

# West Suffolk Council Strategic Priorities and Medium Term Financial Strategy 2024 to 2028

<b>Report number:</b>	<b>COU/WS/23/019</b>	
<b>Report to and date:</b>	<b>Council</b>	19 December 2023
<b>Cabinet members:</b>	<p>Councillor Cliff Waterman Leader of the Council Tel: 07974 092289 Email: <a href="mailto:cliff.waterman@westsuffolk.gov.uk">cliff.waterman@westsuffolk.gov.uk</a></p> <p>Councillor Diane Hind Portfolio Holder for Resources Email: <a href="mailto:diane.hind@westsuffolk.gov.uk">diane.hind@westsuffolk.gov.uk</a></p>	
<b>Lead officers:</b>	<p>Ian Gallin Chief Executive Tel: 01284 757001 Email: <a href="mailto:ian.gallin@westsuffolk.gov.uk">ian.gallin@westsuffolk.gov.uk</a></p> <p>Rachael Mann Director (Resources and Property) Tel: 01638 719245 Email: <a href="mailto:Rachael.mann@westsuffolk.gov.uk">Rachael.mann@westsuffolk.gov.uk</a></p>	

**Decisions Plan:** **This item is being considered directly by Council for a decision and has not been referred by Cabinet.**

**Wards impacted:** **All wards**

**Recommendation:**            **Council is invited to adopt the:**

- 1.            West Suffolk Strategic Priorities, as set out in Appendix A to Report number: COU/WS/23/019.**
  
- 2.            Themes of the West Suffolk Medium Term Financial Strategy, as the strategic financial framework to apply from 1 April 2024, as set out in Appendix B to Report number: COU/WS/23/019.**
  
- 3.            Delegated authority be given to the Chief Executive and the Director (Resources and Property), in consultation with the Leader of the Council and the Portfolio Holder for Resources to make any minor typographical, grammatical, factual or contextual changes to the documents, provided they do not materially affect the meaning or substance of the documents.**

## **1. Context to this report**

- 1.1 This report seeks Council's approval of the West Suffolk Strategic Priorities for 2024 to 2028 and the West Suffolk Medium Term Financial Strategy. The former is intended to succeed the Strategic Framework 2020 to 2024 and the latter the Medium Term Financial Strategy 2020 to 2024.
- 1.2 The Strategic Priorities document forms part of the Council's Policy Framework, as set out in the Constitution. The Medium Term Financial Strategy will direct the resources available to West Suffolk to underpin delivery of the council's services and priorities as part of the annual budget setting process. Together, the two documents set the high-level parameters governing the Council's overall direction.
- 1.3 The Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) sets the context against which the 2024 to 2025 budget and medium term financial plans (2024 to 2028) are proposed to be developed between now and the formal Budget and Council Tax adoption meeting of the Council in February 2024.

### **Strategic Priorities document**

- 1.4 The Strategic Priorities document sets out the high-level ambitions of West Suffolk Council over the next four years. The vision, priorities and values in the document have been developed over a period of months by the Cabinet, in consultation with West Suffolk Working Partnership. The document sets the strategic direction for the Council, as well as providing a framework within which future decisions will be made, and setting the priorities that will govern the Council's performance management system.
- 1.5 A key feature of the Council's approach, as outlined at the start of the document, is a focus on listening to, and engaging with all councillors and with West Suffolk's communities as the more detailed plans are developed that will implement the Council's vision. The document describes how this will be done, including some new forms of engagement.
- 1.6 The priorities have also been developed drawing on evidence and insight about the issues and challenges facing West Suffolk, a number of which are summarised in the infographics included in the document.
- 1.7 The aim of the Strategic Priorities document is to provide councillors, staff, partners and interested members of the public with an overview of the Council's strategic direction and its distinctive ways of working, as opposed to a complete description of the activities the Council will

be carrying out. The content is therefore necessarily high-level and focused on areas that are changing, with the detail and business as usual activities being fleshed out in individual plans, strategies and service-specific business plans.

- 1.8 The document also explains that West Suffolk’s contribution is only part of the picture. West Suffolk’s role is not to directly deliver everything referred to in the document but also to play a role in influencing, partnering with and working alongside other partners, not least residents and communities.

### **Medium Term Financial Strategy**

- 1.9 The West Suffolk Medium Term Financial Strategy 2024 to 2028, assesses and evaluates the financial resources the council expects to have and the expenditure in order to deliver the strategic priorities.

- 1.10 West Suffolk’s strategy is based on six key themes, representing our response to the ongoing financial challenges and opportunities surrounding local government. In summary, these six themes are:

1. Aligning resources to the West Suffolk strategic priorities and the delivery of essential services.
2. Sharing services and innovation in service delivery.
3. Behave commercially, delivering a return to our communities.
4. Considering new funding models.
5. Supporting online access to council services.
6. Taking advantage of new forms of local government finance.

- 1.11 As part of good financial planning (councils are also required to prepare for, as a minimum, a three year financial planning period), West Suffolk Council in February 2024 will be asked to set a balanced budget for 2024 to 2025 (its statutory obligation), alongside a medium term financial plan for the period 2024 to 2028. Certain sections of the strategy document will need updating or in some case completing as part of the 2024 to 2025 budget process – for example the revenue and capital sections.

- 1.12 A final and complete version of the document (alongside the West Suffolk Capital Strategy) will be presented to Cabinet and Council in February 2024 alongside the main budget and council tax setting report.

## **2. Alternative options that have been considered**

- 2.1 It is not statutory requirement for councils to have strategic priority document in place. However, this can result in a lack of strategic direction and agreement on the vision and purpose of the

organisation, or the outcomes that councillors and staff are working towards.

### 3. Consultation and engagement undertaken

3.1 The strategic priorities have been developed by the Cabinet, in consultation with the wider West Suffolk Working Partnership and drawing on the priorities that were set out ahead of the local elections in May 2023.

3.2 A key feature of the Council’s strategic approach is the focus on consultation and engagement. This is set out in the section of the draft document “A shared way forward– making our plans together” and includes the establishment of councillor advisory panels.

### 4. Risks associated with the proposals

4.1

Risk area	Inherent level of risk (before controls)	Controls	Residual risk (after controls)
	Low/Medium/ High*		Low/Medium/ High*
Lack of funding to support full set of projects listed in draft document.	Medium	Finance team involvement in business planning to fully assess value for money of detailed proposals Business case approach will assess financial implications and opportunities of projects	Low
Future changes in the wider economic environment affect the delivery of economic development and housing objectives	Medium	Ongoing monitoring of local economic conditions. Wider changes in model of service delivery to allow prioritisation of economic and housing priorities	Low
Unable to meet public’s expectations of what the councils will deliver	Medium	Effective communications to educate residents about new ways of working	Low

## **5. Implications arising from the proposals**

- 5.1 Financial - The draft strategic framework document is aligned with the Medium Term Financial Strategy and budget setting process for 2024 to 2028.
- 5.2 Equalities - The Council’s draft equality objective for 2024 to 2028 is set out in the values section of the Strategic Priorities document, namely:

“To continuously improve access to our services for all members of our community, by learning from best practice and listening to feedback.”

Where appropriate, individual policies and projects referred to in the draft Strategic Framework document have already undergone, or will undergo, an Equality Impact Assessment.

## **6. Appendices referenced in this report**

- 6.1 Appendix A – Draft West Suffolk Strategic Framework document 2024 to 2028  
Appendix B – Draft West Suffolk Medium Term Financial Strategy 2024 to 2028

## **7. Background documents associated with this report**

- 7.1 West Suffolk Strategic Framework 2020 to 2024  
[www.westsuffolk.gov.uk/strategicframework](http://www.westsuffolk.gov.uk/strategicframework)

West Suffolk MTFS 2022 to 2026  
[Budget and Council Tax Setting - 2022 to 2023 and MTFS 2022 to 2026](#)