

## West Suffolk Environmental Statement 2015/16



River Lark Restoration near the Abbey Gardens, Bury St Edmunds

### **Our commitment to Sustainability**

Forest Heath District Council and St Edmundsbury Borough Council are working together to manage the effects that our activities have on the natural environment.

A range of priority themes have been identified which we wish to influence through our services at a local level and an action plan has been put in place to work towards achieving this.

The issues identified include :-

- Creating sustainable economic growth
- Energy conservation and renewable energy
- Affordable warmth
- Health and well-being
- Housing
- Natural and heritage capital
- The built environment
- Travel
- Water resources
- Procurement
- Waste.

The West Suffolk Sustainability Strategy which incorporates our vision and objectives is available via [www.westsuffolk.gov.uk](http://www.westsuffolk.gov.uk).

Set out in the following pages is a snapshot of our performance to the year ending 31st March 2016.

Given the scope of this report, there is a significant amount of work which contributes to improving the environment carried out by us directly and with our partners which is not covered in this statement.

## **Our environmental performance in 2015/16**

The Councils continued working to improve environmental performance during the year. Areas of key interest are summarised below:

- Emissions, compared to our 2010 baseline, are down by 12.1% for Forest Heath but progress in St Edmundsbury has slowed to 9.9%
- Although there have been some positive changes in certain emission sources across our portfolio during the year, the overall trend from both councils has diverged from our targeted trajectory
- We have reviewed our monitoring, data collection and emissions calculating procedures to provide a firmer footing for comparison in future years
- Business passenger car mileage has reduced by 6% in 2015 compared to 2014 (the baseline year), with 457,870 miles claimed
- Building energy consumption was slightly high compared to last year, with gas use increasing and electricity use declining
- Water use across the two councils and associated leisure trusts has increased by 7.3% since last year but still shows a reduction in comparison to our 2010 baseline
- Our solar photovoltaic (PV) schemes continue to deliver around £118,000 of income/energy savings and 166 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> savings annually
- We installed a further 200kWp of solar capacity on on Newmarket and Brandon Leisure Centres delivering around £32,000 of income/savings and saving 30 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> savings annually
- We retained Green Flag status for four of our public parks.
- We are reviewing our targets, in particular with respect to Greenhouse Gas emissions, in the light of wider discussion with other public sector partners. Our current target is aligned with the "Suffolk – Creating the Greenest County" CO<sub>2</sub> reduction target and a new county-wide target is being adopted which accords generally with national carbon budgeting required under the Climate Change Act 2008.

In addition, our community-focused environmental work includes:

- Continued support for the Suffolk Warm Homes Healthy People fuel poverty programme during winter 2015
- Implementing a long-term energy investment plan alongside our existing support for improved community energy efficiency as part of our West Suffolk Councils' Community Energy Plan. This has led to the Councils investing in over 0.5MW of solar generating capacity hosted by third parties in West Suffolk
- Providing local businesses with our West Suffolk Greener Business Grant funding for energy efficiency measures. To date, for a grant investment of £62,000 this programme is estimated to be saving local businesses over £75,000 and 315 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> annually.

More detailed performance against our objectives and targets is set out in the following pages.

## Greenhouse gas emissions arising from Council activities

### Target

Reduce greenhouse gas (CO<sub>2</sub>e)<sup>1</sup> emissions by 60%<sup>2</sup>

**Target date:** 2025

**Baseline year:** 2010

### Baseline (2010 recalculated July 2016):

Forest Heath	2,453 tonnes CO <sub>2</sub> e
St Edmundsbury	5,136 tonnes CO <sub>2</sub> e

The footprint comprises of three components:

- Emissions from building heating (e.g. by gas or oil), business passenger car travel and any so-called "fugitive" emissions arising from sources other than from controlled combustion.
- Emissions arising from purchased electricity use.
- Business mileage by public transport and the embedded emissions associated with water use in public buildings.

In practice, this target applies to energy, transport and water use across both Councils. We include emissions associated with the leisure centres operated by Abbeycroft Leisure Trust and Anglia Community Leisure Trust now combined as one trust, ACL, and other operational buildings within each respective Council's footprint. This is because we own the buildings and have a direct commissioning relationship with the Trust.

In 2015/16 we have reviewed our energy monitoring approach for other sites to bring them in line with this approach, we now include 100% of the energy and emissions for sites such as West Suffolk House, the Apex and other sites under short term contract with a third party. This change in approach means that each Council's baseline and reduction trajectory has been recalculated to ensure a consistent and inclusive approach to monitoring energy consumption and emissions reporting.

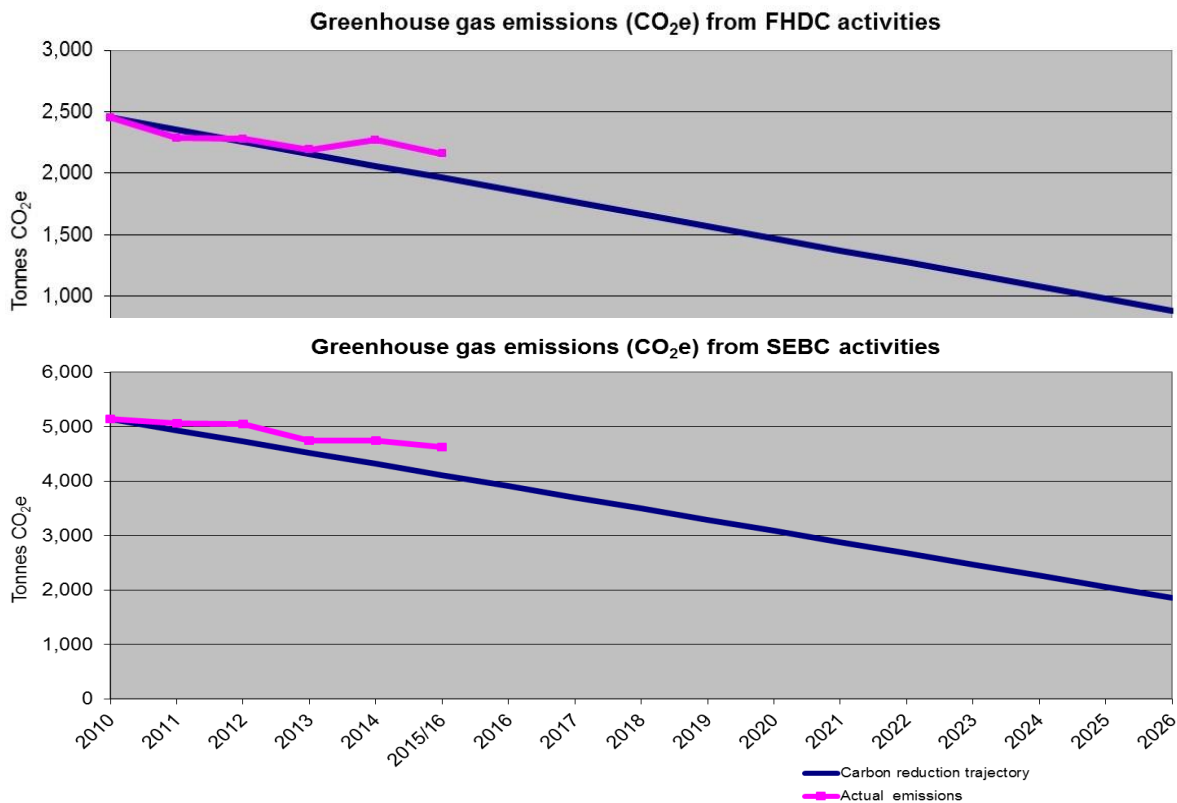
We publish the own Greenhouse Gas Inventories annually with the first publication made in July 2011 for the financial year 2010/11. These are available on our website.

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<sup>1</sup> Local authority Greenhouse Gas Inventories are published and reported annually following the approved method set out in Defra publication "Guidance on how to measure and report your greenhouse gas emissions" published in September 2013. It is revised the following year where it is necessary as result of the latest available billing and metering information and changes to the ownership and use of buildings. It is worth noting that the purchase of green electricity cannot be used to claim carbon savings under the methodology.

<sup>2</sup> *Carbon dioxide equivalent (CO<sub>2</sub>e)*. A universal unit of measurement used to indicate the global warming potential of a greenhouse gas, expressed in terms of the global warming potential of one unit of carbon dioxide. It is used to evaluate the releasing (or avoiding releasing) of different greenhouse gases against a common basis.

## 2015-16 performance



CO<sub>2</sub> emissions recalculations have improved the consistency of our approach, however they have changed the initial baseline emissions and most notably 2014/15 emissions – this was because the emissions from grid electricity were much higher in this year.

In 2015/16, Forest Heath decreased by 5.0% compared to the previous year. Emissions for St Edmundsbury showed a 2.5% reduction. Compared to our 2010 baseline, emissions have reduced generally by 12.1% for Forest Heath but progress in St Edmundsbury has slowed to 9.9% because our accounting now takes into account all buildings owned by the council, even if operated under a contract by a third party.

The main trends in relation to greenhouse gas emissions in 2015/16 from buildings have been an increase in the amount of gas used (not linked to weather) across the councils biggest sites and slowing of the progress made to manage consumption and emissions generally in buildings.

Transport-related emissions have decreased over the period for both councils.

Emissions arising from ACL's activities have decreased slightly in 2015/16 in St Edmundsbury. This is despite increased business generally, in particular from the reopening of water flumes at Bury Leisure Centre leading to increased energy demand.

## Building energy use

### Target:

Reduce carbon emissions associated with building energy

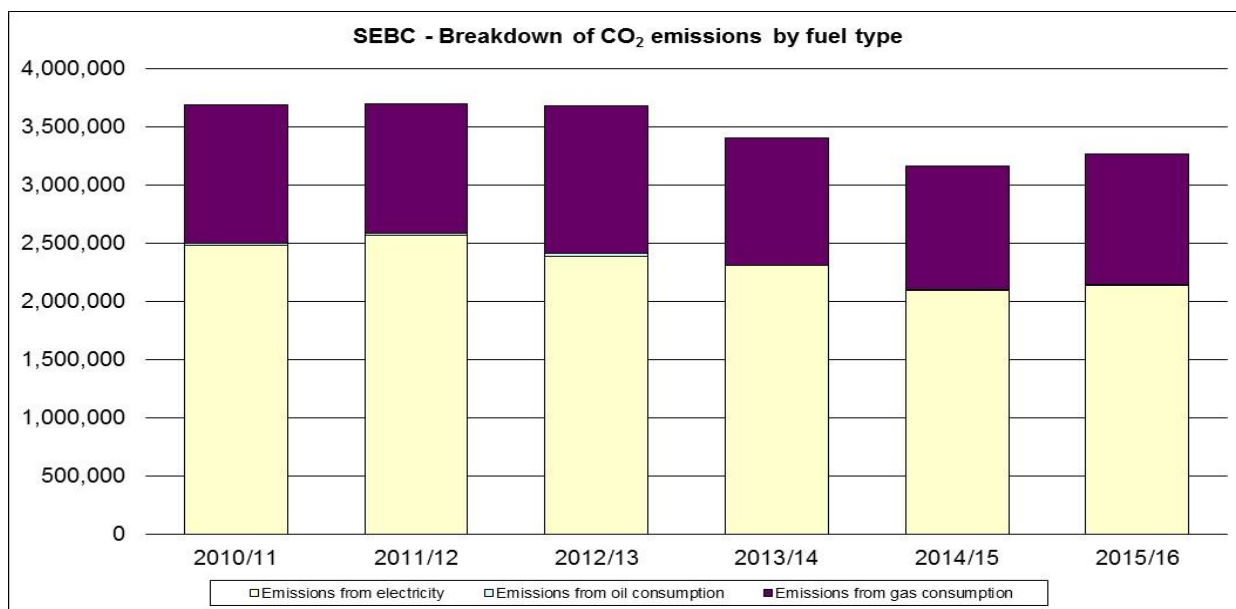
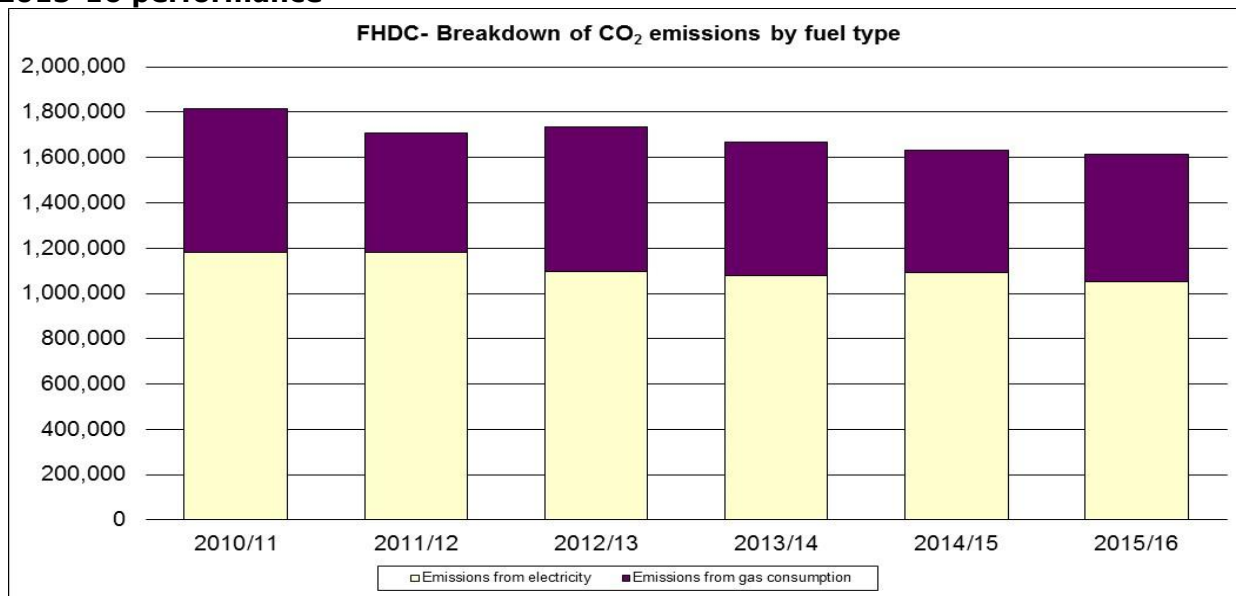
**Target date:** 2025

**Baseline year:** 2010 (recalculated July 2016)

Forest Heath  
St Edmundsbury

1,817 tonnes CO<sub>2</sub>e  
3,692 tonnes CO<sub>2</sub>e

### 2015-16 performance



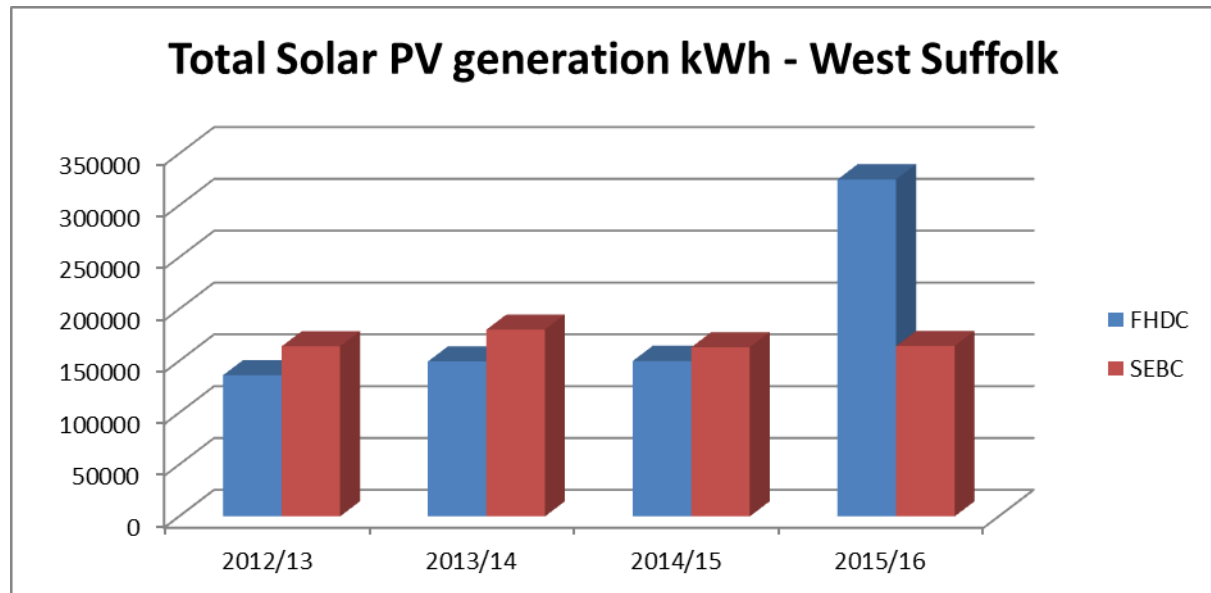
Compared to 2014-15, gas consumption increased by 4.5% across the St Edmundsbury/ACL property portfolios while Forest Heath/ACL showed a 6.0% increase. Electricity use decreased by 2.6% across St Edmundsbury/ACL while a 0.5% decrease was seen within FHDC/ACL.

Investment continues to be made in energy efficiency measures including installing Light Emitting Diode (LED) lighting in council controlled car parks. However, increases in occupancy/use of sites such as the leisure centres and the Apex have come with an increased energy demand. Despite this linkage with use, there are opportunities for 2016-17 to refocus

on the control of installed systems to better manage consumption at all sites.

Work is planned in 2016-17 to review energy consumption and develop action plans at the main sites to prioritise key energy consuming areas which should lead to further cost and energy reductions. In addition the council plans to put in place new monitoring and evaluation tools and procedures to improve our performance over the coming years.

### Renewable energy generation



The Councils have been investing in solar panels to generate electricity since 2011. April 2015 saw two additional 100kWp arrays come online at Brandon and Newmarket Leisure Centres. This resulted in a significant increase in generation, of around 175,000 kWh, and an associated £20,000 income generation along with energy cost savings for ACL. An additional 93 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> savings were achieved during 2015/16 compared to the previous year.

Significant reductions in the Feed-In Tariffs for new installations are making further investment on this scale less viable. However, the Councils 'Solar for Business' scheme continues to look for opportunities to invest in third party installations.

## Transport use

### Target:

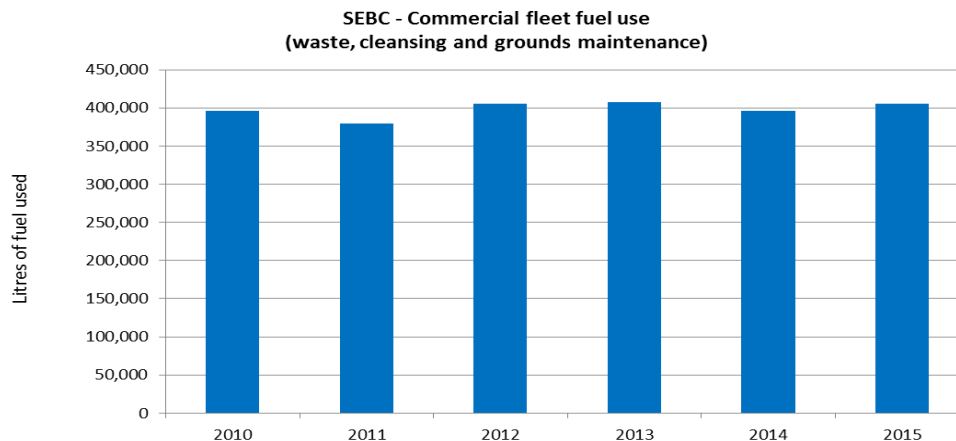
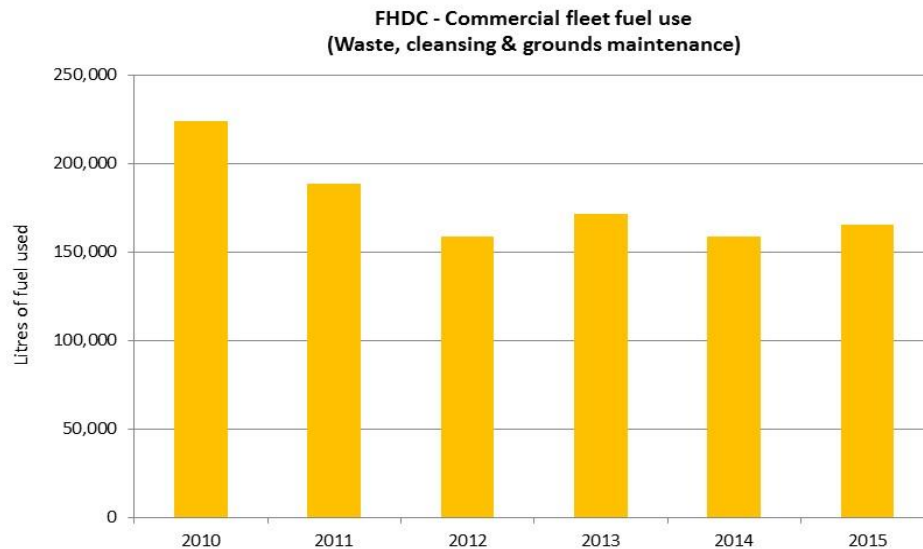
Reduce the amount of fuel used by the Council's commercial fleet

**Baseline Year:** 2010

### Commercial fleet fuel use in baseline year

Forest Heath DC	224,260 litres
St Edmundsbury BC	396,182 litres
West Suffolk total	620,442 litres

### 2014-15 performance



Our combined West Suffolk commercial fleet, which provides refuse collection, cleansing and grounds maintenance services, used 19,826 litres more fuel in 2016 compared with the previous year. Compared to the 2010 baseline, fleet fuel use for refuse trucks and road sweepers has decreased by 7.1%. Last year's increase in demand reflects service growth in response to more homes being built in the area and includes increased levels of street cleaning and commercial activities like gardens and grounds maintenance.

## Transport use

### Target:

Reduce the total amount of Council passenger mileage by 10% each year over 2015 and 2016.

**Baseline Year:** 2014

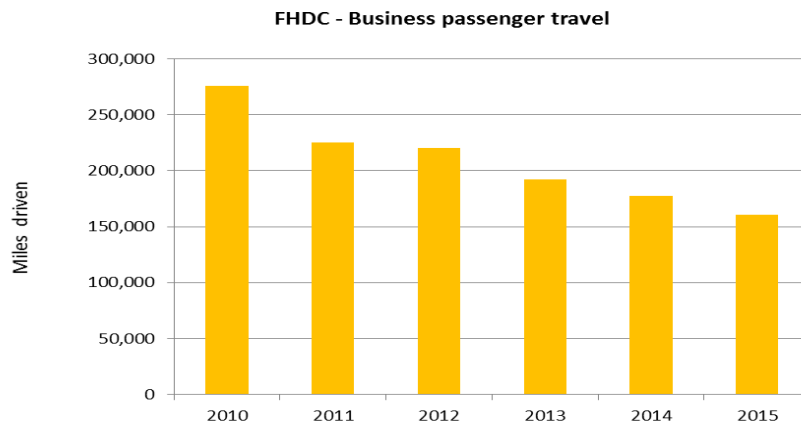
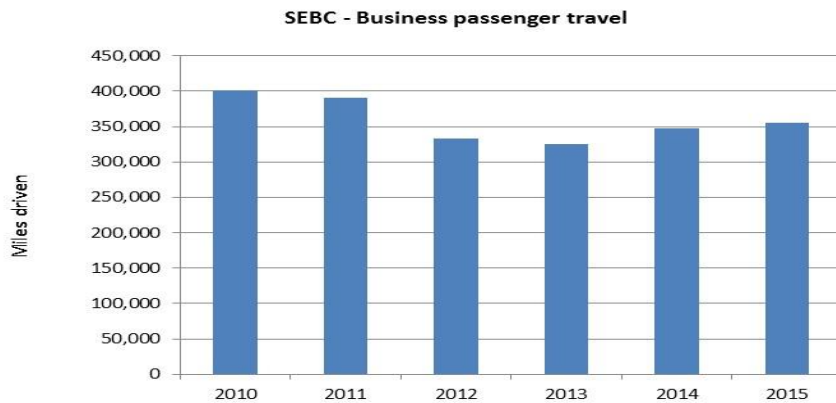
### Business passenger travel in baseline year:

West Suffolk total

484,744 miles

### 2015-16 performance

Given the shared way of working, it is no longer feasible to a meaningfully apportion claimed business passenger mileage between the two Councils. A 10% per annum mileage reduction target was adopted in January 2015 to run to December 2017 taking on 2014 mileage baseline of 484,744 miles across the Councils. This equates to a total saving of around £30,000 over the two year project life. To achieve this, a reduction programme was launched comprising a range of initiatives, advice and support to staff about business travel.



Business mileage reduced by 6% in 2015 with 457,870 miles claimed. A range of factors are likely to have led to our decrease in claimed business mileage (in no particular order):

- Impact of our business mileage reduction programme
- Changes to the arrangements for claiming mileage
- The use of tele and videoconferencing – more facilities are now available between offices
- Pool car use.

Overall, in 2015/16 Business passenger travel including business mileage and pool car use, appears to have roughly stabilised in St Edmundsbury. Forest Heath continued to show a



reduction in miles travelled.

## Water use

**Target:** Reduce the amount of water used in Council activities.

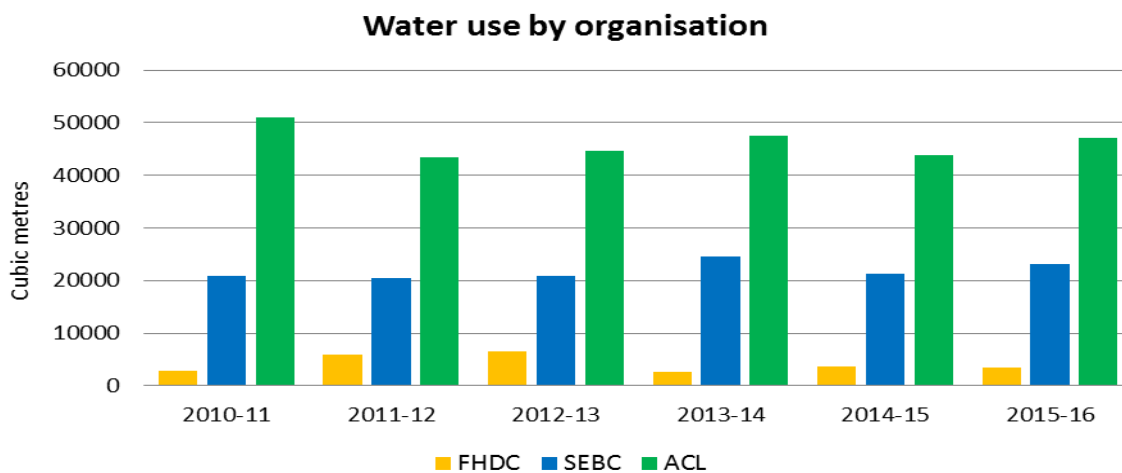
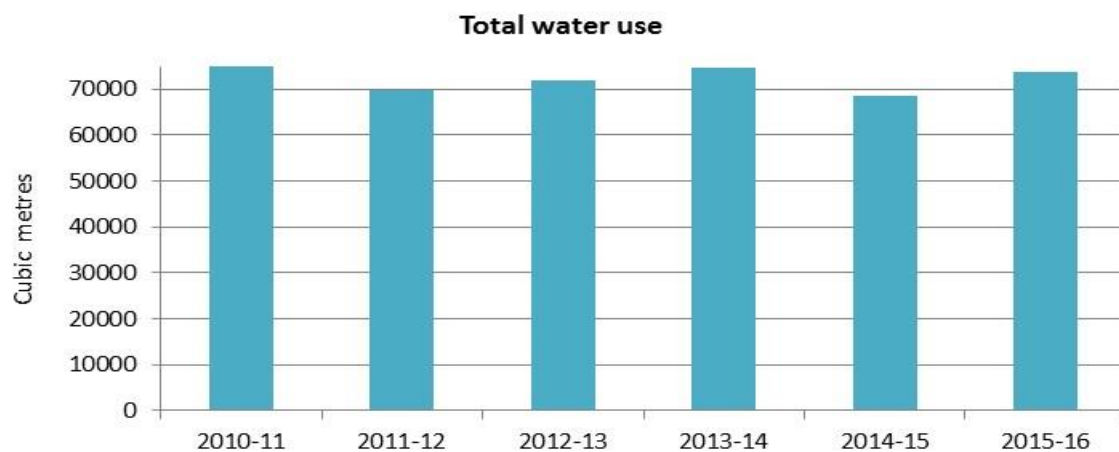
**Baseline year** - 2010 (recalculated June 2014)

### Water use in baseline year

Forest Heath	2,872 cubic metres
St Edmundsbury	20,955 cubic metres
ACL	51,076 cubic metres
<b>West Suffolk total</b>	<b>74,903 cubic metres</b>

The leisure centres operated by ACL are included in the baseline to accord with the Greenhouse Gas Inventory. The leisure centres account for around two thirds of total water use in 2015/16.

## 2015-16 performance



Water use has increased in 2015/16. There has been a significant increase in use from ACL and St Edmundsbury sites. Water consumption from Forest Heath sites has shown a very slight decrease on the previous year. New AMR systems have been installed by Anglian Water to aid in the tracking of consumption and have already helped to highlight and help the investigation of increase usage. Further work is planned for 2016/17 to review the recent increases in consumption and establish actions plans for management.

## Corporate Waste

**Target:** Recycle/Reuse/Recover 50% or more of each waste stream where safe to do so.

**Baseline year - 2010**

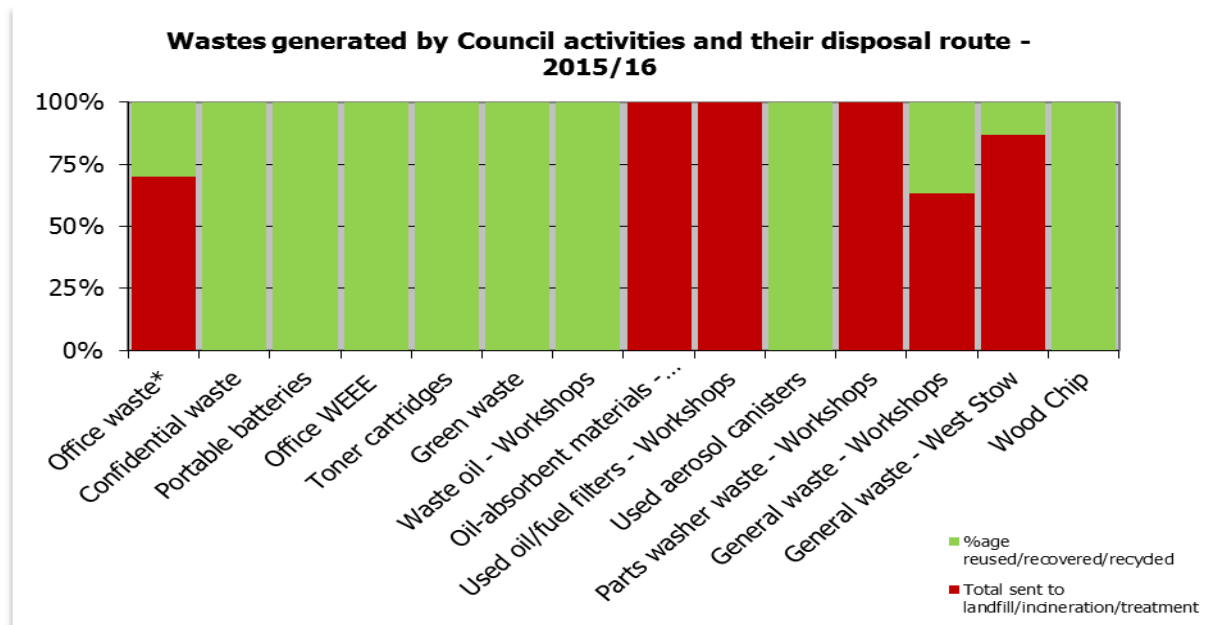
### Corporate Waste use in baseline year

- 10 waste streams 50% recycled.
- 6 waste streams with potential to increase the recycling rate to 50% or above.
- 7 waste streams are subject to safe disposal only.

The Council's generate waste from a range of activities with our goal to reduce their arising and then increase to proportion recycled instead of landfilled.

### 2015-16 performance

The overall trend in waste generation and current waste management routes of those waste that we have direct responsibility (i.e. we are the waste holder under the Waste Duty of Care Code of Practice) are shown below:



It is our intention to continue to ensure legal compliance with respect to the Duty of Care for waste whilst reviewing our target during 2016/17 so that we focus on areas that we can achieve meaningful improvement.

## Biodiversity

**Target:** Demonstrate habitat improvements at Green Flag Accredited Sites

**Baseline:** Four Green Flag parks

### 2015-2016 performance

The following sites successfully retained Green Flag accreditation in 2015-2016:

- Nowton Park, Bury St Edmunds
- East Town Park, Haverhill
- Abbey Gardens, Bury St Edmunds
- Aspal Close Nature Reserve, Beck Row

#### *Nowton Park*

There are 50 acres of woodland in the park. Volunteers work with rangers to ensure the ground flora of the woodland is kept varied by coppicing areas on rotation to achieve varied light levels. The resultant diversity can be seen in this picture of a row of 'Elf Cap' fungi, with snowdrops in the background.



#### *East Town Park, Haverhill*

Suffolk Wildlife Trust sponsored the reworking of a section of the millennium meadow, removing the rank species such as nettles and docks, and restocking the field after ploughing with hay arisings from a species rich Suffolk Meadow. Volunteers spread the hay across the prepared meadow to help distribute the wild seed.



#### *Abbey Gardens, Bury St Edmunds*

Adjacent to the south of the gardens is a low lying area known as the Crankles, where medieval fishponds used to be. This year, following the harvesting of the existing cricket bat willow plantation, the area has been replanted with alder trees, fruit trees and open meadow wildflowers to establish more nectar producing plants.



*Aspal Close Nature Reserve, Beck Row*

This unique nature reserve contains some 200 ancient oaks lying within species-rich Breckland grassland. The districts arboricultural team have carried out a range of formative pruning work on these valuable trees to ensure they are kept in the best of health.



**Target:** Demonstrate habitat improvements in two principal towns in West Suffolk

*The Yellow Brick Road (Newmarket)*

The Newmarket Brook runs parallel with the Number 57 national cycle route for much of its course, from the centre of the town to the northern boundaries (1.7 miles). The brook has had major clearance of woody vegetation during the winter to reduce shading and to allow better access for ecological survey work to take place the following year.



**Target:** Demonstrate habitat improvements at one rural location in West Suffolk

*Red Lodge Heath (Red Lodge)*

The Heath is designated as an SSSI and FHDC support the local conservation group (in consultation with the landowner) in helping to maintain the site and promote its special interest. Interpretation panels were installed last year and this year the district has funded a new ride on mower for the group to help keep paths and rides well maintained within the reserve.



## **Environmental Compliance**

**Target:** No incidents leading to formal action being taken by regulatory bodies

**Target date:** Ongoing

**Baseline:** 100% legal compliance with operations according with the ISO14001 certification

### **2015-16 performance**

The Councils continued to ensure effective compliance with environmental regulations.

Regular reviews are undertaken by key services to ensure that they are up-to-date with the environmental legislation that applies. No problems with environmental compliance have been reported during the period.

The councils continue to carry out their activities to achieve commitments set out in the West Suffolk Sustainability Strategy adopted in 2013.

Since June 2015, St Edmundsbury ceased to be accredited to ISO14001. Consequently, it is planned to review the target.