

Introduction

The four strategic priorities set by the new administration in December 2023 for West Suffolk Council are:

- Affordable, available, and decent homes
- Environmental resilience
- Sustainable growth
- Thriving communities

What does this look like?

Affordable, available, and decent homes

In order to deliver on our strategic priority of affordable, available and decent homes, we will:

- Use planning powers to significantly increase the supply of affordable housing in West Suffolk, particularly for social rent, and explore other options for increasing provision.
- Investigate options to address the specific market conditions in West Suffolk that make it challenging for local people to afford to buy or rent.
- Use the council's planning, regulatory and other powers to ensure all housing is of good quality and sustainably built and has minimal environmental impacts, including noise.
- Work with communities to ensure all housing is supported by the right infrastructure.

Environmental resilience

To deliver on our strategic priority of environmental resilience and our ambition to be net zero by 2030 as a council, we will:

- Bring about environmental improvements that support progress to net zero, including work in partnership with businesses, residents and others.
- Work together to implement actions to adapt to climate change in West Suffolk, in line with the third National Adaptation Programme.
- Promote improved public and active travel opportunities in West Suffolk and work to reduce the impact of heavy goods vehicles in communities.

Sustainable growth

In order to deliver on our strategic priority of sustainable growth, we will:

- Support new and existing businesses to grow, for example, through start-up support and skills development.

Annual Report 2023 to 2024

- Work to ensure West Suffolk is an attractive place for businesses, to ensure growth is supported by employment. This will have a particular focus on attracting higher-skilled enterprises to support wage growth.
- Continue to support West Suffolk's local high streets and markets as the vibrant centres of thriving local communities.
- Seek to develop infrastructure that supports growth.
- Maximise what makes us distinctive.

Thriving communities

In order to deliver on our strategic priority of thriving communities, we will:

- Ensure all West Suffolk residents are able to access appropriate services, benefits and support.
- Enable West Suffolk residents to improve their physical and mental health and wellbeing through sport, physical and cultural activities, as well as access to health services. In particular, nurture and protect parks and open spaces for the benefit of both residents and visitors.
- Work with partners to prevent and reduce crime and antisocial behaviour in the district.

Engagement

Through our strategic priorities West Suffolk Council has established a strong commitment 'to ensuring that everything we do takes account of the needs and views of local communities, residents, businesses and interest groups'. In this year, we have committed to establishing Councillor-led panels that will cover:

- environment and sustainability
- towns and high streets
- health
- the horse-racing industry
- transport

In this year, we have undertaken consultation and engagement on the emerging West Suffolk Local Plan, the new Housing, Homelessness Reduction and Rough Sleeping Strategy and a new street trading policy, all detailed in the pages of this report.

During this first year of our administration we have been talking to and engaging with a range of groups and partners to understand their needs and how we can work together. This has included councillor tours of West Suffolk's towns and rural areas and engagement with Abbeycroft Leisure, Cambridgeshire district councils, Homes England, private sector landlords, registered providers, the wider Suffolk system, the United States Air Force, the Suffolk Climate Change, Environment and Energy Board, Transport East and the horse racing industry among many others.

You can read more on this at [Strategic priorities \(westsuffolk.gov.uk\)](https://www.westsuffolk.gov.uk/strategic-priorities).

Annual Report 2023 to 2024

Affordable, available, and decent homes

- 611 new homes were built in West Suffolk during 2023 to 2024, of which 30 per cent were classed as 'affordable housing' and 6.6 per cent were for 'social rent'.
- Barley Homes (the council's housing company) purchased land to build 13 homes at Rougham, alongside taking on option on adjoining land to potentially facilitate another 27 homes. The company is working with the council are working on a development brief to accompany a future planning application that may provide as many as 180 homes in Great Barton. Barley Homes continued to appraise numerous sites to work towards achieving its target of delivering 40 new homes per year as detailed in its business plan 2023 to 2028 [here](#).
- £1,426,858 of Local Authority Housing Funding was used to deliver ten units of accommodation in partnership with local registered providers for the resettlement of Afghans and Ukrainians this year. This includes one unit of temporary accommodation being purchased by the council for general needs use.
- The new Housing, Homelessness Reduction and Rough Sleeping Strategy will help direct the council's approach to housing over the next few years. 145 responses were received to a public and stakeholder online consultation in this year. Three member workshops were held, each of which focused on a different priority area.
- Five proactive and 106 routine inspections of Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) were undertaken this year. Following a review of the issues identified through these inspections, in April 2024 we wrote to all landlords about their responsibilities and to tenants about how they can report issues, while assuring that their confidentiality will be maintained. The letter to tenants in HMOs was translated into more than a dozen languages to make it more accessible for tenants from different backgrounds.
- The Private Sector Housing Team took part in two multi-agency impact days alongside Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service, the police and other partners to pro-actively inspect accommodation above commercial premises. Nine premises were visited by the team.
- 2.2 million of Government funding has been secured by Suffolk's districts and boroughs to improve the standard of private rented homes. The project approved by DLUHC will focus on engagement with landlords, tenants and communities to achieve compliance by self-regulation with enforcement as a last resort.
- Following efforts this past year, 36 more landlords have signed up to work with the council. West Suffolk Letting Partnership continues to encourage more landlords to work with them in housing council placed tenants.

Annual Report 2023 to 2024

- West Suffolk has invested £180,000 in energy efficiency improvements to homes used to support homeless people. All of these are also being supplied with 100 per cent renewable electricity with the majority of this generated locally from Toggam solar farm. The overall saving is predicted to be 22 tonnes of carbon dioxide a year.
- [Safe Suffolk Renters](#) is a Suffolk-wide initiative backed by government funding to improve standards in the private rented sector through building relationships between tenants, landlords, property managers and councils. Specific actions include a Suffolk-wide housing stock condition survey, support for landlords, tenants, and the Private Sector Housing teams across Suffolk through additional resource, intelligence, and training.
- Tenants of period properties with low Energy Performance Certificates (EPC) ratings are enjoying lower energy costs and cosier homes thanks to work carried out by their landlords and West Suffolk Council. Ten properties at the Euston Estate and four Metcalfe Almshouses in Hawstead have been fitted with several energy efficiency measures, through funding from the Government's Sustainable Warmth funding and landlord investment.
- Since the new Independent Living Service was introduced in December 2020, the number of Disabled Facilities Grants approved has increased from 72 in 2020 to 211 in the year ending 31 March 2024. The number of grants completed has increased from 108 in 2020 up to 214 completed in the year ending 31 March 2024. On average this equates to four applications approved and completed every week.
- During 2023 to 2024, we assisted 205 West Suffolk households with adaptations to their homes. This saw £1,668,887.29 million spent on providing essential adaptations and facilities to enable elderly, disabled and vulnerable residents to live independently and safely in their homes through the Disabled Facilities Grant.
- 1,275 households who were at risk of homelessness were provided with advice and support. In 2023 to 2024, 321 households were successfully provided with advice, or the risk of homelessness resolved, at the first point of contact. 286 were owed a prevention duty, whereby the council must take reasonable steps to prevent the individual or household from becoming homeless and 668 were owed a relief duty, when the council must take reasonable steps to secure suitable accommodation for them.
- The national figures for the number of homeless people sleeping outdoors, termed rough sleepers by the Government, increased from six to eight in West Suffolk. The figure is based on a snapshot and fluctuates almost daily as people are accommodated and other people either become homeless or lose their place of accommodation.
- The council is continuing to fund a personalised healthcare service in partnership with health outreach and Sanctuary Housing for rough sleepers in supported accommodation with £30,000 per year for two years.

Annual Report 2023 to 2024

Environmental resilience

A summary of the council's environmental performance can be found in the Environmental Statement [here](#), which is a summary of the council's progress to net zero. Other environmental initiatives include the below:

- A trial of four reverse vending machines provided by the council began, in partnership with Love Newmarket BID, The Guineas Shopping Centre, Abbeycroft Leisure, Eastern Education Group, Our Bury St Edmunds BID and Trovr.
- In February 2024, a package of measures to reduce Great Barton's air pollution was agreed by West Suffolk Council's cabinet.
- West Suffolk Council's European pilot project to speed up transition to low carbon energy networks has saved local businesses £407,000 and 350 tonnes of carbon a year. The four-year project, completed in April and part-funded by EU organisation Interreg, saw the council work with local companies to test the use of innovative energy technology.
- 3,000 bulbs were planted in the Abbey Gardens in Bury St Edmunds in November 2023, by volunteers, local schools and West Suffolk Council
- This year, the council has committed an additional £2.75 million in capital investment to support our net zero ambitions through the Net Zero Fund.
- During 2023 to 2024, Toggam solar farm, owned by the council, generated 11,851 megawatt hours (MWh) of renewable electricity, which was 4 per cent above target for the year, with the financial performance far exceeding the original target. The electricity that is sold into the National Grid is enough to power around 3,320 homes and offset the carbon dioxide emissions from 1,509 cars.
- The Solar for Business programme, offered by West Suffolk Council, has just seen its best year so far with 2.5MW installed, bringing the total of businesses benefiting to 86 and saving 1,887 tonnes of carbon emissions since the scheme started in 2016. This year, 86 businesses have benefitted, in both towns and villages, with 7.6MW of solar installed through the scheme.
- 1.4MW of solar energy capacity was installed across the council's operational buildings, saving a further 354 tonnes of carbon emissions.
- A £1 million Decarbonisation Initiative fund was launched in West Suffolk to help community organisations reduce their carbon emissions and make energy savings.
- Using this Fund, West Suffolk Council made the first payment to help town and parish councils with the cost of rapidly converting streetlights to more efficient light-emitting diode (LED) lanterns. The transition is expected to reduce the town and parish councils' energy consumption by at least 70 per cent and eventually save over 200 tonnes of CO₂ per year.

Annual Report 2023 to 2024

- West Suffolk Council has installed six more town centre electric vehicle charging points in Bury St Edmunds, available for the public to use. This is in addition to the deal the council has signed to install around 100 new slow, fast, and rapid public points on council-owned land.
- Young people heard a keynote speech by a wildlife presenter and award-winning photographer at Suffolk's first youth conference on climate change. 96 students aged 12 to 17 years from across the county attended the day, held at West Suffolk College, with workshops and networking about tackling the climate emergency in Suffolk.
- The first electric street sweeper in West Suffolk Council's fleet was at work in Haverhill last summer, keeping the town's air cleaner as well as its pavements. In May 2023 alone, it saved 653kg CO₂e compared to an equivalent diesel sweeper.
- A £150,000 fund opened to applications from not-for-profit organisations looking to deliver community-based carbon reduction projects in Suffolk in June 2023.
- A new member-led referencing group was created this year to focus on tackling climate change and environmental issues across the district, supported by an officer working group.
- In October 2023, we introduced a new water consumption metric to the existing suite of environmental key performance indicators (KPIs). This will allow us to measure the amount of water the council uses with a view to reduce water consumption in the long term.
- Since August 2023, we have included reference to our net zero ambition in job adverts and our recruitment website. This applies to all relevant jobs that have a link to the work to reduce council emissions and improve the environment. The inclusion of this information helps to communicate the importance of the environment and sustainability to new staff.

Sustainable growth

- The emerging West Suffolk Local Plan which will guide where new homes can and cannot be built between now and 2040, and also allocate land for business growth went through its final stage of public consultation. The Submission Draft consultation on the West Suffolk Local Plan took place between January and March 2024 during which time 187 individual participants gave feedback, generating around 1,000 individual representations to the plan and supporting documents.
- This year, West Suffolk residents, street traders, businesses and other stakeholders were asked for their input to help shape a new street trading policy for the district, in a consultation garnering 154 responses.

Annual Report 2023 to 2024

- The council announced three new and exciting deals tailored exclusively for local market stallholders which are set to support new and existing traders to thrive and flourish. These include free trading, gazebo insurance and a Market Pass to trade in the Bury St Edmund's Wednesday market at a discounted rate. A Markets Development Plan has been commissioned following on from the Markets Review, which will be implemented from 2024.
- In October 2023, we allocated funding from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund to support projects in our local towns. Grants of up to £10,000 for each town were available and required match funding from the town council or Business Improvement District at a rate of 40 per cent.
- We completed the first phase of landlord improvements at Provincial House in Haverhill and received Cabinet approval for an additional investment of up to £2 million in capital works to complete the next phase of refurbishment. We have secured West Suffolk College as a major new tenant, with the college relocating their Adult Learning Centre back into the town centre.
- We continue to support the Advanced and Manufacturing Engineering (AME) sector through a £12.1 million investment that will provide space for new businesses in that sector to flourish and be supported as well encourage jobs growth. The council purchased 6.8 acres of land at Suffolk Business Park in Bury St Edmunds to develop an 80,000 square foot AME Centre in two phases.
- West Suffolk Council partnered with the Suffolk Chamber of Commerce to support business growth and economic development across the district. The Suffolk Chamber of Commerce will also champion West Suffolk in its lobbying role.
- We have brought more employment and business opportunities into the district by establishing a commissioning fund to progress a number of sustainable growth initiatives including along the A11 corridor near Mildenhall, and along the A1307 and A14.
- The EcoCarriers Shop and Drop scheme launched in Bury St Edmunds this year, through which pedal-powered delivery crews are helping businesses give a greener level of service. The project was supported by West Suffolk Council and Suffolk County Council as well as Our Bury St Edmunds BID.
- West Suffolk high streets continue to perform strongly, with only 8.8 per cent of commercial units across the six market towns being vacant as of 31 March 2024, compared to the UK average of 14 per cent.
- Bury St Edmunds hosted heats and a regional final of the National Young Market Trader Competition in July 2023.
- Alongside a mix of regular street markets, the council organised and promoted specialist market events including monthly Makers Market in Bury St Edmunds, Newmarket, and Haverhill.

Annual Report 2023 to 2024

- We awarded £35,000, as part of the Council's allocation from the Rural England Prosperity Fund to the Newmarket Cinema project, which will see a silver screen opening in the town later in 2024.
- West Suffolk car parks continue to perform strongly, with an increase of 13.53 per cent in off-street and on-street car parking events this year compared to last year.
- Suffolk's district and borough councils and New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) partnered to invest over £1 million in business support and development services, including advice to reduce carbon emissions from July 2023 to March 2025.
- The West Suffolk Business Festival in October 2023 was the 13th year the council has collaborated with local business support organisations to deliver two weeks of business events across West Suffolk, attended by over 250 business leaders.
- 200 youngsters from primary schools based in Mildenhall took part in one of the only careers events for younger primary school children in the country, through the Eastern Academies Group Skills Escalator programme that we help organise and deliver.
- Hundreds of local jobseekers were able to access employment and upskilling opportunities at jobs and skills fairs delivered in partnership with the Department for Work and Pensions, in Bury St Edmunds, Haverhill, Mildenhall and Newmarket.
- We have continued to deliver 'Choose Hospitality' in partnership with the Culinary Arts Academy at West Suffolk College. The programme celebrates the varied career options on offer within the sector and encourages young people to consider a career in the industry.
- The council is committed to offering the opportunity for apprenticeships as a career path. As of March 2024, West Suffolk Council had 31 apprentices, compared to 30 the year before.

UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) and Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF)

The council agreed an investment plan for its £1,943,467 million share of the Government's UKSPF to further strengthen the West Suffolk economy, improve job opportunities, town centres and rural areas as well as support community groups over the three years. The funding is being delivered over three years and in the year of April 2023 to 31 March 2024, £471,715 of UKSPF was provided to support projects such as the following,

The council was also a recipient of REPF funding, a top-up to UKSPF funding aimed at supporting the Levelling Up White Paper and Future Farming Programme. Within West Suffolk this can be used everywhere outside Bury St Edmunds, with a total sum of funding of £753,701 spread across two years (2023 to 2024 and 2024 to 2025). In the year of April 2023 to 31 March 2024, £188,425 was provided to support projects such as those listed below:

UKSPF

- Community sports clubs from across West Suffolk could apply for a council grant to help increase participation and further enhance activity. Grants of between £200 and £1000 were made available under West Suffolk Council's Capital Sports Fund.
- Lapwing Education were commissioned to deliver targeted and intensive support for young people aged 16-24 to gain and sustain employment or education.
- Community and environment charity Groundwork East partnered with Suffolk's local authorities to deliver free and impartial expert advice to help businesses and organisations save energy, reduce their emissions and establish tailored decarbonisation plans.
- Additional cycle parking at Bury St Edmunds station, which services over 600,000 passengers each year. This will provide approximately 50 additional cycle spaces, supporting cycling to the station.

REPF

- Capital grants with a value between £5,000 to £10,000 to support small businesses looking to grow and expand.
- A new bridge and new pathways in Newmarket to make better connections to the Guarded Orchard.

Annual Report 2023 to 2024

Thriving communities

- In September 2023, Mildenhall was awarded Most Active Town in the Suffolk Community Awards in recognition of the great strides that have been made to increase physical activity levels.
- A brand new £122,000, free-to-use pump track opened in Mildenhall in December 2023, built by West Suffolk Council.
- The Mutiny in Colour art exhibition in Bury St Edmunds, Haverhill and Newmarket from June to October 2023 saw 13,850 visitors. A visitor survey found that 98 per cent of respondents described the exhibition as excellent or good and 93 per cent thought it was good or very good value for money.
- The Apex in Bury St Edmunds had its best financial year on record, both in box office income and ticket sales, with 113,356 tickets sold worth £2.7 million between April 2023 to March 2024. The venue achieved a 73 per cent capacity in the main auditorium, meaning 73 per cent of all tickets available were sold throughout the year.
- The two-day Dragon Fest saw more than 2,285 people descend on the West Stow Anglo-Saxon Village in June 2023.
- 13,964 school children visited West Stow Anglo-Saxon Village and Moyses Hall saw 2,685 school visitors.
- Between October 2023 to January 2024, 4,600 people visited the Film and Sci-fi exhibition, a prop and merchandise display with family trails and activities in Moyses Hall.
- Upgraded conveniences with Newmarket's first Changing Places facility opened in September 2023 following the £330,000 upgrade of the Guineas public toilets.
- Since April 2023, the council has also made two levels of Parkway multi-storey car park in Bury St Edmunds available exclusively to hospital workers from Monday to Friday through a permit scheme.
- The 2023 to 2024 Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme introduced a change to the maximum reduction on Council Tax that a West Suffolk resident could receive. Whereas previously the maximum reduction was 91.5 per cent, this was increased to 100 per cent, to support low-income working age residents.
- 77 Community Chest funding applications were received totalling £1,319,843.12. Community Chest had £466,733 available for allocation for 2023 to 2024. Within the full allocation, £245,000 was provided to West Suffolk Citizens Advice. The scheme was oversubscribed by 282 percent. 46 applications were considered by the Grant Working Party (GWP) to the value of £1,066,087.12. Overall, the GWP recommended funding to 32 organisations (60 per cent) of the projects in either full or part to the value of £466,733.

Annual Report 2023 to 2024

- This year, we maintained our annual £61,000 grant to the Theatre Royal in Bury St Edmunds for core costs.
- The overall spend on Locality Budgets for 2023 to 2024 was £159,758.21, from a budget of £179,200. The End of Year Transparency Report for a full overview of grants paid can be found [here](#).
- Feel Good Suffolk launched and is now fully operational this year. The service supports residents in Suffolk to make positive changes to their health and wellbeing. 947 referrals had been received as of 31 March 2024 for West Suffolk (19.7 per cent), out of a total of 4,799 across Suffolk. In West Suffolk, 43 per cent were 'weight management' related, 24.5 per cent were to 'quit smoking' and 32.3 per cent were 'physical activity' related. 52.4 per cent of referrals are self-referrals, with 47.6 per cent made by healthcare professionals. In response, 3,887 contacts were made, 483 interventions have been provided and 137 appointments held.
- In collaboration with West Suffolk NHS Foundation Trust, 2,612 GP referrals were made to Abbeycroft Leisure which helped improve residents' health and wellbeing. Within the first 12 weeks, 65 per cent of those active experienced an increase in their wellbeing.
- The council was awarded £213,500 of funding by Sport England to help offset increased utility costs and ensure its swimming pools remained open. This support follows £300,000 that the council agreed to make available as part of the 2023 to 2024 budget.
- West Suffolk Council has continued to coordinate the Government's Holiday Activities and Food programme during the school holidays. The council used part of the funding to extend the scheme to other families in financial hardship who would not otherwise qualify for the scheme. A total of 7,156 places were booked with a spend of £295,767 this year funded through the Department for Education and supported by the county council.
- The council is working with expert advisors to develop proposals to invest in essential maintenance and explore what additional refurbishments and service improvements are possible in the current Bury St Edmunds leisure facilities. This follows the cancellation of the Western Way Project in September 2023, due to national uncertainty over public and household finances, and the risk this placed on the council's short-term finances. Further news and engagement on this important project will take place in Summer 2024. The scheme is part of our long-term investment in leisure facilities across West Suffolk.

Getting the essentials right

- In March 2024, 46 per cent of all contact with the customer service team was online, compared to just 31 per cent in March 2020. This means there are more opportunities for customers to access services and make contact with the council at a time that is convenient to them. For people who are unable to access services online, the council continues to provide a telephone customer

Annual Report 2023 to 2024

service. Where a face to face or virtual conversation is preferable, appointments are arranged at a time that suits the customer.

- One of the knock-on effects of the pandemic was a delay to food safety inspections. That in turn had created a backlog of some 982 businesses awaiting inspection at the beginning of April 2022. But over the past two years, the commercial environmental health officers have managed to reduce this waiting list by 90 per cent by 31 March 2024. During 2023 to 2024, 605 food safety inspections were carried out, helping give customers confidence in where to eat and supporting businesses in ensuring public safety.
- During 2023 to 2024, the council responded to 410 reports of environment crime from residents and businesses, resulting in 38 abandoned vehicles and almost 25 tonnes of waste being removed.
- More than 4.8 million bins from West Suffolk households were emptied during the year, resulting in 10,332 tonnes of recycled waste and 38,908 tonnes of non-recyclable household waste being sent for processing at the Energy from Waste facility in Great Blakenham.
- In 2023 to 2024, 31,463 households subscribed to the garden waste collection service, through which 12,746 tonnes of garden waste were collected and composted locally. Last year, 33,355 households subscribed to the garden waste collection service, through which 10,862 tonnes of garden waste were collected and composted.
- The council is preparing for 'Simpler Recycling', Government legislation for councils to align their household waste and recycling services.
- £200,000 was invested in the council's grounds maintenance service through increased skilled workforce and additional investment in new green equipment for operational efficiencies.
- During 2023 to 2024, we determined 2,151 planning applications supporting the supply of new housing including affordable housing, and business growth across the district.
- 43 major, 208 minor and 702 'other' (for example, change of use, listed buildings and adverts) planning applications were granted during 2023 to 2024, compared to 43 major, 247 minor and 814 'other' in 2022 to 2023.
- West Suffolk Council was recognised for its part in keeping the housing market moving and won Best Migrated Local Authority in the 2024 Land Data Awards for Excellence.
- Councillors continued to be supported through a development framework focused in this year on raising awareness of operational teams and functions and building relationships across the council. Bespoke training was provided to the Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee to further develop its role.

Annual Report 2023 to 2024

- The council committed to a review of how portfolio holder (Cabinet Member) decisions are made alongside a review of how exempt information is reported to ensure transparency and robust procedure.
- We conducted a review on all of our key performance indicators (KPIs) which included input from Internal Audit, Portfolio Holders and the Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee. We added Office for Local Government metrics to ensure our data were benchmarked against national trends.

Appendix 1

- 70 electric vehicles can now charge simultaneously as a result of council-installed chargers. These charges deliver the equivalent of 421,490 miles of power.
- The amount of renewable energy generated by West Suffolk Council projects is 183 per cent higher than 2012 levels. The amount of power now being generated could power 239 average homes for one year.
- The total amount of waste generated at West Suffolk House in 2023 to 2024 was down 17 per cent compared to 2022 to 2023.
- The percentage of all waste that was recycled from West Suffolk House was 73 per cent this year. This was a 5 per cent decrease on last year, as a result of a significant decrease in the amount of confidential waste being produced.
- The amount of fuel used for West Suffolk Council vehicles and equipment decreased by 1 per cent on last year, resulting in a 3 per cent drop in emissions.
- A total of 705 whips were supplied by the Woodland Trust and 136 trees were planted on West Suffolk owned land last year. This includes 600 whips planted by volunteers from the local community in Brandon Country Park and Nowton Park.
- Six Green Flags were retained for the council's parks and open spaces at the Abbey Gardens, East Town Park, Brandon Country Park, Aspal Close Nature Reserve, West Stow Country Park, and Nowton Park.
- The total amount of amenity grass that we maintained and operated, including highway verges, amounted to 308 hectares on an approximately three-weekly cycle. This is the equivalent to 432 football pitches and a significant proportion of it is made up of very small patches of grass in and around our residential areas.
- We sought to increase biodiversity by cutting certain areas later in the season. This has included leaving larger areas of uncut grass around trees and shrubs in our parks.
- Grid electricity consumption by West Suffolk Council rose by 13 per cent compared to 2022 to 2023. Gas consumption by West Suffolk Council was

Annual Report 2023 to 2024

down by 28 per cent on 2022 to 2023. The increase can be attributed to a phased return to our offices and an increase in the number of buildings being supplied with electricity.

- Grid electricity consumption by Abbeycroft Leisure rose by 3 per cent compared to 2022 and 2023. Gas consumption by Abbeycroft Leisure decreased by 3 per cent compared to 2022 and 2023.
- The total emissions in 2023-24 from all activities the council is directly responsible for (including but not limited to buildings, fleet and transportation) was up 1.3 per cent compared with 2022 to 2023.
- Water consumption by West Suffolk Council increased by 3 per cent compared to last year.