



Draft West Suffolk Annual Report 2016/17

Foreword from the Leaders

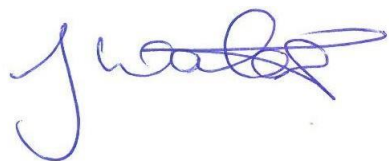
We have a real success story contained in the pages of this annual report. The words on these pages represent real deeds and achievements that directly benefit not only current residents but our future communities and businesses.

There is no doubt that by working together we have seen a step change in how we are delivering services and working with our individual communities. With joint working now as second nature to us, we have been able to give extra focus to the issues that really matter to our residents and businesses. We are now more commercially minded, strategically managing growth and tackling the challenge of providing much needed homes to meet the needs of our communities while delivering high quality services.

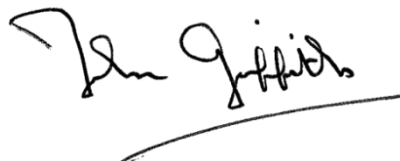
But we and our communities have challenges ahead that we must face. We now need to build on these successes and that of sharing services. They give us a golden opportunity to use this stability to look at the next step of our relationship together going forward to reach our ambitions and meet the challenges we face now and in the future, for example, against a backdrop of reducing public finances, we need to find new ways to remain financially resilient, while still improving the quality of the services we provide to an expanding and increasingly ageing population.

To remain democratically accountable to our communities and small enough to work with them on initiatives tailored for our residents in village or town, urban or rural. But large enough to have a strong unified voice to drive strategic change and growth to further bring prosperity and jobs to our area. We are an attractive area to live in and for developers and business to invest in - uniquely positioned with good networks and are an internationally renowned area with a range of industries from racing to agriculture to high-tech.

Now we need to build on those successes outlined in this report and look what that next chapter is for the West Suffolk story.



Councillor James Waters
Leader
Forest Heath District Council



Councillor John Griffiths
Leader
St Edmundsbury Borough Council

Introduction

You will notice that we are presenting this year's annual report in a slightly different way. We wanted to create a document that would be easy to use, a quick reference tool for our highlights from the year and easy to update so we can tell you more about what we're doing, and how projects are progressing, after this report is published.

The information in this document will be supported by case studies all available on the following webpage:

www.westsuffolk.gov.uk

The vision and priorities that we are working towards are set out in the West Suffolk Strategic Plan at:

www.westsuffolk.gov.uk/strategicplan

The rest of this document describes our achievements in detail, but some of the highlights of 2016/17 are shown below:

- Development of the **Suffolk Business Park and Eastern Relief Road**, a key growth site for Bury St Edmunds, which will help us realise our ambitions for bringing jobs, housing, education and leisure facilities to West Suffolk.
- Working with partners to develop the business case and for alternative uses and preparing an initial masterplan for the **RAF Mildenhall** site.
- Working with schools, colleges and businesses to better understand the **skills young people need for the future**.
- **Building capacity and resilience in local communities** to prevent local issues becoming a significant problem.
- Supporting projects and initiatives across West Suffolk through **community chest and locality budget funding** that will improve the local areas and facilities for residents.
- Working with partners to **reduce the number of empty homes** across West Suffolk and **investing in temporary accommodation** to help ensure individuals and families can be homed appropriately.
- Embarking on a joint venture with Suffolk County Council to set-up **Barley Homes** which will see the development of houses for sale and private rent on a commercial basis, **while also delivering much needed affordable housing**.
- Generating additional income through Forest Heath District Council's purchase of **Toggam Solar Farm**, which is part of our long-term investment strategy.
- Taking a collaborative approach to deliver a **shared legal service** between four councils (Babergh, Forest Heath, Mid Suffolk and St Edmundsbury) to provide a fit for purpose legal service that provides value for money.

Priority 1 – Increased opportunities for economic growth

What we want to see:

- Beneficial growth that enhances prosperity and quality of life
- Existing businesses that are thriving and new businesses brought to the area
- People with the educational attainment and skills needed to support business growth
- Vibrant, attractive and clean high streets, village centres and markets

Why was this a priority for 2016/17?

Our first priority of economic growth underpins everything we do across West Suffolk. A thriving and diverse local economy helps support wider improvements in the quality of life for our residents. High levels of business and employment growth in a broad range of economic sectors can both support improvements to the quality of life of our residents and offer larger scale benefits for our communities.

This section of the annual report sets out our key achievements this year and it shows that we have continued our commitment to ensure that the infrastructure, homes, skills and opportunities exist to enable the economic growth for our communities. In this section we highlight our activities under the headings:

- Creating the right conditions for growth
- Skills and education
- Supporting our markets
- Creating prosperous places to live in, work in and visit
- Modernising our approach to regulation

Creating the right conditions for growth	
Setting the framework for future growth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • West Suffolk councils have been working together with partners to plan for where future business, housing and infrastructure growth should be located. This includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Working with our two Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) on the reviews of their Strategic Economic Plans; and - Developing with partners across Suffolk a Strategic Planning and Infrastructure Framework (SPIF), that builds on the effective relationships that were forged during the work on Norfolk

	<p>and Suffolk devolution.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preparing the Forest Heath Local Plan. This is covered more fully in the housing section of this document, but is integral to our growth ambitions.
Campaigning for the right infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We have continued to campaign for fast, reliable and safe transport connections to and from West Suffolk, for example through lobbying for more regular east-west rail services in East Anglia, the dualling of the A1307 between Cambridge and Haverhill, and investment in key trunk road junctions. • A14 junctions 37, 43, 44, and the A11 at Fiveways have all been included in Suffolk County Council's submission to Highways England for Road Investment Strategy 2 funding. Funding of £400,000 from the Department of Transport has recently been announced to install traffic signals on all or some of the approaches to the A11 Fiveways junction and address safety concerns on the A11 immediately to the south of Fiveways.
Suffolk Business Park and the Eastern Relief Road	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One of our key economic growth sites is to the east of Bury St Edmunds. The first part of the Bury St Edmunds Eastern Relief Road opened in November 2016. It means we are closer to realising our ambition of bringing new jobs and housing to the area while a new school and leisure facilities have already opened. • The 350 metre stretch of road is part of a £15 million scheme and jointly funded by the New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership, via its Growth Deal with Government, Suffolk County Council and St Edmundsbury Borough Council. It has provided access to the new Sybil Andrews Academy and Skyliner Sports Centre run by our partner Abbeycroft Leisure, and has opened up part of the Suffolk Business Park site. Once completed the road will enable the delivery of 500 homes and unlock the rest of the Suffolk Business Park site which will then be used to create thousands of jobs and generate income for the local economy. • We are pleased to report that a business has already signed up to relocate to the business park. • It is anticipated that the road will be completed by autumn 2017.
RAF Mildenhall and RAF Lakenheath	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RAF Lakenheath and RAF Mildenhall airbases are home to personnel from the United States Visiting Forces (USVF). While both bases are within the Forest Heath district, the economic impact of approximately 8800 US personnel, staff and 1100 UK civilians employed by the airbases goes far wider into Suffolk, Cambridgeshire and Norfolk. Over the next six years we will see substantial changes at both airbases with the withdrawal of all USVF operations from RAF

	<p>Mildenhall and the deployment of F-35A aircraft at RAF Lakenheath.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The USVF is investing a minimum of \$285million in infrastructure construction at RAF Lakenheath to support the deployment of the F-35A by 2021. Other developments on the site such as a new school and hospital, power upgrade and road improvements could bring the total investment to \$1billion. • In November 2016 the Ministry of Defence (MoD), which owns the RAF Mildenhall airbase, confirmed that the 440 hectare airbase will not be required for a British military purpose and so will be released for redevelopment after the USVF depart in 2023. We believe that the release of the RAF Mildenhall site is a once in-a-lifetime opportunity to shape the future of Mildenhall and the surrounding area. We are therefore working with the MOD to deliver a vision that attracts new businesses, creates employment and delivers appropriate housing. • Building on feedback from engagement sessions with local communities and businesses, Forest Heath used One Public Estate funding to commission a study of the potential future uses of the RAF Mildenhall site and to develop a Prospectus outlining a new vision for its future. • In November 2016 Forest Heath approved the Prospectus with an ambition to create: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 2000 jobs ○ 2000 homes ○ £70-100 million Gross Value Added • Forest Heath and local partners (Local Enterprise Partnerships, Suffolk County Council and Suffolk Chamber of Commerce in Newmarket and District) will work with the MoD and the Homes and Communities Agency to drive the vision forward by developing the business case for future uses and preparing an initial masterplan for the site during 2017/18. The masterplan will be used to identify key infrastructure requirements and to bid for up-front investment to unlock the site for development. • We have information regarding the USVF changes at RAF Mildenhall and RAF Lakenheath which is available here: http://www.westsuffolk.gov.uk/Business/RAF_Lakenheath_and_Mildenhall/index.cfm
<p>Enterprise zones</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Government’s Enterprise Zone programme includes two sites in West Suffolk: Haverhill Research Park and 14 hectares of land at Suffolk Park (which is part of Suffolk Business Park), Bury St Edmunds. Enterprise Zones help to grow the local economy by offering benefits to businesses such as a potential business rates discount. • West Suffolk councils are currently undertaking a Planning Improvement Plan (PIP), more of which is included later within this annual report. The PIP aims to minimise delay in the planning

	<p>process and will assist applications for the Enterprise Zones.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We have been working with Local Enterprise Partnerships and developers to finalise the individual development plans for each site and to consider the support needed to bring forward the Enterprise Zones. • Haverhill Research Park is now also actively being marketed as part of the Greater Cambridge Greater Peterborough's 'Cambridge Compass' Enterprise Zone. Similarly, Suffolk Park is being marketed by New Anglia within its 'Space to Innovate' Enterprise Zone. We will be able to update on this later in 2017.
<p>Investing in our commercial property</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In August 2016 a new factory extension at Omar Group opened on a site rented from Forest Heath District Council in London Road, Brandon. The district council invested £500,000 in the extension, which will result not only in increased rents to the council, but also in an increase in production capacity of 50%, and an increase in workforce of 80 people. Forest Heath invested in 10 new light industrial units small business units at Sam Alper Court in Newmarket. The site is adjacent to six existing industrial properties owned by Forest Heath and the new units are built on the site of a demolished factory unit. The project budget was £1.85 million. Pentaco, the main contractor, took possession of the site in December 2015 and the site was completed in December 2016. • The units have underfloor heating supplied by air-source heat pumps. Solar panels are fitted on each unit which will benefit occupiers and generate additional income for the Council. • Eight out of ten units are already occupied by new tenants and the remaining two are due to be let shortly. The total rental income is £97,000 each year compared to £84,000 in the business case. • The new tenants include a number of local firms ranging from a cleaning company to a roofing business.
<p>Small business grants</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The small business grants scheme enables new businesses or those still within their first year (subject to criteria) to apply for a grant of up to £1500. • In 2016/17, 8 grants totalling £12,000 have been awarded across West Suffolk. We have supported a wide variety of businesses including a bakery in Bury St Edmunds, a pre-loved children's clothes business in West Row and a commercial photographer in Tuddenham.
<p>West Suffolk Greener</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In early 2017 the scheme received its 100th grant application. Since its launch in 2011, the grant has supported organisations to reduce their energy expenditure in a wide variety of ways, with

Business Grant	<p>LED lighting upgrades being the most popular measure.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To date, the grant has assisted these organisations to make annual savings of £83,763.
Solar for businesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This service, launched in June 2015, installs solar panels on local businesses, reducing electricity bills and supplying the electricity grid with energy from renewable sources. During 2016/17 we have continued to build on the success of this scheme by increasing the number of buildings benefiting from council-owned solar panel installations to 27, with a further 10 likely to be installed later in 2017. Host businesses receive discounted electricity, usually around 30% cheaper than the existing grid tariff. This is projected to save the host business around £15,500 in one year and £315,000 over the life of the 20 year project. To date, £711,684 has been invested into the scheme generating an annual income of £75,000. In 2016/17, £92,915 was invested into the scheme.
Business events and inward investment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In October this year, West Suffolk councils jointly held the sixth business festival with partners. It was attended by 2000 people who came to events across West Suffolk over 10 days. The event started with the annual Menta Trade Fair with over 100 exhibitors, free training and business funding advice. A total of 24 events were hosted by a range of our partner organisations and the event concluded with the Bury Free Press Business Awards. Businesses from across West Suffolk were invited to attend a Hong Kong Trade Event, a free seminar held in Bury St Edmunds. The aim of the seminar was to boost trade between local firms with Hong Kong and Asia. The seminar in May 2016 followed on from an event held the previous year in partnership with the Hong Kong Trade Development Council. Suffolk companies have already shown huge interest in opportunities in Hong Kong and China and the seminar provided an opportunity to develop that interest, to network and gain insights into how to do business with Asia.

Skills and education	
Local skills and education needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Two skills surveys for businesses and young people were launched in December 2016. The aim of the business survey was to find out what skills and attributes West Suffolk firms need from their future employees. The young people’s survey, run in partnership with West Suffolk College, aimed to find out about young people’s future job aspirations and their views on the skills and

	<p>training they need. The survey closed at the end of March 2017 and results will be used to identify where action is needed in the future.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In this context, we recognise that recruitment in West Suffolk is challenging at the moment. We live in an area of relatively full employment and there is a strong pull from Cambridge within the local jobs market. This makes the need to grow our own talent through apprenticeships and other training schemes even more important. • Through this work we are contributing towards one of our 2014-16 equality objectives to ensure West Suffolk has 'people with the educational attainment and skills needed in our local economy'.
<p>Developing our staff</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We currently have 18 apprentices in post, working for West Suffolk councils and 12 existing members of staff working towards apprenticeship qualifications. The subjects undertaken range from business administration and finance to arboriculture and mechanical engineering. • West Suffolk also led an initiative to address the national shortfall of planning officers which has been felt in Suffolk. This saw West Suffolk councils work with neighbouring local authorities to take on 10 planning apprentices working across the county. West Suffolk recruited three of those 10. All 10 were recruited with the view to retaining their employment within the public sector and developing their careers. • In the last five years we have employed 54 apprentices, of which 35 have stayed with us in either permanent or temporary jobs. Of our current workforce, 5% started their careers as an apprentice.

<p>Supporting our markets</p>	
<p>- Local markets - Developing our markets - Christmas markets</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Our commitment to develop the regular markets and introduce special events and additional markets has continued this year. We recognise the importance of a thriving market to local residents but it is also a good way to provide employment and opportunities to new businesses, as well as increasing footfall in our towns by attracting visitors, boosting the local economy. • Bury St Edmunds Christmas fayre attracted its highest visitor numbers so far with 125,000 people visiting over the four days of the fayre. • We have increased the number of speciality markets. During the school summer holidays we held six community markets every Tuesday in Newmarket, while special events hosted on the market square in Haverhill included a crafts and gifts market, a motor show, beer festival and a young

	<p>people’s market. Special events were also organised as part of the Mildenhall Christmas market.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Further highlights from this year can be found in the attached case study. • We are also working with a group of businesses and individuals in Clare who have asked St Edmundsbury to consider the possibility of reinstating the town market. The market closed back in the 1990s. A drop-in event was held in the town to ask residents and businesses leaders for their views. We will update you as this initiative progresses.
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Creating prosperous places to live in, work in and visit	
Bury St Edmunds Town Centre Masterplan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We want to ensure that Bury St Edmunds town centre remains a vibrant and interesting place for residents, employees and visitors. In this year, we have begun the process of creating a masterplan for the area in order to address this challenge. The aim of the masterplan is to attract investment, set the guidelines for the future growth and development of Bury St Edmunds town centre and to provide a framework against which individual development proposals can be assessed when they come forward. The masterplan is also about recognising that growth in Bury St Edmunds and the wider area is happening and the need to look at how we accommodate that, as well as changes in technology and changes in shopping patterns. • With Peter Brett Associates and David Lock Associates, we are exploring how the masterplan can address a number of town centre issues such as traffic management (including parking), heritage conservation and accessibility for all users. • This work is being led by a working group of partners including the Business Improvement District, Suffolk Chamber of Commerce in Bury St Edmunds, Bury market traders, the Bury Society, the Bury Town Trust, Bury Town Council, St Edmundsbury Borough Council and Suffolk County Council. • We recognise that co-producing the masterplan with our partners, local people and visitors will help to ensure that we can best shape town centre growth so that it works for people. • Public engagement on an issues and options report during the spring gave residents, town centre workers, shoppers and visitors the opportunity to give their views on the challenges and opportunities for the town centre both now and as we look to the next decade and beyond. • We are now collating the results of this engagement exercise and preparing a draft masterplan which will go back out to public consultation in the summer.
Haverhill Masterplan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working with the ONE Haverhill partnership, St Edmundsbury developed a masterplan for Haverhill town centre which was adopted in September 2015.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The masterplan is being progressed through five workstreams: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>Workstream 1: Highways and movement</i> – including delivery of highway improvements ○ <i>Workstream 2: Marketing</i> – such as advertising Haverhill and specific sites ○ <i>Workstream 3: Site assembly</i> – gaining control of sites, investing and influencing to bring sites forward ○ <i>Workstream 4: Development briefs</i> – creating briefs from a planning perspective ○ <i>Workstream 5: Place management</i> – for example, the town centre work delivered by the town and borough councils • Some of the projects currently being realised through the delivery of the masterplan include: • Camps Road Recreation Ground (an example of workstream 1) – Work started in February 2017 to upgrade the existing footpath network across the Recreation Ground. This includes widening three existing footpaths to three metres wide to enable pedestrians and cyclists to jointly use it safely. • Jubilee Walk mixed development project (an example of workstream 4) – Within the town centre one of the key sites, Jubilee Walk, has been severely constrained by lease arrangements giving control over existing parking to a single retailer. Although the retailer had vacated the premises, which stood empty, the lease prevented the borough council from implementing any alternative development proposals. The council has since negotiated the surrender of that restrictive lease and has subsequently let the vacant retail unit on new terms. This achieves both an active retail frontage in a key location and unlocks the Jubilee Walk site for redevelopment in accordance with the masterplan. • Town Council handyman (an example of workstream 5) - The Town Council has employed a handyman on a permanent contract, working 22 hours a week. The handyman’s role is to address some of the ‘tidy up’ issues in and around the town that were original identified by The ONE Haverhill Partnership through the masterplan consultation. Work to date has included weeding, washing traffic island bollards and reporting broken ones, cutting verges, cleaning bus stops, painting railings, fixing signs, litter picks and liaising with residents to trim overgrown hedges.
<p>Newmarket Business Improvement District (BID)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At the time of writing last year, Newmarket businesses had just voted to set up a BID for the town. The BID has now employed a manager and they are busy working to deliver events in 2017. • The BID is also setting up town centre Wi-Fi to provide free internet access to residents and visitors to the town centre and has employed two rangers who provide support to residents and

	<p>visitors, sign-post to services and report any problems around the town.</p>
<p>Bury St Edmunds Business Improvement District (BID)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bury St Edmunds BID (ourburystedmunds) has continued to be the voice of businesses in Bury St Edmunds town centre with St Edmundsbury Borough Council a member of its Board. In 2016/17 the BID organised a number of events including the Whitsun Fayre, Independents Week (as mentioned in the markets case study), the Food and Drink Festival, the Festival of Sport and the Christmas Lights Switch On. These events were highly successful and served to raise the profile of the town and increase footfall to the area and local businesses. • More information about the BID is available at: http://www.ourburystedmunds.com/index.php
<p>Street scene</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We take pride in our local area and know that living, working and visiting an attractive place can enhance wellbeing and improve the overall impression of an area. Alongside our local communities, and invaluable support from volunteers, we work hard to ensure that our localities remain vibrant, clean and safe. Some highlights include: • Continuing to promote the highly successful Love Where You Live campaign and the webpage: www.westsuffolk.gov.uk/lwyl, which provides a wealth of information for people who want to set up groups or individual litter picks. Information is provided on equipment that's available, how to ensure litter is collected at the end of the pick, risk assessment information and tips for ensuring the litter pick is carried out safely. • In 2016/17, approximately 600 people have taken part in litter picks across West Suffolk, collecting 460 bags between them. A further 124 people undertake litter picks on an 'ad-hoc' basis. • We supported national events such as Keep Britain Tidy, Keep Clean for the Queen in summer 2016 and the Great British Spring Clean in March 2017. • Through the Suffolk Waste Partnership we are part of the Suffolk Fly-Tipping Action Group (STAG). We contribute to enforcement events, work with Vehicle and Operator Services Agency, the Environment Agency and police. • We successfully investigated and prosecuted an incident of fly-tipping on Forestry Commission land, successfully claiming back our full costs. We continue to raise awareness of the issue and the possibility of prosecution to discourage others from fly-tipping. • We proactively supported Bury in Bloom after the organisers of the competition gave feedback that they wanted to see more community engagement. As a result we sponsored a leaflet to 20,000 homes to encourage people to get involved with Bury in Bloom and to take more

	<p>ownership and pride in their local area. Bury St Edmunds was successful in its category, more of which can be found in this report later.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In April 2016 we successfully moved to a new garden waste subscription scheme which achieved sign-up of just under 40% by residents across West Suffolk. Due to changes in funding at the county level we needed to make the service self-financing. The result was to run a new scheme where residents are charged £40 for collection of their garden waste throughout the year, with residents who do not wish to sign up encouraged instead to either home compost, take their garden waste to the Household Waste Recycling Centre or to share a bin with neighbours. Indications are that the vast majority of residents are disposing of their garden waste by these methods. • In February 2017 we introduced another payment method making it easier for customers to sign-up. Customers can now order and pay for their garden waste collection by Direct Debit on line. Early indications show that customers are eager to use this option with over 6,860 customers signed up since going live. • With Suffolk Waste Partnership Recycling we took part in a campaign in November 2016 aimed at reducing contamination in blue bins such as food waste, glass, nappies, textiles and electricals. A leaflet was sent to all households across Suffolk and backed up by a social media campaign. The 'Get your recycling right' Youtube video had 52,000 views across Suffolk.
<p>Public Spaces Protection Orders (PSPOs)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 introduced a number of changes to the ways that councils and the police can deal with local anti-social behaviour issues. Among the changes is the replacement of the Designated Public Place Orders, Gating Orders, and Dog Control Orders with Public Spaces Protection Orders (PSPOs). • A PSPO can be used to regulate activities in public places that have a detrimental effect on the local community. They can help by giving local councils and police additional powers to tackle anti-social behaviour in specific locations. • West Suffolk councils have consulted on new offences under the PSPO in relation to dog walkers/ owners. This would mean introducing a heavier fixed penalty for those who fail to pick up after their dog and excluding dogs from certain areas, such as children's play areas and fenced off football pitches. • The aim remains to work with communities to reduce incidents of dog fouling and to target specific problem areas.

Bury St Edmunds Destination Management Organisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• St Edmundsbury Borough Council is supporting the establishment and operation of a Destination Management Organisation (DMO) in a number of ways including funding. This year the DMO was set-up as a company with board members meeting with local stakeholders who have all expressed an interest in this initiative. It is envisaged that the DMO will become a more active presence in Bury St Edmunds and the surrounding area in the year to come. The DMO will provide long-term strategic direction for tourism in Bury St Edmunds and the surrounding area.• Outcomes from the DMO include creating economic growth across the tourism sector, ensuring a co-ordinated approach to marketing the tourism assets, retaining tourism business and creating a catalyst for other initiatives and events. The main focus will be to increase the value of tourism to the area by encouraging overnight stays and longer visits.
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Modernising our approach to regulation	
The environmental health service has adopted new ways of working with local businesses and communities that aim to modernise our approach to regulation. Highlights from this year include:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Suffolk Eat Out Eat Well Awards: This scheme recognises the efforts of eligible food businesses to actively promote healthier food choices to their customers as part of their business and menus. West Suffolk has been at the forefront of the scheme which you can learn more about in the attached case study.• Participation in Crucial Crew: Environmental Health took part to promote good food hygiene to year six pupils, including focus on handwashing practices. Throughout 2016/17 we reached nearly 1500 pupils from local schools across West Suffolk.• Simple Cautions: Three Simple Cautions were issued to businesses during the year, two for food hygiene matters and one for health and safety matters. A simple caution is where a person admits to the alleged offence but is not formally prosecuted for the offences.• Use of new technology: Towards the end of 2016, inspectors began using mobile tablet technology during routine food hygiene inspections. In the future this will lead to an improved quality of reports, improved database information and administrative efficiencies.• Bury St Edmunds Christmas Fayre: Our team carried out food hygiene enforcement activities at the fayre and provided advice to businesses. No significant food hygiene issues occurred during the event.

Priority 2 – resilient families and communities that are healthy and active

We want to see:

- A thriving voluntary sector and active communities who take the initiative to help the most vulnerable
- People playing a greater role in determining the future of their communities
- Improved wellbeing, physical and mental health
- Accessible countryside and green spaces

Why was this a priority for 2016/17?

We are actively supporting families and communities to create better links, become more self-sufficient and sustainable and able to deal with the changing landscape in terms of, for example, the ageing population and reduced funding in public services. Our approach is to help prevent problems from developing or even better still, to stop them from happening in the first place. We do this by creating connections throughout our communities, providing assistance through grant funding and working with our partners to provide a holistic approach to empowering communities. This section covers our activities under the headings:

- Making connections in the community
- Community funding
- Parks and green spaces
- Arts, heritage and leisure
- Improved health and wellbeing
- Communicating with our residents

Making connections in the community

In line with our Families and Communities strategy, the councils work with local communities to identify and implement initiatives in local areas that help to build community capacity and resilience, as well as improving outcomes for local residents. By building on the strengths of individuals, families and communities, our aim is to support communities in caring for themselves, rather than requiring costly public service interventions. Much of the work detailed in this section contributes to our equality objective to ensure we have 'a thriving voluntary sector who take the initiative to help the most vulnerable'.

Social Prescribing

- This pilot is an innovative new approach where individuals are referred for non-clinical support

<p>Pilot in Haverhill – Life Links</p>	<p>to promote wellbeing and resilience, becoming less reliant on primary and statutory services but increasing their use and knowledge of the voluntary and community sector as a means of support. A case study providing further details is attached.</p>
<p>Brandon Day Centre</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In August 2016, we were made aware that the Brandon Day Centre would be closing down as the provider at the time had decided to withdraw services. • The centre was supported by Brandon Community Association (BCA) and residents of the town. It had become an important part of the lives of service users and their families. It provided service users with a safe environment to see friends, enjoy some entertainment and have a meal while it also provided respite and support to families and carers. • In partnership with Suffolk County Council, Forest Heath District Council worked hard to ensure that the day centre should remain open. We formed a steering group which included representatives from BCA, Brandon Town Council and councillors from Suffolk County Council and Forest Heath. • A new provider was found by Suffolk County Council and their approach was focused on delivering services in a sustainable way and becoming part of the local community. • The new provider became a member of the steering group which meant they had the benefit of key information and could make important links and contacts across the town. • There have been positive steps since the new provider took over the day centre in January 2017 with user numbers increasing. Funds are also being raised for a new minibus which will be supported by locality budget money from Forest Heath councillors and funding streams recommended by the two councils. • This is an excellent example of a service being saved through the passion and commitment of the local community, with support from the district and county councils.
<p>The Shed, West Row</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A piece of land in West Row was identified as having potential for a community garden. A team of community volunteers were formed known as 'The Shed' with the main aim of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - leasing the land from Suffolk County Council; - renovating buildings and the area into a community facility; and - providing a place for communities to enjoy. • Together with Community Action Suffolk, we became involved with championing the project, assisting with the legalities of transferring the land and assisting with sources of funding for the future. • We are pleased to report that the lease was secured in late 2016 and work has since begun on

	<p>the area, with volunteers clearing a large piece of the land and uncovering a number of outbuildings.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will report on work as it progresses over the next few months. The main aim will be to provide a multi-use area including toilet facilities, kitchen, tea room, outbuildings, community gardens, sensory gardens, arts and crafts, wildlife areas and conservation. • This project has already provided a valuable opportunity for people in the community to work alongside skilled tradespeople.
<p>Newmarket history and connections</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This public engagement project involved people living in and around Newmarket to reveal personal histories, stories and legacies of the area and share them with the rest of the community to encourage a sense of belonging and a celebration of the town. • We worked with Spinning Wheel Theatre Company who delivered the project and they created opportunities to encourage participation. • Almost 1200 people took part in the project including 73 children listening to and creating stories and three primary schools were involved in workshops focusing on creating stories and building a family portrait. • This has been a successful and well received project and outcomes have included residents of Newmarket participating in shared activities and creating a sense of common vision for the local area.
<p>Community facilities in Lackford</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lackford village is made of up over 100 homes, however, there was no community facility to host the variety of activities, groups and clubs that take place there. • The Parish Council Committee decided to form a working group and fundraise to transform the Church Bell Tower and old boiler room into a community hub. • Over a four year period, the residents of Lackford have raised significant funds towards this much needed project. • In 2016/17, St Edmundsbury Borough Council has supported the project with funding from the Rural Initiatives Grants Scheme and from a ward member Locality Budgets, while the Council has also provided advice and contacts. • This is an excellent example of a community working together, taking ownership of a problem and finding a solution. The building work has commenced and in future we will report on how this progresses and how the facility is used.
<p>St Mary's Church,</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As well as religious purposes, this church is used for a number of clubs and activities. The

<p>Haverhill</p>	<p>church wanted to be able to extend the activities available for a summer children’s club and the weekly mother and toddler group.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • St Edmundsbury was able to provide advice on the equipment that would be required and licensing for showing films in the community. • New equipment was purchased, with the help of Locality Budget funding, which will provide a new facility for use in the community.
<p>Bury St Edmunds town centre masterplan – Community co-production</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A section on the Bury St Edmunds town centre masterplan has been included in the economic growth section of this document. There is, however, a community co-production element to this work. • At a very early stage it was decided that the masterplan would be co-produced with the people who live in, work in and visit the town centre. As the population grows we understand that the town centre needs to meet the needs of everyone who uses it. • We arranged for a meeting of the Bury Assembly of Associations (formed of all the residents’ associations working across the town) and an Accessibility Group consisting of ten organisations that support and/or advocate people with additional needs. The discussions and feedback from these meetings was shared with the consultants appointed to the project, and this then helped form the Issues and Options report. The report sets out an analysis of the initial issues and options for Bury St Edmunds town centre. It represents a key stage in the production of the masterplan for the town centre and was subject to a public engagement exercise where we went out to the market, the supermarkets, the leisure centre and The Apex, all with a view of encouraging people to have their say. • The results of this are now being analysed and will be used to inform the draft masterplan which will then be subject to further public engagement in the summer. Updates will be available as this work progresses.
<p>Haverhill Youth survey</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Youth Action Group for Haverhill, which is led by the Town Council, wanted to conduct a survey of young people specifically asking about cultural activities that young people want to take part in. • Suffolk County Council was already involved in a schools project and we were able to use that engagement to feed into the Haverhill Youth Survey. • The collaboration resulted in young people from Samuel Ward Academy developing the questionnaire and the partnership between the three councils ensured the survey was widely advertised.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We gained some excellent feedback from the survey and some key points have already been actioned. One example related to feedback as to why young people were not attending sessions as frequently as had been hoped at the leisure centre. That feedback led to new furniture and charging sockets for IT devices being installed in a 'chill out' area of the leisure centre. The Apex are now working with the Town Council on a variety of projects including film workshops, music heats and spoken word events.
West Suffolk Parish Conference	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We held our first West Suffolk Town and Parish Conference for town and parish councils from across west Suffolk to update one another and discuss a range of issues. The conference is interactive, exchanging information, taking part in workshops and networking with each other and partner organisations. In 2016/17 discussions included affordable housing and changes to the Local Government landscape.
Newbury Community Centre transfer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> St Edmundsbury Borough Council has continued working with the Newbury Community Association, (NCA), Suffolk County Council, Havebury Housing Partnership and the local community to ensure the replacement of the Newbury Community Centre is designed by the community to meet their requirements. The old community centre has been important for local residents therefore it has been a priority to ensure its design is shaped by the people it serves. In 2016/17, two community consultations have been held which consisted of drop-in sessions and an online survey. Over 100 responses were received. The feedback revealed that there was very strong support for replacing the centre (around 90% of respondents). Many gave additional comments on issues such as design, layout, parking and traffic which the partners are now using to improve the scheme. As a result, the facility on the Howard Estate will be built on part of the former Howard Primary School site, in St Olaves Road. An outline planning application is due to be submitted later in 2017.

Community funding	
Community Chest	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The West Suffolk Community Chest has been the main funding mechanism available to voluntary and community sector groups across West Suffolk. It means they can apply for funding to do work that will bring benefits to local people and which will help the West Suffolk councils achieve their priority of supporting families and strengthening communities to enable

	<p>them to become more resilient and more able to help themselves. In so doing, Community Chest funding has formed a key part of our Families and Communities agenda.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In this year there has been a particular focus on how organisations can support people to make positive choices and behaviour change to prevent ill health, supported with funds of £160,000 from Suffolk County Council’s Public Health department. In total, £593,263 has been paid to voluntary groups and organisations across West Suffolk in 2016/17 to support their valuable work. • Annex 1 (attached) sets out the organisations that have received Community Chest funding across West Suffolk in 2016/17.
<p>Locality Budgets</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Our locality-based approach to community development is supported by our Locality Budget scheme, where councillors each have an annual budget of £2500 that they can allocate to community groups and activities in their ward. Locality Budgets help residents take ownership of issues that they care about and help councillors ensure that funding gets to the heart of these issues. • In 2016/17 West Suffolk councillors contributed more than £155,000 towards over 300 initiatives and projects in their wards areas. From supporting the Newmarket library to the Discover Moreton Hall walk/run route. A full list of projects funded by councillors, together with information about how the scheme works can be found here: www.westsuffolk.gov.uk/localitybudgets
<p>Rural Initiatives Grant Scheme</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • St Edmundsbury offers the Rural Initiatives Grant Scheme to match fund organisations for one-off specific capital projects in rural areas that contribute towards the Council’s priorities. • During 2016/17 £69,501 was committed towards 10 projects for purposes such as the conversion of part of Lackford church into a community facility (as described earlier), Hargrave Parish Council for a play area refurbishment, Bradfield St George Village Hall for heating system improvements and Stradishall Parish Council for the purchase of recreation land.

Parks and green spaces

We are proud of our parks and open spaces which have again been recognised at a national and local level. This would not be possible without the dedication of volunteers who spent some 7000 hours working in our parks and green spaces during 2016/17.

<p>Achievements in this year across West Suffolk include:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A management plan for Yellow Brick Road in Newmarket has been prepared, which will see this central walkway regenerated and improved. It has the potential to become an important wildlife corridor and provide an enjoyable walk for local people to access the town and residential areas.• The Beck Row Football changing rooms on Aspal Close Nature Reserve have been replaced, providing smart new facilities for local and visiting teams. This new sports facility was paid for by using section 106 funding from Suffolk County Council.• The Beck Row Community Centre needed to vacate its premises at the local school. A new community hall facility, which will be managed by the parish council, will now be provided in the former Rose and Crown pub. This new community facility is being funded by Suffolk County Council.• Multi-use games areas were upgraded at Warren Close, Brandon; Douglas Place, Mildenhall; and Heathersett Way, Lakenheath.• A series of wildlife audits have been conducted at sites important to nature conservation across West Suffolk.• The Abbey Gardens, East Town Park in Haverhill, Nowton Park and West Stow Country Park have again been awarded green flag status which means they are safe, clean and well looked after.• Bury St Edmunds achieved the gold award in Anglia in Bloom and both Nowton Park and the Abbey Gardens were placed top of their respective categories.• A new play area on Hooper Square in Bury St Edmunds opened in December. We used the community co-production model to deliver the new play area which meant local people were involved throughout. Having voiced their concerns about the previous play area, they helped choose the most appropriate location for the new play area, as well as the equipment to go in it. We worked alongside the Westley Residents' Association to design flyers that were distributed to every household on the Westley Estate and a consultation event was attended by over 50 people. A new multi-use games area is also now open.• The play area at Julian Close in Haverhill was refurbished and pupils from the local school were consulted on how this should look.• New equipment was installed at play parks at St Peter's Pit and the Gainsborough Recreation Ground in Bury St Edmunds.• The play area in East Town Park was also refurbished this year. The visitor centre on site was reconfigured to provide a refreshment kiosk which now overlooks the play area.• In partnership with Abbeycroft Leisure we have established the The Discover Moreton Hall: Run
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	<p>Walk Route which is a sign posted five kilometre route around Moreton Hall to support running and walking activity. The route is marked with small round signs that are fixed on existing lamp posts slightly above head height. There are also plans for a similar route in Brandon.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We have also been assisting the County Council Rights of Way Team and the River Lark Catchment Group in creating a new link path along the River Lark corridor across a site currently owned and managed by British Sugar. St Edmundsbury is about to agree Heads of Terms that will give a 99 year lease for the river corridor.
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Arts, heritage and leisure

<p>Maximising our assets</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The eagerly awaited National Horseracing Centre for Horseracing and Sporting Art at Palace House in Newmarket was officially opened by Her Majesty the Queen in November 2016. This was the culmination of 10 years of partnership work between many individuals and trusts from across the horseracing industry, Suffolk County Council and Forest Heath District Council, with support from the Heritage Lottery Fund. • The Breaking New Ground Partnership obtained Heritage Lottery Funding of £1.5 million over three years to deliver a range of exciting heritage and landscape projects in the heart of the Brecks, including Brandon and West Stow, aimed at promoting the heritage of the Brecks. At Brandon, we delivered the Forest Festival held in June 2016, which gave visitors the opportunity to get involved with a number of wildlife and nature activities. The Enchanted Forest held in August 2016 saw the Country Park transformed with a number of interactive activities, story-telling and arts and crafts. • The partnership also wanted to deliver a unique schools project that would inspire, educate and entertain children, teachers and families with the story of the Brecks. Forest Heath District Council commissioned a new piece of interactive, educational theatre which was targeted at Key Stage 2 children. Nearly 1400 children from 14 schools across Norfolk and Suffolk saw the production. It also played at Brandon Country Park, West Stow and the Latitude Festival where a further 1026 people saw the play. The feedback from those that saw the play was positive with it described as both educational and engaging for children. • Following the success of these events we are considering a second bid for funding next year. • At West Stow, we delivered the Enchanted Heath event where over 2000 visitors could enjoy crafts, music, stories, guided tours and archery amongst other things. • As part of the Enchanted Heath funding, West Stow also gained an added attraction in the form
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	<p>of the Beowulf and Grendel trail. This two kilometre trail winds through key Breckland features in the park and entwines the rich storytelling narrative of the early Anglo-Saxons and the unique landscape, including the Site of Specific Scientific Interest. An impressive three metre carved Dragon Head and 40 foot mound is the centrepiece on the Heath. The next phase is the installation of interpretation panels followed by a launch event in August 2017.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • St Edmundsbury obtained an Arts Council Resilience Grant of £108,000 for Moyse’s Hall Museum and West Stow. The funding will help fund staff and volunteer training, physical adaptations to the museum’s displays, the building of a shelter at West Stow to enable more school children to visit at any one time and display materials for outreach visits. • In 2016, there has been an increase in visitors with Moyse’s Hall up by 3,624 tickets on last year, while West Stow is up by 4,009. • For the period 2016/17, there were over 26,000 admissions to West Stow and over 20,000 admissions to Moyse’s Hall. Across both sites over 67,000 school children visited. • We held very successful events at Moyse’s Hall where 17,263 people visited the Lego events and 3,603 people visited the Sci-fi event. • We were delighted to welcome nearly 15,000 school pupils to West Stow, which made the final five in the National School Trip Awards 2016. West Stow was also used for filming on BBC CBeebies programme ‘Our Story’ which has had multiple showings on the children’s channel. The popular Ring Quest event took place during February half-term in 2017. Visitors could take part in a family trail around the country park, meet creatures from Tolkien’s Middle Earth, and try out archery. February 2017 saw recorded numbers since it started in 2002 with over 327 family packs sold and 1,675 visitors in February half-term week.
<p>Bury St Edmunds Guildhall transfer</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We have continued working with the Guildhall Feoffment Trust and Bury St Edmunds Heritage Trust Limited to pursue the long-term aim of making the Guildhall an independent and sustainable community enterprise. • In May 2016, the project was awarded a grant of £669,000 from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) for the refurbishment of the building which included repairing the rear roof and strengthening and restoring some of the ancient fabric. Match-funding from the project means that work started in January 2017 and will be completed in 2018. • Once works are completed, the Guildhall will be managed entirely independently of the Borough Council, emphasising our commitment to supporting sustainable community asset transfers.
<p>The Apex</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Apex continues to prove itself as one of the region’s leading destinations for live

	<p>entertainment.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• In 2016, the Apex hosted over 200 shows and sold 90,000 tickets, which is an increase of 10,000 on the previous year.• The box office took a total of £1.8 million over 2016/17 which is an increase of 14.5% on the previous year.• We have concentrated our efforts on marketing including a successful gift voucher campaign in November and December 2016 which saw sales of over £18,000 (compared with £5,000 for the same period in 2014).• The Apex has also continued to be an attractive offer for community use by groups including: baby ballet, post-natal yoga, amateur performances by local organisations, Sunday brunch, chess club and art displays.• Our 'reach' on the internet is also expanding with the number of people receiving information about the Apex on Twitter and Facebook increasing with more unique users visiting the website.
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Improved health and wellbeing	
<p>Working with Abbeycroft Leisure, we deliver sports and leisure services across West Suffolk. Abbeycroft undertakes outreach work that contributes to our priorities and is in line with the Promoting Physical Activity Framework that was adopted in July 2016</p>	<p>Examples of projects that Abbeycroft has run in this year include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stand tall – a 12 week physical activity and wellbeing programme that targets 14-25 year olds who are both inactive and known to suffer with a mental health condition. The outcome of this was that 78% of the individuals referred showed improved wellbeing. • Monday mums – in partnership with community midwives, antenatal groups are held at Bury St Edmunds and Newmarket leisure centres. The programme seeks to educate and empower pregnant women who are overweight or obese to support them to have a healthy pregnancy and birth experience. This initiative has had both positive results and positive feedback from expectant mums and it is hoped that the programme will be replicated in more locations. • Exercise on referral – this scheme has seen 467 people take part during 2016/17 across West Suffolk. There have been positive results with 57% of those clients who started, going on to complete the scheme. Of those that complete the scheme, 93% continue to remain active. Outcomes have included clients reducing blood pressure, weight and even medication. • Keep active – key projects have been delivered in West Suffolk after £148,000 was secured from the Sport England Community Sport Activation Fund. The funding was secured for a three year period and the initiative will be rolled out to the different communities within Forest Heath over that period. The aim is to engage both the younger and older population with the aim of increasing participation in those target groups. Progress has so far seen: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community engagement sessions with the over 55 population across Newmarket. Taster sessions including bowls, badminton, short tennis and table tennis were used to generate interest. Successful walking football and walking netball sessions have also been developed. The youngest participants in this are 55 while the oldest is 92. • The programme has also had a focus on the 14-25 population by providing opportunities to take part in sport and dance in an informal environment. Again the aim is to encourage increased physical activity and behaviour change. Sessions have taken place in Newmarket, Brandon and Mildenhall. The Mildenhall project reached its target for individual attendees. The success of this programme is partly due to partnership working between Catch 22, local schools and youth groups. • The council has agreed to create an investment fund that Abbeycroft Leisure can apply to for capital funding to improve and develop its facilities and reduce operating costs. As such, Abbeycroft Leisure is reviewing the current portfolio of leisure facilities and examining the possibilities for future development on those sites. This work will identify a facility mix that will aid both commercial development, broaden opportunities to co-locate with other stakeholders,

	<p>engage a broader audience in different forms of physical activity and improve the quality of services to customers. The feasibility work is already underway and will be completed in 2017.</p>
<p>Promoting physical activity</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • West Suffolk councils recognise the importance of individuals and communities that are active as it improves health and wellbeing and, in time, can reduce the reliance on some services brought about by inactivity. We committed to our approach to increasing physical activity through our Promoting Physical Activity Framework that was adopted in July 2016. • Through this framework, West Suffolk councils set out the commitment to enable and encourage people to lead active lives thereby increasing activity levels across West Suffolk. This will lead to improved health and wellbeing for our communities resulting in less reliance on health care services. The framework sets out the outcomes we want to see and how, with partners, we can use our role to increase participation in physical activity across West Suffolk. • We also want to see holistic, place-based solutions for our major centres of population, which are: Brandon, Bury St Edmunds, Clare, Haverhill, Mildenhall and Newmarket. This work is starting in Bury St Edmunds. We understand from talking to local sports clubs and organisations that there is a need to grow clubs in order to increase capacity, participation and realise their ambitions and potential. • With match funding from St Edmundsbury Borough Council, Sport England provided £10,000 of feasibility study funding. This will be used to look at the possible options for a shared facility in Bury St Edmunds to meet the needs of local clubs. The study is being carried out by consultants and we are working in partnership with the sports clubs, Sport England and Abbeycroft Leisure to create an option for the future. We look forward to updating you on this work later in 2017.
<p>Suffolk Health and Wellbeing Board</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • West Suffolk councils are members of the Suffolk Health and Wellbeing Board along with the county council, local clinical commissioning groups, NHS England, HealthWatch, the police, the voluntary sector and other district and borough councils. Although health outcomes for many people in Suffolk and West Suffolk are good, the board aims to help those groups and communities which experience poorer health and wellbeing than others. • West Suffolk councils are contributing towards the board’s cross-cutting theme of community resilience – preventing issues before they become a problem. Experience shows that this prevention support is most effective when it comes through an established network within the local community. • The Suffolk Community Resilience Steering Group hosted a series of workshops to support the

	<p>development of a community resilience programme which builds on work already taking place across Suffolk. This engagement has resulted in a focus on four key areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal responsibility • Early help • Community action • Strong voluntary and community sector <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The community resilience programme forms part of the community strategies for boroughs and districts across Suffolk, such as West Suffolk’s Families and Communities Strategy. This is about a Suffolk-wide approach to community resilience that aims to eliminate duplication and see the boroughs and districts contributing to the health agenda in a holistic way. • West Suffolk is also a priority lead for the Suffolk-wide Prevention Strategy, the only non-clinical organisation to do so. This illustrates the importance of ensuring that good health and wellbeing starts with individual and community responsibility and resilience. • This work contributes towards our equality objective to improve physical and mental health and wellbeing.
<p>Dementia Action Alliance (DDA)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A large group of stakeholders started working together as they wanted to create a Dementia Friendly Community (DFC) for Bury St Edmunds. This involved introducing Dementia Friends sessions to different organisations and the wider community. Dementia Friends sessions focus on what it is like to live with dementia and is used as an awareness raising tool. This enables individuals, businesses and the community to look at what they can do differently to accommodate the needs of someone living with dementia. • We have helped by shaping the steering group and bringing in other successful DAAs to shape the best way to move forward for Bury St Edmunds. We have also supported this both by working to gain funding to be able to advertise and promote the DAA, and by bringing the Clinical Commissioning Group and other organisations on board to help with the roll out and promotion of creating a Dementia Friendly Community for Bury St Edmunds. • The Steering group was formed in January 2017 and has already started to make progress with positive changes within Bury St Edmunds. Examples of this are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - relaxed performances of films at Abbeygate Cinema; - involvement in the Bury St Edmunds town centre masterplan; and - enabling 12 different organisations to register an action plan with the Bury St Edmunds DAA.

Communicating with residents	
Customer services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Over the past year we have continued the implementation of our target operating model for customer contact with the councils, meaning that the team is able to handle queries about a range of services. This enables customers to have their questions answered at the first point of contact when at all possible. • Improvements in IT have also reduced the amount of staff time spent on handling routine transactions in the 'back office'. • The list of services and activities now delivered by the Customer Service Team include housing options, elections (extended hours were offered in the run up to and day of the European Union referendum), planning helpdesk, building control, licensing, waste, garden waste collection service sign up, parking permits, The Apex, noise, dogs, complaints and Freedom of Information Act requests.
Online Success	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The availability of online forms has grown since 2013/14 when only a limited number of online forms were available. This means that our customers can enjoy the convenience of completing and submitting a form online when they need to contact us about a range of services, or make payments, including: garden waste, parking permits and noise complaints. • We remain committed to our vision to enable customers to 'self-serve' online when convenient and appropriate and we know that this has been a great success.
Social media conversations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • West Suffolk councils are embracing new methods of communicating, and the councils are proactively using social media to engage with residents. Information is tweeted to over 7000 followers giving other Twitter users the opportunity to share the news with their own followers. Their comments and enquiries are monitored and answered by the Customer Service Team and communications officers. • Tweets are also used to direct residents to more information posted on our website. The communications teams meanwhile have used Facebook to engage with a growing audience of nearly 60 community Facebook groups. Some of these groups have membership levels in excess of 15,000 people. Not only is there the potential for these individuals to share the councils' status with friends, but even more importantly this offers the councils the opportunity to have direct conversations with residents, explain changes in more detail, expanding on the

	<p>reasons that have led to them and politely correcting residents on statements that are misinformed or untrue.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• A particular success was the launch of the Bury St Edmunds Town Centre Masterplan where we reached 23,189 people through a single post on Facebook alone. Although other posts were made throughout the public engagement stage, this launch post saw 109 shares, 126 likes, 1 dislike and a series of comments from around 50 individuals. While some of these comments were disparaging of the process, each of these types of comments were responded to in a polite and positive manner – the outcome of which led to more people seeing the post and some of the more sceptical of the audience being persuaded to take part online or attend one of our engagement events.
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Priority 3 – Homes for our communities

We want to see:

- Sufficient housing for current and future generations, including:
 - More affordable homes
 - Improvements to existing housing
- New developments that are fit for the future, properly supported by infrastructure, and that build communities, not just housing
- Homes that are flexible for people’s changing needs

Why was this a priority for 2016/17?

Our third priority is to ensure that we have an appropriate and sufficient supply of housing for our communities. Not only are we working hard to raise the standard of housing in the private rented sector and bring empty homes back into use, but we have also established a new company to build homes, in partnership with Suffolk County Council. We know that good housing can play an important role in improving the health and wellbeing of people in our area, and it is vital to realising our ambitions for economic growth. We have seen a significant change in Government legislation and policy on housing in 2016/17 including the Housing White Paper, the Homelessness Reduction Act and further welfare reform, all of which have significant implications for how we plan for, deliver and continuously improve the availability and affordability of housing in West Suffolk.

This section covers our activities under the headings:

- Ensuring a sufficient supply of housing
- Identifying and delivering new funding models for affordable housing
- Homelessness and temporary accommodation

Ensuring a sufficient supply of housing	
Forest Heath Local Plan	The local plan sets out the long-term planning and land use policies for the district. We use our planning policy framework to ensure appropriate business, housing and infrastructure development across the district. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is important to understand that even without a Local Plan, growth happens, but without a

	<p>Local Plan, it is harder to shape exactly where development should take place and to ensure of the infrastructure benefits to support local development.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responses to the consultation on the Site Allocations Local Plan and the Single Issue Review (SIR) of Core Strategy Policy CS7 (Overall Housing Provision and Distribution) helped inform a further document, which went out for consultation and set out the council's preferred strategy for the allocation of sites across the district. • The final draft is known as the Submission Document and early in 2017 there was a final opportunity for the public to comment before the documents were submitted to the Secretary of State for an independent planning examination. • The number of new dwellings required in Forest Heath for the period 2011 to 2031 is 6,800. • Housing and mixed use sites are being proposed in the market towns and in a number of villages. This will help to ensure that there is certainty around the long-term growth of the district and delivering the level of housing required. • In December 2016, Forest Heath District Council published its assessment of a five year supply of housing land. It sets out the availability of housing land supply for the period 2017-2022.
<p>St Edmundsbury Borough Council Vision 2031 – major development sites</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Moreton Hall: The development at Moreton Hall of 500 dwelling is currently being built and will be occupied by the end of 2017. The expansion of the Moreton Hall community centre has also been secured as part of this development. • Marham Park: Permission has been granted for a new country park, relief road between Tut Hill and Mildenhall Road (including a new roundabout on Mildenhall Road) and outline planning permission for this residential development in Bury St Edmunds. The finer details of the residential development are currently being considered by the local planning authority and it is hoped that building work will start in summer 2017. • The number of new dwellings required in St Edmundsbury for the period 2012-2031 is 11,480.
<p>Neighbourhood plan</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A neighbourhood plan is a community led framework for guiding the future development, regeneration and conservation of an area. Neighbourhood plans have a different status to other community led plans. Subject to a few basic conditions they will become legally binding and will become part of the development plan for the area. • Neighbourhood plans are currently in preparation for Newmarket, Great Barton, Hargrave and Barningham.

<p>Bringing empty homes back into use</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We have continued a pro-active approach to addressing the challenge around the high levels of empty homes in West Suffolk. We adopted the Empty Homes Strategy in 2015 and use a range of tools, including enforcement, which has led to 26 homes returned to use during 2016/17. • Working with partners, we offer support, including a grant, to help owners bring their previously empty properties up to the required standard for occupation in the private sector. • Our commitment to this work will continue in 2017/18 because we know there are families and individuals in need of such accommodation.
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<p>Identifying and delivering new funding models for affordable housing</p>	
<p>Barley Homes (Group) Ltd</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Barley Homes was formally incorporated as a company in March 2016 and the business plan approved in December 2016. It is a company limited by shares jointly owned by Suffolk County Council (50% of shares), Forest Heath District Council (25%) and St Edmundsbury Borough Council (25%). The purpose of the company is to develop houses across all tenures, for sale and private rent on a commercial basis, while also delivering much-needed affordable homes. • In 2016/17, four sites have been identified which it is hoped will deliver approximately 100 units with a mix of for sale, private rent and affordable housing. Work has now begun on the detailed development and planning process. • A five year business plan has been developed which contains details of the initial developments, the amount and type of funding required to complete the developments and the expected returns generated for the councils. • Funding of £6 million has been approved by West Suffolk councils and Suffolk County Council put forward a further £6 million, providing £12 million of funding in total.
<p>Continuing the supply of affordable housing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The housing and planning services are continuing to work hard to ensure that new private developments provide both affordable housing and contributions to key infrastructure. • In 2016/17 we delivered 141 affordable housing units which is above our target this year of 121 units. • We have continued to work with registered providers who have delivered a number of schemes. Orbit developed schemes at Barrow which delivered 24 units with another 12 on land at Kentford. The Havebury Housing Partnership completed the Priors Avenue development in Bury St Edmunds which delivered 33 units and was formally opened by Princess Anne in December

	<p>2016.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> We have, and will, continue to work with developers to ensure we achieve 30% affordable housing on new developments. This year we achieved 30% on all schemes apart from Station Hill in Bury St Edmunds which was 10%.
<p>Improving the quality of existing housing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We understand the importance of individuals and families having homes that are safe and suitable to live in and we continue to work with both owners and landlords in the private sector to ensure this happens. We have utilised our enforcement powers to bring up to standard 71 homes in the private rented sector to ensure these are safe and free from serious hazards. Under our existing programme to improve houses in multiple occupation (HMOs) we inspected 107 one, two and three storey properties in 2016/17 which resulted in 16 properties being licensed, with the remaining properties being brought up to standard. Under current legislation, all three-storey HMOs that are rented to five or more people who form more than one household, must be licensed. We inspect HMOs on a risk basis and the frequency is largely dependent on the confidence we have in the management and the standard of the property. The Government seeks to extend licensing from 2017/18 which means all of the current two-storey HMOs may come under the above regime. We are preparing for these new requirements by surveying areas to identify HMOs across 2017/18. As part of our commitment to drive up housing standards in line with our strategic priority West Suffolk councils took the lead on a Suffolk-wide project with the Fire and Rescue Service in order to reduce the hazards in flats above shops. You can read more information about this in the attached case study. The discretionary housing assistance to help people repair their own homes has been maintained, and we have helped 35 households through grant aid, with a total budget of £142,535. The take-up of this scheme has been relatively low so we are proactively reviewing our policy in 2017/18, to understand how we can reach more residents in need of such assistance. We have undertaken extensive consultation with partners and organisations who represent vulnerable client groups. We are also working with our colleagues, who offer specific funding for energy efficiency; insulation and heating, to pool our resources to reduce the hazard of excess cold in homes. We are expecting new measures under the Housing and Planning Act to tackle rogue landlords with additional sanctions to deal with poor conditions in the private rented sector.

<p>Support through Disabled Facilities Grants (DFG)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We worked with Suffolk partners in 2016/17 to procure a new Home Improvement Agency (HIA) to deliver services for our most vulnerable and disabled residents under a new integrated approach that went live in May 2016. The HIA delivers the majority of the Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) funds that the councils have been allocated through the Better Care Fund for 2016/17. This fund has been able to help 73 residents in West Suffolk. It underpins West Suffolk’s own strategy and aims to ensure that residents can live independently and safely in their homes. • We have promoted the service as well as directing people to other services, advice, minor and major adaptations and a ‘handy person’ scheme. • Only 30% of the total enquiries to the service resulted in the award of a DFG. We have ensured that the funding is suitably spent and residents do not have to suffer unnecessary building works or disruption in their homes. We are working to improve the current HIA and we are developing other potential models to deliver residents essential needs as efficiently as possible. • Under the Public Health Act we are working with social care partners, particularly in terms of vulnerable people with reduced capacity, to ensure that homes remain in a sanitary condition. We are represented, along with other housing colleagues, on a multi-agency group to improve the way that we assess and assist people in their homes which should lead to further improvements in 2017/18. • This work supported our equality objective of providing ‘homes that are flexible to meet people’s changing needs’.
<p>Suffolk co-ordination service</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Suffolk Co-ordination service provides a one-stop-shop for adults requiring housing-related support. • West Suffolk councils led on the successful Suffolk co-ordination service pilot, which benefited from funding from Suffolk County Council, and helped to place local people in supported accommodation. Across West Suffolk in 2016/17, a total of 298 people were placed in supported accommodation from a total of 492 assessments. • We will be delivering the new combined gateway service from 1 April 2017, which means people will benefit from single, easier route toward getting help for supported accommodation in Suffolk. This will be combined with the Central Access Referral Agency (CARA). The service will be transferred to Suffolk County Council in autumn 2017.

Homelessness and temporary accommodation	
Temporary accommodation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We are committed to reducing the use of bed and breakfast accommodation in West Suffolk for those requiring emergency temporary accommodation, as it may be unsuitable for an individual or family's needs and is not a cost-effective solution. • In 2015, St Edmundsbury bought a property on Newmarket Road, Bury St Edmunds and converted the previous bed and breakfast facility into a property that can accommodate up to six families who have become homeless and are in need of temporary accommodation. To learn more about the success of this initiative, please see the attached case study. • We are continuing to work with our partners to identify further units of accommodation that can be used temporarily to provide appropriate accommodation and make additional savings. • We are pleased to report that our spending on bed and breakfast accommodation has continued to fall. We spent £86,677 on bed and breakfast accommodation in 2016/17 which is down from £98,200 in 2015/16 and £208,600 in 2014/15. This means that our approach is working because we have reduced spending. Whilst spending on bed and breakfast accommodation has reduced it would have been significantly higher without the proactive decision to purchase the property on Newmarket Road. Ensuring that we have sufficient suitable temporary accommodation remains a challenge with demand continuing to increase. • We set out to ensure that no family would have to spend more than six weeks in bed and breakfast accommodation in 2016/17 and we have achieved this. We have also ensured that 16 and 17 year olds are provided with suitable accommodation and emergency bed spaces have been created for this age group at three locations across West Suffolk.
Homelessness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Through the West Suffolk Homelessness Strategy, we have committed to do more to combat homelessness and to ensure that those affected by homelessness receive timely advice and assistance. • During 2016/17, we have: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - accepted 238 homeless cases compared with 210 in 2015/16. This increase is largely due to changes in welfare reform and continued lack of affordable housing. This increase mirrors the experience across the country; - continued to financially support the Bury Drop In to help ensure that they can provide valuable help to the homeless; - been successful in our bid to the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) domestic abuse accommodation fund. Funding of £516,244 has been granted to partners to

	<p>provide accommodation for victims of domestic abuse across Suffolk;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - been successful in our bid for funding for a rough sleeper outreach worker to work across the areas cover by West Suffolk, Babergh and Mid-Suffolk councils. The outreach worker will help us further achieve our aim to reduce homelessness by providing a point of contact for individuals who are either at risk of becoming homeless or who are at the point of homelessness, whilst also having a role in linking agencies and our partners to develop ways of preventing homelessness. The outreach worker joined the team in early May 2017; and - started ensuring that we have clear pathways in place over the next 12 months for homeless patients being discharged from hospital. Discussions have begun with Wedgewood House at West Suffolk Hospital and with partners, we are in the process of engaging with all hospitals in the region. This is to help ensure we are in line with the statutory protocols in place with the Homelessness Reduction Act. We anticipate that the Homelessness Reduction Act will be in place in early 2018.
<p>Provide advice and support to vulnerable households to alleviate fuel poverty</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In 2015/16 Warm Homes Healthy People partnership successfully secured funding of £1.6 million from the Department for Energy and Climate Change (DECC) First Time Central Heating Fund and £350,000 from the fuel poverty charity National Energy Action. This funding is being used to deliver a range of energy efficient improvements into vulnerable households across Suffolk. • In 2016/17 we continued to work with all the local authorities in Suffolk to deliver the Warm Homes Healthy People Project. Through a county-wide bid to the DECC’s Green Deal Communities Fund, we are pleased to report that 156 homes across West Suffolk received fully funded external wall insulation. In this year we have also seen our residents benefiting from free central heating systems as a result of the successful county-wide bid to the DECC. • The Business Energy Efficiency (BEE) programme provides free support to eligible organisations in Suffolk and Norfolk to help them become more energy efficient. Support can be provided in three different ways: with free energy reviews, grant funding and carbon charter accreditation. • In 2016/17, 31 West Suffolk businesses have participated in the scheme with combined projected energy bill savings of £47,000.

Ways of working

Why was this important to us in 2016/17?

Changes in the way the Government funds local councils have meant we need a new approach to our finances, becoming less reliant on central budgets and more self-sufficient, including generating our own income streams. Throughout this annual report we have already highlighted ways in which we are focusing on local growth, investing in our assets and 'behaving more commercially' to help make the transition to self-sufficiency. However, we need to take this further by developing our organisation, our estate and our people. All of this will mean new ways of working with public and private sector partners. By working together as West Suffolk councils, we already know that Forest Heath and St Edmundsbury have made significant savings to taxpayers, but we need to become even more flexible and effective in the future.

This section covers our activities under the headings:

- Developing our organisation – transformation, investment and commercial approaches
- Developing the public sector estate in West Suffolk
- Developing the way we work
- Developing our people

Developing our organisation – transformation, investment and commercial approaches	
Devolution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • During the course of 2016/17, West Suffolk councils played a significant role in the development of proposed devolved arrangements in Norfolk and Suffolk. Councillors and officers worked together with colleagues in Suffolk and Norfolk, as well as Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, to develop proposals for a deal with Government that would look to secure additional growth for the region in the future. • While unfortunately, it was not possible to reach agreement between the signatory councils and the process ended in December 2016, the partnerships formed and analysis work carried out has placed us in a good position to consider the best way forward. Councils in Suffolk are continuing to explore with Government how best we can work together in promoting economic growth and the health and wellbeing of our population through greater powers, responsibilities or funding at the local level.
Suffolk-wide working	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In 2014, public authorities in Suffolk were awarded £3.3 million of government funding from the Transformation Challenge Award (TCA) for an ambitious programme of collaboration and

	<p>integration aimed at reducing costs and improving services for local people. The case study attached provides details of how this initiative is starting to see results in terms of increased collaboration and improved services.</p>
<p>Success of working with the Anglia Revenues Partnership</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • West Suffolk councils continue to play a key role in the Anglia Revenues Partnership (ARP), which administers Council Tax and business rates revenues, and benefits, on behalf of the seven partner councils. The partnership continues to develop its role in line with recent changes to local government funding, providing advice and support to partner councils. <p>Highlights from ARP in 2016/17 include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 2016/17 Financial Performance: Overall income was up at the end of 2016 mainly due to the success of the Bailiff Service (£295,000 higher than budget) with an additional £52,000 rechargeable income achieved. The forecast out-turn for 2016/17 showed a below budget spend of £455,000 as a result of efficiencies achieved earlier than planned (including the Bailiff service) and reduced salary costs. - Enforcement Agency service (bailiffs): ARP provides an enforcement agency (bailiffs) service which was launched in July 2015 for all seven partner councils. Enforcement has continued to perform well in 2016/17; collection for the first half of the year in 2016 was comparable with that collected by external Enforcement Agents before the establishment of the in-house team. ARP has continued to meet the cost of running the service through fees collection and are on target to produce a surplus this financial year. In January 2017, the total efficiencies made were £762,556 compared to a £150,000 target. The surplus will contribute to each partner councils' efficiency targets and help them to fund essential services. - Empty properties: A review of all long term empty domestic properties was completed in December 2016 in order to maximise the New Homes Bonus. West Suffolk councils as well as other ARP partners have seen a reduction in the number of long term empty properties. - Fraud prevention: ARP were tasked with identifying and preventing fraud in the following areas; local Council Tax support, single person discount, Council Tax and business rates and, tenancy fraud, with the aim of this leading to an increase in Council Tax income. ARP have exceeded targets for 2016/17, in total almost £1.5 million has been identified including over £400,000 for West Suffolk. The team are also producing excellent results in identifying incorrect and fraudulent claims for discounts. They are working with housing associations to tackle Right to Buy and subletting abuse and are

	<p>having success in this area.</p> <p>- Working together: ARP supported the councils' housing options and customer service teams by supplying a scan detailing all of the customers likely to be affected by the benefit cap introduced in November 2016, in order to avoid homelessness and the cost of temporary housing. They also informed landlords and stakeholders. ARP plan to work with housing options and customer service teams to plan for the roll out of Universal Credit, which will commence in October 2017 for St Edmundsbury and September 2018 for Forest Heath.</p>
<p>Civil Parking Enforcement</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • West Suffolk councils are taking over responsibility for enforcing 'on-street' parking restriction from the police. This can include yellow lines, loading bays, taxi rank, bus stops and school 'keep clear' markings. • The benefits of Civil Parking Enforcement (CPE) include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - more local accountability and the ability to be adaptable to local needs; - Safer traffic conditions and improved traffic flow reducing local congestion and supporting the economy; and - a more cost effective operation achieved by a coordinated approach between on and off street (car parks) enforcement. • Public sector leaders across Suffolk have sponsored this transfer of powers (already devolved to Ipswich Borough Council for over ten years), and now authorities in the East, West, Babergh and Mid Suffolk councils have agreed to the transfer of powers. • The set-up cost for implementing CPE will be approximately £1.1 million, which includes the review of all traffic regulation orders, inspection of all lines and signs on the highway, recruitment of staff to enforce the restrictions, and the purchase of associated new equipment and operating systems. The cost will be met by Suffolk County Council and the police. • West Suffolk councils will manage CPE within their geographical boundary and will assume all financial responsibility. • It is anticipated that CPE powers will be transferred and fully operational in West Suffolk by April 2019.
<p>Managing our finances - 4 year settlement from government</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Local Government Finance Settlement for 2017/18 was announced on 15 December 2016. Forest Heath and St Edmundsbury were both successful in being included in the settlement which confirmed our figures from the four year Revenue Support Grant settlement in 2016 and gave details of the revised New Homes Bonus figures and rules.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In response to this news, we published an efficiency statement in support of accepting the four year deal. The document set out that West Suffolk councils have plans and strategies in place to make ourselves more self-sufficient and resilient in the medium to long-term. • By introducing the four year funding package for councils, the Government aims to change the relationship between central and local government by enabling local authorities to be financed locally, through Council Tax and business rates rather than central government grants.
Our approach to investment - Solar Farm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In August 2016, Forest Heath District Council acquired the largest local authority owned solar farm in the UK, which will help protect the future of council services in the district. Read more about this innovative new approach to bridging the funding gap in the attached case study.
Building control	<p>Our building control service has had a busy year dealing with a range of matters and we are exceeding a number of our performance targets. Some highlights from this year include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dealing with 24 dangerous structures. • Carrying out over 4250 site inspections. • Increasing our market share by 5%. • Registering 98% of applications within three days. • Checking 96% plans within ten working days. • Carrying out 100% of site inspections on the day of request.
Tree services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In 2015, we identified an opportunity to extend our offer and introduce a tree maintenance service. • From the beginning this service has been a great success and in 2016 we: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - expanded the team from two to four arborists (one of which was an apprentice); and - exceeded income target of £40,000 in 2016/17. • In this year we have proactively promoted our service to local businesses, we have purchased additional equipment and we are looking to recruit a new apprentice.

Developing the public sector estate in West Suffolk	
Mildenhall Hub	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Forest Heath District Council continues to work towards the Mildenhall Hub project which will bring together public services, making them more accessible for local people and reducing the cost of public services to the tax payer.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In 2016/17 we undertook a pre-application consultation which included a public exhibition and online survey. We will use the results to help inform the next stage. • As we progress the Mildenhall Hub and Western Way developments (set out below) we are looking to design in energy saving and renewable energy generation to reduce heat and power costs and carbon emissions based on our investment principles.
<p>West Suffolk Operational Hub</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The West Suffolk Operational Hub (WSOH) in Bury St Edmunds is a project to build a site containing vehicle workshops, depot, waste transfer station, household waste and recycling centre and associated facilities. The project is a partnership between the West Suffolk councils and Suffolk County Council. • By having these facilities on the same site we would increase efficiency, save taxpayers' money, cut our current environmental impact and future-proof waste management for West Suffolk's growing communities. By combining our facilities on a new single site we would also unlock valuable public sector land that could be used for development to create employment and deliver economic benefits. • Developing facilities to deal with the waste that we generate can be of concern to those residents who live near to any proposed site. For the West Suffolk Operational Hub project we have undertaken two public consultations before submitting a planning application and we have listened carefully to the views of local residents whilst developing our plans. This has included working closely with a Community Liaison Group comprised of local residents, parish councillors and neighbouring businesses.
<p>Western Way Development</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Western Way Development is an exciting opportunity to build on the Public Service Village ethos that exists on the site in Bury St Edmunds. This ethos has been established by West Suffolk House hosting West Suffolk councils, Suffolk County Council, West Suffolk Clinical Commissioning Group and the East of England Local Government Association, among others. • We took the opportunity to review the Western Way Masterplan which was approved in 2016. We are currently working to develop a design brief and the associated financial modelling. The key to the effective development of the site is balancing the following objectives: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Unlock the value of council held assets; - Support the council's public sector village aspiration; - Strengthen relationships with other public sector organisations; - Drive efficiency, improve customer experience and public service provision; and - Maximise capital and revenue return to support future investment in public sector

	transformation.
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Developing the way we work	
Shared legal service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In November 2016, four councils (West Suffolk councils and Mid-Suffolk and Babergh councils) established a shared legal service. Please see the attached case study to learn more about this innovative new way of working.
Improvements to our development management service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In 2015/16 we reported on opportunities for improvement that had been identified across the development management service. The service went through extensive internal and external reviews, the results of which were collated in a Planning Improvement Plan. We are now seeing the positive results from the plan as set out below. This is also backed-up by our improved and now sustained performance in 2016/17 which is evident through data in our balanced scorecard. We are now consistently meeting and exceeding our key performance indicators as a result of changing our practices and fine tuning our workflow regimes.
Planning Improvement Plan: Pre-application advice service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In July 2016 we introduced this new paid-for service that enables the delivery of timely advice, at the detail required, according to the type of advice requested and the complexity of the proposals under consideration. It is a good way of our customers receiving advice on a development proposal which can save time and money for customers and the councils alike, before an application has been submitted. The service replaced the previous morning duty service at College Heath Road in Mildenhall and West Suffolk House in Bury St Edmunds and lined up with the very successful Planning Helpdesk Transfer to customer services in June and the newly launched Planning One Stop Shop web pages in May. Officers are still available for pre-booked meetings and walk-in enquiries, which now operates all day and not just in the morning, but there has been a significant reduction in simple duty calls and enquiries. Planning technicians and officers are also receiving less general enquiries as these and the general enquiry email inbox, are now managed by customer services. Customer services handle all enquiries using the Planning One-Stop-Shop webpages and customers are guided to self-serve information and data bases, including Find My Nearest and Public Access. The general principle of self-serve relies on an up-to-date and easy to use website and clearly trained customer service advisors, supplemented with paid for non-statutory services as an alternative.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The service has been well received and used by agents and residents alike and projected annual income is set to exceed the budgeted income of £50,000.
<p>Planning Improvement Plan: Paperless parishes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In 2016 we started working with parish councils to look at changing the way we notify them about planning applications. There is no statutory requirement to send parishes hard copies of plans, which was costing the service approximately £19,000 per year, so we wanted to look at options for sending planning applications to parishes electronically. • We consulted with parish councils through an online survey and at Parish Forums and Conferences. The results were used to encourage willing and able parishes to pilot this new approach to receiving planning applications. We are pleased to report that 45% of parish notifications are now sent electronically with no paperwork being issued. • We are currently in the second phase of the campaign which will target further parishes that are willing to try this new approach and we are looking to use the existing online parishes to 'buddy up' with those still receiving paper copies of planning applications to help demonstrate the benefits. We have worked proactively across the councils, with members and the Suffolk Association of Local Councils to promote this initiative. • There are some challenges where broadband provision is poor but we are looking at technical options and funding options to provide equipment that could be utilised for other uses. • We have plans to implement a Memorandum of Understanding between Forest Heath District Council and parish and town councils to further increase our working relationship. This is aligned with the work locality officers already do to help communities to help themselves, also with the Planning Improvement Plan which looks to maximise the use of technology and, where appropriate, moving our customers towards accessing services online. In practice this means that effective lines of communication are in place with town and parish councils on all relevant planning activity such as planning applications, major developments, consultations and changes to land use.
<p>Planning Improvement Plan: Planning agents' forum</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We have also been working to improve the quality of applications submitted by agents to avoid 'double-handling' of invalid applications and a quicker processing time for customers. • In February 2017, we held our first joint agents' forum which was held with Building Control. This gave us an opportunity to introduce and publicise Local Authority Building Control Services (of which the West Suffolk service is a member organisation), provide information on e-working and what is available for self-serve on the West Suffolk website, discuss with officers about the content of a new e-newsletter and forward programme for the forum.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Our plans for the future include publishing agent performance figures and considering an accredited agents scheme, developing the e-newsletter and preparing for the second Agents' Forum that is planned for later in 2017. <p>We look forward to updating you again later in 2017 on all the future work contributing to the success of the Performance Improvement Plan.</p>
<p>Paperless office</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Further work has been carried out during 2016/17 to explore how we could reduce the amount of papers produced for meetings, for example, through the development of our online committee management system. • An element of the Planning Improvement Plan also looked at funding mobile working for all planning officers, who have now each been assigned a tablet computer. • Every new application submitted is made into an electronic file and downloaded. No paper file is created, therefore, creating efficiencies and reducing costs.

<p>Developing our people</p>	
<p>Supporting our staff through training</p>	<p>In the section on priority 1 (increased opportunities for economic growth), we talked about the success of our apprenticeship scheme across West Suffolk councils. We are committed to the development of our workforce and the learning of new skills, behaviours and competencies. The ways in which we have supported our staff in this year, are set out below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Corporate training: in April 2016 we launched the MiHR Self-service career and development module. MiHR is the online package we use to help staff manage the training requirements, career progression and personal information. Access to the career and development module encourages individuals to build their own personal learning plans. Staff can book themselves on training as required, update their learning records and review their development requirements for the future. Since introducing this module the number of training places being taken has increased. We have 629 staff and during this year there has been a total of 923 attendances of 117 corporate training sessions held throughout the organisation. • Collaborative working with the other councils across Suffolk has continued. The 21st century manager programme has been very successful and offered access to classroom and on-line training for those new to management roles and the opportunity to network with managers across the county. Collaborative working is illustrated by the fact that the councils' Families and

	<p>Communities team includes Suffolk County Council staff and that both organisations had a flexible and open-minded approach to recruitment and management of staff. Other agencies are interested in joining this team which focusses on working for and with a locality and a community, regardless of the employing authority.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Linked to the publication of the mental health wellbeing policy, MIND was commissioned to deliver a series of training events for individual staff and a series for managers entitled "Emotional wellbeing – a managers toolkit" (see further information below). To date, 103 staff and managers have accessed this programme. • Professional development: We have had 32 individuals work towards accredited professional qualifications in specialist subject areas. The West Suffolk talent management programme offers access to professional qualifications ranging from Masters degrees and Foundation degrees to Institute of Leadership and Management at level three and five. • This is just part of the continuous professional development offer which runs throughout all the service areas. It is supported with time and resources available to those who take the opportunity to develop themselves.
<p>Improving wellbeing and health - introduced mental health at work policy and working with Suffolk and Norfolk Mind–healthier communities:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Four new people policies were introduced in September 2016 in order to support our staff: Mentoring, Mediation, The Workplace Wellbeing Strategy and Mental Health at Work. West Suffolk councils have made a commitment to the Suffolk Workplace Wellbeing Charter which focuses on an organisation’s commitment to the wellbeing of staff. To deliver this we are working with our partners: Suffolk County Council, East of England Local Government Association, occupational health providers, neighbouring local authorities, hospitals including Ipswich and Addenbrooke’s and the Clinical Commissioning Group. • One of the key areas of commitment is mental health. To deliver this commitment we are working closely with both Suffolk and Norfolk MIND to support staff and managers alongside a number of national initiatives such as Mental Health at Work week and Mental Health at Work Day. • The wellbeing of our staff can impact on our communities not only through the roles our staff do but also through their families and wider community links.

Councillor Learning and Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Through the Joint Member Development Group we have offered a varied programme of events including specialist licensing training and five sessions on development management with internal and external speakers. We are working hard to ensure that councillors have the key information they need to support their communities and work as local ward members. We have offered individual induction advice for those elected in by-elections.• In this year a total of 11 development events have been held with 163 attendances.
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The future

You will have seen from this report that we have made significant steps towards achieving our strategic priorities in 2016/17. We also know there are challenging times ahead and that we need to utilise the opportunities available to us in the future.

- Future of local government in west Suffolk [add text here depending on outcome of Cabinet meetings (30 May) and/or council meetings (13/14 June)]
- Changes in local government finance
- Investment
- Strategic Plan refresh
- Inclusive growth
- Universal Credit / Welfare reform
- Partnership working / new forms of delivery