



EASTSUFFOLK
COUNCIL

OUR

DIRECTION

2028

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Cllr Caroline Topping, Leader

I was incredibly honoured to have been elected as Leader of East Suffolk Council and to be its first female Leader. This is a truly beautiful and vibrant part of the world and I am proud, as a resident, to serve you all.

After many years of Conservative Administration at Suffolk Coastal, Waveney and East Suffolk Councils, our residents voted for change. Our communities have put their trust in us, and we will do our best to deliver what they want us to achieve.

We fully appreciate how worried people have been about tackling the cost-of-living crisis which has hit our communities really hard. People can't find affordable housing; they are worried about their town centres with shops and banks closing, and they are worried about the environmental legacy we are leaving for our children, with the threat of climate change already evident.

Therefore, this Green, Liberal Democrat and Independent Administration, working collaboratively with all Members, staff and important stakeholders will operate on the basis of clear priorities which reflect our shared values. These priorities are presented here in 'Our Direction 2028', our plan for the next four years.

The Council is ready for an exciting and ambitious new phase, and Our Direction has seen the original East Suffolk Plan evolve, with a refreshed and refined approach, reflecting the political ambitions of the new Administration.

Our Direction 2028 is about the path we are embarking on together, collaboratively, over the next four years. We are taking an ambitious approach and have sought the views of local people to create this Plan. We are working with and empowering communities and individuals to conserve what we love about our District, improve services where we need to and adapt to our changing environment to ensure the District is in the best place possible in 2028.

Over the next few pages, we will explain exactly what we are seeking to achieve and the standards to which we expect to be held. It will no doubt be challenging, but also exciting and on behalf of all councillors I can guarantee that we will do our very best at all times.

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Chris Bally, Chief Executive

'Our Direction 2028' comes at a time of great challenge and opportunity for the district and the organisation. East Suffolk Council has made huge strides since 2019, delivering against the Council's first ever Strategic Plan achieving, real progress in the district.

We have welcomed considerable funding to deliver major projects and throughout East Suffolk there are examples of important schemes and activities being delivered by the Council or in partnership with other key stakeholders.

2023 has been a year of significant change, with a new Chief Executive and Administration. However, the energy, resilience and positivity shown in taking this change in its stride and continuing to deliver excellent public services is a testament to all who work for the Council.

Looking ahead, we have an exciting four-year agenda. The new Green, Liberal Democrat and Independent Administration of the Council recognise the progress that has been made, but also know that they have been chosen by the electorate. They want to deliver a renewed focus on the environment and an economy that works for all in the district, addressing inequalities and tackling the housing challenge appropriately across the District.

Alongside this, at our core, is maintaining the quality of services day-in day-out and ensuring the council is governed well and delivers effectively and efficiently. We are also ready to look at things afresh, as demonstrated by the creation of trading vehicles such as East Suffolk Services Limited and East Suffolk Lettings, plus the adoption of technology through our Digital Towns work.

However, we know we cannot do this alone and welcome continued excellent working relations with other councils in Suffolk, health and police partners, the business and voluntary sectors, and central government. This is typified by our innovative Community Partnership model which will develop further to create a thriving network of projects and initiatives.

I am incredibly proud to be the Chief Executive of East Suffolk and proud of the commitment, energy and ingenuity that our officers and teams put into delivering outstanding services around the clock. Excellent planning, building control, environmental health, housing, leisure and so much more only happen because of the people dedicated to serving our communities. They are united in their purpose whether they are directly delivering services or supporting those who are engaged in that delivery to achieve the best for East Suffolk.

OUR DIRECTION 2028

Our aim is to promote
a bright, green, open,
free, and fair future
for all East Suffolk





EAST SUFFOLK IN CONTEXT



Population of
around
250373



Around
487
square miles



115
square miles
of AONB



49
miles of
coast line



15.54%
19 or under



27.71%
65 or over

- Natural beauty
- Heritage
- Arts
- Beach
- Ports
- Market town
- Wind energy
- Nuclear energy
- Coastal protection
- A12 Roads
- Rail



11.3% of our population are affected by income deprivation, higher than the Suffolk average of 10.2%



19,638 people were claiming universal credit in July 23



Approximately **4000** planning applications per year



45% of waste collected sent for recycling or composting



2000 fly tipping incidents per year



13,000 properties pay Government-set business rates, which we administer



We collect waste and recycling, administer Council Tax, and more, from over **127,000** properties in the district



Food hygiene ratings **98.75** at rating 3-5



Over **1 million** ESC-owned leisure centre visits, year to Spring 2023

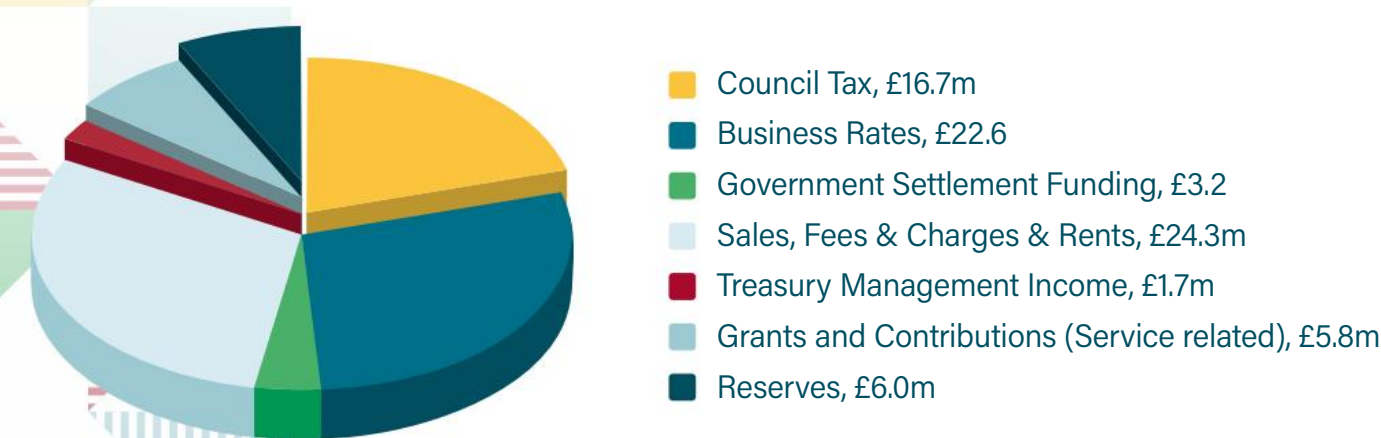


£13.8m in successful grant funding – 94% of applications, year to Spring 2023

How our Council Services are Funded

In 2023/24 East Suffolk Council had a net budget of £80.3m. East Suffolk Council's services are funded from a mix of sources including Council Tax, Business Rates, income from Fees and Charges and a small grant from Government. Between 2015/16 and 2023/24 the amount the Council received from Government fell from £8.04m to £3.23m as part of the Government's austerity programme.

The Council is increasingly reliant on locally generated funds from Council Tax, business rates and fees and charges. The ability to generate income from charges for its services is increasingly important to support the Council's strategic objectives. This provides a third of the total funding to Council.



Where the Money is Spent (net budget £80.3m in 2023/24)





Financial Management

East Suffolk has a good record of budget and financial management and continues to protect front line services. Good financial governance ensure that emerging budget pressures are kept under review during each year, and this has been particularly important following the Covid-19 pandemic, a period of high inflation and the cost-of-living crisis.

We review key contractual arrangements and are very active in securing external grant funding. Meanwhile, the Council held unallocated reserves of £6m at the start of 2023-24, with earmarked reserves of £45m.



Capital Programme

In addition to the revenue budget, the Council has a capital investment programme which supports delivery of the Council's strategic direction and to carry out necessary health and safety works. For 2023/24 the budget programme of capital projects totals £113m, with £73m funded from external grants and a 4-year capital programme of £370m (£260m from external grants) over the period of the Medium Term Financial Strategy.



Housing Revenue Account

Over and above the money spent by the Council as part of its General Fund, the annual income from the Council's housing stock, is in the region of £22m and is ring-fenced for re-investment into the provision of housing services, support for tenants and investment in the existing stock and new housing.

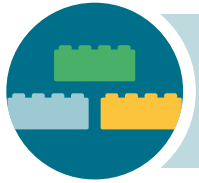


Financial Challenges to 2028

During the period of this Plan, maintaining a balanced budget will be pushed to the limit. The demand for Council services arising from a number of pressures including the cost-of-living crisis will increase and it is likely the Council will face significant challenges to its income streams. Our commitment to reach net zero by 2030 and new legislation including, for example, in areas of housing regulation will put further pressure on budgets.

Following a period of high inflation, the costs for goods and services has increased and supply chain pressure will continue to impact on the Council's capital programme. The implications of the UK leaving the European Union will continue to affect the Council, not least the Port Health Authority as we implement the new Border Target Operating Model.

The absence of multi-year settlements, delays to the Fairer Funding Review and the re-set of the business rates system, does not provide the certainty to plan for financial sustainability. However we understand these challenges and commit to addressing them over the next four years.



Our Foundations

Our Direction 2028 is the Council's blueprint for success over the next four years, and in delivering this Plan we recognise the importance of the solid foundations that are critically important to any successful local authority.

We will continue to provide excellent quality services for our residents, whether it's working with Anglia Revenues Partnership to deliver our revenue and benefits services, ensuring hygiene standards are maintained by our Port Health Team who check that imported foods are safe, through hygiene inspections at your favourite café or providing access to our fabulous beach huts along our coastline.

The delivery of our day-to-day functions will always remain an unwavering priority.

We will always listen to our residents and commit to engaging with them whenever possible. We will also find innovative ways of doing this, especially for residents that are less likely to engage with us and are harder to reach.

We will ensure our customers find it easy to do business with the Council. On every occasion people interact with us, it must be as straightforward as possible and we will always adopt a solution-focussed approach.

Digital Technology plays a key role in how we work as an organisation, and it is vital we continue to invest in the right technology to enable the council and the district to thrive. In doing this, we are also committed to ensuring that those who cannot access digital services themselves are not excluded.

We will use digital technology to ensure our services are efficient, secure and data-led – and we will capitalise on the benefits of greener ways of working, using technology.

Finally, we will always measure and reflect on our performance, including how we deliver this plan as part of Our Direction 2028. This includes undertaking robust internal audits accross all our service areas.

We will ask our communities what they think of us in a variety of different ways, including through our regular residents surveys, and we will always take action when things are not going so well.



Our Values

We want our workforce to be the best they can, delivering the best possible services to those who need us most. Our People Strategy maps out how we want to develop our people, ensuring they have the right skills and training to do their jobs well.

East Suffolk Council has five core staff values which lay the foundation for the way our people work, engendering a common purpose that everyone understands, buys into and embodies in all they do.



Equalities, Diversity, and Inclusion

We are fully committed to Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion in all that we do. We will strive to ensure a supportive and inclusive culture amongst our workforce, promoting diversity and eliminating all forms of unlawful and unfair discrimination.

We will not provide less favourable services, facilities or treatment on the grounds of protected characteristics. The protected characteristics are age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership status, pregnancy and maternity, race (including ethnic origin, colour, nationality and national origin), religion or belief, or sex and sexual orientation. The District Council also includes socio-economic factors in addition to the protected characteristics.

The Council is proud to have signed up to Unison's Anti Racism Charter and we have further reinforced our commitment to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion, by developing a four-year action plan to ensure that it remains integral to all we do.





Delivering positive climate, nature, and environmental impacts through the decisions we make and actions we take.



Continued commitment to net zero by 2030

We are committed to achieving net zero as a Council by 2030, and working collaboratively to deliver this for Suffolk, focussing and investing in this transition while protecting our core services.



Work in partnership to manage coastal adaptation and resilience

In the face of great threats to East Suffolk's coastline, we will work in partnership with stakeholders and communities to manage coastal adaptation and create resilience wherever possible.



Supporting sustainable transport

We will support sustainable transport – delivering our own Cycling and Walking Strategy whilst working hard with our partners enabling people to use public transport and travel in an environmentally sustainable way.



Focus on reduction, re-use and recycling of materials

Through our own practices and by encouraging others, we will focus on the reduction, re-use and recycling of materials, including the eradication of single use plastics.



Restoring ecosystems and biodiversity

We are committed to restoring ecosystems and biodiversity, through rewilding and tree planting, enabling landowners to follow our lead. We will set ambitious biodiversity net gain targets and encourage improvement.



Encourage food self-sufficiency

We will reduce food waste and encourage more local food production, including community growing schemes, to reduce food miles. We will support residents and community groups to develop food practices which move away from chemical control.



Support, promote and implement green tech

We will implement and support decarbonising, electrifying and greening technologies to create energy across the district, contributing to local and national energy infrastructures.



Preserve and maintain the district's beauty and heritage

We will seek to preserve and maintain the inherent beauty and attraction of East Suffolk including its natural landscape and conservation areas, historic environment and cultural heritage, retaining its unique selling points for generations to come.



SUSTAINABLE HOUSING

All homes in East Suffolk are safe, suitable, and sustainable, in communities where residents are proud to live.



Deliver the right housing based on our communities' need

We want to deliver and support the right housing developments in the right locations based on all residents' housing needs, with more affordable homes including social rent and better first-time buyer opportunities.



Promote housing developments which enhance wellbeing and protect the environment

We want housing developments that enhance wellbeing with high quality infrastructure, green spaces; encouraging sustainable transport where possible, using master planning to engage with our residents.



Tackle fuel poverty and support new heating technologies

We will strive to help end fuel poverty and deliver more sustainable housing, including our own stock. We will take advantage of funding opportunities for new heating technologies, including for the installation of solar panels, improving insulation and installing heat pumps.



Reduce and prevent homelessness

We will continue to work hard for those that are at risk of becoming homeless to prevent this from happening, alongside supporting people who are homeless back into suitable accommodation.



Promote community pride in homes and neighbourhoods

We will promote community pride in our homes and neighbourhoods to help people respect and enjoy where they live and to help maintain and improve quality of life standards.



Add to, improve and make better use of our housing stock

By converting unused public buildings into housing units, developing upper floors of retail units, or bringing empty homes back into use we will make sensible use of what we have, to provide suitable housing for our residents.



Encourage more self-build housing in East Suffolk

We will seek to encourage more self-build housing in East Suffolk as a means to create homes in an environmentally sustainable way.



Improving quality of life across the district by tackling financial, social and health inequalities.



Use local data to design and deliver services

We will use local insight and data to target inequalities that exist across our district, ensuring that we adapt the design and delivery of our services accordingly to support communities and individuals appropriately.



Work with partners to better understand need

We will continue to work collaboratively with partners, including those in the voluntary, community, faith, and social enterprises (VCFSE) and public sectors, to understand the needs of our residents, enabling them to help themselves.



Prioritise early help to support residents

We will further develop our Community Help Hub model and other preventative approaches to provide early help, ensuring we engage quickly to better support our residents during difficult times.



Digitally enable our communities to help residents in need

We will address a lack of digital inclusion which can drive inequality to help all our communities better access online services, including those that are designed to support residents when they are in need.



Efficiently deliver benefits and grants to residents

We will ensure residents and businesses understand what benefits and grants they are entitled to and ensure, if provided by us, that they receive exactly what they are entitled to in a timely and efficient manner.



Further develop Community Partnership model

We will continue to develop our Community Partnership model to ensure that it supports our residents, tackles inequalities and strives for a district that is fully inclusive and increases engagement.



Reduce health inequality and improve wellbeing

We will play an active role in reducing health inequalities and improving mental and physical health and wellbeing, ensuring residents have access to services, and ability to choose, that encourage healthy behaviours.



Take action to improve community safety and reduce ASB

We will take action to improve community safety throughout the district and strive to address and reduce anti-social behaviour and its impacts on residents.



Enabling residents to benefit from, and contribute to, a thriving economy.



Empower residents to build the right career skills

We want to work with partners to ensure our residents build and possess the right career skills for current and future employment opportunities across the district.



Encourage creativity and enterprise, and support start ups

We will encourage enterprise, innovation and creativity, in our population to ensure they have the tools to start up and grow their businesses, and we will celebrate all that's made and produced within our district.



Support businesses to eliminate waste and recycle more

We will work with business to decarbonise and be more sustainable, creating the conditions for business longevity, while protecting our precious environment by increasing a product's lifespan to eliminate waste and pollution.



Ensure Local Plans work for local people

We will ensure that our Local Plans will work for local people, as part of a vision to provide them with affordable housing, good public services, and a healthy environment, so that East Suffolk continues to be a great place to live and work.



Encourage investment in East Suffolk's key sectors

We will encourage investment in the key sectors which reflect East Suffolk's strengths bringing employment and prosperity.



Increase the economic viability of our towns

We will encourage place-based development to ensure we increase the viability of our Town Centres and Market Towns, ensuring they provide for our residents, businesses, and visitors, contributing to a thriving economy.



Community wealth building by working with local companies

We will work with local companies, cooperative businesses, and social enterprises, getting maximum benefit from our spending and contracting, to encourage Community Wealth Building and the reinvestment of wealth within East Suffolk for the benefit of our residents.



Ensure our residents can benefit from national infrastructure projects

We will work hard to ensure our residents benefit from Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects, adopting policies that encourage investment which supports impacted communities.



Support responsible tourism and visitor economy

We will support and seek to strengthen tourism and the visitor economy, while encouraging an understanding of responsible activities which reflect our environmental priorities and ambitions.

HOW ARE WE DOING?

Our Direction 2028 sets out the themes and priorities for East Suffolk Council across the next four years. However, it is important that we are then seen to deliver against these priorities, ensuring real, tangible outcomes for all our communities.

Therefore, we will develop an action plan to measure exactly what we are doing and what we have achieved. It will be clear and transparent, reflecting our determination to make a genuine difference.

To follow our journey, please head to

 www.eastsuffolk.gov.uk/ourdirection2028

