise takes place over a two-year period, matching records such as housing benefit, local council tax reduction scheme, student loans, payroll, companies house data, pensions, creditor payments, housing register waiting list, housing tenants, right to buy, and resident parking permits.

The current NFI exercise saw the majority of data matches being released between January and March 2023, with supplementary matches released from May 2023 to January 2024. This produced a decrease in the number of matches previously reported as data matching improves and the NFI continues to enhance data matching capabilities and broad data sharing opportunities across the public and private sector.



A fraud risk score is given to matches by the NFI, those with a high-risk score are prioritised for review with a sample of other matches also being reviewed. Matches are reviewed by internal audit and ARP.

A separate annual exercise to match electoral register data to single person discount (SPD) records is also undertaken to identify where SPD may not be applicable as there is more than one liable person living at the property.

- 7.6 350 single person discount cases, with a potential lost income value of £349,775 were identified through NFI work during 2023 to 2024 for the council. This is where the household was found to be no longer eligible for single person discount but had not informed ARP. The potential lost income value is calculated from when the eligibility is removed, the liability for the remainder of the current year plus another year. This is an increase of 119 cases with a value of £142,346 in 2022/23 due to the NFI Premium SPD services being utilised. The Premium service also matches to credit agency data, resulting in increased matches being produced and reviewed during 2023 to 2024. The ARP post to resource this work was funded by Suffolk County Council and is anticipated to be a biennial exercise.
- 7.7 Where fraud or error is found, recovery is made by way of the housing benefit overpayment process, credits obtained from suppliers (for example for duplicate invoice payments) or revised council tax bills are issued.

8. Anglia Revenues Partnership (ARP) Fraud Arrangements

8.1 ARP are tasked to identify and prevent fraud in the following areas:

- Local Council Tax Support
- Single Person Discount
- Council Tax fraud
- Non Domestic rates fraud

8.2 Housing Benefit frauds are passed to DWP to investigate.

8.3 The ARP Fraud and Visits Team work with the Housing Options Team and also with Housing Associations to tackle Right to Buy and subletting abuse. The ARP Fraud and Visits team also forge close working relations with service areas in an attempt to prevent and detect fraud and error, this includes a joint working approach with Planning Enforcement, Public Health and Housing (for example in relation to Houses in Multiple Occupation).

8.4 Proactive work includes:

- checks are made on single person discount (SPD) applications by the ARP Fraud Team to proactively prevent discounts being incorrectly granted, this approach also contributes to the reduced number of SPD matches reported in the NFI exercises
- identifying potential tax evasion due to properties not on the Council Tax or business rates databases
- new staff recruited to the ARP revenues and benefits team are given an induction session, to include training on fraud awareness, key documents, and the role of the ARP Fraud Team
- working with housing teams and social housing providers to recover properties
- investigating referrals from West Suffolk Council as requested

8.5 The data below has been provided by ARP to summarise some of the fraud work undertaken by them during 2023 to 2024 for the council.

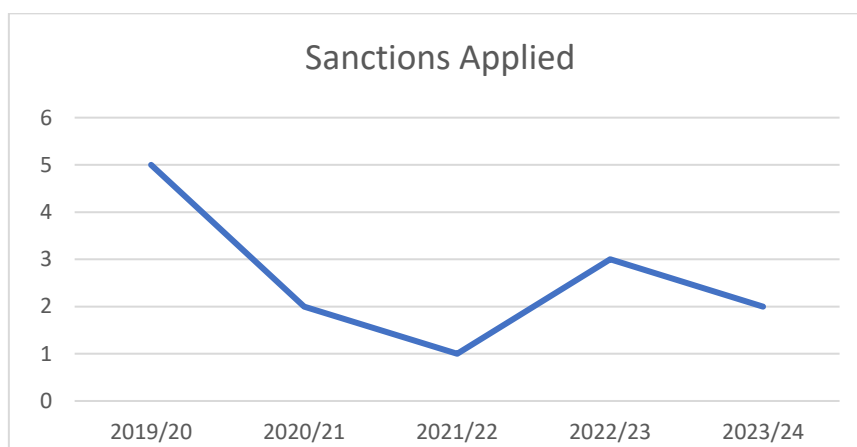
Council Tax Reduction Scheme

8.5.1 Every effort is made to recover debt caused by fraud in line with DWP guidance. New council tax bills are issued for the period in question to enable collection to be made.

8.5.2 56 cases of ineligible council tax reduction scheme awards were identified with potential lost income of £68,359 calculated. The increase is a consequence of the NFI Premium SPD review which, whilst targeting single person discounts, can subsequently identify where council tax reduction requires amending or removing. Potential lost income is calculated from the actual overpayment plus 21 weeks as per DWP methodology.



Sanctions Applied



8.5.3 Investigations can be closed without a sanction because it is considered to be a genuine error, there is insufficient evidence of fraud, or it is not in the public interest to pursue the fraud. In these instances, the benefit is corrected, and the action taken is recovery action in respect of an overpayment; whilst this is not recorded as a fraud, there is a saving to the taxpayer.

8.5.4 Two administrative penalties for Council Tax Reduction Scheme were applied with a value of £1,937.57. Administrative penalties can be offered for lower value offences where sufficient evidence is held for prosecution but it would not be in the public interest to prosecute.

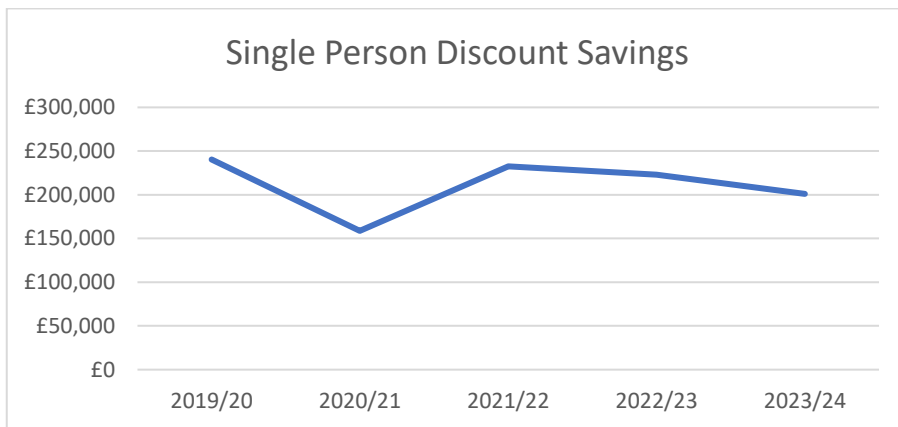
Housing Benefit

8.5.5 Housing benefit fraud is investigated by the Single Fraud Investigation Service (SFIS) which is a partnership between the DWP Fraud Investigation Service, HMRC, and local authorities. ARP will also regularly conduct joint working

investigations with the DWP to ensure that frauds are dealt with in the most efficient and cost-effective manner and are informed if there is to be a change to the housing benefit award at the conclusion of the investigation.

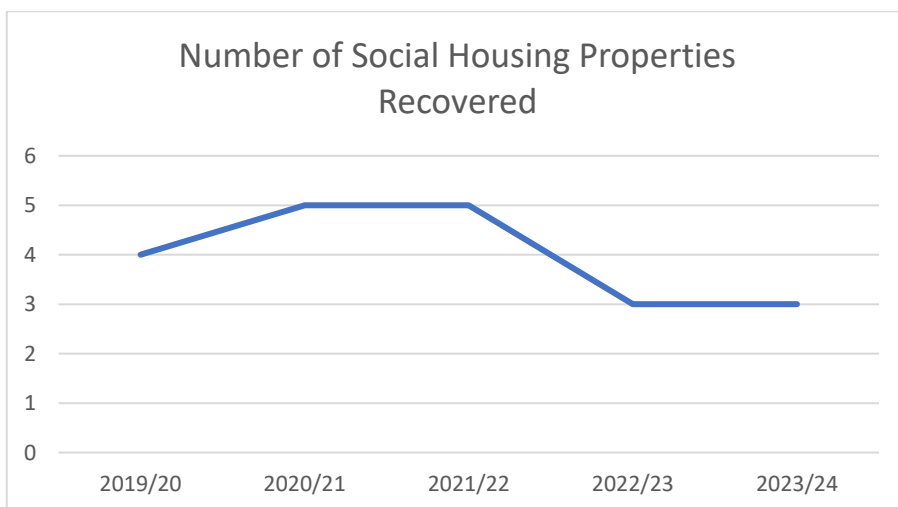
Single Person Discount Fraud

8.5.6 A rolling fraud prevention programme of work is undertaken to review single person discount against credit data to determine if the discount is appropriate. 262 cases were identified, with potential lost income of £200,947 calculated. In line with NFI guidance, the potential lost income is calculated from when the eligibility is removed, the liability for the remainder of the current year plus another year.



Social Housing Fraud

8.5.7 Joint working with the housing team and housing associations to tackle fraud such as Right to Buy and sub-letting abuse. This resulted in three properties being recovered and the removal of an individual from the housing waiting list. These properties can then be offered to those who are eligible for social housing.



Other Fraud Activity

8.5.8 Work continues to identify properties which are not on the business rates or council tax database. This can occur as the property has not been declared to the Valuation Office or incorrect information on the property status has been declared; officer vigilance can often identify these properties. Backdated bills are raised for these properties:

- one non-domestic rates (NDR) property was identified as not being on the database in 2023 to 2024; the value of the retrospective bills raised for the property is £1,330. A more proactive approach is planned for 2024/25 to use open-source data to identify undeclared commercial addresses.
- 15 cases of council tax avoidance, either through not being on the council tax database or properties no longer being eligible for discounts and exemptions were identified in 2023 to 2024 with bills to a value of £45,335 being raised. A more proactive approach is planned for 2024 to 2025 to use open-source data to identify undeclared residential addresses.

9. Failure to Prevent

9.1 The Failure to Prevent Fraud offence is expected to come into force during 2024.

9.2 This new offence means an organisation, including local authorities, will be liable where a specified fraud offence is committed by an associated person (employee, third party or subsidiary of the organisation, including wholly owned companies) for the organisation's direct or indirect benefit and the organisation did not have reasonable fraud prevention procedures in place.

9.3 The Government has announced it will issue guidance on what reasonable fraud prevention procedures are during 2024 and the offence will then come into force immediately, with no grace period.

9.4 Consideration is being given to the possible implications of the above and any required actions, however until further guidance is issued our existing fraud prevention procedures and associated policies are assumed to be satisfactory and the risk to the council is currently expected to be low.

10. Fighting Fraud and Corruption Locally

10.1 The 'CIPFA Fighting Fraud and Corruption Locally 2020s' is the counter fraud and corruption strategy for local government and succeeds the previous strategies written in 2011 and 2016. This estimated that fraud costs local authorities £7.8bn a year.

10.2 The strategy and its tools provide ways for local authorities to further develop and enhance their counter-fraud response by ensuring that it is

comprehensive and effective and by focusing on the key changes that will make the most difference.

- 10.3 The strategy includes a checklist to make a proper assessment of fraud and corruption risks. This checklist has been reviewed, confirming that arrangements and performance, which includes resources available through ARP, are satisfactory.

11. CIPFA Code of Practice – Managing the Risk of Fraud and Corruption

- 11.1 The CIPFA Code of Practice on Managing the Risk of Fraud and Corruption provides five key principles and expectations to embed effective standards for countering fraud and corruption.

- 11.2 The five principles and the results of our assessment of compliance are:

- **Acknowledge the Responsibility**
Compliance with this is considered to be satisfactory through the range of interrelated policies and procedures that provide a corporate framework to counter fraudulent activity.
- **Identify Risks**
All audit work considers fraud risks as stated in the Internal Audit Charter. The fraud self-assessment is reviewed regularly to assist in directing the anti-fraud work.
The highest risk area (by volume) is considered to be within the revenues and benefits services which have a continual fraud work programme and dedicated fraud team.
- **Develop a Strategy**
The Anti-Fraud and Anti-Corruption Policy applies to all council activities and outlines the commitment to creating a culture of zero tolerance of fraud, theft and corruption. The Policy is intended to support and enhance the council's ability to deliver priorities.
- **Provide Resources**
The Internal Audit Plan includes staff resources for review and investigations; this is also complemented by qualified ARP resources who undertake revenue and benefits related fraud and can assist in housing application investigations and advise on corporate fraud investigations.
- **Take Action**
The council takes action to prevent, detect and investigate fraud and participates in data matching exercises. The Fraud Response Plan has incorporated the CIPFA Code of Practice guidance.

- 11.3 Having considered all the principles, assurance can be given that the council has adopted a response that is appropriate for its fraud and corruption risks and commits to maintain vigilance to tackle fraud.

Outline Internal Audit Plan 2024 to 2025

Report number:	PAS/WS/24/011	
Report to and date(s):	Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee	30 May 2024
Cabinet member:	Councillor Diane Hind Cabinet Member for Resources Email: diane.hind@westsuffolk.gov.uk	
Lead officer:	Jon Snares Service Manager (Internal Audit) Tel: 01284 757239 Email: jon.snares@westsuffolk.gov.uk	

Decisions Plan: This item is not required to be included in the Decisions Plan.

Wards impacted: Not applicable.

Recommendation: It is recommended that the Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee:

- 1. Approves the Outline Internal Audit Plan 2024 to 2025**

1. Context to this report

1.1 The objectives of internal audit are to:

- provide a professional, independent and objective assurance and advisory service that assists the Director Resources and Property in her statutory duty as Section 151 Officer to ensure that the council's finances are properly administered; and
- work with management to improve the operation of the council.

1.2 The internal audit service is delivered and developed in accordance with the internal audit charter approved by this committee in May 2019.

1.3 In January 2024, the Institute of Internal Auditors published the new Global Internal Audit Standards. These Standards guide the worldwide professional practice of internal auditing and serve as a basis for evaluating and elevating the quality of the internal audit function. At the heart of the Standards are 15 guiding principles that enable effective internal auditing. Each principle is supported by standards that contain requirements, considerations for implementation, and examples of evidence of conformance. Together, these elements help internal auditors achieve the principles and fulfil the Purpose of Internal Auditing.

While the Global Internal Audit Standards apply to all internal audit functions, internal auditors in the public sector work in a political environment under governance, organisational, and funding structures that differ from those of the private sector. As such, the differences can affect how internal audit functions in the public sector apply the Standards.

The new Standards will be effective in the public sector from April 2025, and the West Suffolk Council internal audit team will undertake work throughout the year towards compliance, whilst taking into account the 'public sector' aspect.

2. Proposals within this report

2.1 The proposed 2024 to 2025 audit plan, provided at **Appendix B**, is a risk-based plan of work for the internal audit team which takes into account the need to produce an annual internal audit opinion for the council which concludes on the overall adequacy and effectiveness of the council's framework of governance, risk management, and internal control.

2.2 It is very important that the audit plan is flexible and able to adapt to changing risks facing the council, thereby ensuring that audit resources are used where they will add maximum value. During the year, specific audits may therefore need to be taken out of the plan or added in, according to changing circumstances.

2.3 Where possible the proposed audits will be carried out in priority order, and as many of these audits completed as possible, within the available resources.

2.4 Final approval of the audit plan is the responsibility of the Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee.

3. Alternative options that have been considered

3.1 The Public Sector Internal Audit Standards and the Global Internal Audit Standards both require that a plan of internal audit work is produced. There are no alternative options.

4. Consultation and engagement undertaken

4.1 The draft audit plan was produced in consultation with the Leadership Team and service managers.

5. Risks associated with the proposals

5.1 An approved audit plan ensures that risk-based plans are in place to determine the priorities of the internal audit activity, I support of the achievement of the council's objectives.

6. Implications arising from the proposals

6.1 Any implications arising from the proposal are covered in Appendix A.

7. Appendices referenced in this report

7.1 Appendix A - Internal Audit Plan Report

7.2 Appendix B – Outline Internal Audit Plan 2024 to 2025

8. Background documents associated with this report

8.1 None

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West Suffolk Council Internal Audit Plan 2024 to 2025

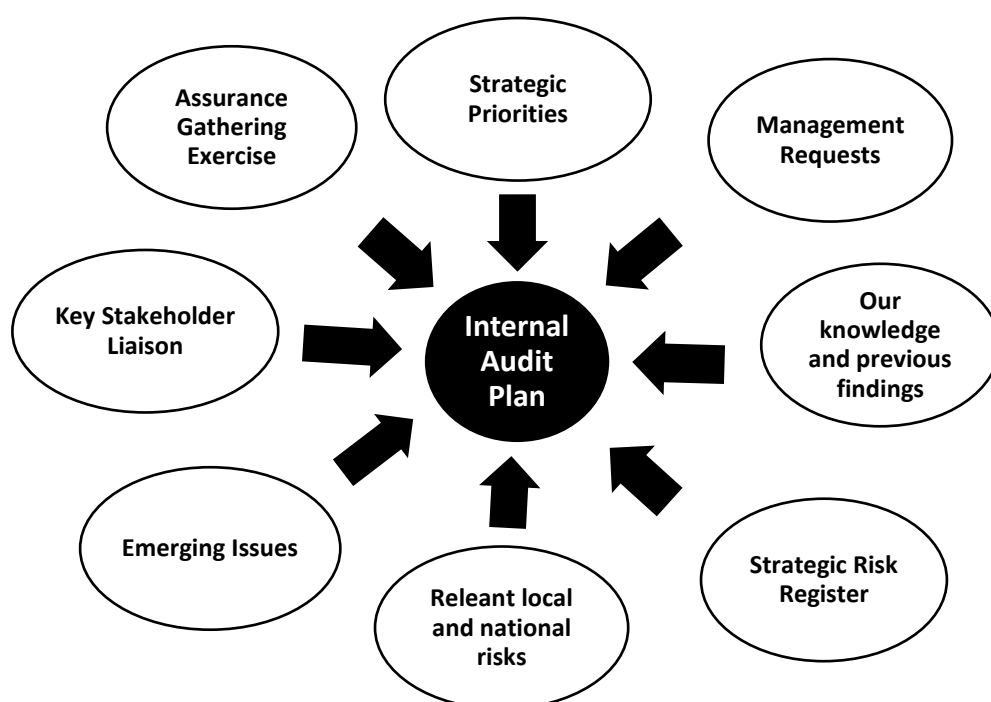
1. Introduction

1.1 The role of internal audit is that of an independent, objective assurance and consulting activity designed to add value and improve an organisation's operations. It helps an organisation accomplish its objectives by bringing a systematic, disciplined approach to evaluate and improve the effectiveness of risk management, control and governance processes.

2. What is the Internal Audit Plan and why does it matter?

2.1 The proposed 2024 to 2025 audit plan, provided at **Appendix B**, is a risk-based plan of work for the internal audit team that provides a framework for ensuring that audit resources are focused on activities that will make the most difference to supporting the council's priorities.

2.2 The internal audit plan takes into account the need to produce an annual internal audit opinion which underpins the council's annual governance statement, the diagram below shows key sources of information that help to inform the audit plan.



3. How was the draft internal audit plan produced?

- 3.1 A series of meetings was held with managers within the council to discuss and gain a better understanding of any current or upcoming service or corporate challenges or risks.
- 3.2 From these meetings, review of the strategic risk register, and additional knowledge of local and national risks arising from reading publications, attending training events and seminars, and networking with colleagues from other councils, a list of potential audit areas was produced and then risk assessed using the following criteria, resulting in a risk-based proposed plan of work.
- **Controls assurance** – information taken from previous internal audit work as well as other assurance processes within, and external to, the council.
 - **Corporate importance** – the extent to which the council depends on the correct running of the system, whether for legal or regulatory requirements or to meet strategic priorities.
 - **Materiality** – in monetary terms the relative significance or importance of the system or process to the council.
 - **Vulnerability** – the extent to which the system or process is liable to breakdown, corruption, loss, error and so on.
 - **Management concerns** – direct requests for support.

4. What is included in the draft internal audit plan?

- 4.1 **Appendix B** provides information on the key audit areas we have prioritised in our work programme for 2023 to 2024 as well as a rough approximation of the expected staff resource allocation for each audit area.
- 4.2 In essence, the draft internal audit plan includes two categories of work, that which supports the annual internal audit opinion either directly or indirectly (assurance work) and other, non-assurance work, as follows:

Assurance work

- main financial systems
- corporate and business area audits
- follow up work on previous audits to check whether agreed actions have been implemented
- added value work which are areas identified by management and internal audit that would benefit from appropriate audit input or resource in the form of providing support and advice to management including reviewing relevant arrangements

- grant certification work
- proactive anti-fraud work
- other assurance related work including working groups, general advice and assistance, and quality assurance work to ensure compliance with audit standards.

Non-assurance work

- fee earning Anglia Revenues Partnership (ARP) audits on behalf of other partners
- financial vetting, and financial due diligence for investment decisions
- managing the internal audit service
- annual independent examination of the West Stow Anglo Saxon Village Trust accounts.

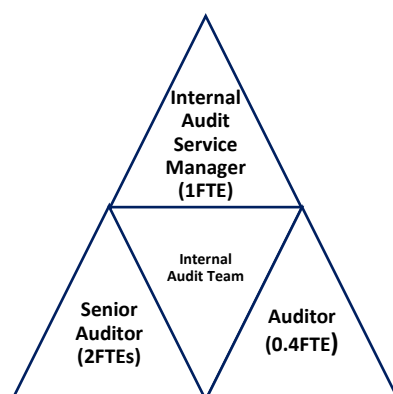
5. Delivering the plan

- 5.1 It is very important that the audit plan is flexible and able to adapt to changing risks facing the council, and thereby ensure that audit resources are used where they will add maximum value.
- 5.2 The intention is that as far as possible the proposed audits will be carried out in priority order and as many of the audits completed as possible within the available resources. It should however be recognised that it is possible that not all of the identified pieces of work will be undertaken. Also, other pieces of work not currently in the plan may be carried out.
- 5.3 The draft audit plan as presented at **Appendix B** represents the Service Manager Internal Audit's current view of how audit resources can be used most effectively. An update on progress against the audit plan will be given to the Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee during the year.
- 5.4 The Service Manager Internal Audit will remain alert to changing circumstances and emerging risks through a number of channels, including:
- attendance at senior officer meetings including Senior Management Team (Leadership Team plus Service Managers), officer working groups, feedback from the Section 151 Officer, and discussions with other West Suffolk colleagues
 - committee reports
 - professional reference material, websites, and discussion forums.

- 5.5 Internal audit is only one source of assurance and through the delivery of this plan we will not, and do not seek to cover all risks and processes within the organisation. We will however continue to consider the potential for taking into account the work of other assurance providers to ensure that duplication is minimised, and a suitable breadth of assurance is obtained. These external assurance providers include external audit and those who provide assurance over cyber security and other IT related areas.
- 5.6 Where any sources of assurance other than the work contained within this plan are relied on in forming the annual audit opinion, additional work may be undertaken by internal audit where necessary and appropriate to validate these other sources of assurance.

6. What staff resources does the internal audit team have and how are these allocated?

- 6.1 West Suffolk Council's internal audit resource requirements are based on a recognition that:
- the ability to be flexible wherever possible and react to services' need for advice and assistance is a crucial element of internal audit's ability to add maximum value
 - the council has a statutory obligation to undertake an effective internal audit to evaluate the effectiveness of its risk management, control and governance processes, thereby covering a broad spectrum of work
 - audit coverage needs to be appropriate and sufficient to enable the Service Manager Internal Audit to discharge his duty to provide a robust annual internal audit opinion in support of the council's annual governance statement.
- 6.2 The Service Manager Internal Audit considers that the current internal audit staff resource is adequate to fulfil the requirements of an annual plan of audit work to provide an annual audit opinion and meet statutory obligations.
- 6.3 The following full-time equivalent posts are filled:



- 6.4 The training and personal development needs of internal audit staff are established through a review process. The existing skills, knowledge and experience of internal audit staff have been taken into account when preparing the draft audit plan.

7. Conflicts of interest

- 7.1 Where there are any relationships that may affect, or appear to have the potential to affect, the independence and objectivity of the team, steps would be taken to avoid the conflict of interest and where this is not possible the nature of the conflict would be disclosed to the relevant parties.

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Priority key

1	high
2	medium
3	low

Main financial systems

These are the main financial systems that support the running of the council. These audit reviews are carried out to provide independent assurance to the Director (Resources and Performance) as the S151 Officer that arrangements are operating effectively, and in line with the Financial Procedure Rules and Treasury Management Strategy as appropriate. These audits are carried out annually and the coverage of each audit is decided on a risk basis. Rough approximation of expected staff resource allocation: 21%

Audit Area	Outline scope, audit opinion area, and links to strategic risk register and strategic priorities	Priority
Creditors	<p>Outline scope: to provide assurance that payments made are valid, authorised, accurate and timely, in respect of goods and services received by the council and that they have been properly accounted for in the council's accounts.</p> <p>Audit opinion category: financial control</p> <p>Links to strategic risk register: WS1 – financial management; WS2 – financial planning</p> <p>Links to strategic priorities: all</p>	1
Debtors and debt management	<p>Outline scope: to provide assurance that income generating activities are identified and accurately invoiced; that all invoices are paid, and income is accounted for and reflected in the council's accounts; the extent of debt is minimised, and overdue accounts are promptly followed up. Also, aged debt process to be reviewed.</p> <p>Audit opinion category: financial control</p> <p>Links to strategic risk register: WS1 – financial management; WS2 – financial planning</p> <p>Links to strategic priorities: all</p>	1
Treasury management	<p>Outline scope: annual audit to provide assurance that accurate, complete, and timely information is produced to allow for effective monitoring and decision making in line with the investment strategy; that transactions are complete, accurate, valid and timely and made with institutions in line with the treasury management strategy; and that treasury management activities are monitored and scrutinised in accordance with the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) Code of Practice.</p> <p>Audit opinion category: financial control</p> <p>Links to strategic risk register: WS1 – financial management; WS2 – financial planning</p> <p>Links to strategic priorities: all</p>	1

Car parks cash handling	<p>Outline scope: audit required due to significant sums involved and risks associated with cash handling. Provides assurance that effective controls are in place over car parking cash collection, retention, and banking systems.</p> <p>Audit opinion category: financial control</p> <p>Links to strategic risk register: WS1 – financial management; WS2 – financial planning</p> <p>Links to strategic priorities: all</p>	1
Anglia Revenues Partnership (ARP) audits 2024 to 2025: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • council tax billing and benefits • overpayments recovery 	<p>Outline scope: provides assurance over the administration of the revenues and benefits systems. West Suffolk undertakes the audits of council tax billing and benefits, and housing benefits overpayments recovery, on behalf of all the Anglia Revenues Partnership (ARP) partners for which a fee is charged. The audits of national non-domestic rates and ARP enforcement are currently undertaken by other partners.</p> <p>Audit opinion category: internal control</p> <p>Links to strategic risk register: WS1 – financial management; WS2 – financial planning; WS22 - Financial impact on individuals due to rising cost of living, inflation etc</p> <p>Links to strategic priorities: all</p>	1
Payroll	<p>Outline scope: to provide assurance that key controls exist for payroll processing including adequate documentation for starters and leavers.</p> <p>Audit opinion category: financial control</p> <p>Links to strategic risk register: WS1 – financial management; WS2 – financial planning</p> <p>Links to strategic priorities: all</p>	1
General ledger	<p>Outline scope: to provide assurance that financial transactions are correctly recorded including ensuring their completeness and integrity, with the aim of providing the financial information from which the council's annual statements of accounts can be prepared.</p> <p>Audit opinion category: financial control</p> <p>Links to strategic risk register: WS1 – financial management; WS2 – financial planning</p> <p>Links to strategic priorities: all</p>	1

Added value work

Areas identified by management and internal audit that would benefit from audit input or resource in the form of providing support and advice to management including reviewing relevant arrangements on behalf of management and/or assisting in making improvements. Care will be taken to ensure these activities do not impinge upon internal audit independence.

These pieces of work will generally be one-off activities (unlike the annual financial systems reviews) and will not always result in a formal report being issued or an opinion provided. However, these pieces of work will contribute to a balanced audit plan which enables the Service Manager Internal Audit to give his statutory annual audit opinion on the adequacy and effectiveness of the council's framework of risk management, control and governance processes.

Work included in this category will be discussed and agreed with management during the year, and may include amongst other work, transformation programme support and financial resilience work.

Rough approximation of expected staff resource allocation: 29%

Corporate and business area audits

Reviews of systems, processes or tasks where the internal controls are identified, tested, and evaluated. These are therefore more traditional pieces of audit work in contrast to the 'Added Value Work' referred to above. Again, unlike the annual financial systems reviews these pieces of work will generally be one-off activities but they will normally result in a formal report being issued and an opinion provided. The work in this category is driven by a shared understanding between management and internal audit of relevant risks. Work included in this category is likely to include, but not necessarily be restricted to, the following pieces of work. An ongoing assessment of potential work areas will ensure that audit resource will be used in those areas which will benefit most from audit input.

Rough approximation of expected staff resource allocation: 18%

Audit Area	Outline scope, audit opinion area, and links to strategic risk register and strategic priorities	Priority
IT audit	<p>Outline scope: detailed discussions will be held with the ICT team to agree the scope of this work which is expected to include cyber security.</p> <p>Audit opinion category: governance, risk, internal control</p> <p>Links to strategic risk register: WS8 – ICT Development, WS19 – cyber security, WS14 - Breach of data protection and information security</p> <p>Links to strategic priorities: all</p>	1
Body Worn Cameras	<p>Outline scope: to review use of body worn cameras including those used by markets, car parking enforcement and ARP to ensure the requirements of the Amended Surveillance Camera Code of Practice (accessible version) - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk) are being met</p> <p>Audit opinion category: governance, risk, internal control</p> <p>Links to strategic risk register: WS19 – Cyber security, WS9 a) – Deliver: Thriving communities, WS14 - Breach of data protection and information security</p> <p>Links to strategic priorities: thriving communities</p>	1
Data Quality - Waste	<p>Outline scope: review of systems and processes to assess the accuracy of collection and reporting of waste data to ensure that central government requirements are being met, data is reliable to make informed decisions, and enables comparison with other Suffolk local authorities.</p>	1

	<p>Audit opinion category: internal control</p> <p>Links to strategic risk register: WS15 - Service performance, WS16 – Demographic changes</p> <p>Links to strategic priorities: environmental resilience</p>	
Asset Management	<p>Outline scope: to review the process for commercial property rent and lease renewals to enable a competitive market and be attractive to tenants</p> <p>Audit opinion category: internal control, financial control</p> <p>Links to strategic risk register: WS1 – Financial management, WS2 - Financial planning, WS20 - Economic impact of rising costs on local business, WS9 b) – Deliver: Sustainable growth</p> <p>Links to strategic priorities: sustainable growth</p>	1
Creditor Bank Account Changes	<p>Outline scope: to provide assurance that controls relating to creditor bank account changes are being followed to include service areas undertaking the required checks and finance validating the change prior to payments being made. This work will include following up on the operation of additional controls introduced following the bank mandate fraud in 2023 to 2024.</p> <p>Audit opinion category: financial control</p> <p>Links to strategic risk register: WS1 – Financial management</p> <p>Links to strategic priorities: all</p>	1
Contract Procedure Rules	<p>Outline scope: review of whether the tendering limits and requirements regarding sustainable procurement and modern day slavery, rolled out in November 2022, are being followed.</p> <p>Audit opinion categories: internal control, governance</p> <p>Links to strategic risk register: WS1 – financial management</p> <p>Links to strategic priorities: all</p>	1
Contract Management	<p>Outline scope: to provide assurance that contracts are held, monitored, managed, renegotiated and (where required) safeguarding contract monitoring requirements are met</p> <p>Audit opinion category: internal control, financial control</p> <p>Links to strategic risk register: WS1 Financial management, WS2 - Financial planning, WS18 - Safeguarding children and vulnerable adults</p> <p>Links to strategic priorities: all</p>	2
Workshop – Ordering & Stock Control	<p>Outline scope: to review the controls in place for the ordering, security, and stock monitoring of workshop spare parts, tools and equipment</p> <p>Audit opinion categories: internal control, financial control</p> <p>Links to strategic risk register: WS1 Financial management</p>	2

	Links to strategic priorities: sustainable growth	
Depot – Ordering & Stock Control	<p>Outline scope: to review the controls in place for the ordering, security, and stock monitoring of depot refuse bins and other high volume items</p> <p>Audit opinion categories: internal control, financial control</p> <p>Links to strategic risk register: WS1 Financial management</p> <p>Links to strategic priorities: sustainable growth</p>	2
Refunds	<p>Outline scope: to review the controls in place for the issuing of refunds by all service areas, ensuring any delegations are adhered to, and refunds are supported and appropriate</p> <p>Audit opinion categories: internal control, financial control</p> <p>Links to strategic risk register: WS1 Financial management</p> <p>Links to strategic priorities: all</p>	2
Focused mini audit reviews	<p>Outline scope: the scope of these 'quick' audit reviews remain to be agreed with services but could potentially include areas such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • effectiveness of the FOI and DSAR processes to include compliance with ICO requirements • record of disposal registers • travel & subsistence claims • transparency and open data • management of heritage assets • event management • controls to prevent polygamous working through the use of agency workers <p>Audit opinion categories: internal control, financial control</p> <p>Links to strategic risk register: all</p> <p>Links to strategic priorities: all</p>	2
Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG)	<p>Outline scope: to provide assurance to both West Suffolk Council and Suffolk County Council that the conditions of the grant allocated to, and spent by West Suffolk Council, have been complied with. The grant is for the provision of adaptations to disabled people's homes to help them to live independently in their own homes for longer.</p> <p>Audit opinion categories: internal control</p> <p>Links to strategic risk register: WS9 a) – Deliver: Thriving Communities, WS9 c) – Deliver: Affordable, available and decent homes</p> <p>Links to strategic priorities: thriving communities, affordable, available and decent homes</p>	2

Follow ups

Rough approximation of expected staff resource allocation: 4%

Outline Scope	Priority
Whilst it is management's responsibility to manage the risks associated with the areas under their authority, internal audit will monitor progress against the implementation of all agreed audit recommendations deemed to be high and medium risk.	1

Fraud, irregularity and probity

Proactive testing of systems and processes to identify potential fraud and misappropriation or non-compliance with policies and procedures and potentially reactive investigations into potential wrongdoing, fraud, and corruption.

Rough approximation of expected staff resource allocation: 7%

Audit Area	Outline scope, audit opinion area, and links to strategic risk register and strategic priorities	Priority
COVID-19 business support payments recovery monitoring and counter-fraud work	<p>Outline scope: work to support the recovery of COVID-19 business support payments, to BEIS or other external agencies with information as required</p> <p>Audit opinion categories: internal control, financial control</p> <p>Links to strategic risk register: WS9 b) - Deliver Sustainable Growth</p> <p>Links to strategic priorities: all</p>	1
Irregularity investigations	<p>Outline scope: reactive work where suspected irregularity has been detected.</p> <p>Audit opinion categories: internal control, financial control</p> <p>Links to strategic risk register: WS1 – Financial management, WS2– Financial planning</p> <p>Links to strategic priorities: all</p>	1
Data matching	<p>Outline scope: organisation of the extraction of data and submission to the Cabinet Office for the National Fraud Initiative exercises, and co-ordination of review of the matches.</p> <p>Audit opinion categories: internal control, financial control</p> <p>Links to strategic risk register: WS1 – Financial management, WS2– Financial planning</p> <p>Links to strategic priorities: all</p>	1
Proactive fraud and corruption work	<p>Outline scope: proactive anti-fraud work that includes targeted testing of processes with inherent risk of fraud. To also include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • review and update of our fraud risk assessment. • understanding the requirements of the Failure to Prevent Fraud Offence and take any appropriate action (e.g. policies and advice to service areas) to ensure these are met. NB - this is a new offence which will come into force when the Economic Crime and Corporate Transparency Bill has been approved by Parliament (expected in 2024). 	1

	<p>Audit opinion categories: internal control, financial control</p> <p>Links to strategic risk register: WS1 – Financial management, WS2– Financial planning</p> <p>Links to strategic priorities: all</p>	
Fraud awareness and publicity	<p>Outline scope: continuing to raise awareness of fraud issues and how to report suspicions.</p> <p>Audit opinion categories: internal control, financial control</p> <p>Links to strategic risk register: WS1 – Financial management, WS2– Financial planning</p> <p>Links to strategic priorities: all</p>	2

Other audit activity to support the audit opinion

Includes providing advice on systems and processes and attendance at working groups to advise on risk and control, as well as responses to specific enquiries
 Rough approximation of expected staff resource allocation: 7%

Audit Area	Outline scope, audit opinion area, and links to strategic risk register and strategic priorities	Priority
Annual Governance Statement 2023-24	<p>Outline scope: feed into production of the West Suffolk Annual Governance Statement and its associated documents.</p> <p>Audit opinion categories: governance</p> <p>Link to strategic risk register: all risks</p> <p>Links to strategic priorities: all</p>	1
Information governance	<p>Outline scope: audit support and advice on information governance policies and practices.</p> <p>Audit opinion categories: internal control</p> <p>Link to strategic risk register: WS14 – breach of data protection and information security</p> <p>Links to strategic priorities: all</p>	1
Strategic Risk Management Group	<p>Outline scope: feed into review of strategic risks prior to submission to Leadership Team and Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee.</p> <p>Audit opinion categories: risk</p> <p>Link to strategic risk register: all risks</p> <p>Links to strategic priorities: all</p>	1
Financial due diligence in respect of investment decisions and potential	<p>Outline scope: financial due diligence checks on businesses (prospective suppliers, contractors, industrial unit tenants and partners) to minimise financial risks to the council.</p> <p>Audit opinion categories: financial control</p> <p>Links to strategic risk register: WS1 – financial management; WS2 – financial planning</p>	1

suppliers / contractors	Links to strategic priorities: all	
Internal Audit Quality Assurance Improvement Plan (QAIP) and work the new Global Internal Audit Standards (GIAS)	<p>Outline scope: work to ensure conformance with the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards, and also to understand the impact and new requirements of the new Global Internal Audit Standards coming into force in January 2025 and implement changes to working practices and audit policies and documentation as appropriate.</p> <p>Audit opinion categories: all</p> <p>Link to strategic risk register: all risks</p> <p>Links to strategic priorities: all</p>	1
General advice and assistance and requests for support from management	<p>Outline scope: provision of advice and assistance on the risk, governance and internal control environment, and unplanned work assessing the impact on controls arising from changes in systems or processes.</p> <p>Audit opinion categories: all</p> <p>Link to strategic risk register: all risks</p> <p>Links to strategic priorities: all</p>	2
Internal Audit external working groups	<p>Outline scope: participation in the Suffolk Working Audit Partnership (consisting of the Suffolk local authority internal audit teams), Suffolk Fraud Group, and other relevant groups to share learning and good practice.</p> <p>Audit opinion categories: all</p> <p>Link to strategic risk register: all risks</p> <p>Links to strategic priorities: all</p>	2
Liaison with external audit	<p>Outline scope: to ensure there is no duplication of work between internal and external audit, and exchange knowledge as appropriate.</p> <p>Audit opinion categories: all</p> <p>Link to strategic risk register: all risks</p> <p>Links to strategic priorities: all</p>	2

Other work

Rough approximation of expected staff resource allocation: 3%

Audit Area	Outline scope, audit opinion area, and links to strategic risk register and strategic priorities	Priority
Community Outbreak Management Fund	<p>Outline scope: to provide assurance to Suffolk County Council that the conditions of the grant allocated to, and spent by West Suffolk Council, have been complied with. The grant provides support towards expenditure incurred in relation to COVID-19 Test and Trace services.</p> <p>Audit opinion categories: internal control</p>	1

	<p>Links to strategic risk register: WS9 a) – Deliver: Thriving Communities</p> <p>Links to strategic priorities: thriving communities</p>	
<p>West Stow Anglo Saxon Village Trust Annual Accounts</p>	<p>Outline scope: independent Examiners’ report on the 2022 to 2023 accounts to provide assurance on the charity trustees’ preparation of the accounts.</p> <p>Audit opinion categories: n/a</p> <p>Links to strategic risk register: n/a</p> <p>Links to strategic priorities: thriving communities</p>	2
<p>Data analytics and continuous auditing</p>	<p>Outline scope: work to explore further use of data analytics in our audit work.</p> <p>Audit opinion categories: internal control, financial control</p> <p>Links to strategic risk register: all risks</p> <p>Links to strategic priorities: all</p>	2

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Management

Rough approximation of expected staff resource allocation: 11%

<p>Managing the internal audit service</p>	<p>Audit resource is also spent on the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reporting to and attendance at Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee, including drafting of reports and development of the annual audit opinion • Annual audit planning process, including meetings with the services and relevant managers, and risk assessment of potential areas to include in the draft annual audit plan • Regular internal audit team meetings and 1:1s with team members to discuss and monitor workloads and other team related issues • Review of auditors' working papers and draft reports • Senior management meetings • Training, including both audit related training and corporate training
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Local Code of Corporate Governance

Report number:	PAS/WS/24/012	
Report to and date(s):	PASC	30 May 2024
	Cabinet	25 June 2024
	Council	16 July 2024
Cabinet member:	Councillor Diane Hind Portfolio Holder Resources and Property Email: diane.hind@westsuffolk.gov.uk	
Lead officer:	Rachael Mann Tel: 01638 719245 Email: rachael.mann@westsuffolk.gov.uk	

Decisions Plan: This item is not required to be included in the decisions plan.

Wards impacted: All wards

Recommendation: It is recommended that the committee:

- 1. Consider the updated draft Local Code of Corporate Governance (Appendix 1), making any recommendations before it is submitted to Cabinet and Council for approval.**

1. Context

- 1.1 We are required to develop and maintain an up-to-date local code of corporate governance which sets out the Council's aims to apply the principles of good governance and maintain our commitment through its development, adoption and continued maintenance. We also prepare an annual governance statement (AGS) to report publicly on the extent to which we comply with this code.
- 1.2 The Local Code of Corporate Governance was last produced jointly by Forest Heath and St Edmundsbury Councils in 2017 and readopted by West Suffolk Council in 2019. Following the updating of the CIPFA / Solace guidance, it is now time for West Suffolk Council to review that Code, making sure it is effective, transparent and relevant.
- 1.3 Each year, the Council produces an Annual Governance Statement. This is a statutory requirement and is a reflection of how we have complied with our own Code and worked to strengthen our governance arrangements over the previous year.
- 1.4 In order to produce the proposed draft Code of Corporate Governance, attached at Appendix A, an officer group, including representatives from key services (audit, legal, policy, finance and performance) has reviewed the Councils' existing governance arrangements at a detailed level, and then evaluated how the arrangements should be demonstrated within the local code. The Code has also been assessed by Leadership Team.
- 1.5 The Councils' previous Code closely adhered to the principles, and sub-principles contained within the CIPFA framework. Recognising the emphasis within the framework on local arrangements, the revised Local Code has a greater emphasis on how West Suffolk Council applies the principles and comply with good practice. The Code reiterates our firm commitment to continually review our compliance with good practice, and openly report the outcomes of this work.

2. Proposals within this report

- 2.1 The Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee is requested to review the Code, and, where necessary, identify those areas where it believes that the document can be strengthened, prior to adoption by Council.

3. Consultation and engagement undertaken

- 3.1 The reviewed Code has been considered by Leadership Team

4. Risks associated with the proposals

- 4.1 None

5. Appendices referenced in this report

5.1 Appendix 1 - Local Code of Corporate Governance

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West Suffolk Local Code of Corporate Governance

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This document sets out how West Suffolk Council aims to apply the principles of corporate governance. We are committed to the principles of good governance and maintain our commitment through the development, adoption and continued maintenance of this code of corporate governance.
- 1.2 We develop and maintain an up-to-date code of corporate governance and to prepare an annual governance statement (AGS) to report publicly on the extent to which we comply with this code.
- 1.3 This Code is reviewed by the Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee and updated when appropriate to ensure it reflects the Council's current government arrangements.

2. Defining governance

- 2.1 The Chartered Institute of Public Finance Accountants (CIPFA) and the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives (SOLACE) define governance as being about how councils ensure they are doing the right things, in the right way, for the right people, in a timely, inclusive, open, honest and accountable manner.
- 2.2 It comprises the systems, processes, cultures and values, by which councils are run and through which they are accountable to and engage with communities.
- 2.3 Good governance leads to good management, good performance, good stewardship of public money, good public engagement and, ultimately, good outcomes for citizens and service users. Good governance enables councils to pursue their visions effectively as well as underpinning that vision with mechanisms for control and management of risk and opportunity.

3. Core principles of good governance

- 3.1 We recognise the seven core principles of good governance which are:

- A. Behaving with integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values, and respecting rule of law.
- B. Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement.
- C. Defining outcomes in terms of sustainable economic, social, and environmental benefits.
- D. Determining the interventions necessary to recognise the achievement of the intended outcomes.
- E. Development of the Council’s capacity, including the capability of its leadership and the individuals within it.
- F. Managing risks and performance through robust internal control and strong public financial management.
- G. Implementing good practices in transparency reporting, and audit to deliver effective accountability.

4. Applying the principles of good governance

4.1 The CIPFA/SOLACE framework has identified that the seven core principles have a number of sub principles, which in turn translate into a range of specific behaviours and actions that apply across the business.

The following tables show how each of the principles and sub-principles should be applied and a list of the key elements of West Suffolk Council’s governance framework. Compliance with these principles will be subject to annual review (see section 5 of the code):

Principle A	Behaving with integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values, and respecting the rule of law	
Sub-principles	How West Suffolk Council applies the principles/sub-principles	
Behaving with integrity		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring members and officers behave with integrity and lead a culture where acting in the public interest is visibly and consistently demonstrated thereby protecting the reputation of the organisation • Ensuring members take the lead in establishing specific standard operating principles or values for the organisation and its staff and that they are 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Constitution • Statutory Committees, including two scrutiny committees • Employees Code of Conduct • Councillors Code of Conduct • Contract Procedure Rules • Anti-fraud and Anti-corruption Policy • Whistleblowing Policy 	

<p>communicated and understood. These should build on the Seven Principles of Public Life (the Nolan Principles)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leading by example and using the above standard operating principles or values as a framework for decision making and other actions • Demonstrating, communicating and embedding the standard operating principles or values through appropriate policies and processes which are reviewed on a regular basis to ensure that they are operating effectively <p>Demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seeking to establish, monitor and maintain the Council’s ethical standards and performance • Underpinning personal behaviour with ethical values and ensuring they permeate all aspects of the Council’s culture and operation • Developing and maintaining robust policies and procedures which place emphasis on agreed ethical values • Ensuring that external providers of services on behalf of the Council are required to act with integrity and in compliance with ethical standards expected by the Council <p>Respecting the rule of law</p> <p>Ensuring members and staff demonstrate a strong commitment to the rule of the law as well as adhering to relevant laws and regulations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creating the conditions to ensure that the statutory officers, other key post holders, and members, are able to fulfil their responsibilities in accordance with legislative and regulatory requirements • Striving to recognise the use of the full powers available for the benefit of citizens, communities and other stakeholders • Dealing with breaches of legal and regulatory provisions effectively • Ensuring corruption and misuse of power are dealt with effectively 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anti-Money Laundering Policy • ‘Register of councillors’ interests • West Suffolk Information Security Policy • Safeguarding Policy • Modern Slavery Statement • Equality Scheme • Camera Surveillance Code of Practice • Statutory Officers Group (made up of the Council’s three statutory officers: Head of Paid Service, Chief Financial (S.151) Officer and Monitoring Officer) which meets regularly to observe and prepare for the emergence of governance, staffing or financial risks by drawing insight and intelligence from around the organisation and other local authorities and to ensure members are appropriately advised.
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Principle B	Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement
<p>Openness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring an open culture through demonstrating, documenting and communicating the Council’s commitment to openness • Making decisions that are open about actions, plans, resource use, forecasts, outputs and outcomes. The presumption is for openness. If that is not the case, a justification for the reasoning for keeping a decision confidential should be provided • Providing clear reasoning and evidence for decisions in both public records and explanations to stakeholders and being explicit about the criteria, rationale and considerations used. In due course, ensuring that the impact and consequences of those decisions are clear • Using formal and informal consultation and engagement to determine the most appropriate and effective interventions/ courses of action <p>Comprehensive stakeholder engagement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effectively engaging with stakeholders to ensure that the purpose, objectives and intended outcomes for each stakeholder relationship are clear so that outcomes are achieved successfully and sustainably • Developing formal and informal partnerships to allow for resources to be used more efficiently and outcomes achieved more effectively • Ensuring that partnerships are based on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ trust ○ a shared commitment to change ○ a culture that promotes and accepts challenge among partners and that the added value of partnership working is explicit <p>Engaging with individual citizens and services users effectively</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishing a clear policy on the type of issues that the Council will meaningfully 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual report • Environmental Statement • Information about councillors and meetings • Consultation Statement • Equality Scheme • West Suffolk Council Corporate Complaints Policy including Persistent and unreasonable behaviour policy – using feedback from complaints to aid learning for future service development. • Latest news from West Suffolk Council. • West Suffolk Council website • Partnership working across the public and voluntary sectors in Suffolk

<p>consult with or involve communities, individual citizens, service users and other stakeholders to ensure that service (or other) provision is contributing towards the achievement of intended outcomes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring that communication methods are effective and that members and officers are clear about their roles with regard to community engagement • Encouraging, collecting and evaluating the views and experiences of communities, citizens, service users and organisations of different backgrounds including reference to future needs • Implementing effective feedback mechanisms in order to demonstrate how views have been taken into account • Balancing feedback from more active stakeholder groups with other stakeholder groups to ensure inclusivity • Taking account of the impact of decisions on future generations of tax payers and service users 	
<p>Principle C</p>	<p>Defining outcomes in terms of sustainable economic, social, and environmental benefits</p>
<p>Defining outcomes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Having a clear vision, which is an agreed formal statement of the Council’s purpose and intended outcomes containing appropriate performance indicators, which provide the basis for the Council’s overall strategy, planning and other decisions • Specifying the intended impact on, or changes for, stakeholders including citizens and service users. It could be immediately or over the course of a year or longer • Delivering defined outcomes on a sustainable basis within the resources that will be available • Identifying and managing risks to the achievement of outcomes • Managing service users’ expectations effectively with regard to determining priorities and making the best use of the resources available 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic Priorities • Growth Investment Strategy • Housing Strategy • Families and Communities Approach • Medium Term Financial Strategy • Local Plan • Risk Management Policy and toolkit • Investment Framework • Environment and Climate Change Action Plan • Business plans – each service produces an annual business plan which identifies actions and resources to support the strategic priorities.

<p>Sustainable economic, social and environmental benefits</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Considering and balancing the combined economic, social and environmental impact of policies and plans when taking decisions about service provision • Taking a longer-term view with regard to decision making, taking account of risk and acting transparently where there are potential conflicts between the Council’s intended outcomes and short-term factors such as the political cycle or financial constraints • Determining the wider public interest associated with balancing conflicting interests between achieving the various economic, social and environmental benefits, through consultation where possible, in order to ensure appropriate trade-offs • Ensuring fair access to services 	
<p>Principle D Determining the interventions necessary to optimise the achievement of the intended outcomes</p>	
<p>Determining interventions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring decision makers receive objective and rigorous analysis of a variety of options indicating how intended outcomes would be achieved and associated risks. Therefore ensuring best value is achieved however services are provided • Considering feedback from citizens and service users when making decisions about service improvements or where services are no longer required to prioritise competing demands within limited resources available including people, skills, land and assets and bearing in mind future impacts <p>Planning interventions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishing and implementing robust planning and control cycles that cover strategic and operational plans, priorities and targets • Engaging with internal and external stakeholders in determining how services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consultation statement and programme • Families and Communities approach: • Enforcement Policy • Performance monitoring: Statutory Committees, including two scrutiny committees • Project management framework which is a corporate approach to agreeing project proposals, managing and regularly reporting on projects: • Procurement Policy • Medium Term Financial Strategy • Business partner model – each service has direct links to a business partner in Policy, Finance, Legal, Human Resources and Information Technology • A Change and Service Improvement (CSI) programme: Under this programme we periodically

<p>and other courses of action should be planned and delivered</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Considering and monitoring risks facing each partner when working collaboratively, including shared risks • Ensuring arrangements are flexible and agile so that the mechanisms for delivering goods and services can be adapted to changing circumstances • Establishing appropriate key performance indicators (KPIs) as part of the planning process in order to identify how the performance of services and projects is to be measured • Ensuring capacity exists to generate the information required to review service quality regularly • Preparing budgets in accordance with objectives, strategies and the medium term financial plan • Informing medium and long term resource planning by drawing up realistic estimates of revenue and capital expenditure aimed at developing a sustainable funding strategy <p>Optimising achievement of intended outcomes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring the medium term financial strategy integrates and balances service priorities, affordability and other resource constraints • Ensuring the budgeting process is all-inclusive, taking into account the full cost of operations over the medium and longer term • Ensuring the medium term financial strategy sets the context for ongoing decisions on significant delivery issues or responses to changes in the external environment that may arise during the budgetary period in order for outcomes to be achieved while optimising resource usage • Ensuring the achievement of 'social value' through service planning and commissioning 	<p>review key service areas and functions undertaking targeted pieces of work to ensure delivery of the Council's Target Operating Model, focusing on either structural reviews, demand analysis and demand management or process mapping and process re-engineering.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A co-ordinated and regularly reviewed approach to the Council's lobbying activity
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Principle E	Developing the entity’s capacity, including the capability of its leadership and the individuals within it
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<p>Developing the entity’s capacity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reviewing operations, performance and use of assets on a regular basis to ensure their continuing effectiveness • Improving resource use through appropriate application of techniques such as benchmarking and other options in order to determine how resources are allocated so that defined outcomes are achieved effectively and efficiently • Recognising the benefits of partnerships and collaborative working where added value can be achieved • Developing and maintaining an effective workforce plan to enhance the strategic allocation of resources <p>Developing the capability of the entity’s leadership and other individuals</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing protocols to ensure that elected and appointed leaders negotiate with each other regarding their respective roles early on in the relationship and that a shared understanding of roles and objectives is maintained • Publishing a statement that specifies the types of decisions that are delegated and those reserved for the collective decision making of the governing body • Ensuring the leader and the chief executive have clearly defined and distinctive leadership roles within a structure whereby the chief executive leads in implementing strategy and managing the delivery of services and other outputs set by members and each provides a check and a balance for each other’s authority • Developing the capabilities of members and senior management to achieve effective leadership and to enable the organisation to respond successfully to changing legal and policy demands as well as economic, political and environmental changes and risks by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ ensuring members and staff have 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workforce plan • Learning and development policy • Member development framework • Skills matrix for member training: sets out the competency areas that have been identified as key to support an effective District Councillor and has been designed as a practical document which can be used by Members who wish to identify their personal training and development needs. • Employee performance review framework • Human Resources Policies: Mental Health at Work Policy, Well-being Champions, Mental Health First-Aiders, Domestic Abuse Champions • Recruitment: West Suffolk Recruitment homepage • Peer managers network – a place for all in a management/supervisory role to share learning • Health and well-being/Employee Assistance • Aspiring Leaders Programme and Management Development Programme – internal training programmes for aspiring leaders/managers for those in a supervisory role • A Change and Service Improvement (CSI) programme: Under this programme we periodically review key service areas and functions undertaking targeted pieces of work to ensure delivery of the Council’s Target Operating Model, focusing on either structural reviews, demand analysis and demand management or process mapping and process re-
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<p>access to appropriate induction tailored to their role and that ongoing training and development matching individual and organisational requirements is available and encouraged</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ ensuring members and officers have the appropriate skills, knowledge, resources and support to fulfil their roles and responsibilities and ensuring that they are able to update their knowledge on a continuing basis ○ ensuring personal, organisational and system-wide development through shared learning, including lessons learnt from governance weaknesses both internal and external • Ensuring that there are structures in place to encourage public participation • Taking steps to consider the leadership’s own effectiveness and ensuring leaders are open to constructive feedback from peer review and inspections • Holding staff to account through regular performance reviews which take account of training or development • needs • Ensuring arrangements are in place to maintain the health and wellbeing of the workforce and support individuals in maintaining their own physical and mental wellbeing 	<p>engineering.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Target Operating Model
<p>Principle F Managing risks and performance through robust internal control and strong public financial management</p>	
<p>Managing risk</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognising that risk management is an integral part of all activities and must be considered in all aspects of decision making • Implementing robust and integrated risk management arrangements and ensuring that they are working effectively • Ensuring that responsibilities for managing individual risks are clearly allocated <p>Managing performance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitoring service delivery effectively including planning, specification, 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial procedure rules • Contract procedure rules • Treasury management strategy and growth investment strategy • Budget monitoring – reporting variances against the budget for each quarter • Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee • Strategic risk register: • Investment framework: West Suffolk Council Strategic Framework 2020-2024 • Risk management toolkit: • Performance Dashboards • Internal audit

<p>execution and independent post implementation review</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Making decisions based on relevant, clear objective analysis and advice pointing out the implications and risks inherent in the Council’s financial, social and environmental position and outlook • Ensuring an effective scrutiny or oversight function is in place which provides constructive challenge and debate on policies and objectives before, during and after decisions are made thereby enhancing the Council’s performance and that of any organisation for which it is responsible <p>Robust internal control</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aligning the risk management strategy and policies on internal control with achieving objectives • Evaluating and monitoring risk management and internal control on a regular basis • Ensuring effective counter fraud and anti-corruption arrangements are in place • Ensuring additional assurance on the overall adequacy and effectiveness of the framework of governance, risk management and control is provided by the internal auditor • Ensuring an audit committee or equivalent group/function, which is independent of the executive and accountable to the governing body: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ provides a further source of effective assurance regarding arrangements for managing risk and maintaining an effective control environment ○ that its recommendations are listened to and acted upon <p>Managing data</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring effective arrangements are in place for the safe collection, storage, use and sharing of data, including processes to safeguard personal data • Ensuring effective arrangements are in place and operating effectively when sharing data with other bodies • Reviewing and auditing regularly the quality and accuracy of data used in 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business continuity plan • Corporate Complaints and Compliments Policy • Health and Safety Policy • Annual Health and Safety Report to Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee
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<p>decision making and performance monitoring</p> <p>Strong public financial management</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring financial management supports both long term achievement of outcomes and short-term financial and operational performance • Ensuring well-developed financial management is integrated at all levels of planning and control, including management of financial risks and controls 	
Principle G	Implementing good practices in transparency, reporting and audit to deliver effective accountability
<p>Implementing good practice in transparency</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Writing and communicating reports for the public and other stakeholders in a fair, balanced and understandable style appropriate to the intended audience and ensuring that they are easy to access and interrogate • Striking a balance between providing the right amount of information to satisfy transparency demands and enhance public scrutiny while not being too onerous to provide and for users to understand <p>Implementing good practices in reporting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reporting at least annually on performance, value for money and stewardship of resources to stakeholders in a timely and understandable way • Ensuring members and senior management own the results reported • Ensuring robust arrangements for assessing the extent to which the principles contained in this Framework have been applied and publishing the results on this assessment, including an action plan for improvement and evidence to demonstrate good governance (the annual governance statement) • Ensuring that this Framework is applied 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • West Suffolk Council homepage • Statement of accounts • Annual Governance Statement • Annual Report • Annual Environmental Statement: • Medium Term Financial Strategy • Anti-fraud and Anti-corruption Policy • Whistleblowing Policy • Data Protection Policy • Officer Information Governance Group: a group of officers to include the Council's Senior Information Risk Officer, Data Protection Officer and Information Governance Officer, Information Technology, Buildings Manager, Audit and Finance which meets quarterly to discuss all information governance related activity, consider case studies with a view to improving its governance arrangements. • Performance Dashboards • Annual internal audit report and opinion • External audit opinion

<p>to jointly managed or shared service organisations as appropriate</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring the performance information that accompanies the financial statements is prepared on a consistent and timely basis and the statements allow for comparison with other, similar organisations <p>Assurance and effective accountability</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring that recommendations for corrective action made by external audit are acted upon • Ensuring an effective internal audit service with direct access to members is in place, providing assurance with regard to governance arrangements and that recommendations are acted upon • Welcoming peer challenge, reviews and inspections from regulatory bodies and implementing recommendations • Gaining assurance on risks associated with delivering services through third parties and that this is evidenced in the annual governance statement • Ensuring that when working in partnership, arrangements for accountability are clear and the need for wider public accountability has been recognised and met 	
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5. Annual review and reporting

- 5.1 We will carry out an annual review of our corporate governance arrangements using the above principles as a guide. The review will ensure compliance with this code and any emerging good practice. The purpose of the review will be to provide assurance that governance arrangements are adequate and operating effectively, and where any gaps are observed, to identify action which is planned to ensure effective governance in the future.
- 5.2 The outcome of the review will take the form of a West Suffolk Annual Governance Statement prepared on behalf of the Leader of West Suffolk Council. It will be submitted to the Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee for consideration and review. Where necessary, the Annual Governance Statement will contain an action plan to address any areas identified for improvement from the review. An annex of the Annual Governance Statement will detail the principles and supporting principles, together with links to the key documents established to support the application of this code.

5.3 The Annual Governance Statement will include:

- an acknowledgement of responsibility for ensuring there is a sound system of governance (incorporating the system of internal control) and reference to the authority's code of governance;
- a reference to and assessment of the effectiveness of key elements of the governance framework and the role of those responsible for the development and maintenance of the governance environment;
- a conclusion that arrangements continue to be regarded as fit for purpose in accordance with the governance framework or confirmation that an action plan will be required;
- a reference to how issues raised in the previous year's annual governance statement have been resolved; and
- a conclusion including a commitment to monitoring implementation as part of the next annual review.

5.4 The preparation and publication of the West Suffolk Annual Governance Statement meets the statutory requirement of the Accounts and Audit Regulations which require authorities to 'conduct a review at least once a year of the effectiveness of its system of internal control' and to prepare the statement 'in accordance with proper practices'.

6. Conclusion

6.1 West Suffolk Council is fully committed to the principles of corporate governance, and through the measures outlined within this code, will ensure that adequate arrangements are made with regard to its continued implementation, monitoring and review.

Contact:

Rachael Mann

Director, Resources and Property

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Co-opting non-elected independent members

Report number:	PAS/WS/24/013	
Report to and date(s):	Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee	30 May 2024
Cabinet member:	Councillor Peter Armitage Chair of Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee Email: peter.armitage@westsuffolk.gov.uk	
Lead officer:	Rachael Mann Director Resources and Property Section 151 Officer Tel: 01638 719245 Email: rachael.mann@westsuffolk.gov.uk	

Decisions Plan: This item is not required to be included in the Decisions Plan.

Wards impacted: All wards

Recommendation: It is recommended that the Committee:

1. Approves the proposed Person Specification at Appendix A and the timeline at Appendix B.
2. Approves the recruitment approach set out at section 2.4 of this report.

1. Context to this report

- 1.1 In January 2024, the Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee considered report number PAS/WS/24/004 which set out proposals regarding the co-opting of non-elected independent members to this committee. At this meeting the committee:
- agreed the principle of co-opting two non-elected members to this committee; and
 - approved the approach, including the next steps, to co-opting independent members as set out in that report
- 1.2 The co-opted independent members will:
- be expected to attend the meetings of the Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee to provide an independent perspective and to give advice to the Committee based on their knowledge and experience
 - not be able to vote on any items considered by the Committee
 - be politically independent
 - be bound by the Code of Conduct in the Constitution
 - be appointed for a four-year term, and may serve for a maximum of two terms of four years. This approach is consistent with Suffolk County Council and would provide some continuity for the committee between elected administrations.
- 1.3 The next steps as set out in the January 2024 report to PASC were as follows:
- The Constitution Review Group be requested to advise the Council on the necessary amendments to the constitution to provide for two non-voting Independent Members to be appointed on a term not exceeding four years.
 - The Independent Remuneration Panel be invited to advise the Council of an appropriate rate of remuneration for the role.
 - The Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee considers the recruitment process, recruitment pack and appointment of an interview panel at a future meeting (anticipated May 2024).
 - The Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee to co-opt the independent members at their meeting in September 2024 following a successful recruitment process.
- 1.4 This report sets out the progress made against the above next steps and seeks approval for the recruitment process, recruitment pack, and appointment of an interview panel. The recruitment pack is included as appendices to this report and comprises a Person Specification (**Appendix A**) and a timeline for the recruitment process (**Appendix B**).

2. Proposals within this report

- 2.1 The Constitution Review Group has advised the Council on the necessary amendments to the constitution to provide for two non-voting Independent Members to be appointed on a term not exceeding four years. The Council duly considered and approved these amendments at its meeting on 26 March 2024 [COU/WS/24/008](#).
- 2.2 The Independent Remuneration Panel has advised the Council of an appropriate rate of remuneration for the role. The Council considered this and agreed a rate of £300 per annum retainer and £100 per attendance (meeting/training/etc) plus travel, at its meeting on 14 May 2024.
- 2.3 The Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee is asked to consider and approve the proposed Person Specification at **Appendix A** and the timeline at **Appendix B** for the two co-opted non-elected independent members for this committee.
- 2.4 It is proposed that the co-opted persons will be appointed by the committee at its September 2024 meeting and a recruitment process (consisting of an advert being issued and interested individuals being asked to complete an appropriate application process) will therefore be required for a recommendation to be made to the committee. It is further proposed that the interview panel will undertake the interviews and be made up of the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Committee, supported by the Chief Executive, the Section 151 Officer and the Monitoring Officer.
- 2.5 The Performance and Audit Scrutiny committee is asked to consider and approve this recruitment approach set out in paragraph 2.4.

3. Alternative options that have been considered

- 3.1 Whilst there is no legislative direction to include co-opted independent Members, CIPFA's Position Statement 2022 recommends that each local authority audit committee should include at least two Co-opted Independent Members to provide appropriate technical expertise. The Position Statement is supported by The Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities and the Home Office.

4. Consultation and engagement undertaken

- 4.1 Engagement with this committee on the recruitment process and documentation is a key part of the overall co-opting process.

5. Risks associated with the proposals

- 5.1 There is a risk that the Committee will be unable to appoint non-elected independent members with a sufficient level of knowledge and expertise to support the committee. This risk can be mitigated with a robust recruitment process with detailed documentation regarding the role.

6. Implications arising from the proposals

- 6.1 Financial - An allowance and expenses will be payable to the co-opted Independent Members on the Committee and this would need to be included in future budget setting processes.

7. Appendices referenced in this report

- 7.1 Appendix A - proposed person specification
7.2 Appendix B – proposed timeline for recruitment process

8. Background documents associated with this report

- 8.1 [Government response to local audit framework: technical consultation - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/government-response-to-local-audit-framework-technical-consultation)
- 8.2 National Audit office AO report 2019 [Local Authority governance \(nao.org.uk\)](https://www.nao.org.uk/publications/2019/07/20190701-local-authority-governance/)
- 8.3 Report number [PAS/WS/24/004](#) to Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee 25 January 2024

Person specification

Independent Member of the Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee

West Suffolk Council is seeking Independent Members to join its Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee.

Individuals will have experience of working at a senior level, not necessarily in the public sector, but with an interest in the workings of local government. You will be an impartial, independent-minded person who will have experience in one or more of the following: audit, finance, performance, treasury management, governance or risk management.

The independent member will have responsibility to the council and to assist the Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee in discharging its responsibilities as set out in its Terms of Reference. Co-opted non-elected members will not be able to vote on any items considered by the committee.

The Independent Member will meet the following criteria:

Skills and competencies:

- A desire to serve the local authority and a keen interest in public life.
- An ability to understand complex issues and an understanding of the importance of accountability and probity in public life.
- An ability to be objective and impartial, and to exercise good judgement and make sound decisions.
- An ability to influence and challenge the standards of governance within the council.
- An ability to analyse evidence, to question written and verbal reports and to come to rational and well-evidenced conclusions.
- An ability to maintain confidentiality in relation to sensitive information.
- Effective interpersonal skills, in particular strong influencing and communication skills
- Ability to demonstrate integrity and discretion
- A commitment to Equality and Diversity

Independent members will need to liaise with the Monitoring Officer, Section 151 Officer, Head of Paid Service, Head of Internal Audit, Chairman and members of the Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee, other officers and councillors of the Council as required.

In particular, the Independent Members will be required to assist the Committee in:

- Providing independent assurance to the Council in relation to its internal control environment.

- Considering and commenting on reports from council officers, the external auditor and other inspection agencies.
- Considering any significant issues arising from internal or external audit work and ensuring appropriate actions are taken for improvement.
- Commenting on the council's arrangements to counter fraud and corruption, including effective proactive and reactive actions.
- Assisting in the review of the annual statement of accounts, including the annual governance statement and the external auditor's report.
- Assisting in the review and monitoring of the effectiveness of both internal and external audit.
- Assisting the council in promoting high standards of conduct by elected and co-opted Members through, in particular, the Suffolk Code of Conduct.
- Assisting the monitoring of the effectiveness of the Council's financial and performance framework.
- Assisting the monitoring the effectiveness of the Council's risk management arrangements.
- Developing a sound understanding of the ethical framework as it operates within West Suffolk Council.
- Acting as advocate and ambassador for the council in promoting ethical behaviour.

Knowledge:

All Members of the Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee should have, or should acquire as soon as possible after appointment, an understanding of:

- the council's structure and responsibilities
- audit, financial governance and stewardship, performance management, treasury management and risk management in either the public or private sectors
- the council's decision-making process
- the importance of ethical behaviour
- how risks and performance evolves for organisations operating with finite capacity

Experience (all or some of the following):

- Financial management (accountancy, audit or management of a large budget)
- Performance and risk management in a changing environment
- Contract management
- Corporate governance arrangements
- Treasury management
- Operating in a political environment

As part of the application, candidates are required to declare any matters that may cause a conflict of interest in performing their role. The council has the right to remove any candidates or members of the committee (once appointed) who they believe do not meet this criteria; whose interest conflict with the independent requirement, and who they believe have undertaken activities that would be considered a breach of the Suffolk Code of Conduct if undertaken by members of the committee.

Timelines for recruitment process

Action	Timeline
Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee: Committee approves timeline recruitment process.	Thursday 30 May 2024
Place advert for Co-opted person. Alongside advert on website, issue press release, social media posts and LGA to highlight Co-opted Audit Person advert.	Monday 3 June 2024
Closing date for applications	Friday 21 June 2024 (3 weeks)
Shortlisting (Section 151/Monitoring Officer/Internal Audit Service Manager)	Tuesday 25 June – Friday 28 June 2024
Interview Panel (Chief Exec/ Chair/Vice-Chair PASC/ Section 151 Officer/Monitoring Officer) Interviews and decide on candidates recommended for appointment. (In person, back-to-back on one day)	Friday 19 July 2024 [9.30am to 2.30pm] Ground Floor Room 14, West Suffolk House
Draft PASC report (including seeking comments from Chair/officers)	w/c 5 August 2024
PASC Report deadline	Monday 16 September 2024
Final PASC report published.	Thursday 19 September 2024
PASC Committee Meeting to confirm appointment(s).	Thursday 26 September 2024
Training to take place for co-opted person(s) during October / November 2024	
PASC Committee Meeting (first meeting with co-opted persons)	Thursday 28 November 2024

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Health and Safety Summary Report 2023 to 2024

Report number:	PAS/WS/23/014	
Report to and date(s):	Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee	30 May 2024
Cabinet member:	Councillor Gerald Kelly Cabinet Member for Governance and Regulatory Tel: 07968 396389 Email: Gerald.kelly@westsuffolk.gov.uk	
Lead officer:	Richard King Health and Safety Manager Tel: 01284 757010 Email: richard.king@westsuffolk.gov.uk Wendy Canham Service Manager (HR, Payroll, Learning and Development and Health and Safety) Tel: 01284 757006 Email: wendy.canham@westsuffolk.gov.uk	

Decisions Plan: This item is not required to be included in the Decisions Plan

Wards impacted: Not applicable.

Recommendation: It is recommended that the Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee note the contents of the Health and Safety Summary Report 2023 to 2024.

1. Context to this report

- 1.1 The Health and Safety Summary Report has been produced to identify and document West Suffolk Council's health and safety performance and work carried out during the year, to ensure legal compliance.

2. Proposals within this report

- 2.1 None

3. Alternative options that have been considered

- 3.1 No alternative options were considered

4. Consultation and engagement undertaken

- 4.1 Consultation with employees, Health and Safety representatives, members of the Health and Safety Group and Health and Safety Sub-Committee occurs throughout the financial year. This report summarises health and safety activities throughout 2023 to 2024.

5. Risks associated with the proposals

- 5.1 None

6. Implications arising from the proposals

- 6.1 None

7. Appendices referenced in this report

- 7.1 Appendix A - Health and Safety Summary Report 2023 to 2024

8. Background documents associated with this report

- 8.1 None

Health and Safety Annual Report 2023-2024

Portfolio Holder; Councillor Gerald Kelly

Lead Officer; Richard King, Health and Safety Manager/Wendy Canham, Service Manager

Director Responsible for Health and Safety; Jill Korwin

Directorate; HR, Governance and Regulatory; Jen Eves

This annual report provides an overview of health and safety activity that has taken place during 2023/2024 and includes progress on a range of health and safety-based initiatives, inspections and audits, as well as an analysis of health and safety accidents and incidents.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Health and Safety team works to ensure that our staff work in a safe and healthy environment supporting the delivery of the corporate priorities.
- 1.2 The Council provides a varied range of services, some with inherently higher-risk activities and in challenging and changing environments. It is important that the Council continues to review, monitor, and improve, wherever practical, its arrangements and practices.
- 1.3 This annual report has been produced to identify and document key aspects of West Suffolk Council's health and safety performance over the last year (1 April 2023 - 31 March 2024).
- 1.4 This report demonstrates that the Council's health and safety performance continues to be good during the last year and outlines key priorities for 2024-2025.

2. Governance

- 2.1 PASC, the Staff Consultative Panel and the Portfolio Holder provide governance and scrutiny over H&S provision across the organisation throughout the year. Across these different forums, members regularly review health and safety performance indicators, they are informed, and they can contribute to policy developments as well as being engaged in conversations around appropriate workplace health, safety, and welfare standards, thereby influencing the organisational response in line with the workforce strategy.

- 2.2 From an officer perspective, the Council has a Health and Safety Working Group to ensure that there is a corporate approach to relevant issues. The group meets on a quarterly basis with representation across the Council along with Trade Union representation. The group reviews and comments on codes of practice, reports and supports the Corporate Health and Safety team in determining the council's priorities in health and safety. Additionally, Leadership Team scrutinise health and safety performance in their regular performance review, with a view to ensuring that there is a breadth of understanding across senior officers of the current position and any trends / lessons to be learned.

3. Overview of key functions

- 3.1 West Suffolk Council is committed to maintaining a healthy and safe place of work for all its employees, as well as taking all reasonable steps to ensure that the public and the environment (which may be affected by its work) are exposed to the lowest practicable level of risk. This is also extended to contractors and members of the public who visit or access our services. We achieve this through the following:
- Providing health and safety advice and guidance both internally and to external third parties where relevant.
 - Audits/Inspections which includes the review/advice on risk assessments, safe systems of work, use of equipment, to ensure we meet the minimum legal requirements, with the aim to be in the top end of best practice.
 - Undertaking Fire Risk assessments on corporate buildings.
 - Managing or arranging health and safety training, including first aid and IOSH management training.
 - Managing the occupational health service.
 - Together with the Principal HR Business partners, lead/organise wellbeing events.
 - Leading on drug and alcohol testing.
 - Recording accidents, incidents and near misses, including violence at work, and carry out subsequent investigations if necessary.
 - Ensuring that both internal and third-party events held on our land have suitable event safety plans.
- 3.2 We also work as an integral part of the organisation on all major projects.

4. Accident, Incidents and Near Misses Summary Analysis 2023/2024

- 4.1 Staff accidents and incidents have fallen over the last year as shown in the data below;
- 76 in 2023/2024
 - 86 in 2022/2023
 - 69 in 2021/2022
 - 99 in 2020/2021

4.2 These are broken down as follows;

Table 1 – Details of accidents / incidents and near misses over the past 4 years

	2020-2021	2021-2022	2022-2023	2023-2024
Non-Reportable Injury	40	24	30	21
Animal bites / stings	1	0	1	0
Cuts or Abrasions	7	0	3	5
Contact with moving vehicle	1	0	1	0
Lifting and handling injuries	0	1	0	1
Machinery Contact	0	0	1	3
Manual Handling	3	11	6	3
Other	8	1	3	1
Road traffic accident	5	0	3	1
Slips/Trips/Fall	12	5	8	4
Falls from height	1	0	0	0
Struck by equipment/furniture	2	3	1	1
Struck by falling / moving object	0	3	1	0
Taken Ill or Unwell	0	0	1	1
Trapped by furniture/Equipment	0	0	2	1
Non-Injury Incident	4	2	13	25
Contact with moving vehicle	0	0	1	0
Drunk/Intoxicated	0	0	1	0
Slips/Trips	0	0	1	0
Struck by falling/moving object	0	0	1	0
Other	0	1	8	9
Road traffic accident	4	1	1	16
Reportable Disease	0	0	0	1
Carpal tunnel Syndrome	0	0	0	1
Reportable Injury	3	3	4	6
Contact with machinery	0	0	1	1
Cuts or Abrasions	1	0	0	0
Manual Handling	0	2	2	1
Slips/Trips/Fall	1	0	1	3
Falls from height	1	0	0	0
Trapped by furniture / equipment	0	1	0	0
Other	0	0	0	1
Violence at Work	52	40	39	23
Aggression	10	5	6	1
Drunk / Intoxicated	3	0	1	0
Mental Abuse	2	0	2	0
Physical Abuse	2	7	1	1
Threatening Behaviour	17	14	12	7
Verbal Abuse	18	14	17	14
Grand Total	99	69	86	76

Please note that the increase in Road Traffic Accidents in the table above is due to a change in reporting software that has improved the visibility for the H&S team of incidents reported.

- 4.3 Out of the 76 work incidents, 7 were reportable under Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations (RIDDOR), 1 of which was a reportable disease (carpal tunnel syndrome).
- 4.4 In addition to work related incidents, there was an increase in members of the public related RIDDOR accidents rising from 1 in 2022/2023 to 5 in 2023/2024. After investigation and review of the accidents it was concluded that there was no direct trend other than risks that are most probable for manual job roles and any reactive measures were suitable to prevent recurrence as far as practicable.
- 4.5 A full breakdown of the incidents reported to RIDDOR is shown in **Appendix B** (below).

5. Days lost due to incidents and accidents

5.1 We have an increase of days lost due to incidents compared to previous years. This is due to the fracture type injuries that have occurred as the individuals have taken longer to return to work and the increase is significantly linked to the RIDDOR related accidents (as shown in **Appendix B**). The majority of these have occurred in the operational environment as can be seen in table 2 below.

- 345 days lost in 2023/2024
- 90 days lost in 2022/2023
- 60 days lost in 2021/2022
- 115 days lost in 2020/2021

Table 2 – Details of the types of incidents and number of days lost.

	Incident type	Total days lost
RIDDOR	Contact with Machinery	136
	Manual Handling	17
	Manual Handling	10
	Slips / Trips / Falls	131
	Slips / Trips / Falls	12
	Slips / Trips / Falls	26
	Carpal Tunnel	0
	Non RIDDOR Accidents	Contact with Machinery
Slips / Trips / Falls		2
Slips / Trips / Falls		1
Slips / Trips / Falls		2
Slips / Trips / Falls		2
Manual Handling		1
2023/2024 TOTAL		345

6. Safety Observations

6.1 There has been a commitment in the past year to further encourage the reporting of near misses and safety observations. To further improve our proactive approach to H&S reporting and in addition to near miss reporting, we have introduced safety observations at the start of 2024 as a separate reporting category. This includes the subcategories 'Unsafe acts', 'Unsafe conditions' and 'Safety suggestions'. This will enable us to recognise and action potential hazards before they result in a near miss, accident, or incident, as well as encouraging staff to take ownership of their work environment.

6.2 Due to our continued commitment to encourage the reporting of near misses and observations we have had 79 Near Misses and Safety Observations reported this financial year, up from just 10 for 2022-2023. The larger majority of these are localised to operations due to the nature of this service however we have had increased notifications from other

services this year. Examples of some of the incidents reported are shown in **Appendix C** (below).

6.3 There have been no specific trends of concern in the near misses and safety observations reported. However, we continue to ensure that all reported near misses and safety observations are continuously monitored and actioned accordingly to address the areas of highest potential risk to injury, damage to property and the environment. We also continue to focus on areas which are not generally contributing to this accident data but could have the potential to cause serious injury or property damage, such as fire safety and contractor management.

6.4 We will be launching this year a QR code-based reporting system for safety observations to simplify the process, increasing reporting accessibility and further encourage all staff to report.

7. Drugs and alcohol testing

7.1 The Council has been testing employees for drugs and alcohol for over 10 years. There are 4 occasions when we carry out testing:

- Pre-employment testing
- Post Incident/For Cause testing
- Employee Compliance testing
- Random testing

7.2 During the past twelve months (April 2023 – March 2024), we have tested, 1 for cause, 16 random and 17 pre-employment drug and alcohol tests. 1 pre-employment test was non-negative, confirmed by the laboratory as a positive result for drugs.

8. Occupational health

8.1 During the past 12 months, there have been 85 Occupational Health (OH) appointments (more than the previous year). These appointments are confidential and linked to both personal and work-related issues, but when reviewing the reasons for referrals, there is no obvious trend across the organisation or in a particular directorate that would cause any concerns. We continue to work with our OH provider to monitor and action any trends.

8.2 68 Annual health surveillance appointments where employees are checked for (similar to previous years):

- Symptoms of Hand Arm Vibration (HAV)
- Lung function
- Hearing loss
- Skin infection

9. Wellbeing

9.1 The welfare of our staff remains a priority as staff continue to work in a range of agile ways. This is co-ordinated with the help of HR business partners, Health and Safety, Wellbeing Champions, Domestic abuse champions and Mental Health First Aiders (MHFA's).

9.2 Various wellbeing events have also been delivered this year including:

- Mini health checks
- NHS health checks delivered by Onelife Suffolk and Abbeycroft Leisure over 6 days
- 60 staff took up our Flu voucher offer
- Anxiety toolkit delivered by Wellbeing Suffolk
- Wellbeing and career drop-in session with Mental health first aiders, wellbeing champions, HR, Learning and development
- Intranet articles – coping with grief and loss, menopause, sleep, nutrition, cancer awareness
- Organizational engagement sessions with counsellor and life coach (Get the best out of you for home and work)
- Menopause check in and chat
- CPR training provided by East Anglian Air Ambulance
- Wellbeing Suffolk free webinars
- Mental Health awareness week
- Counselling
- Domestic Abuse Champions
- Physiotherapy
- Employee assistance program
- Salary finance scheme
- Cycle to work scheme
- Lease car scheme
- Smart tech scheme
- Purchase of additional annual leave
- AVC scheme
- Abbeycroft Leisure subsidy for WSC employees

10. Health and Safety Training (including e-Learning)

10.1 There are specific health and safety training courses provided to relevant staff in the past year. These were:

- IOSH Managing Safely course – This course is for managers and supervisors equipping them with the knowledge to manage health and safety within their teams. An additional 9 staff members attended the course.
- A Health and Safety Event Management Course has taken place to provide a level of H&S training and knowledge to 14 employees across various teams who are currently involved with events or may be involved with events in some level in the future.

- Drug and alcohol collector training enables staff to take drug and alcohol samples following strict chain of custody procedures, enabling us to keep our drug and alcohol testing in house.

10.2 Below is the data of staff completing the Health and Safety E-Learning modules for 2023/24:

- A Guide to Stress in the Workplace – 76%
- Display Screen Equipment (DSE) – 87%
- Fire Safety – 89%
- Manual Handling – 92%
- Working Safely - An Introduction to Workplace Health and Safety (for Employees) – 91%
- Driving Safely for Work – 92%

10.3 Health and Safety online training has now been incorporated into the Learning and Development training platform, iLearn. This brings all online learning into one place and offers the reporting function to help managers to monitor and ensure completion of mandatory training. For operational staff, computer access has been provided and improved in depot rest areas with some modules remaining as practical training, such as manual handling and use of fire extinguishers.

10.4 We continue to ensure that our First Aid provisions are suitable for our work environments including training of mental health first aiders. We currently have 63 qualified first aiders and 10 mental health first aid volunteers spread across our various sites to ensure our staff are fully supported and have this year installed Emergency Trauma first aid kits into our workplaces and areas accessed by the public.

11. Inspections, audits and fire risk assessments

11.1 The Health and Safety Team continuously undertake informal / formal inspections as well as formal audits and fire risk assessments. During the past 12 months we have completed all the programmed work (46 audits and Fire Risk Assessments (FRA's)).

11.2 Having a structured audit and fire risk assessment process ensures a consistent approach is taken across the Council. Once complete the Managers of the relevant areas receive a full and detailed report of the findings, along with an action plan with a time scale for completion.

11.3 The Health and Safety Manager and Senior Health and Safety Advisor have completed the Fire Risk Assessor 5-day training course at the Fire Service College. This ensures that we are compliant in our obligations under the Fire Safety Regulatory Reform Order 2005 that was revised in October 2023.

12. Projects / Events

- 12.1 The Health and Safety Team have continued to give advice on various projects across the Council which includes continued support to Mildenhall Hub and Provincial House Haverhill.
- 12.2 As one of the stakeholders around event safety, the team have continued to give event safety advice as and when required which included event safety advice linked to risk assessments at the Safety Advisory Group.

13. Forward planning; future priorities

- 13.1 Next year, in addition to the core functions of the Health and Safety Service, the following areas will continue to be prioritised:
- To encourage the completion of mandatory annual H&S training, including iLearn online training modules
 - Continue work with the new health and safety management system (Work Wallet), to further expand the usage and increase paperless records.
 - Continue to embed a proactive culture around accidents/near misses, with an improved more accessible digital reporting system and embedding learning to help reduce the likelihood of accidents occurring.
 - To review and revise the H&S auditing process.
 - To advise and assist with operational policy and procedure changes brought about by any new H&S legislation including 'Martyn's Law'.
 - Safe Systems of Work - ensuring they are fit for purpose and followed by employees.
 - To monitor health surveillance trends.
 - Health and Safety audits and fire risk assessments – ensuring actions are followed up by staff and reported back.
- 13.2 As well as the reactive health and safety work, we will be reviewing our policies and continue with a full programme of FRA's and Audits (programme available on request).

23rd April 2024

Breakdown of work related and public related RIDDOR's

Details of work related RIDDOR's

- Parks - Reportable disease – Annual OH surveillance showed signs of possible Hand Arm Vibration Syndrome (HAVS). A T4 Assessment concluded the staff member was suffering from early signs of carpal tunnel syndrome (CTS).

Staff members vibration exposure from handheld equipment (mowers, strimmer's etc) was minimal (3 – 53 HSE vibration points). The staff member has an existing health condition (Primary Raynaud's syndrome) that is likely to have contributed to the onset of CTS.

Action taken – Occupational health provider recommended that the staff members vibration exposure be limited to 100 HSE vibration points / 8hr period. Management to continue to monitor exposure through the Reactec vibration monitoring system.

- Waste and Street Scene – Over 7-day reportable injury – staff member putting loose cardboard into back of refuse collection vehicle strained his shoulder. This was confirmed following GP visit at the end of his shift and reported to line manager the next morning.

Action taken – Staff member had already completed inhouse manual handling training which included communication of the risk assessment (RA) and safe system of work (SSoW) for the process being carried out. The RA and SSoW were reviewed by line manager and deemed suitable. Staff member received refresher training when he returned to work.

- Landscaping - Over 7-day reportable injury – staff member was operating a John Deere ride-on-mower along a verge in long grass. The mower contacted the side of a hidden manhole cover jolting the machine sideways. This caused the hand and wrist to jolt from being attached to the mower lever controls. Staff member completed his shift but informed his line manager the next day that the wrist had swelled and was painful. Following a hospital X-ray it was confirmed that the accident had resulted in a small wrist fracture.

Action Taken – RA and SSoW were reviewed by line manager and deemed suitable. Toolbox talk given to landscaping staff be aware of hidden obstacles when cutting in long grass. Staff member received refresher training when he returned to work.

- Waste and Street Scene – Over 7-day reportable injury – whilst walking a wheelie bin back to the property, the staff member tripped over and into a large deep pothole in the road resulting in a minor fracture to his ankle.

Action Taken – RA and SSoW were reviewed by line manager and deemed suitable. Allocated footwear was examined and suitable for use. Toolbox talk given to waste staff be aware of their surroundings. Staff member received refresher training when he returned to work.

- Waste and Street Scene – Over 7-day reportable injury – Staff member was carrying out litter picking duties within the B1112 layby when he lost his footing on uneven ground (grass verge) falling onto the layby hard surface injuring his right shoulder.

Action Taken – RA and SSoW were reviewed by line manager and deemed suitable. Allocated footwear was examined and suitable for use. Toolbox talk had already been issued as above.

- Waste and Street Scene (Commercial) – Over 7-day reportable injury – Staff member was moving a 360ltr wheelie bin when he slipped on a wet / icy metal drain cover twisting his ankle.

Action Taken – Site was visited by line manager to confirm the location of the wheelie bin was safe for staff access. RA and SSoW were reviewed by line manager and deemed suitable. Allocated footwear was examined and suitable for use. Toolbox talk had already been issued as above.

- Landscaping - Over 7-day reportable injury – staff member was digging ground area during planting of shrub when he made contact some unforeseen hardcore material beneath soil level resulting in a sudden pain in his hand and elbow. First GP visit was inconclusive of injury. Further X-ray at hospital confirmed a sprain to the right wrist.

Action Taken – RA and SSoW were reviewed by line manager and deemed suitable. Investigation concluded staff member had carried out his work process as trained.

Details of public related RIDDOR's

- Parks – 7-Year-old girl was playing on tree house rope bridge in Abbey Gardens when her foot fell through a gap in the slats resulting in her leg sustaining a cut from an exposed screw head. The girl was taken to hospital by her parent where she received two stitches to her thigh and given antibiotics.

Action taken – Tree house closed immediately and fenced off. Investigation revealed that the slats had come loose and moved apart in between the weekly equipment checks. The bridge was replaced, and daily recorded checks were increased / added for the park rangers in addition to the official weekly park inspections.

- Parks – Unsupervised 6-Year-old girl tried to access a piece of play equipment (Surf Rider) at Hardwick Heath that was above her age / size range. As she stood on one end the surf rider flipped 180 degrees causing the girl to fall to the ground and the surf rider striking her head as it

swung back into position. The girl sustained a 3mm cut to her head which was later glued / sealed at the hospital with no further signs of concussion.

Action taken – H&S and parks inspector attended site the same day and inspected the piece of equipment concluding that it was not faulty and operated safely as per manufacturers design. Further investigation revealed that the child was not within the correct size range to reach the grab handles whilst accessing the equipment and was not properly supervised by the child minder. No further action taken.

- Mildenhall Hub – Lady walking across from the leisure centre / main entrance towards the carpark tripped and fell forwards resulting in a dislocated finger and laceration to her head.

Action taken – First aid was given on site and ambulance suggested. The lady declined and said she would go with her husband later that day. Follow up conversation between the lady and H&S manager confirmed that she was admitted to hospital for 48 hours for observation due to the head injury. Further investigation (inc. CCTV, site visit) and discussions concluded that the lady had insufficient footwear (sliders) that curled over catching on the block weave paving. No further action required.

- Parks – Dog walker caught her foot in a divot / suspected rabbit hole whilst walking across Wood Henge Meadow in Nowton Park. This resulted in the lady in the lady sustaining a broken ankle.

Action taken – First aid was given on site by Ranger and ambulance called. Investigation of the meadow / accident area could not confirm the exact hole / divot due to the surrounding grass height. The investigation concluded that the lady walked over a section of the meadow that was noticeably uneven and away from the main trodden routes. No further action required.

- Car Parks – Lady walking through the pedestrian exit from St Andrews Street car park onto Bishops Road when she tripped over a low-level metal barrier. This resulted in minor injuries to her leg and right hand, as well as damage to her jaw in two places. The Lady did not report this to WSC until 29th August, the incident occurred on the 15th July.

Action taken – The car park was visited by the H&S team and car park manager to confirm the trip hazard / ground condition where the accident happened. It was discovered that a low-level metal barrier was in place in the pedestrian access / egress but was for no obvious purpose. This was immediately taped off and removed the following week. It was concluded that the metal barrier had been installed when the car park was initially built but there was no record as to why it was installed or for what purpose and was not picked up on car park checks. This was brought to the attention of the car park inspectors to raise awareness and further encourage the reporting of safety observations. No further action required.

Examples of the safety observations

- 1) Unsafe Condition – slippery floors within stairwells of Parkway Car Park increasing slip risk to public and staff.

Action: Site visited by H&S and car parks to investigate which concluded that the floor material required additional slip resistance. Slip risk signs installed throughout the building's stairways and additional layer of anti-slip floor paint installed within 4 weeks of initial report.

- 2) Unsafe Condition – Concern raised over inadequate lighting of EV charging in Olding Road car park.

Action: Site visited by H&S to investigate outside of daylight hours which concluded that lighting was not suitable. Electrical contractor investigated power supply box and lights. Fault was discovered and lighting was repaired.

- 3) Unsafe Act – Report of youths accessing scaffolding on Parkway carpark.

Action: Scaffolding contractor contacted and attended site to make security adjustments to prevent recurrence.



Annual Appointments to the Financial Resilience Sub-Committee’s (2024 to 2025)

Report number:	PAS/WS/24/015	
Report to and date(s):	Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee	30 May 2024
Cabinet Member(s):	Councillor Diane Hind Cabinet Member for Resources Email: diane.hind@westsuffolk.gov.uk	
Lead officers:	Teresa Halliday Monitoring Officer Telephone: 01284 757144 Email: teresa.halliday@westsuffolk.gov.uk	

Decisions Plan: This item is not included in the decisions plan.

Wards impacted: Not applicable.

Recommendations: It is recommended that the Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee:

- 1. Recommends three Members, and one Substitute Member from the membership of the Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee to sit on the Financial Resilience Sub-Committee for 2024 to 2025.**

1. Context to this report

- 1.1 At the Annual Council meeting held on 14 May 2024, West Suffolk Council approved the allocation of 10 seats and 6 substitute seats to the Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee.
- 1.2 The Constitution sets out that the appointment of members to the Financial Resilience Sub-Committee be undertaken at the first meeting of the Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee following Annual Council or following a review of the allocation of seats on committees during the year.
- 1.3 The Constitution further expects that in making such appointments, the Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee seeks to do so in a manner that reflects the political balance as far as practically possible.
- 1.4 In practice, as there are only a total of 4 appointments to the sub-committee (plus substitutes) it would be very difficult to be compliant with the full political balance calculations. As such, the proposals below have been developed to try to achieve an equitable and fair allocation to the groups across both sub-committees.
- 1.5 Due to the small number of substitutes, some groups will not have a nominated substitute. However, if they cannot make a meeting and the group does not have a nominated substitute, a temporary substitute can be nominated by their group leader to the Monitoring Officer.

2. Proposals within this report

2.1 Appointments to the Financial Resilience Sub-Committee

- 2.1.1 The Financial Resilience Sub-Committee will comprise three members and one substitute member of the Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee, which, as above, desirably reflects the political balance of the Council, as far as practically possible.
- 2.1.2 A proposed seat allocation is set out below:

Group	Seat Allocation
Conservative Group	1
Independents	1
Progressive Alliance Grouping	1
Total	3
Substitute	1

2.1.3 The substitute place on the Financial Resilience Sub-Committee has not been allocated to a group. Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee may appoint a member to the group. If it is not practical to do so then, in the event that a member of the Sub-Committee cannot attend, a temporary substitute may be nominated by the group leader to the Monitoring Officer.

2.1.4 Attached at **Appendix 1** to this report is the Terms of Reference, which sets out the role of the Financial and Resilience Sub-Committee.

3. Alternative options that have been considered

3.1 None, as the matter under consideration is required by the Constitution.

4. Consultation and engagement undertaken

4.1 None.

5. Risks associated with the proposals

5.1 None.

6. Appendices referenced in this report

6.1 Appendix 1 – Terms of Reference: Financial and Resilience Sub-Committee

7. Background documents associated with this report

7.1 None

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C.6 Financial Resilience Sub-Committee

1. Remit

- 1.1 The Financial Resilience Sub-Committee will undertake the enhanced monitoring and scrutiny of the Council's financial resilience, and will be responsible to the Performance and Audit Committee for:-
- (1) The Council's responses to changes in statutory and regulatory requirements and guidance related to treasury management, capital financing and financial resilience.
 - (2) Examining and recommending Annual Treasury Management and Investment Strategy.
 - (3) On-going revisions to treasury management strategies and policies.
 - (4) The mid-year treasury management review.
 - (5) Receiving reports on treasury management performance.
 - (6) The annual report on treasury management performance, including the effects of the decisions taken and the transactions executed in the past year, and on the circumstances of any non-compliance with the Council's treasury management policy statements.
 - (7) Examining ongoing compliance with any statutory and non-statutory guidance or measures relating to financial resilience.

2. Membership and Meeting Arrangements

- 2.1 The Sub-Committee will comprise three Members and one substitute Member of the Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee, which desirably reflects the political balance of the Council, as far as practically possible.
- 2.2 There will be one non-voting invitee, which will normally be the Portfolio Holder with responsibility for finance.
- 2.3 The Sub-Committee will be appointed annually by the Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee (or Council) and will appoint its own Chair.

- 2.4 The Sub-Committee will meet at least three times each year, although meetings may be cancelled by the Chair due to lack of business. Special meetings of the Sub-Committee may also be called as necessary.
- 2.5 In order to help streamline the comprehensive treasury management reporting requirements of the CIPFA Code, where possible meetings will be held to coincide with existing reporting requirements.

*(*Note: This meeting is not governed by the normal Access to Information rules (The Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012) in the Council. Therefore, these meetings are not open to attendance by the public).*



Performance and Audit Scrutiny Work Programme 2024 to 2025

Report number:	PAS/WS/24/016	
Report to and date(s):	Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee	30 May 2024
Cabinet Member:	Councillor Diane Hind Cabinet Member for Resources Email: diane.hind@westsuffolk.gov.uk	
Chair of the Committee:	Councillor Peter Armitage Chair of Performance and Audit Scrutiny Email: peter.armitage@westsuffolk.gov.uk	
Lead officer:	Rachael Mann Director (Resources and Property) Telephone: 01638 719245 Email: Rachael.mann@westsuffolk.gov.uk	

Decisions Plan: This item is not included in the decisions plan.

Wards impacted: Not applicable.

Recommendation: It is recommended that the Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee:

- 1. Notes the current status of its Work Programme for 2024 to 2025, attached at Appendix 1 to this report.**

1. Context to this report

1.1 Performance and Audit Scrutiny Work Programme

1.1.1 The committee's work programme for 2024 to 2025 is attached at **Appendix 1** to this report.

2. Proposals within this report

2.1 The committee is asked to note the current status of its work programme for 2024 to 2025.

3. Alternative options that have been considered

3.1 None.

4. Consultation and engagement undertaken

4.1 None.

5. Risks associated with the proposals

5.1 None.

6. Appendices referenced in this report

6.1 Appendix 1 – Performance and Audit Work Programme 2024 to 2025

7. Background documents associated with this report

7.1 None

WEST SUFFOLK COUNCIL

Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee

Work Programme (July 2024 to May 2025)

Date	Topic	Lead Officer
25 July 2024	2024 to 2025 Performance Report (Quarter One)	Service Manager (Policy, Projects & Performance)
	Annual Financial Resilience Management Report (2023 to 2024)	Service Manager (Finance and Procurement)
	Treasury Management Report (June 2024)	Service Manager (Finance and Procurement)
	Work Programme Update (2024 to 2025)	Director (Resources and Property)
26 Sept 2024	Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman Annual Report	Monitoring Officer
	Annual RIPA Report	Monitoring Officer
	Approach to Delivering a Sustainable Medium-Term Budget	Director (Resources and Property)
	Work Programme Update (2024 to 2025)	Director (Resources and Property)
28 Nov 2024	Statement of Accounts	Director (Resources and Property)
	Annual Governance Statement	Director (Resources and Property)
	Ernst and Young – Auditors Results Report 2023 to 2024	Director (Resources and Property)
	Internal Audit Mid-Year Progress Report 2024 to 2025	Service Manager (Internal Audit)
	2024 to 2025 Performance Report (Quarter Two)	Service Manager (Policy, Projects & Performance)
	Delivering a Sustainable Medium-Term Budget (2025 to 2026)	Director (Resource and Property)
	Treasury Management Report (September 2024)	Service Manager (Finance and Procurement)
	Work Programme Update (2025)	Director (Resources and Property)
	Page 317	

Appendix 1

30 Jan 2025	2024 to 2025 Performance Report (Quarter Three)	Service Manager (Policy, Projects & Performance)
	Treasury Management Report (December 2024)	Service Manager (Finance and Procurement)
	Annual Financial Resilience Management and Investment Strategy Statements 2025 to 2026	Service Manager (Finance and Procurement)
	Delivering a Sustainable West Suffolk Council Budget (2025 to 2026)	Director (Resources and Property)
	Work Programme Update (2025 to 2026)	Director (Resources and Property)
29 May 2025	EY Audit Plan and Fees report for 2024/25	Director (Resources and Property)
	Internal Audit Annual Report (2024 to 2025)	Service Manager (Internal Audit)
	Outline Internal Audit Plan (2025 to 2026)	Service Manager (Internal Audit)
	2024-2025 Performance Report (Quarter Four)	Service Manager (Policy, Projects & Performance)
	Annual Report from the Health and Safety Sub-Committee	Health and Safety Manager
	Annual Re-Appointments to the Financial Resilience Sub-Committee and the Health and Safety Sub-Committee (2025 to 2026)	Business Partner (Governance)
	Work Programme Update (2025 to 2026)	Director (Resources and Property)

Awaiting confirmation from EY of the Audit Planning for 2023-2024

	Ernst and Young – 2023 to 2024 Annual Results Report to those charged with Governance	Director (Resources and Property)
	West Suffolk Annual Governance Statement 2023 to 2024	Director (Resources and Property)
	2023 to 2024 Statement of Accounts	Director (Resources and Property)

By virtue of paragraph(s) 1, 2 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

Document is Restricted

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