

Forest Heath & St Edmundsbury councils

**West Suffolk**  
working together

# Strategic Framework 2018-2020

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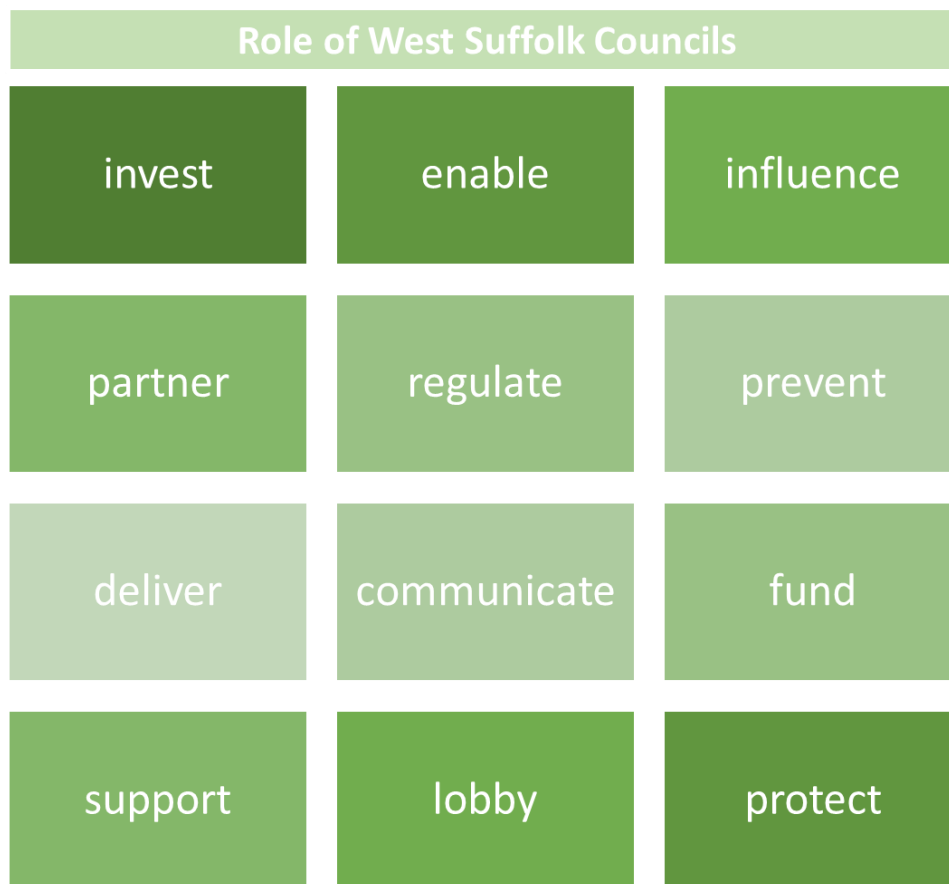
**1. LEADERS' FOREWORD – to be added**

## 2. WEST SUFFOLK COUNCILS' ROLE IN TRANSFORMING LOCAL PLACES

West Suffolk Councils – Forest Heath District Council and St Edmundsbury Borough Council – are uniquely placed to support our local places as they seek to grow and prepare for the next decade, and to improve quality of life for all.

As district councils, we play a central part in shaping the future in west Suffolk, alongside residents, businesses, the third sector and other public sector partners.

Our role includes the following:



Using evidence and insight (see following section) the councils have identified the most significant challenges and opportunities that are facing West Suffolk's towns, villages and other rural areas over the next few years. Based on this, and on our vision for what we believe a future West Suffolk should look like, we have identified those areas of West Suffolk Councils' responsibility where we can have the greatest impact and make the biggest difference in our local areas, using the resources that have been entrusted to us. In doing so, we have been mindful of the role of other partners and their plans and strategies, for example, Suffolk County Council, the two Local Enterprise Partnerships covering West Suffolk, parish and town councils, the third sector, community and representative groups and other public sector partners.

**This document describes this *strategic framework* which will shape our resourcing and decision-making over the period 2018-2020.**

### 3. ABOUT WEST SUFFOLK: CURRENT CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

West Suffolk Councils are committed to making decisions about the future based on evidence and insight. The priorities described in this document are therefore based on analysis that has been carried out to determine what are the most significant challenges and opportunities facing the area. Our approach has drawn on:

- published national data sources
- data from public sector partners
- internal operational data
- insight from local communities, residents, councillors and staff

#### **About West Suffolk**

The area of West Suffolk comprises the council areas of Forest Heath and St Edmundsbury, two predominantly rural districts in the heart of East Anglia. Well-connected with London, the rest of East Anglia and the Midlands, West Suffolk is a safe and comparatively prosperous place in which to live. West Suffolk has a thriving and diverse economy, embracing a number of business sectors, including several that support the two major US Air Force bases at RAF Mildenhall and Lakenheath. It also has some beautiful and accessible countryside areas, including grassland, heath and forest. At the same time, some areas of West Suffolk are facing challenges such as rural isolation, a lack of skills or qualifications, an ageing population in need of more specialist housing or care, poverty, ill-health or deprivation.

The charts and graphs on the following pages summarise some of the attributes of West Suffolk, and the challenges and opportunities faced by residents, businesses, the councils and other partners. To see more statistics about life in West Suffolk, please visit: [www.suffolkobservatory.info](http://www.suffolkobservatory.info)

*TO BE ADDED: Infographics summarising the challenges and opportunities facing west Suffolk, for example:*

- *Ageing population → dependent population*
- *Increasing homelessness*
- *Skills and attainment*
- *Housing affordability*
- *Low earnings*
- *Low unemployment*
- *Relatively good quality of life*
- *Proximity to Cambridge sub-region*

*etc etc*

#### 4. VISION AND STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

From 2018-2020, Councillors and staff across West Suffolk Councils are committed to:

*Supporting and investing in our west Suffolk communities and businesses to encourage and manage ambitious growth in prosperity and quality of life for all.*

In practice, this will mean continuing to focus our energies and resources on the following strategic priorities:

<p><b>Growth in West Suffolk’s economy for the benefit of all our residents and UK plc.</b></p>	<p><b>Resilient families and communities that are healthy and active</b></p>	<p><b>Increased and improved provision of appropriate housing in west Suffolk in both our towns and rural areas.</b></p>
<p>We will use our influence, investment, partnerships and regulatory powers to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- lobby for a better connected West Suffolk, in terms of transport and digital connectivity</li> <li>- promote West Suffolk as a place to do business, so as to attract investment and innovation that increases salary levels and encourages the right mix of jobs to grow our economy</li> <li>- invest in and promote our local places by building on their unique qualities through specific local strategies, projects and environmental services</li> <li>- develop our current and future local workforce through education, training and opportunities for all</li> </ul>	<p>We will use our leadership, local connections, commissioning role and assets to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- foster supportive networks to improve and sustain the lives of individuals, families and communities</li> <li>- use our community, leisure, open space and heritage assets to support wellbeing and education</li> <li>- work with and influence partners including the voluntary sector in our shared endeavour of improving the health, wellbeing and safety of families and communities.</li> </ul>	<p>We will use our roles as a local housing and planning authority, a regulator, an investor and local influencer to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- plan for housing to meet the needs of current and future generations throughout their lifetimes, that is properly supported by infrastructure, facilities and community networks</li> <li>- improve the quality of housing and the local environment for our residents</li> <li>- enable people to access suitable and sustainable housing.</li> </ul>

## 5. WAYS OF WORKING

In carrying out our work, West Suffolk councillors and staff are committed to a number of 'ways of working' that, when taken altogether, represent a set of distinctives of our organisation. These ways of working govern the way in which carry out our business and choose those opportunities that are important to pursue. They are based on the values that drive our approach, coupled with the circumstances facing local government in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

<b>"The West Suffolk Way"</b>	Empowering families and communities to create positive and healthy futures. Working in a way which helps to create safe places, recognises individuals and their needs and strengths, understands relationships and connects people. Finding out what communities care about and supporting them to achieve their goals.
<b>Place focus and subsidiarity</b>	Distinctively local, not generic solutions, that are shaped and delivered locally
<b>Collaboration and integration</b>	Ambitious and comprehensive cross-system partnerships that join up resources around communities and individuals
<b>Inclusive growth</b>	Encouraging and investing in ambitious growth and good quality housing that all can access and benefit from, and that is good for local people and the environment
<b>Financial self-sufficiency</b>	A shift from reliance on grants to self-generated income, returns on investment, and business rates growth
<b>Behaving more commercially</b>	Taking a business approach to our operations, within our public service remit
<b>Digitally enabled</b>	Maximising the potential of data and technology to transform decisions and transactions

In everything we do, we will be guided by our commitment to promoting equality and diversity by seeking to eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimization, advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations between different groups of people through all aspects of our work across West Suffolk. Where appropriate, we will assess the impact of our policies and projects as they develop, in order to ensure they support our commitment to equality and diversity. We have also identified some particular areas within the priorities on p x where focused action is needed to improve equality of opportunity for people in West Suffolk. These are shown below:

### ***Equality objectives***

- develop our current and future local workforce through education, training and opportunities



- work in partnership with, and influence, other organisations including the third sector to support families and communities in improving their health, wellbeing and safety.
- enable people to access suitable and sustainable housing.

The following pages of this document explain in more detail the actions and projects we will undertake in relation to our vision and priorities over the next two years.

## 6. OUR PLANS FOR 2018-2020

### **Growth in West Suffolk's economy for the benefit of all our residents and UK plc.**

We will use our influence, investment, partnerships and regulatory powers to:

- lobby for a better connected West Suffolk, in terms of transport and digital connectivity
- promote West Suffolk as a place to do business, so as to attract investment and innovation that increases salary levels and encourages the right mix of jobs to grow our economy
- invest in and promote our local places by building on their unique qualities through specific local strategies, projects and environmental services
- develop our current and future local workforce through education, training and opportunities for all

#### **Why is this a priority?**

Without 'good growth' in West Suffolk, our residents, families and communities have little prospect of achieving the goals they want to achieve. A strong economy that is capable of growing, sits at the heart of this growth, and West Suffolk Councils hold a number of key levers in driving forward economic change.

West Suffolk Councils need to use our resources to foster good growth in West Suffolk because there are areas where the potential of our places and people is not being maximised and where more could be achieved. For example, we need to direct our energies towards projects and activities that will help bolster productivity, improve educational attainment and increase wages, which are currently lagging behind national trends. We also need to work with others to improve infrastructure, which is so critical in rural areas such as ours.

As we look towards the next decade and the significant social and economic change that we are likely to experience, West Suffolk Councils need to be leading the way in ensuring that our local economies are resilient and growing in an inclusive way.

#### **During 2018-2020, we will:**

1. Ensure an up-to-date strategic planning framework is in place across West Suffolk, including an Infrastructure Development Plan. Our work will include the preparation of a joint local plan timetable, supported by supplementary planning documents; a review of the Statement of Community Involvement; and work with parish and town councils on neighbourhood plans.
2. Give West Suffolk a louder voice in the growth agenda at the national and regional levels, in particular through the Local Enterprise Partnerships, Suffolk Growth Programme Board, Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority and wider networks covering the East and South East of England. This will include ensuring West Suffolk gets a fair share of available funding to support growth.
3. Make opportunities for growth available through land, premises and Enterprise Zones, for example, the development of the Cambridge – Norwich tech corridor,

Suffolk Business Park, Haverhill Research Park and Epicentre. We will also continue to work with central government on the future of the RAF Mildenhall site once it is closed following US Visiting Forces departure.

4. Work with partners and developers to secure, improve and increase infrastructure provision, in particular, the A1307, A11, A14, Ipswich to Cambridge rail services (including East-West rail, Eastern Section) and broadband provision.
5. Develop insight-based bespoke strategies for investment and other activities in our local places. Our approach in each of our places will promote inclusive growth, which enables residents, families and communities to improve their quality of life, while also growing the economy and safeguarding and enhancing the natural and built heritage and environment.
6. Drive forward improvements in our town centres, including improving markets provision. We will continue to implement the Haverhill masterplan and to finalise the masterplan for Bury St Edmunds as well as work on masterplanning in Newmarket and Mildenhall.
7. Understand our local businesses and provide them with targeted support to enable them to expand and flourish, for example, through small grants or loans and signposting to support agencies. This will include working with Chambers of Commerce, the New Anglia Growth Hub, Business Improvement Districts and others such as West Suffolk College.
8. Provide focused support for our key growth sectors of advanced manufacturing; digital and creative; biotech; tourism; film; and food, drink and agritech. Our support will include encouraging businesses to implement environmental improvements and to adopt a culture which nurtures employee health and wellbeing as well as their talents, ambitions and innovation.
9. Promote West Suffolk's brand through inward investment activities and events, for example the West Suffolk Business Festival, and by raising our local profile through the Destination Management Organisation. We will use these opportunities to retain and attract talented people, especially young people, to choose to live and work in West Suffolk.
10. Develop an Asset Management Plan to ensure the operational and other assets owned by West Suffolk are used for maximum public benefit, including our office buildings, waste facilities, car parks, investment properties and energy assets such as Toggam Solar Farm. This will include joint initiatives such as the delivery of the West Suffolk Operational Hub and Mildenhall Hub, as part of the One Public Estate programme
11. Support the development of higher level skills in West Suffolk so as to support individuals in achieving their goals and attract higher paid jobs to the area. We will do this by working with employers, the county council, West Suffolk College and other local training providers to promote training opportunities and apprenticeships, including in-house.

## **Resilient families and communities that are healthy and active**

We will use our leadership, local connections, commissioning role and assets to:

- foster supportive networks to improve and sustain the lives of individuals, families and communities
- use our community, leisure, open space and heritage assets to support wellbeing and education
- work with and influence partners including the voluntary sector in our shared endeavour of improving the health, wellbeing and safety of families and communities.

### **Why is this a priority?**

Many of the difficulties experienced by West Suffolk residents could be prevented or tackled early if support and potential solutions were available close to home, for example, from within family, neighbourhood or community networks. This would then result in a different role for public services, namely being an option of last resort, rather than the first port of call.

We are already developing the foundations of a more preventative approach, working across groups and organisations, listening to and working within and with our communities. Crucial to this approach is encouraging them to explore their strengths and assets, and tailoring our support and responses accordingly. Traditionally we think of assets as being buildings or places but in this approach references to assets also means local people who care enough about an issue in their community that they are prepared to do something about it.

Each locality's social, economic and demographic make-up is different, as well as the challenges faced, and understanding these will be fundamental to the success of our work. This is particularly true as we see long-term trends in demographics, families, the make-up of communities and priorities changing across Suffolk. For example, a third of newborns will live to 100 years of age<sup>1</sup>. Increasingly, those approaching retirement age are still caring for their parents, which has an impact on housing choices, where people decide to live and work, and their lifestyles.

In practical terms this means rethinking what public services do. Prioritising the role of families and communities in society will mean that West Suffolk councils will advocate, empower and enable people to spot, prevent and address emerging problems, rather than waiting until they become serious and manifest themselves as worklessness, anti-social behaviour or poor health.

### **What will we do to achieve this priority?**

1. Continue the direction set in 2011, updating our strategy where appropriate
2. Work closely with councillors to identify groups, community connectors and other individuals able to provide support within their communities, such as lunch clubs and pre-school provision.

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<sup>1</sup> ONS Period and cohort life tables, 2012 release (Dec 2013)

3. Continue to strengthen our relationships with parish and town councils through Town and Parish cluster meetings, Forum and the West Suffolk conference.
4. Support groups and organisations to build capacity by making the best use of community grants and locality budgets
5. Maximise the value to communities of external funding streams by monitoring and influencing the distribution of funding and ensuring the West Suffolk community grants do not duplicate other arrangements.
6. Help communities to take more ownership of community assets, for example the Guildhall transfer in Bury St Edmunds and the Newbury Community Centre transfer.
7. Review and understand our diverse cultural assets and opportunities with a view to work with partners to develop a 21<sup>st</sup> century cultural strategy. The strategy will set out how the value of the assets can be maximised in terms of, for example, celebrating and safeguarding heritage assets; tackling social isolation; promoting tourism; or generating commercial income. It will build on previous work and take account of assets such as the Home of Horseracing and the ambition for a cinema in Newmarket to provide leisure opportunities for families and communities.
8. Support the development of the Mildenhall Hub to achieve maximum benefits for local communities from the co-location of public sector services, leisure centre, school and swimming pool.
9. Build on the relationship with our strategic leisure partner to support the delivery of the Physical Activity Framework.
10. Develop the model of working with housing staff, health visitors and community nurses in discussion with agencies, building stronger partnerships to address 'hotspots' and 'super users' of public services.
11. Work closely with statutory and voluntary sector partners and communities, including ONE Haverhill, to identify key areas and causes of demand on public services and enable community-based solutions
12. Work alongside partners to implement a multi-agency team in West Suffolk to support communities to become more resilient and sustainable.
13. Utilise and build on the specialist skills and knowledge in the West Suffolk officer team, including community safety, anti-social behavior, health, arts and culture, vulnerable groups, children and young people and community grants, using a variety of approaches
14. Work with our partners to identify the cost/benefit of the West Suffolk approach and develop measures to monitor progress and outcomes.

### **The West Suffolk Way**

The West Suffolk approach sets out the five key elements we believe are the building blocks for resilient and thriving communities.

**Element 1: A Safe Place** – is about working in a way which increases the safety of a place and people's sense of the place in which they live, work or visit. It can apply to emotional safety as well as physical.

**Element 2: Recognising Individuals** – is about working in a way which recognises people's individuality, that differences matter and that each person has different needs and strengths. It applies to the development of, and respect

for important concepts such as self-identity, self-esteem and self-worth. It embraces culture and values.

Element 3: **Understanding relationships** – is about working in a way which recognises the context of relationships and the connections that exist between people, in spite of difference, be they transactional, nurturing, emotional, practical etc.

Element 4: **Encouraging agency** – is about working in a way which encourages people to help themselves, validating their own ability whatever size, recognising that taking action is an important step to change, development and improvement. At a personal level, this increases people's ability and capacity to demonstrate power, influence and control over their lives.

Element 5: **Developing vision** - is about working in a way which builds positive goals and an understanding of what is being worked towards.

**Increased and improved provision of appropriate housing in west Suffolk in both our towns and rural areas.**

We will use our roles as a local housing and planning authority, a regulator, an investor and local influencer to:

- plan for housing to meet the needs of current and future generations throughout their lifetimes, that is properly supported by infrastructure, facilities and community networks
- improve the quality of housing and the local environment for our residents
- enable people to access suitable and sustainable housing.

**Why is this a priority?**

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. Without suitable and affordable housing, West Suffolk's residents will not be able to achieve their ambitions, whether for family life, career development, a fulfilling retirement or other goals. The local conditions in West Suffolk makes housing particularly difficult to afford, given relatively high house prices and low wages. The councils therefore have an important role to play in seeking to address this situation, and also to ensure housing is suitable for the increasingly ageing population. At the same time, the councils continue to work to improve the quality of housing, so as to ensure it supports the health and wellbeing of residents, families and communities. In recent years, as well as focusing on increasing the supply of appropriate housing, the councils have also responded to rising homelessness in West Suffolk by investing resources in preventing homelessness and securing suitable accommodation for those in crisis.

**During 2018-2020, we will:**

1. Promote and facilitate the provision of new housing, supported by infrastructure, and in line with the Government's approach. We will do this by working with a range of partners including registered providers, infrastructure providers, private developers and parish councils.
2. Bring forward growth on the strategic sites at North West and North East Haverhill, North East Bury St Edmunds, Bury St Edmunds East and Bury St Edmunds West.
3. Ensure there is sufficient mix of housing types to meet the needs of our local communities, including delivering 30% affordable housing on any private development. We will also work with registered providers to ensure that levels of social rented homes are maintained so there are sufficient affordable homes for individuals and families on low incomes.
4. Seek to encourage developers to build homes to the national minimum space standards to promote healthy living.
5. Develop new housing for sale and rent through the delivery of Barley Homes' first five year delivery plan. Barley Homes is the councils' housing company, jointly owned by West Suffolk councils and Suffolk County Council. Income from Barley Homes will also generate revenue to support West Suffolk Councils in becoming self-sufficient.
6. Promote the development of lifetime homes which meet the needs of people throughout their lives, as well as providing specific adaptations to housing through Disabled Facilities Grants.



7. Continue to assess the accommodation needs of Gypsies and Travellers and where appropriate allocate land to meet those needs.
8. Work with private landlords and tenants to ensure privately rented accommodation is up to standard. This will include provision of advice and support as well as formal inspections, particularly in Houses in Multiple Occupation. We will also implement policy changes to allow West Suffolk Councils to impose financial penalties on rogue landlords whose properties are in poor condition.
9. Support owners of empty properties to enable them to bring homes back into use.
10. Work in partnership with residents, communities, registered providers and other partner organisations to prevent homelessness and ensure families and individuals are appropriately housed. This will include implementing the new duties on placed councils by the Homelessness Reduction Act, through our Homelessness Strategy and Lettings Policy, and promoting housing related support.
11. Implement DCLG's Positive Pathway model for tackling homelessness, including identifying risks early, promoting self-help and resilience for those who are able to help themselves and proactive help for those who are too vulnerable to help themselves.
12. Explore options for the provision of more temporary accommodation, in order to house individuals and families, including those who have experienced domestic abuse.
13. Use dedicated support to work with rough sleepers and try to address the problems that lead to rough sleeping and being at risk of sleeping rough.
14. Deliver excellent services for those who are homeless, including aiming to achieve the Gold Standard for housing options that will help the councils to deliver more efficient and cost-effective homelessness prevention services. Our work will recognise that some people have more than just 'the need for a roof' and will involve working in partnership to provide support and stabilisation, with the aim of breaking the cycle of homelessness.
15. Work with the Anglia Revenues Partnership to support the roll out of Universal Credit and to identify and prevent fraud
16. Continue to explore innovative ways to use good housing to promote the health and wellbeing of our families and communities, including through our role in the Suffolk Health and Wellbeing Board.

Further detail of our planned projects and activities is available in our specific strategy documents available on our website at [www.westsuffolk.gov.uk](http://www.westsuffolk.gov.uk)



## **Resourcing our priorities**

Alongside our Strategic Framework, the Councils' Medium Term Financial Strategy and annual budgets set out how our activities will be resourced. Our Medium Term Financial Strategy [add link] is based on the following six themes:

1. Aligning resources to the West Suffolk strategic plan and essential services;
2. Continuation of the shared service agenda and transformation of service delivery;
3. Behaving more commercially;
4. Considering new funding models (eg acting as an investor);
5. Encouraging the use of digital forms for customer access; and
6. Taking advantage of new forms of local government finance (e.g. business rate retention).

## **Improving how we work**

Supporting our ambitious agenda of enabling change in our local communities requires us to 'lead by doing' and is reliant on significant supporting infrastructure, for example around communications, policy development, information management, estate management, customer access, workforce and organisational development and improving our governance and democratic arrangements.

We have a number of plans in place to drive forward change in these areas over the period 2018-2020, many of which are available to view at [www.westsuffolk.gov.uk](http://www.westsuffolk.gov.uk)

### ***Focus on West Suffolk Councils' workforce***

A committed and effective workforce is key to the successful delivery of our strategic priorities. Our people policies support the health and wellbeing of our staff in order that they are able to achieve the ambitions set out by West Suffolk councils.

During 2018 – 2020 we will focus our workforce strategy on 5 key areas:

## 7. MEASURING OUR PROGRESS

Over the period of this framework, we will use our performance management arrangements to track our progress.

The West Suffolk Councils' performance framework uses a mix of operational, financial, staff performance, customer feedback and contextual information to build a picture of progress in achieving the vision and objectives outlined in this document. The business intelligence gathered in this way supports staff Councillors to spot risks and opportunities and to continuously improve.

In addition, in order to measure overall change and transformation in our places, we will measure progress against the following six outcomes, using our own data alongside data from our partners:

<b>Safe and clean</b>	<b>Healthy and well</b>	<b>Inclusive</b>
<b>Economically vibrant</b>	<b>Resilient and strong</b>	<b>Aspirational</b>

A range of organisations, as well as residents and businesses themselves, will determine how well local places are performing against these outcomes. And so we will also measure West Suffolk councils' specific contribution by monitoring the specific outcomes and outputs from our activities. Our performance management framework also considers our financial performance and that of our staff.

We will report our progress through regular reporting to the Performance, Audit and Scrutiny Committees, as well as through our Annual Reports.

Residents, businesses and other stakeholders can access information about our performance and our use of resources through our committee reports, which are made public, and through the transparency pages of our website.