

2022/2023 West Suffolk Environmental Statement

Report number:	CAB/WS/23/031	
Report to and date:	Cabinet	18 July 2023
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Decisions Plan: The decisions made as a result of this report will usually be published within 48 hours and cannot be actioned until five clear working days of the publication of the decision have elapsed.

Wards impacted: All

Recommendation: It is recommended that Cabinet approves the Environmental Statement for the Council's 2022 to 2023 performance, included as Appendix A to Report number: CAB/WS/23/031.

1. Context to this report

- 1.1 In September 2019, West Suffolk Council declared a climate emergency, having already established the Environment and Climate Change Taskforce (the Taskforce). The aim of the Taskforce was to make recommendations on the Council's future role in protecting and enhancing the environment, both in the way in which it carries out its operations and through specific initiatives. In June 2023, the Council's new Cabinet approved the creation of a new Environment and Sustainability Working Group to review the progress the Council had made in implementing the action plan and to look at further work the Council could lead to support businesses, residents and communities on their own net zero journey.
- 1.2 The working group recommendations will be reported to Cabinet in September 2023. Meanwhile it is important Cabinet considers and approves the Council's full Environmental Statement for 2022/2023, an annual summary of the Council's performance in regard to the environment and climate change.

2. Approach to producing the Annual Environmental Statement

- 2.1 Each year the Council publishes its Environmental Statement that provides a summary of the environmental impact from the activities the Council undertakes to manage and reduce its carbon emissions. This report covers the period year ending 31 March 2023. There is also a significant amount of work which contributes to improving the environment across the district which is not covered in this statement. This work is carried out both by the Council directly and in conjunction with partners. More information can be found on the Council's webpage [Tackling climate change \(westsuffolk.gov.uk\)](https://westsuffolk.gov.uk).
- 2.2 The performance against previous years needs to take account of a couple of key factors. In 2021-2022, the period of the last report, there were a number of external developments. Globally, inflation had risen significantly due to a number of factors including the war in Ukraine and the UK was still adjusting from the impact of COVID-19.
- 2.3 2021-2022 saw a gradual increase in office use, as the Council transitioned to an agile working approach and the increase in carbon footprint in that period was attributed to the increased use of the office, leisure centres and other assets that have a carbon footprint. As such the last report compared data with 2019-2020 data.
- 2.4 The 2022-2023 report provides a comparison with the previous reporting period 2021-2022 as well as data from 2010 when this reporting regime was introduced. The report has been assembled from data from services across the Council and is overseen by the Council's Environmental

Management Group, consisting of officers from across the Council. It sets out the progress against the Council’s agreed carbon budget and performance across a range of activities as summarised in section 3 below. It includes emissions from the Council’s leisure operations that are delivered by Abbeycroft Leisure.

3. **Summary of the 2022-2023 Annual Environmental Statement**

3.1 The full report is included at Appendix A. In a number of areas there has been minimal change from 2021-2022 performance, with some notable changes that are shown below. This information will be considered by the Environment and Sustainability Working Group to inform future recommendations for action.

Emissions	<p>Total emissions up 1.4 percent compared to 2021-2022;(down 40 percent compared to 2010 baseline).</p> <p>Total owned vehicle emissions down 0.3 percent compared to 2021-2022 (down 9 percent compared to 2019-2020 baseline).</p>
Consumption and energy	<p>Renewable energy generated down 1 percent compared to 2021-2022. Up 135 percent compared to 2012 baseline.</p> <p>Business travel up 7 percent compared to 2021-2022; down 66 percent compared to 2010 baseline.</p> <p>Total water consumption up 44 percent compared to 2021-2022 (down 18 percent compared to baseline).</p> <p>Total West Suffolk House waste down 1 percent compared to 2021-2022 (down 58 percent compared to 2012 baseline).</p> <p>Office printing down 29 percent compared to 2021-2022.</p>
Infrastructure and recycling	<p>The recycling rate down 6 percent compared to 2021-2022.</p> <p>Public electric vehicle (EV) chargers installed by WSC can support 84 EVs charging at the same time.</p>

Environment and green spaces	6 Green Flags retained. 454 trees and 1419 whips planted during 2022-2023. (318 trees and 560 hedge plants planted during 2021-2022)
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3.2 The **carbon budget** agreed by Cabinet in 2020 is included in the environmental statement. The net zero plan which formed part of the 2020 report illustrates potential routes to net zero by 2030. This plan is still being progressed with work having been undertaken on Council buildings and new electric vehicles now starting to be delivered. Full year impact of these improvements made will not be evident until the 2023-2024 Environmental Statement.

3.3 The carbon budget periods are:

- a. April 2020 to March 2024 – steady annual emission rate of 4,675 tCO₂e (tonnes of CO₂ equivalent) per year
- b. April 2024 to March 2028 – steady annual emission rate of 2,484 tCO₂e per year
- c. April 2028 to March 2030 – steady annual emission rate of 840 tCO₂e per year
- d. Zero emissions in 2030-2031.

3.4 For year 2022-2023, the Council is 282 tCO₂e above the carbon budget at the end of the first reporting period with emissions standing at 4,957tCO₂e against the budgets allowed rate of 4,675 tCO₂e. Work planned for future years not only needs to bring the council back in line with its target reduction, but also accelerate improvements to the next carbon budget four year period which sets a target of almost 50 percent reduction.

4 **Alternative options that have been considered**

4.1 The Council has committed to work to achieve net-zero by 2030. This Environmental Statement summarises performance for 2022-2023. It will be further investigated by the Environment and Sustainability Working Group.

5 **Risks associated with the proposals**

5.1 The Environmental Statement does not show the level of improvement that had been predicted in 2022-2023 and there is a risk that council operations, which could have an impact on carbon emissions, have not reduced. This may damage the reputation of the Council as a Climate Change Leader. Risks associated with the delivery of the Council's Net Zero

ambitions and environmental objectives will be explored by the Environment and Sustainability Working Group.

6 Implications arising from the proposals

- 6.1 The report shows that the Council is slightly off track on its carbon budget for the first period and work needs to be done to accelerate reductions in emissions to meet the Net Zero ambition. This will be considered by the Environment and Sustainability Working Group.
- 6.2 **Financial**
There are no specific financial implications arising from this report. Where individual projects require investment, this will be a separate report.
- 6.3 **Legal Compliance**
No implications
- 6.4 **Personal Data Processing**
No implications
- 6.5 **Equalities**
No implications
- 6.6 **Crime and Disorder**
No recommendations
- 6.7 **Environment or Sustainability**
The publication of the Environmental Statement shows the Council's commitment to environmental improvements.
- 6.8 **HR or Staffing**
No implications from this report; further activity may require additional staff to support, and this will be subject to business cases or separate requests.
- 6.9 **Changes to existing policies**
No implications
- 6.10 **External organisations (such as businesses, community groups)**
Data on Abbeycroft Leisure performance has been produced in consultation with them

7 Appendices referenced in this report

- 7.1 Appendix A – West Suffolk 2023-2024 Environmental Statement.

Should approval be given, note that a fully designed and accessibility compliant version will be published on the website in due course.

8 Background documents associated with this report

- 8.1 [CAB/WS/22/040 Environment Task Force 2022 update](#) including 2021-22 Environmental Statement
[WSC-Environmental-Statement-2021-2022.pdf](#)