RESEARCH GUIDE

Model District Council

9 February 2024

EASTSUFFOLK
COUNCIL

RESEARCH GUIDE

Contents

RESEARCH GUIDE

East Suffolk Council - A Snapshot of the District

Area

East Suffolk has a population of 246,058 (ONS, Census 2021) and covers an area of 125,979 hectares (1,260km^2), has 79km of coastline and comprises a mix of urban and rural areas with Lowestoft and Felixstowe being the largest towns. There are also a number of historic towns and a large number of villages. In total, the district has 175 town and parish councils.

East Suffolk is an attractive place to live and work, attracting tourism and visitors and combining a strong economy with a natural and built environment. However, nine neighbourhoods in Lowestoft are within the 10% most deprived in the country and unemployment levels in two wards are double the regional average.

The district also includes the Port of Felixstowe, which is a major gateway for Britain to Europe. The district is also increasingly becoming a major energy supplier to the whole of Britain.

Political Leadership

East Suffolk Council was created in 2019.
It is a district council.

Suffolk has three tiers of local government, Suffolk County Council, five district councils and 175 Town and Parish Councils. The County Council delivers services such as education, waste disposal and social services across the whole of Suffolk, whereas locally, East Suffolk Council operates a range of services including building regulation, burials/cremations, community safety, the administration of council tax and business rates, environmental health, electoral administration, licensing, sports facilities, housing, street cleaning and refuse collection.
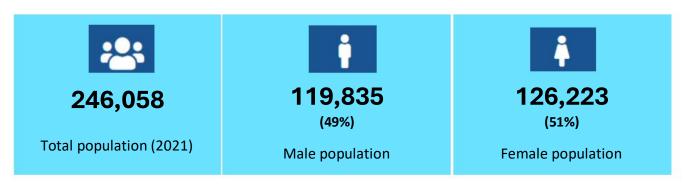
East Suffolk Council has 55 Councillors, covering 29 Wards. Elections were held in May 2023 and the political makeup of the Council is now as follows:

Conservative (15)	Green (16)	Labour (12)	Liberal Democrat (11)	Independent (1)

The Green Party, Liberal Democrats and Independent councillors have formed a political group, known as the GLI Group, which runs the Council.

RESEARCH GUIDE

Population

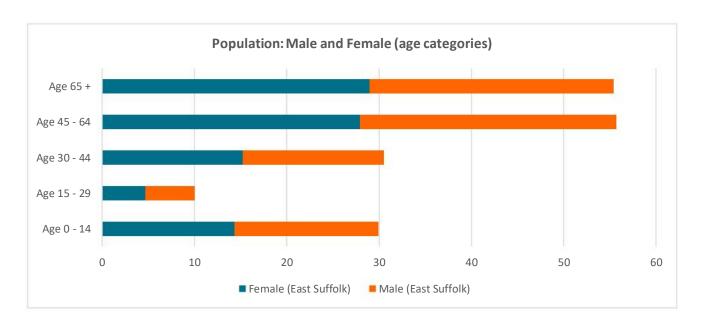|		
246,058	**119,835** **(49%)**	**126,223** **(51%)**
Total population (2021)	Male population	Female population

*ONS population Census 2021

The total population of the district (ONS Population Census 2021) is 246,058. There are 49% (119,835 males) and 51 females (126,223).

Population by broad age groups:

This chart illustrates the breakdown of the population of East Suffolk by broad age groups:
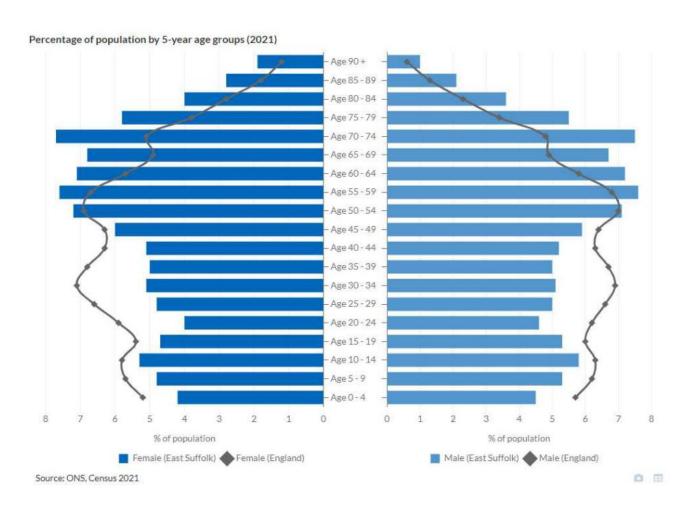
RESEARCH GUIDE

The population of East Suffolk has grown by 2.6% over the past decade. In the same period the Suffolk population grew by 4.4%.

There are 28% over 64 years olds in East Suffolk which is higher than Suffolk (24%) and England (18%). 57% are aged between 15 and 64 years and 15% are under 15 years old – this is lower than both Suffolk and England.

The following chart displays the percentage by 5-year age groups, with the highest category for both males and females being age 70 to 74.

Percentage of population by 5-year age groups (2021)

Source: ONS, Census 2021

RESEARCH GUIDE
Intergenerational Political Equality

Intergenerational political equality can be defined as the view that there should be political fairness between different generations.

In England, people under 18 cannot vote in local and national elections. However, many young people still have views on issues which are important to them, and they want their voice to be heard and their interests recognised and respected.

Youth Councils

Some young people engage with local, regional and national programmes in which they elect their peers to represent their views and take part in campaigns and votes on youth-focused issues. This includes the UK Youth Parliament (UKYP) British Youth Council | UK Youth Parliament (byc.org.uk), run by the British Youth Council, which is made up of approximately 600 elected youth members. UKYP runs the annual Make Your Mark vote, where young people vote on the issue UKYP should campaign on for the following year.

Youth Social Action

Young people across the UK are increasingly leading social action projects through a range of organisations including the National Citizen Service NCS | Grow Your Strengths | National Citizen Service (wearencs.com). Youth-led social action projects have been promoted by the Step Up to Serve #iwill campaign and partners. Many youth social action campaigns have achieved positive outcomes on a number of local and national issues including mental health and sustainable development with youth-led projects raising funding for a range of charities across the UK.

Digital participation

Young people are increasingly participating in internet-based social action. For instance, many are finding their civic voice on digital platforms through online petitions, blogs, vlogs and charity sites. There is a growing trend towards interaction with elected representatives and political organisations via social media platforms.

Petitions

Alternatively, young people could create a petition, which is a formal written request for politicians to do something or take action. Young people can encourage others to sign their petition and if they get a significant number of signatures, then the politicians must respond.

For example, a petition will be debated by East Suffolk Council's Full Council, if it is submitted to them and attracts over 1,200 signatures.

Nationally, you can start and sign petitions on the petition.parliament.uk website. If a petition gets 10,000 signatures the government will respond, if it gets 100,000 signatures, it will be considered for debate in Parliament.

RESEARCH GUIDE

MPs, peers and local councillors engagement

Elected and non-elected officials across the UK also engage with their young constituents to build their views into both local and national decision making. Engagement examples have included online surgeries on social media platforms targeting young people, hustings in schools and youth groups ahead of both local and national elections, and constituency summer schools for young people to gain knowledge of campaigning and collaborating with their peers on local issues. Parliamentarians are also hosting youth panels in constituencies to help shape policy making and involve young people in conducting research, evaluating a public service or running a local project.

Benefits of Youth Engagement

A young population that is engaged in democracy is beneficial to both young people and society as a whole.

When young people are politically engaged they:

1. feel they are listened to and can make a difference.

    This can help to improve decision-making and local communities – young people are experts on what affects them and can provide innovative solutions to problems.

2. feel more confident in expressing their point of view and challenging others' perspectives.

    This can help to build trust in political systems – a lot of mistrust in political systems stems from a lack of understanding of the work MPs, peers and local councillors do; if young people have a better understanding of how they work for them, this will increase their trust in them.

3. develop skills and experience, e.g. public speaking, problem solving and developing arguments.

    This can help to develop the next generation of leaders – if young people are engaged early they will see themselves as agents of change and will be more inclined to see themselves as future leaders.

4. can express their needs and ideas for change

    This can help to develop a more inclusive democracy where more people take part – if people understand the importance of exercising their rights they will be more inclined to do so.

5. have a better understanding of how political structures work.

    This can help to bring about innovative changes and improvements through youth-led action – young people will approach issues with a different perspective from older generations and may be better placed to find solutions.

Views against having a Youth Council

Some people may believe that Youth Councils are unnecessary. They may argue that young people still have a lot to learn and so their views should carry less weight. They could also argue that young people do not contribute to the economy through paying taxes. They may believe that the right to be heard, like the right to vote, should be limited to adults over 18 only.

RESEARCH GUIDE

Youth activists in the news

Youth activists have been the backbone of many social movements — including movements around climate change, racial justice, gun violence, gender rights and LGBTQ+ rights.

Malala Yousafzai

Malala was 15-years-old when she was targeted for advocating for girls' right to education in Pakistan. A gunman tried to kill her as she walked home from school. Malala survived the attack and she and her family moved to the UK, where she launched the Malala Fund, a non-profit organisation that advocates for girls' education.

In 2014, at the age of 17, Malala became the youngest person in history to be awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for her work and the United Nations launched the 'Malala Day,' in honour of the activist's fight for universal education.

Greta Thunberg

Greta has become one of the world's best-known climate change campaigners.

In summer 2018, aged 15, Ms Thunberg held the first "School Strike for Climate" outside the Swedish parliament.

Greta has been nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize every year between 2019 and 2023.
In 2019, she became the youngest-ever **Time Person of the Year**.

March For Our Lives Organisers, gun control activists

Students affected by the 2018 mass shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Florida, were quick to mobilise and demand action from elected officials, saying enough is enough.

They organised March For Our Lives and now, hundreds of local March For Our Lives have emerged, fighting to end the gun violence epidemic in America.

The Halo Collective, UK's first hair code

In 2020, a group of young black activists launched the UK's first hair code designed to prevent discrimination based on hair style or texture. The Halo Code asks organisations to commit to celebrating natural hairstyles, rather than penalising students and employees. Unilever was the first employer to adopt the Code.

Jerome Foster and Elijah McKenzie-Jackson

In 2022, youth climate and LGBTQ+ activists Jerome Foster and Elijah McKenzie-Jackson urged the organisers of COP27 to reconsider hosting the climate conference in Egypt due to the country's hostile laws towards the LGBTQ+ community.

RESEARCH GUIDE

Youth voice at district level – do we need an East Suffolk Youth Council?

At present, we have a range of different ways for young people to express their voice in the district.

Youth Voice

- Youth Voice Youth Voice » East Suffolk Council is a district wide forum with a difference.
- Using our post boxes or online tool, young people can submit their concerns for the local area, and ideas on how to improve it. We want solutions!
- Specific questions are occasionally posted for young people to have their say on, following us on Instagram will make sure you keep up to date.
- Once a term, all the responses are collected and sent in one report to Community Partnerships (there are eight of these across the district), key decision makers and external partners, all of whom can turn their words into actions.
- All the actions and updates will then be included in the report for the next term, so they how their views have been listened and responded to.
- Real time updates are posted on our Instagram @eastsuffolkyouthvoice

Waveney Youth Council

- We bring together young people in Waveney to provide young people with a voice and to represent young people Waveney Youth Council » East Suffolk Council
- Young people from the attending schools provide updates on what it is happening at their schools and in their communities
- They also identify priorities they would like to influence and campaign around for young people
- Past priorities have included accessible transport and young people's mental health
- We have also hosted question time events with decision makers and published a newsletter by young people and for young people

Youth Take Over Day

- Youth Take Over Day is 1 day a year where we invite the schools to work with us on a topical project or theme.
- Beginning in 2008, groups of students were invited to our Riverside Office for the event, where they would engage with Councillors, different departments and relevant external partners we would invite to give the students a full experience.
- In 2023, the theme was 'design your own campaign'. Held at Riverside and East Suffolk House with students from 3 different schools worked, young people came up with campaigns for issues they care most about – campaigns included better road safety, increased arts provision and work following flooding in Framlingham
- Previous themes have included designing a shopping centre in north Lowestoft, reducing social isolation and loneliness in older people and environmental/climate change impact

RESEARCH GUIDE

Key Questions to consider?

- Would an East Suffolk Youth Council be a good idea or would there be overlap and duplication with the existing ways young people can already engage with each other and decision makers in East Suffolk, Suffolk and nationally (outlined above)?
- What could an East Suffolk Youth Council do? How would it work?
- What other groups or networks could be set up or developed to engage young people?
- Do you have any other ideas about how the voice of young people in East Suffolk could be heard and acted upon?
- How would whatever you propose ensure that the voice of young people from all parts of our community can be heard – particularly those most likely to be excluded

RESEARCH GUIDE

How to prepare to participate and some further reading:

In advance of 9 February, we would encourage you to carry out some independent research into local democracy and youth voice. The following links may assist:

- Look at our website and develop a sense of the make-up of our council: https://eastsuffolk.cmis.uk.com/eastsuffolk/councillors.aspx
- Look at previous Full Council agendas to look at examples of motions: https://eastsuffolk.cmis.uk.com/eastsuffolk/Meetings/tabid/70/ctl/ViewMeetingPublic/mid/3 97/Meeting/796/Committee/4/SelectedTab/Documents/Default.aspx
- Look at the profiles for different wards in the district: East Suffolk Wards » East Suffolk Council
- Look at some data for the district and specific electoral wards – you might want to see what the data looks like for young people on certain topics: Microsoft Power BI
- Look at the work of the British Youth Council and Youth Parliament - British Youth Council | UK Youth Parliament (byc.org.uk)
- Guidance from the National Association of Local Councils (NALC) about how to set up an effective Youth Council file (nalc.gov.uk)

Several Councils have created their own Youth Councils – some examples are below:

- Blaby District Council - Youth Council (blaby.gov.uk)
- Bristol City Council - Bristol City Youth Council and Youth Mayors
- Cornwall County Council - Cornwall Youth Council | Let's Talk Cornwall
- Durham County Council - Youth Council - Durham County Council
- Epping Forest District Council - Epping Forest Youth Council - Epping Forest District Council
- Harlow District Council - Youth Council | Harlow Council
- Medway Council - Medway Youth Council | Medway | England
- London Borough of Bromley - Bromley Youth Council
- London Borough of Camden - Camden Youth Council - Camden Rise - Camden Council
- London Borough of Havering - What is the Havering Youth Council? | Havering Youth Council | The London Borough Of Havering
- Salford City Council - Youth Voice in Salford•Salford City Council
- Southend Youth Council - Home | Southend Youth Council
- Stroud District Council - Stroud Youth Voice

Glossary

Term	Explanation
Chair and Vice-Chair of the Council	The Chair and Vice-Chair are elected in May each year at the Annual Meeting of Full Council. The Chair (or Vice-Chair in his/her absence) provides civic and ceremonial leadership for the Council. Once elected, the Chair rises above party politics in chairing meetings of Full Council, ensuring that the Council's constitution is upheld at those meetings. The Chair also acts as the Council's representative at formal or public engagements during his/her year of office. The Chair of the Council wears a chain of office when carrying out civic duties but does not have any formal robes.
Chair's Casting Vote	Chair's casting vote - if there are equal numbers of votes for and against, the Chair will have a second or casting vote. There will be no restriction on how the Chair chooses to exercise a casting vote.
Chief Executive	The Chief Executive is the most senior officer (paid staff) in East Suffolk Council and they are responsible for leading and managing the Council.
Constituents	These are the people that live in each Ward (area) that the Councillors are elected to represent.
Constitution	The Constitution is the 'rule book' that the Council must follow, to make sure that actions and decisions are taken legally. The Monitoring Officer will help to explain the rules to ensure they are followed correctly.
Councillor	A Councillor's main role is to represent their Ward (area) and the people who live in it. Councillors provide a bridge between the community and the council. They are an advocate for local residents, signpost them to the right people at the Council and keep them informed about issues that affect them. Councillors are elected for a 4 year term of office.
District	Suffolk is divided up into smaller areas called Districts and each of those Districts has a District Council to provide services for that area. The East Suffolk District covers a large area, from Lowestoft in the North to Felixstowe in the South.
East Suffolk Council (ESC)	East Suffolk Council provides local services to the East Suffolk area such as bin collections, environmental health, council tax collection, planning applications, licensing, leisure centres and housing. The Councillors make decisions about how the Council's budget will be spent and the aims and objectives for the Council.
Full Council	Full Council is made up of all 55 Councillors that make up East Suffolk Council and they meet every other month. The meetings are chaired by the Chair of the Council. They consider items of business such as setting the budget and council tax, petitions, questions from Councillors and the public.

RESEARCH GUIDE

Group Leaders	Each Political Group has a Leader, who is in charge and is the main representative and spokesperson for that political group. Councillor Topping is the Leader of the GLI Group (and also Leader of the Council) The GLI Group includes Green, Liberal Democrat and Independent Councillors. Councillor Rivett is the Leader of the Conservative Group Councillor Byatt is the Leader of the Labour Group
Leader of the Council	The Leader is the head of the largest political group represented on the Council. They are the most senior Councillor and they lead on the decision-making process and direct strategic policy and budget setting. Councillor Caroline Topping is the Leader of the Council.
Monitoring Officer (MO)	The Monitoring Officer is responsible for the legal governance of the Council. They ensure the Council acts lawfully and promotes the highest standards of behaviour for Councillors and officers. They also provide support to the Chair of the Council at Full Council meetings. The Monitoring Officer will also investigate when things are not done properly. Chris Bing is the Council's Monitoring Officer.
Motion	A Motion is a request for Full Council to make a decision or to undertake an action. This request must be about matters for which the Council has a responsibility, or which affects the East Suffolk district.
Petitions	A petition is a written document, which is signed by a large number of people, that asks somebody in a position of authority to do or change something. If enough signatures are received (over 1,200), the Petition must be considered at a Full Council meeting.
Political Groups	There are 55 East Suffolk Councillors and the GLI are in charge of the Council. The political groups are as follows: There are 28 GLI Councillors (which is made up of Greens (16), Liberal Democrats (11) and Independents (1)). There are 15 Conservative Councillors There are 12 Labour Councillors
Political Group Support Officers (PGSOs)	Each political group (GLI, Conservative and Labour) has a Political Group Support Officer to assist them with their work and responsibilities. They help arrange their group meetings, do research and assist with questions and motions for Full Council meetings.
Proposer	A proposer is someone who puts forward a Motion for consideration by Full Council. (please see above for the definition of a Motion).
Seconder	A seconder is someone who supports and agrees with the Motion put forward by the proposer. (please see above for definitions of Motion and proposer).

RESEARCH GUIDE

Suffolk County Council (SCC)	Suffolk County Council is responsible for the following services across the whole of the Suffolk: Education, Transport, Social Care, Planning, Libraries, Waste Management, Trading Standards, Fire and Public Safety.
Voting	The Chair of the Council will ask Councillors to vote on a recommendation or Motion by a show of hands (raising their hands). He will ask Councillors to raise their hands if they are voting for, against or abstaining (deliberately note voting). Officers will count the vote and inform the Chair of the results, which he will then announce to the Councillors.
Ward	A Ward is the area and people (Constituents) in it that a Councillor is elected to represent. There are 29 separate Wards in East Suffolk. Some Wards are large and need 3 Councillors to represent them eg Beccles and Worlingham Ward. Others are much smaller and only need 1 Councillor to represent them eg Kessingland Ward.

RESEARCH GUIDE
Your Notes