

# Strategic Framework

2020-2024

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# 1. Leader's foreword

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A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'John Griffiths', with a horizontal line underneath.

**Councillor John Griffiths**  
Leader, West Suffolk Council

## 2. West Suffolk Council's leadership role

The creation of West Suffolk Council on 1 April 2019 confirmed its status as an organisation that is, on the one hand, small enough to remain deeply embedded within, and connected to local communities; while on the other hand, has sufficient scale to think and act strategically across a larger area.

West Suffolk Council will continue to demonstrate leadership of the local area in a range of ways as set out below. In each of these roles, we will continue to develop and explore ways in which we can enhance our existing partnerships with residents, communities, businesses, the third sector and the wider public sector, in order to work together towards our vision for West Suffolk.

Role of West Suffolk Council		
invest	enable	influence
partner	regulate	prevent
deliver	communicate	fund
support	lobby	protect

Using evidence and insight (see following section) we 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 Council's 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.

**This document describes this *strategic framework* which will shape our resourcing and decision-making over the period 2020-2024.**





## 3. About West Suffolk: current challenges and opportunities

### About West Suffolk

West Suffolk is a predominantly rural area of 1,035 square kilometres 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 horseracing and 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 council and other partners. These statistics have been combined with the information, insights, experiences and other feedback that staff and councillors have gained from year-round work within communities, to build a richer picture of life in West Suffolk. Please note, some figures are for Forest Heath & St Edmundsbury as West Suffolk figures are not yet available.

To see more statistics about life in West Suffolk, please visit: [www.westsuffolk.gov.uk/aboutthearea](http://www.westsuffolk.gov.uk/aboutthearea)



## POPULATION

West Suffolk's population is growing and changing. Across the district, the proportion of the population who are older than working age is increasing, but there are large variations between individual towns and villages.

### Population

In 2018, the total population of West Suffolk was

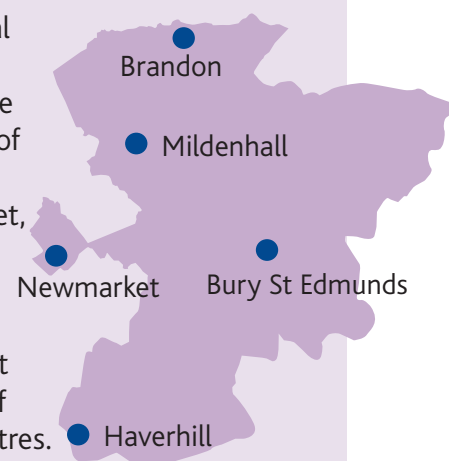
# 178,881



Source: ONS 2018 Mid Year population estimates

### A varied landscape

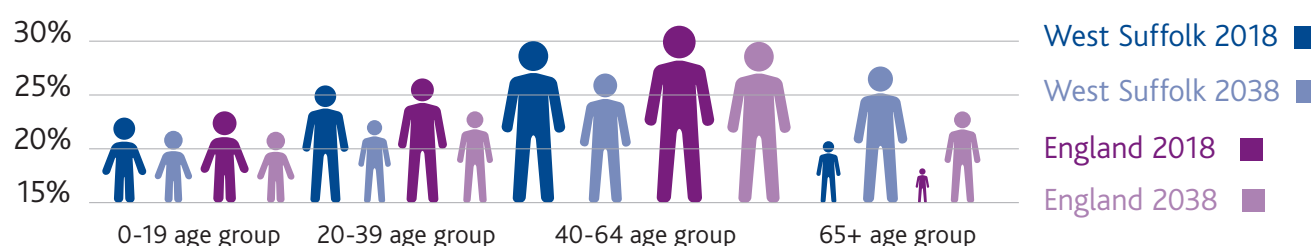
59% of all residential properties in West Suffolk are in the five largest settlements of Bury St Edmunds, Haverhill, Newmarket, Brandon and Mildenhall. These five largest towns make up 3% of West Suffolk's land area of 1,035 square kilometres.



## Population change

West Suffolk's population is an ageing population particularly when compared to the national picture.

Percentage of population by age group



The age group 65+ is the only age group projected to increase over the next 20 years. The proportion of people of working age is projected to decline. An increase of 97% is predicted in the population aged 85+ between 2018 and 2038.

Source: ONS Sub-national population projections 2016 based.

### Local variations

The proportion of the population aged under 16 varies considerably across the Wards of West Suffolk, from 29% (The Rows Ward) to 14% (Fornhams and Great Barton Ward). Similarly, the proportion of the population aged over 65 years varies from 7% (Iceni Ward) to 35% (The Fornhams and Great Barton Ward). Source: ONS 2017

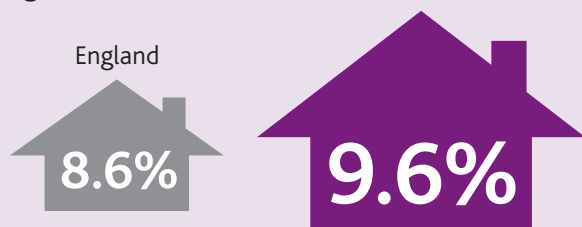


## HOUSING

West Suffolk residents face challenges in finding homes that are affordable to rent or buy, given average prices and local wages levels. Homelessness has also increased in recent years, as in other parts of the country. In spite of significant investment in delivering new housing and preventing and relieving homelessness, the challenge is ongoing.

### Increasing numbers of households

The number of households in West Suffolk is growing. Between 2006 and 2016, it increased by 9.6% compared to the overall England rate of 8.6%.

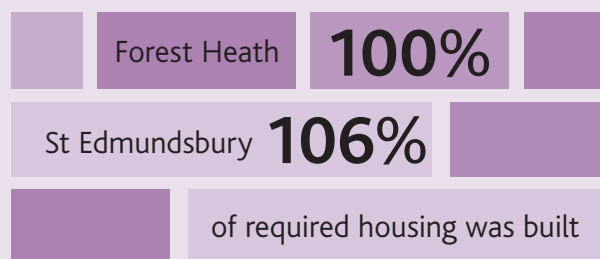


Source: ONS

West Suffolk

### Housing growth

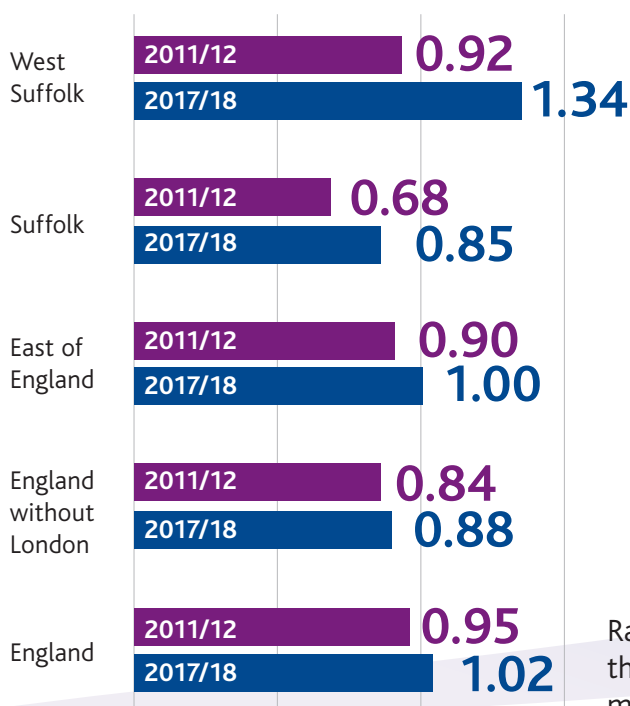
In 2018, West Suffolk met or exceeded its housing delivery targets.



Source: GOV.UK Housing Delivery Test 2018

## Homelessness

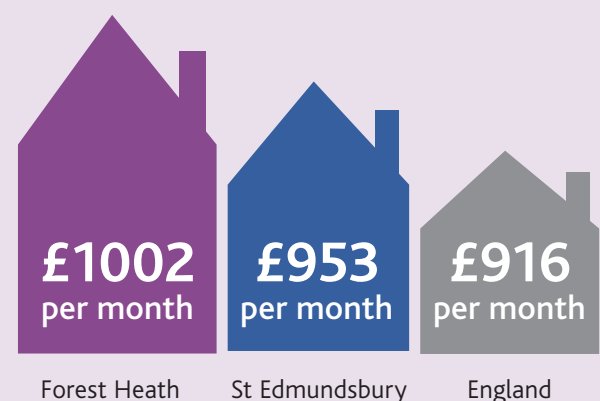
Homelessness acceptances per 1,000 head of population 2011/12 and 2017/18



Source: Table 784 Government live tables on homelessness

### Rented housing

The average cost of renting a 3 bedroom home in West Suffolk is higher than the England average.



Source – Valuation Office Agency 2018-19

Rates of homelessness in West Suffolk are higher than the regional or national average, and have increased more quickly in recent years.

## ECONOMY AND ENVIRONMENT

Unemployment is low in West Suffolk and the economy is diverse. However, average wages and qualification levels are below the national average, leading to a continued focus on attracting high quality jobs and on improving skill and attainment levels.

### Unemployment

Unemployment in West Suffolk is lower than the England average.



4.1%  
England

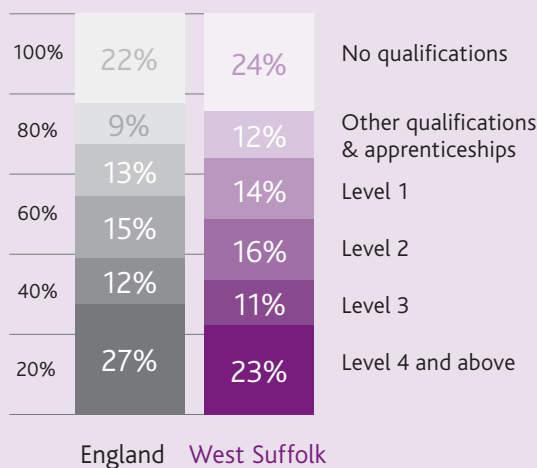
2.7%  
West Suffolk

Source: ONS June 2019



### Qualifications

A higher proportion of people in West Suffolk have no qualifications than in England as a whole, and a lower proportion hold higher level qualifications.



### Attainment

Educational attainment at GCSE is slightly below the national average in West Suffolk.

Percentage of pupils who achieved at least **grade 4** in English and Maths GCSE



Percentage of pupils who achieved at least **grade 5** in English and Maths GCSE

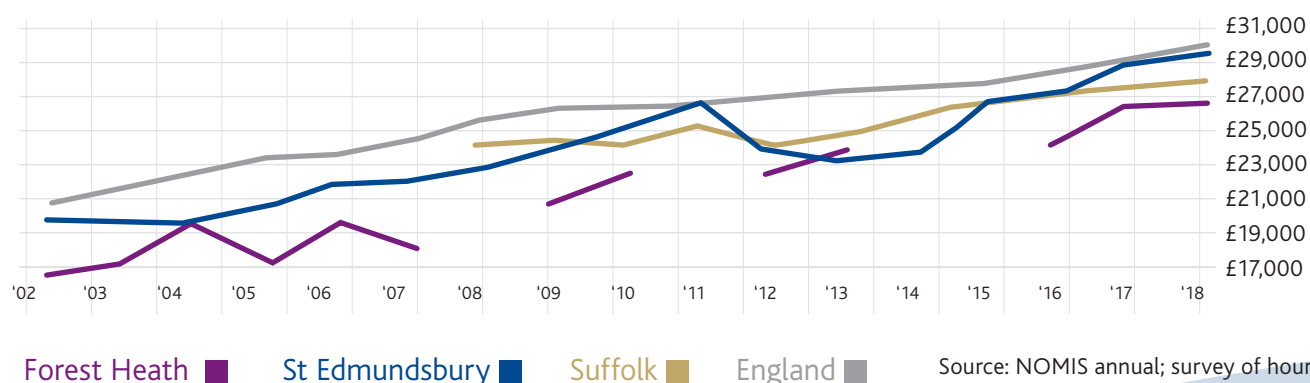


Published results for 2017/18  
Source: Department for Education

### Average wages in West Suffolk



(shown here as Forest Heath and St Edmundsbury Councils)  
Average wages are below England levels.



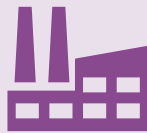


## Main industrial sectors

West Suffolk's main industrial sectors are business administration and support services, health and manufacturing.



Business admin  
& support services



Manufacturing



Health



Retail



Accommodation  
& food services

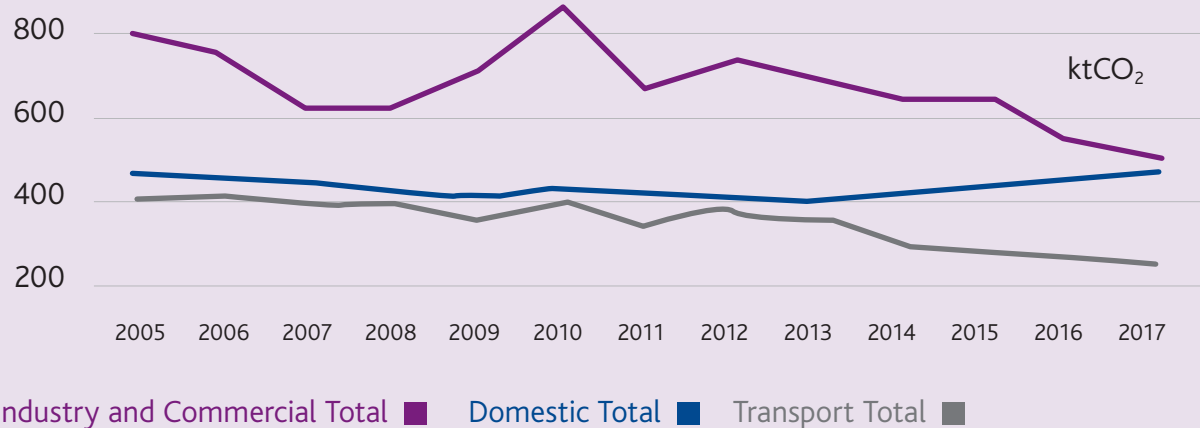
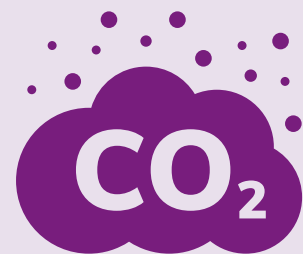
West Suffolk	<b>19.1%</b>	<b>10.6%</b>	<b>11.7%</b>	<b>8.5%</b>	<b>7.4%</b>
England & Wales	9.1%	8.2%	12.9%	9.4%	7.5%

Source: ONS 2018

## Emissions

West Suffolk has invested in renewable energy technologies, but a challenge still remains to reduce greenhouse emissions over time.

*West Suffolk Emissions estimates by Source 2017*



Source: BEIS, 2019

## FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES

West Suffolk families and communities' daily experiences of health, wellbeing, learning and opportunities vary greatly across different parts of the district. Taken as a whole, the following charts show how the average picture in West Suffolk compares to the national situation. The focus for West Suffolk Council remains on building resilience within families and communities and preventing problems early on.

### Social mobility index

The Social Mobility Index 2017 compares the chances that a child from a disadvantaged background will do well at school and get a good job across each of the 324 local authority districts of England.

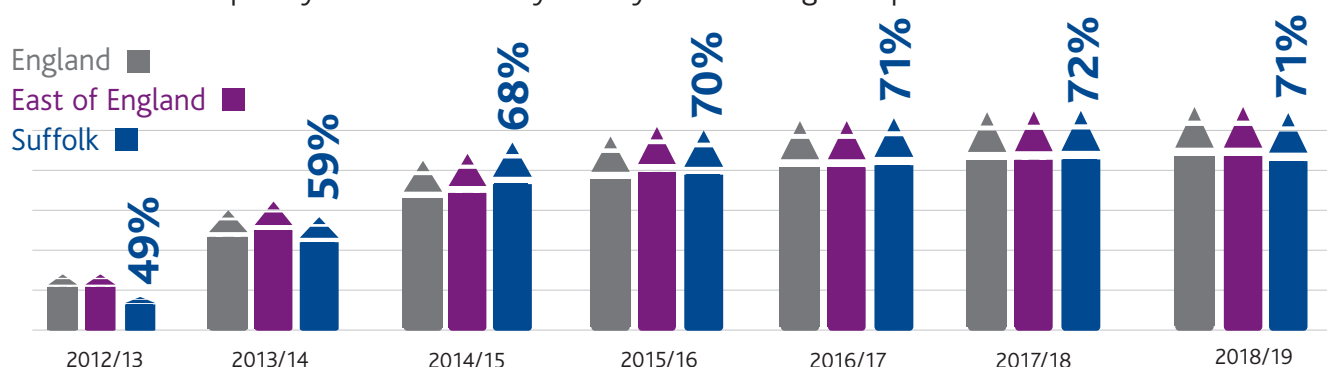
- = Social mobility hotspots
- = Social mobility coldspots.

This means young people from less advantaged backgrounds may experience limited opportunities.

Area	Rank (out of 324)
Mid Suffolk	80
Suffolk Coastal	116
St Edmundsbury	<b>209</b>
Ipswich	261
Forest Heath	<b>264</b>
Babergh	270
Waveney	314

### Early Years Foundation stage

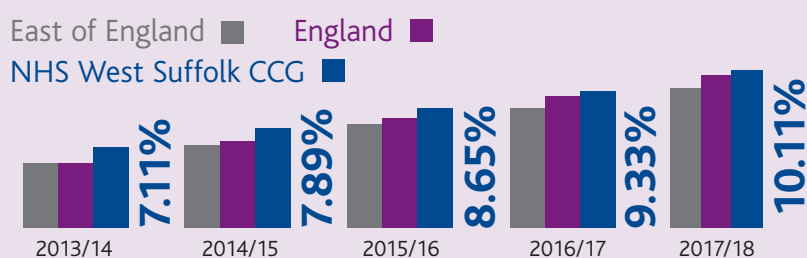
From 2012/2013 to 2017/18, the percentage of children in Suffolk achieving a good level of development at the end of Reception year has increased year on year with a slight drop in 2018/19 to 71%.



Source: Department of Education, EYFS attainment data 18/19 data

### Common mental health disorders

Depression recorded prevalence: % of patients on GP practice register recorded as having depression (aged 18+)



Source: Public Health England, Mental Health and Wellbeing JSNA

**10.11%**

of patients in West Suffolk GP practices were recorded as **having depression** in 2017/18.

This is an increase of

**42%**

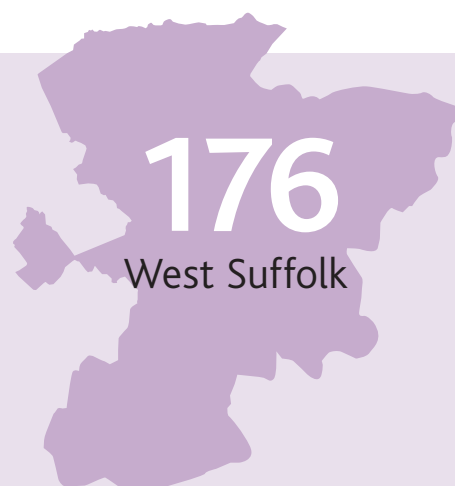
since 2013/14. This was **slightly below** the England average of a

**52%**

increase across the same time period.

## English deprivation rankings

1 = Most deprived local authority  
317 = least deprived local authority



Source: DCLG Index of Multiple Deprivation 2019

## Wellbeing

These figures show the percentage of adults reporting very high levels of life satisfaction, happiness, worthwhileness and high levels of anxiety – 2018/19



Suffolk	37.77%	36.65%	42.74%	17.06%
	Life satisfaction	Happiness	Worthwhile	Anxiety
England	30.56%	35.36%	35.98%	19.72%

How satisfied are you with your life?  
(10 = completely satisfied)

7.71	England
7.85	Forest Heath
7.89	Suffolk
7.98	St Edmundsbury

How anxious did you feel yesterday?  
(10 = completely anxious)

England	2.87
Suffolk	2.77
Forest Heath	2.46
St Edmundsbury	2.23

Source: ONS Headline estimates of personal wellbeing April 18 – March 2019

## Physically active adults

Percentage of physically active adults that meet Chief Medical Officer recommendations for physical activity.

Forest Heath	East of England	England	St Edmundsbury
59.5%	61.1%	62.6%	62.9%



Levels of activity - active at least 150 minutes a week - active lives survey Nov 17/18

Source: Activelives survey 2017/18

## 4. Vision and strategic priorities

From 2020-2024, councillors and staff across West Suffolk Council are committed to:

**Being ambitious in supporting and investing in our West Suffolk communities, businesses and the environment, to encourage and manage 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:

Growth in West Suffolk's economy for the benefit of all our residents and UK plc.	Resilient families and communities that are healthy and active.	Increased and improved provision of appropriate housing in West Suffolk in both our towns and rural areas.
<p>We will use our influence, investment, partnerships and regulatory and public protection powers to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>encourage economic growth in West Suffolk that benefits our local economy, our workforce, our families and communities and our global and local environments in particular by tackling climate change</li> <li>secure improved infrastructure and facilities to support new and existing communities</li> <li>invest in our towns, villages and countryside areas by building on their unique strengths.</li> </ul>	<p>We will use our leadership, local connections, commissioning role, investment and assets to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>support communities to fulfil their ambitions so as to improve the lives of residents and the local environment</li> <li>work with partners to build resilience in families and communities, so that problems can be prevented at the earliest opportunity</li> <li>use our community, leisure, public open space, countryside and heritage assets so that they give maximum benefit to West Suffolk 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>ensure a variety of new housing is provided in appropriate locations, that meets the needs of current and future generations</li> <li>improve the quality of housing and the local environment for our residents</li> <li>support people in accessing suitable housing, including by working in partnership to address their wider needs.</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 we 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 21st 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 through consultation and engagement, and supporting them to achieve their goals.
<b>Environmentally responsible</b>	In line with the Council's declaration of a Climate Emergency, we will use the Council's various roles to protect and enhance, wherever possible, the local and global environment, with a particular focus on reducing carbon emissions to net zero by 2030.
<b>Place focus and subsidiarity</b>	Distinctively local, not generic solutions, that are shaped and delivered locally and reflect the different challenges and opportunities of West Suffolk's places. As a predominantly rural area, this will include in particular having regard to the challenges and opportunities in our villages and countryside areas. We will also take account of the various roles and ambitions of local organisations, including town and parish councils.
<b>Collaboration and integration</b>	Ambitious and comprehensive cross-system partnerships that join-up resources around communities and individuals and focus on prevention.
<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 victimisation, 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 where focused action is needed to improve equality of opportunity for people in West Suffolk, included in the actions on the following pages. These are shown below:

## Equality objectives

- Champion and promote growth in West Suffolk that recognises the economic value of strong, diverse and healthy workforces and communities and a clean natural environment, alongside growth in productivity.
- Work in partnership with others to support initiatives that focus on prevention and early intervention, particularly on issues such as health, crime and social isolation. In particular, develop innovative new models of supporting residents and businesses to access public services, for example through the Mildenhall Hub and Western Way Development.
- Ensure that provision is made for housing that meets the needs of particular groups and enables them to remain independent.

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 four years.



## 6. Our plans for 2020 – 2024

### 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:

- encourage economic growth in West Suffolk that benefits our local economy, our workforce, our families and communities and our global and local environments
- secure improved infrastructure and facilities to support new and existing communities
- invest in our towns, villages and countryside areas by building on their unique strengths.

#### Why is this a priority?

At the heart of our vision for prosperous communities with improving quality of life lies a strong and diverse economy that is capable of growing. West Suffolk Council is uniquely placed to champion and support the local economy.

West Suffolk as an area supports a wide range of businesses and unemployment is low. There are good opportunities for businesses to start up in West Suffolk or to move here, and businesses are well-connected and receive good support.

However, there remain a number of challenges that need to be addressed, such as relatively low levels of productivity, wages and skills. West Suffolk Council will therefore use its influence and investment to bring about improvements in these areas. This will involve not just traditional approaches to economic development and growth, but initiatives that support the wider wellbeing of the workforce in West Suffolk, in order to enable workers to reach their potential and firms to grow and innovate.

#### During 2020-2024, we will:

1. Champion and promote growth in West Suffolk that recognises the economic value of strong, diverse and healthy workforces and communities and a clean natural environment, alongside growth in productivity.
2. Continue to directly invest in West Suffolk, opening up opportunities for businesses and our communities to flourish.
3. Drive progress with partners to plan for the infrastructure that reduces our impact on the environment, for example, non-car transport.
4. Support local businesses by bringing them together and enabling them to access advice, training and financial support.
5. Provide support for initiatives that enable the development of higher level skills in West Suffolk. This will include focusing on skills for young people at risk of becoming NEET, STEM skills, and the development of models that are appropriate for rural areas such as West Suffolk.
6. Promote the further development of West Suffolk's market towns and high streets, in the face of a changing retail environment. This will include working in partnership with retailers and market traders, as well as the implementation of masterplans and ensuring appropriate parking provision.
7. Work towards better connected rural places, where people are able to stay safe, healthy and well; build relationships and community; and access skills, education and jobs.
8. Explore how we can work with developers, businesses and partners to ensure that we improve the green credentials of any new development.



## Resilient families and communities that are healthy and active

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

- support communities to fulfil their ambitions so as to improve the lives of residents and the local environment
- work with partners to build resilience in families and communities, so that problems can be prevented early
- use our community, leisure, public open space, countryside and heritage assets so that they give maximum benefit to West Suffolk communities

### Why is this a priority?

West Suffolk Council already has a strong track record of supporting families and communities to enable them to make a difference in their local places. Our existing focus on prevention has meant a different focus for public services, namely being an option of last resort, rather than the first port of call.

But there is always more to be done, in supporting communities to strengthen in order to deal with the challenges they may face, particularly around issues such as poor health, isolation and loneliness, antisocial behaviour and drug misuse. West Suffolk Council will therefore continue to work with communities and partners over the next four years to enable all West Suffolk residents to thrive and make the most of the opportunities in their local areas.



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

1. Support local communities to build their capacity to shape their own future – in line with the West Suffolk Way. This will include responding to communities' ambitions for their local areas, by enabling them to access council grants and other funding, and by providing officer advice and support to community leaders and groups.
2. Work in partnership with others to support initiatives that focus on prevention and early intervention, particularly on issues such as health, crime and social isolation. In particular, develop innovative new models of supporting residents and businesses to access public services, for example through the Mildenhall Hub and Western Way Development.
3. Continue to celebrate and develop West Suffolk's diverse cultural assets and events, maximising their impact in terms of education, tourism, strengthening community relationships and generating income to support local services.
4. Work in partnership to improve community safety in West Suffolk and in particular to take action to prevent and address drug-related crime (including county lines) through education, intelligence sharing and enforcement.
5. Work in partnership with Abbeycroft Leisure, health agencies, sports clubs, community groups and others to encourage West Suffolk residents to become more physically active. This will include continuing to manage our parks and open spaces as attractive leisure, health and cultural assets.
6. Promote strong rural communities that are integrated, informed, equipped and empowered.
7. Maintain and enhance the green infrastructure in West Suffolk to deliver improved biodiversity and air quality and support the health and wellbeing of our local communities.



## 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:

- ensure a variety of new housing is provided in appropriate locations, that meets the needs of current and future generations
- improve the quality of housing and the local environment for our residents
- support people in accessing suitable housing, including by working in partnership to address their wider needs

### Why is this a priority?

Recent research has underlined the crucial role housing can play in supporting people's economic and social wellbeing. But housing that is affordable in West Suffolk can be a challenge to access given the low wages, coupled with the area's proximity to Cambridge and the large US airbases in the district. West Suffolk Council is therefore responding by working to increase housing supply, improving housing quality and responding to rising homelessness in West Suffolk.



### During 2020-2024, we will:

1. Make provision for housing to meet the needs of current and future generations, properly supported by infrastructure, facilities and community networks, while protecting and enhancing West Suffolk's existing countryside and heritage.
2. Accelerate the delivery of new housing, including affordable housing, with local communities and developers, as well as bringing empty properties back into use.
3. Ensure that provision is made for housing that meets the needs of particular groups and enables them to remain independent.
4. Work collaboratively to find sustainable and suitable housing solutions for residents threatened with homelessness. This includes both preventing and relieving homelessness and supporting people in their new tenancies, including specific work with those who have slept rough.
5. Drive forward improvements in the quality of both new and existing housing, especially in the private rented sector and Houses in Multiple Occupation. This includes both environmental improvements and those needed because of problem landlords or tenants.
6. Achieve a wider variety of housing in rural areas that is suitable and affordable for a range of local people, located in developments that the local community support.
7. Support the development of more environmentally sustainable homes and communities throughout West Suffolk, in a measurable way. This will include working with housebuilders, and influencing the Local Plan and development control processes.

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



## 7. Resourcing our priorities

Alongside our Strategic Framework, the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy and annual budgets set out how our activities will be resourced. Our Medium Term Financial Strategy 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).





## 8. 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 governance and management, estate and resource management, regulation, service delivery, customer access, workforce and organisational development and improving our governance and democratic arrangements. A particular focus during 2020-24 will be continuing to drive improvements in customer access and service delivery. This will include:

- harnessing the potential of digital technology to improve our systems and processes, including encouraging more online transactions
- working in partnership with the wider public sector network and other partners
- supporting our customers to access the right services in the best way possible. This will



include understanding the nature of customer demand; encouraging self-serve approaches where possible; and using our influence with partners to build joined-up processes between different agencies

- supporting our workforce to work to the best of their abilities (see below)
- using our built assets and facilities in creative ways, for example, through the development of our public sector hubs

### The importance of West Suffolk Council's workforce

West Suffolk Council's employees are fundamental to the council achieving its ambitions. As such, engagement, motivation, leadership, development and reward are crucial. The West Suffolk Council Workforce Strategy sets out our people management aims, goals and objectives to assist West Suffolk Council in achieving its strategic aims. It ensures that the HR service commits to working with all our staff and leaders to develop a culture of excellence in how we support and develop people. We will continue to build on our well-embedded workforce strategy to ensure we have the right people, in the right place, with the right values and skills to deliver. The ambitions in the workforce strategy are challenging and measurable so that we can operate successfully in the increasingly complex public sector environment, whilst creating a rewarding and engaging place for people to work.

Our approach will continue to focus on the following five key areas:

#### Skills and behaviours

#### Reward and recognition

#### Recruitment and retention

#### Future planning

#### Health and wellbeing

We have a number of more detailed plans in place to drive forward change in these areas over the period 2020-2024, which are available to view at [www.westsuffolk.gov.uk](http://www.westsuffolk.gov.uk)

## 9. Measuring our progress

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

The West Suffolk Council 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 and councillors to spot risks and opportunities and to continuously improve.

We will report our progress through regular reporting to the Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee, 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.







