

[Welcome](#) [Our priorities](#) [A year in the life...](#)

[A city that is strong  
and prosperous](#)

[A city with a good  
quality of life](#)

[A city rising to the  
climate change  
challenge](#)

[A city delivering  
genuinely  
affordable housing](#)

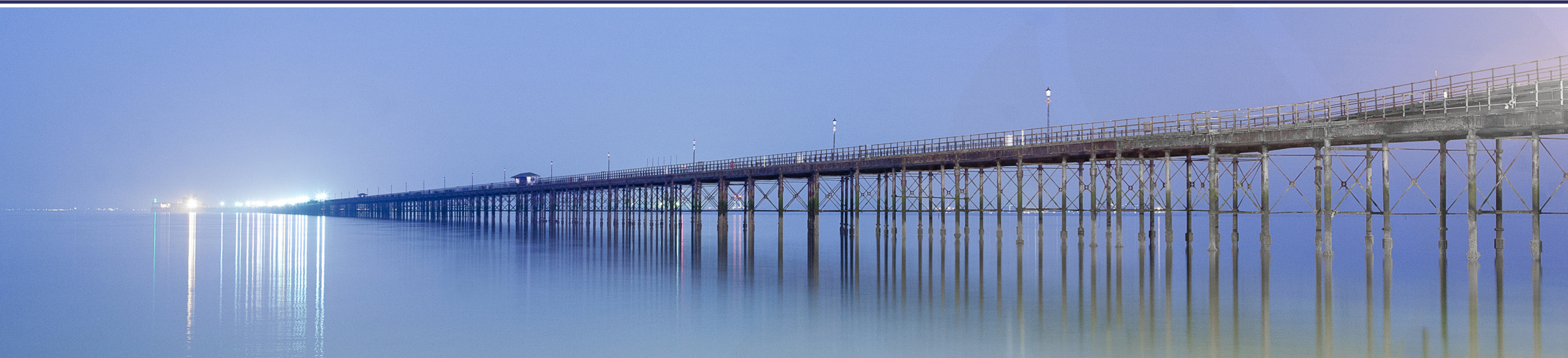
[Resources](#)

[Looking forward](#)



# Annual Report

## 2022 - 2023



# Welcome to our annual report



**Rob Polkinghorne**  
Chief Executive

*The last year has gone incredibly quickly. So much has happened during the past 12 months. We celebrated our first birthday as a city, took part in Diamond Jubilee celebrations, dealt with the sad passing of Her Late Majesty, Queen Elizabeth II, and welcomed a new King, King Charles III. We've also made great strides in making Southend-on-Sea the connected, ambitious, creative and diverse place we want it to be for the people who live, work and visit here.*

Like all organisations, our employees are our most valuable asset. In 2022/23 our teams supported the Local Government Association's Corporate Peer Challenge at the council and produced a draft action plan in response to key recommendations from the peer challenge. Council employees reviewed our Equality Objectives in consultation with residents and partners and developed a new approach to support our desire to be more effective and accountable on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) matters. Employees also embarked on an improvement journey of EDI practices, following an external audit of the council this year.

The council continues to achieve changes for the better for the people and communities of Southend-on-Sea. This annual report showcases how we are:

- helping people access the support they need
- powering economic and community recovery
- doing our bit to enable the roll-out of digital infrastructure
- creating better life opportunities for our children and young people
- protecting and improving the quality of life for older people
- working with our partners to enable integrated care and support arrangements and achieving improved health and social care outcomes for our residents
- pushing forward with our green city ambition and supporting policies that will reduce our carbon emissions
- providing better and more affordable housing for our residents

We will continue to engage with the people and communities of Southend-on-Sea to understand their diverse experiences and what they want for their lives and their city, and what that should mean for our direction as a council. We will use insight to shape council activities and plans.

A remarkable community spirit exists within Southend-on-Sea. We will harness that community spirit to achieve further great successes and continue to support our residents and communities.

We will work alongside local partnerships, neighbouring councils, central government and MPs. We will lead collaboratively alongside our partners and communities, and do so with innovation, ambition, openness and purpose, to build a bright future for everyone in our city.

# Our priorities

We have identified four overarching priorities that as a council we want to achieve for the city

**A city that is strong and prosperous**



**A city with a good quality of life**



**A city rising to the climate change challenge**



**A city delivering genuinely affordable housing**



# A year in the life

Looking at key milestones and achievements from the previous year



More than 50 local children were the first to ride the pier's **new electric trains**

Council employees took part in allotment gardening activities for **Earth Day**



Five of Southend-on-Sea's beaches awarded **Blue Flags**

**Southend-on-Sea City Council Corporate Plan 2024-26** published

April 2022

May 2022

June 2022

July 2022

Over 70,000 government **Energy Rebate Scheme Grants** processed and implemented

Launch of **Lung Health Checks** - 17,000 patients invited for a free lung health check

**Local elections** held



Council-run housing projects shortlisted in six categories of the **Essex Housing Awards 2022**



The city's first **Climate Hub** opens to engage people in climate change

September 2022

August 2022

**Brook Meadows** multi-use care facility successfully caring for and supporting the community for six months



**The Southend Enhanced Discharge Service pilot** launched for residents who have been discharged from hospital, but don't have any support

£10,000 of funding secured for a cut-price **food market van**



Southend-on-Sea awarded seven **Green Flag Awards**

October 2022

December 2022

A **PlastiCity Pledge** announced to continue recycling initiative, to increase recycling in schools and businesses

**City Centre Strategy and Investment Plan** adopted

Local Government Association undertook a **Corporate Peer Challenge** at the council

More than 2,000 children benefitted from the ninth annual **Toy Drive** in Southend-on-Sea



**Cost of living booklet** produced and funding secured for 280 electric blankets and 236 slow cookers for the most vulnerable in the city



Southend-on-Sea retained its **Purple Flag Award**, for safety in the night-time economy, for the tenth consecutive year

**2023/24 budget** approved by councillors

December 2022

January 2023

February 2023

March 2023



The council signed up as a **Mindful Employer**

New **Waste disposal contract** brings savings of around £470,000 and reduces our waste carbon footprint by over 90%

Council's Community Safety Team shortlisted for **Team of the Year** by Resolve

Approximately £1m of **Community Infrastructure Levy** raised to pay for delivery of infrastructure in the city

**Tackling Poverty Strategy** and Action Plan co-produced

The council helped approximately 70,000 households in the city get the **Council Tax Rebate Scheme**

Council named best improving authority in the eastern region in the **National Highway and Transportation survey**



Council signs up again as a **Disability Confident Employer**

Around £1.2m **savings/cost avoidance** delivered against council procured contracts in 2022/23

Council's Operational Performance and Intelligence team shortlisted for the **2023 LGA Awards** for Large Team of the Year



Retrofit and new build **housing sustainability** projects completed, funded through the Local Government Association's Housing Advisors Programme



**Launchpad**, an innovative business hub and workplace at the Airport Business Park, officially opened

# A city that is strong and prosperous

## We will:

- support economic regeneration and business development
- use our spending power wisely
- bid for funding opportunities and attract inward investment
- sustain and grow digital investment and inclusion
- deliver our city centre strategy and investment plan
- enhance our tourism, cultural and leisure offer
- support community recovery
- improve community safety

We have progressed **regeneration projects**, including Roots Hall and Fossetts Farm, East Beach, Seaway and Airport Business Park. We have also welcomed new investment into the area:

- over £396,000 from the government's UK Shared Prosperity Fund to support volunteering, social action and business sectors
- almost £1m from the government's Multiply programme to provide free number confidence courses for individuals and employers to improve adult numeracy skills

We continue to progress the city's £30m **full fibre upgrade**. Southend-on-Sea now has some of the best access to broadband in the UK.

A new scheme for residents to discover **99 things to do in the city before turning 19 years old** was crafted by Southend's Cultural Education Partnership. The project was funded by the government's Community Renewal Fund, Royal Opera House Bridge and the council.

The council and partners have organised numerous fantastic **events**, including city status events, Jubilee street parties, the Birmingham 2022 Queen's Baton Relay and the Halloween parade. Our Southend City Jam and LuminoCity festivals attracted over 318,000 visitors to the city.

In February and March 2023, more than 800 local schoolchildren took part in the Southend Makes Music event.



The council has worked with its partners to support residents most affected by **cost of living** challenges. We have:

- set up [cost of living web pages](#) and booklet
- managed the Council Tax Rebate Scheme locally, processing support for rising energy bills to approximately 70,000 households
- delivered £2.8m of the government's Household Support Fund to thousands of vulnerable residents



**42,193**

awards were given out for food, fuel and water through the Essential Living Fund scheme and with partners

We continue to include **resident voice** in our work. For example, co-producing the [Tackling Poverty Strategy and Action Plan](#) and hosting over 50 projects and engaging more than 5,000 people through our digital platform 'Your Say Southend'.

# A city that is strong and prosperous



**85.8%**

High Street occupancy Q4 2022/23

Last year: 79.6%



**60.54%**

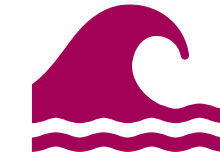
employment 2021 lower than England (60.86%)

We have signed up to the Armed Forces Covenant and Defence Employer Recognition Scheme. We have also pledged our support to the Essex Faith Covenant, which encourages collaboration between faith, community groups and public services.



**76,800**

residents who have access to superfast broadband, as at February 2023



**395,550**

visitors to Southend Pier 2022/23  
Last year: 358,321

**98.7%**

Business Rates collected in 2022/23 highest performance for over a decade

**97.5%**

Council Tax collected in 2022/23



**113.2**

rate of crime per 1,000 people 2022/23 higher than Essex (87.4)



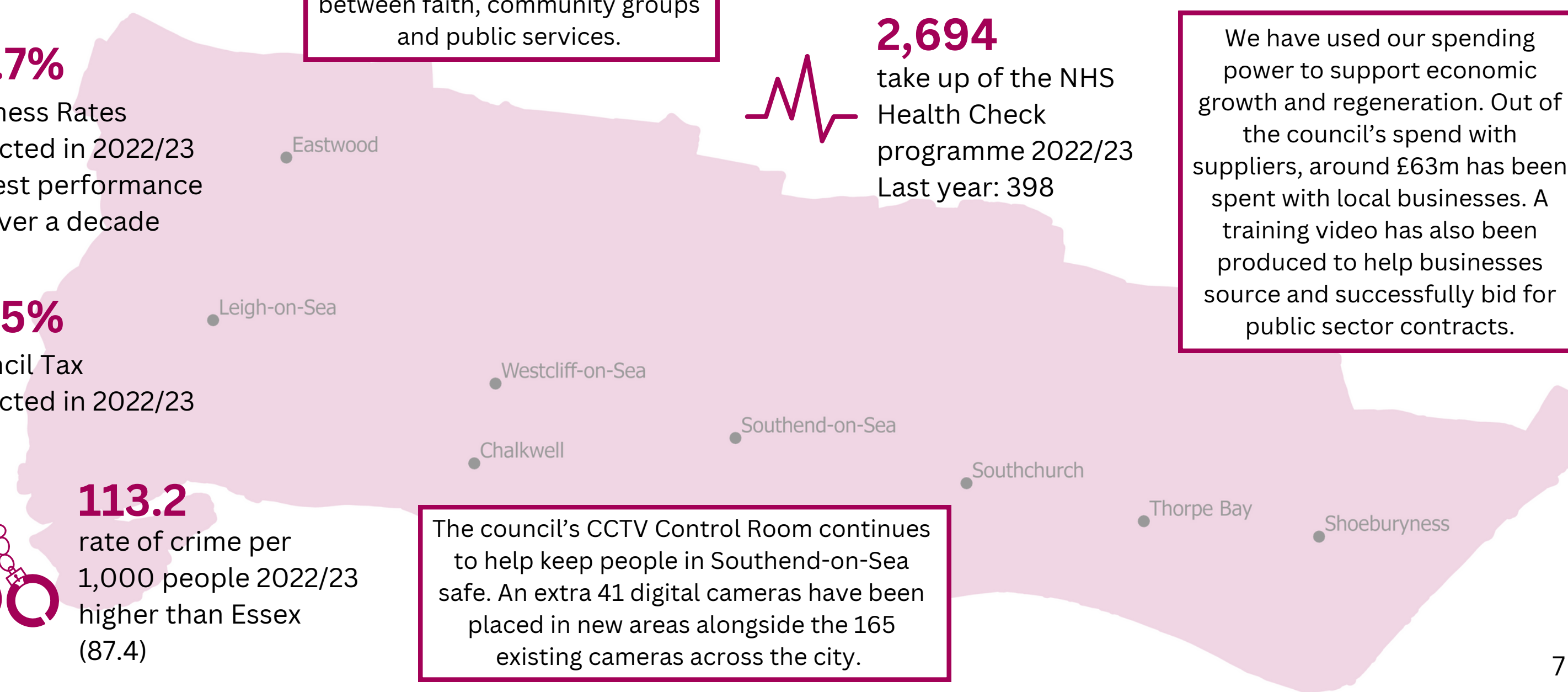
**2,694**

take up of the NHS Health Check programme 2022/23  
Last year: 398

We have used our spending power to support economic growth and regeneration. Out of the council's spend with suppliers, around £63m has been spent with local businesses. A training video has also been produced to help businesses source and successfully bid for public sector contracts.



The City Centre Strategy and Investment Plan was adopted in February 2023 and work started to implement it. This includes bringing more greenery into the High Street through the use of parklets and planters.



The council's CCTV Control Room continues to help keep people in Southend-on-Sea safe. An extra 41 digital cameras have been placed in new areas alongside the 165 existing cameras across the city.

# A city with a good quality of life

## We will:

- achieve our vision where all children achieve success
- ensure children and young people, including those in care, feel and are safe at home, school and in their communities
- enable and provide opportunities for the best start in life
- enable people to age well, live well and care well
- ensure that health and care services meet the needs of all
- ensure services are diverse, sustainable and high quality, including for those who pay for their own care

We are working hard with partners to improve **school readiness** of children aged under four.

The majority of pupils in Southend-on-Sea have been offered a place at one of their preferred **schools**:

- 99% of pre-schoolers will start school at one of their top three choices
- 98% of year six children will be starting secondary school at one of their top three choices of school



We have worked with partners to **protect our residents**, including children and young people, from abuse, domestic violence, neglect and exploitation. By intervening at an early stage, we are supporting individuals before they reach crisis point.

We have engaged with children, young people and families to **improve their experiences**. The council continues to focus on:

- delivering an effective and high-quality Healthy Child Programme for children aged 0 to 19 (unless SEND and/or looked after children then 25 years)
- transforming services for children and young people and support the development of community hubs, helping to evolve Family Centres jointly with A Better Start Southend and local partners
- improving the local offer for physical and recreational activities and support for emotional, health and wellbeing

We strive to **reduce health inequalities and obesity** in the city. This includes:

- development of a healthier food environment policy
- increasing physical activity opportunities through Active Southend
- increasing GP engagement with Everyone Health, resulting in more people in the most deprived wards taking up health checks
- commissioning Everyone Health to provide a 36-week falls prevention course
- commissioning smoking cessation and weight management services and using Making Every Contact Count approach to improving people's health and wellbeing
- developing strategies to improve outcomes in women's health care and early cancer diagnosis
- using the national Core20PLUS5 approach to reduce healthcare inequalities, increasing lung health checks, mental health checks, and learning disability checks in priority target groups
- working with partners to identify the root causes for the low uptake of the blood pressure monitoring at home service



# A city with a good quality of life



**82.7 years**

female life expectancy  
62.1 years healthy life expectancy\* 2018-20



**78.4 years**

male life expectancy  
63.7 years healthy life expectancy\* 2018-20

\* the number of years lived in self-assessed good health

Together with the NHS's Integrated Care Board, we have developed a joint strategy to better support people's health and wellbeing, stay well for longer and reduce their need to access public services.



**9.8**

rate of under-18 conceptions per 1,000 2021 lower than England (13.1)



**78.10**

rate of children in care per 10,000 (under 18 years old) Q4 2022/23  
Target: 65 to 75  
Last year: 82.11

**95.7%**

2, 3 and 4 year old children benefitting from funded early education in good or outstanding settings Q4 2022/23



Our 'avatar army' of AV1 robots helped 12 pupils gain the confidence to return to the classroom this year, when they previously felt unable to in person.



**92.4%**

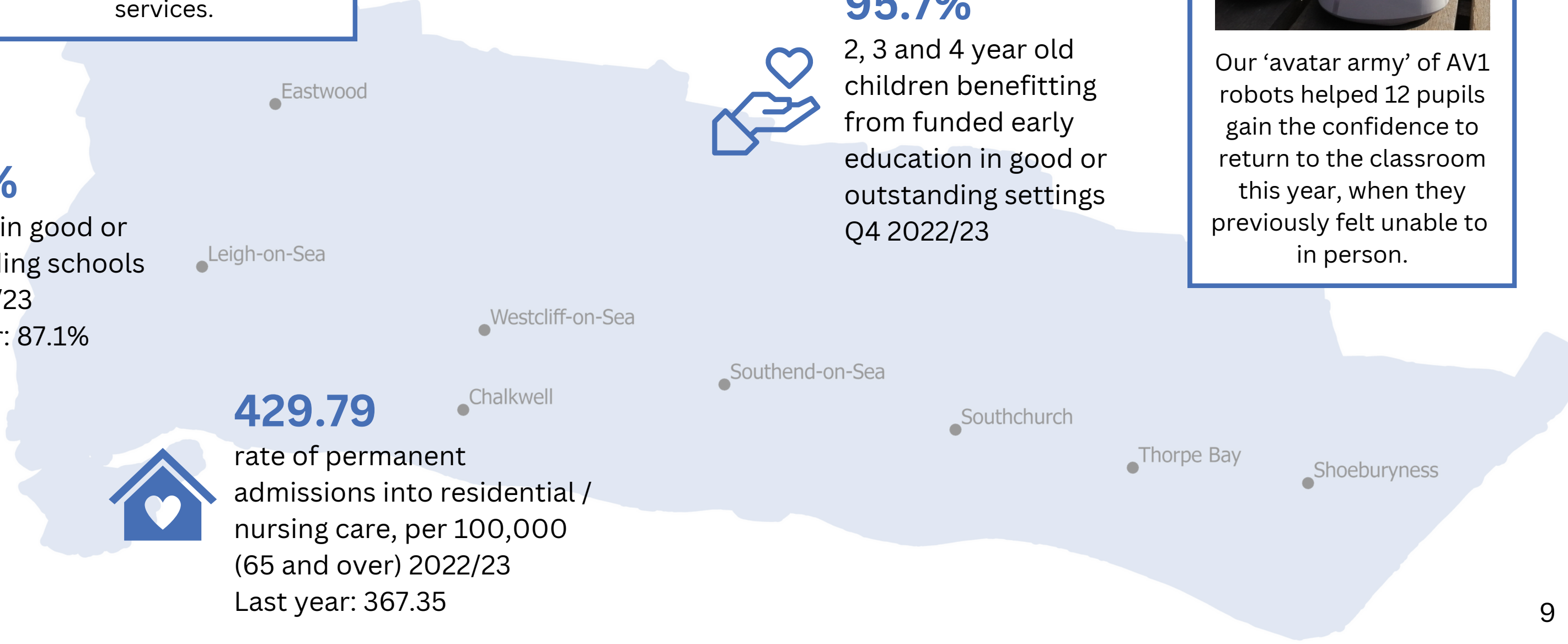
children in good or outstanding schools Q4 2022/23  
Last year: 87.1%



**429.79**

rate of permanent admissions into residential / nursing care, per 100,000 (65 and over) 2022/23  
Last year: 367.35

We have worked with home care and care home providers to ensure care services are diverse, sustainable and high quality, including for those who pay for their own care.



# A city rising to the climate change challenge

## We will:

- become a net Zero Carbon Southend by 2030
- prevent waste, promote re-use and increase recycling
- develop an active and sustainable travel network
- enhance, promote and protect our natural environment
- undertake flood and coastal erosion risk management

In June 2022, the city's first ever **Climate Hub** opened, engaging people in climate change conversations and activity.

We launched the [Southend Climate Action website](#) in September 2022, to inspire residents and businesses to take action to reduce carbon emissions. The website features news, resources and initiatives related to **climate change action**, as well as information about grants and benefits to help people pay energy bills.



We continue to focus on **enhancing our natural and built environment**. Fantastic examples include:

- tree planting along London Road to tackle heat-stress as part of the EU Cool Towns project
- the creation of a business model designed to quantify the benefits of green infrastructure. This was developed through the EU Nature Smart Cities project
- being awarded over £250,000 from the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs to fund air quality audit and sensor monitoring in 10 schools
- teaming up with health and wellness company Go Jauntly to curate two new heritage trails showcasing the city
- opening a new play area on Whitegate Road in January 2023, funded by the Community Infrastructure Levy
- Priory Park voted as an East of England Local Favourite in the Fields in Trust UK's Favourite Parks 2022 awards



In March 2023, over 40 volunteers planted parts of Thorpe Bay beach to help combat climate change. It was funded through the **Sustainable and Resilient Coastal Cities (SARCC)** project, part of the European Regional Development Fund. The team of volunteers also tackled sand dune restoration at East Beach.

The **SARCC scheme** will also see:

- a climate resilient garden at Chalkwell beach, with accessible access for wheelchairs users
- a green seawall at Two Tree Island
- vertipools at Leigh Wharf

# A city rising to the climate change challenge

**Pothole repairs within 24 hours of being reported (Category 1 Defects\*)**  
(April 2022 to March 2023)

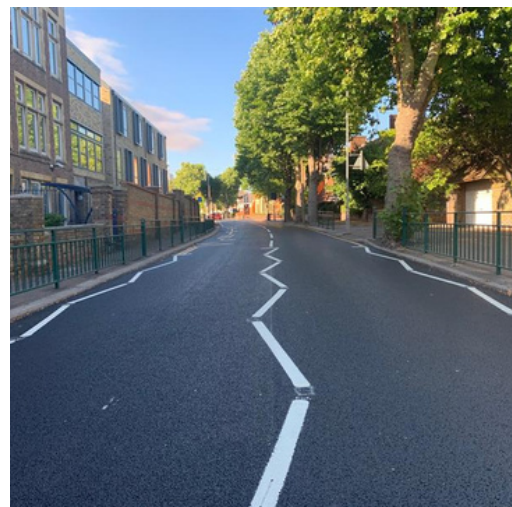
**98%**

**carriageways**  
(671 out of 687)

**96%**

**footways**  
(835 out of 866)

\* 'Category 1 Defects' are defects in or on the public highway network that require prompt attention because they present an immediate or imminent hazard, or a risk of rapid structural deterioration to the affected element.



We have procured footbridge and highways works this year. Potholes and road defects have been fixed by our contractor Marlborough.

The council won the Love Parks Award at the Keep Britain Tidy's local authority Network Awards 2023, for work we undertook during Keep Britain Tidy's Love Parks Week in July and August 2022.



**35.5 µg/m3**

reduction of AQMA1 for air quality management and to decarbonise the transport network 2021/22  
Last year: 44.6 µg/m3



**99.95%**

waste collections carried out on schedule 2022/23  
Last year: 99.93%



**93.2%**

acceptable standard of cleanliness: detritus 2022/23  
Last year: 95.3%



**97.6%**

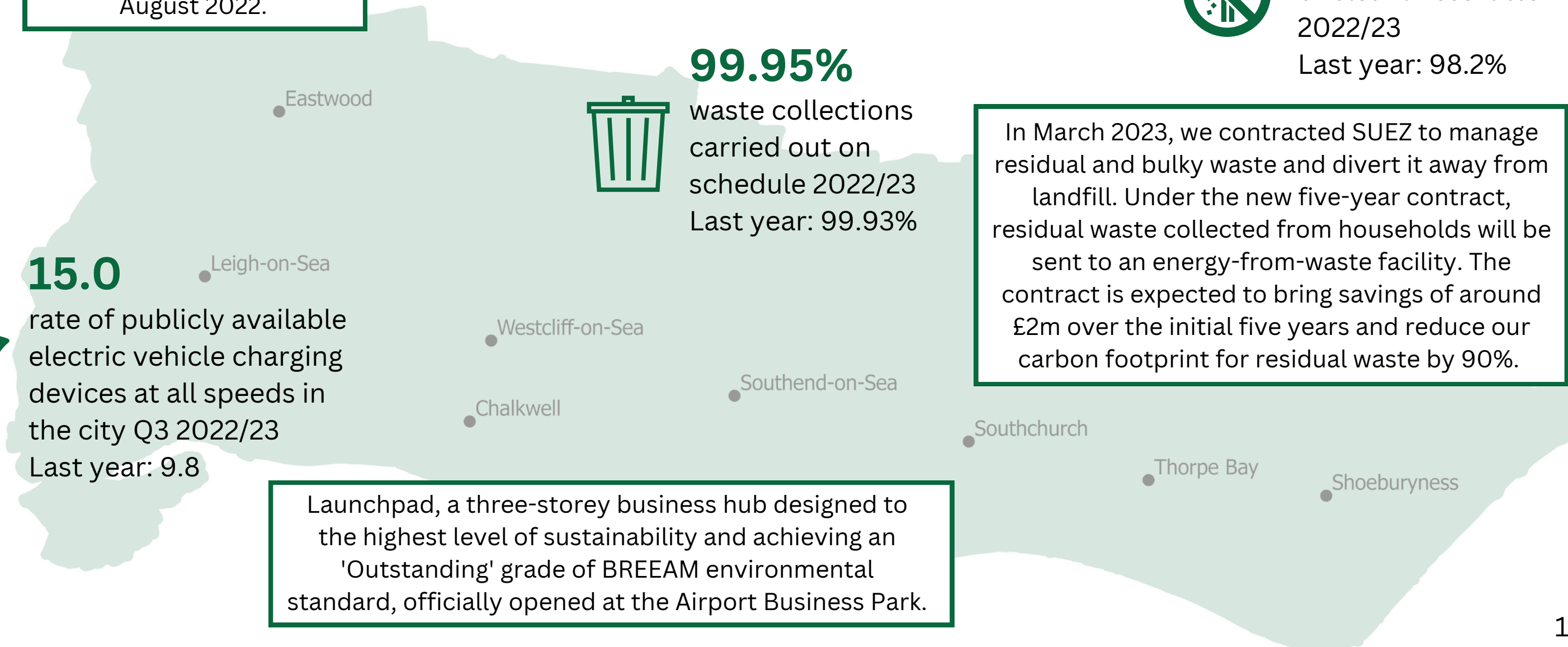
acceptable standard of cleanliness: litter 2022/23  
Last year: 98.2%

In March 2023, we contracted SUEZ to manage residual and bulky waste and divert it away from landfill. Under the new five-year contract, residual waste collected from households will be sent to an energy-from-waste facility. The contract is expected to bring savings of around £2m over the initial five years and reduce our carbon footprint for residual waste by 90%.

**15.0**

rate of publicly available electric vehicle charging devices at all speeds in the city Q3 2022/23  
Last year: 9.8

Launchpad, a three-storey business hub designed to the highest level of sustainability and achieving an 'Outstanding' grade of BREEAM environmental standard, officially opened at the Airport Business Park.



# A city delivering genuinely affordable housing

## We will:

- address local housing need
- prioritise the supply and quality of safe, genuinely affordable homes
- make any instance of homelessness brief and non-recurrent, aiming for functional zero homelessness
- maximise environmental sustainability of homes
- ensure good quality housing design, management and maintenance
- reduce the number of empty homes
- deliver the Local Plan

The council continues to address **local housing need**. Progress on housing in 2022/23 includes:

- £4.2m South Essex Local Enterprise Partnership funding
- £15m of funding from the government's Housing Infrastructure Fund
- work progressing to deliver 29 council homes in Shoeburyness (Phase 3A) and 9 homes in Lundy Close (Phase 4) of the Housing Revenue Account
- planning permission for Passive House pilot sites

Work to deliver **safe, genuinely affordable housing** this year includes:

- delivery of over 200 affordable housing units
- getting approximately £300,000 of funding for the provision of further affordable housing

The council has worked in partnership with empty property owners, residents and partner agencies to **reduce the number of empty homes**.

We have made sure there is a high standard of **energy efficient and net zero homes** across the city through a number of projects:

- the council was able to work with architects and the business Parity Projects to gain a better understanding of sustainability objectives for council owned stock and new builds. This was funded from the Local Government Association (LGA) Housing Advisors Programme
- completing the retrofit and new build Housing Sustainability projects, funded through the LGA's Housing Advisors Programme
- implementing a government-funded Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund scheme to make our housing stock carbon net zero and retrofitting homes to boost their energy efficiency. This includes encouraging the retrofitting of empty homes
- successfully bidding for £1.15m of government funding to improve the energy efficiency of council housing

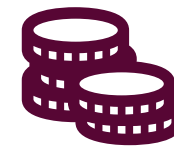


# A city delivering genuinely affordable housing

We continue to develop a new Local Plan for Southend-on-Sea, shaped by the needs of our communities. Having carried out a consultation on the refining the options document, we are now working towards the next stage, which is a Preferred Approach version of the Local Plan.



**53%** homeless prevention cases ending with settled housing being secured Q4 2022/23  
Last year: 48%



**£923** median monthly rent for a two-bedroom property 2021/22 higher than England (£887)

We have assisted with the resettlement of Ukrainian and Afghan families. We have also worked with partners, used our homelessness powers and bid for extra resources from the government to deliver our aim of functional zero homelessness. Official annual rough sleeper count figures show the number of people sleeping rough on Southend's streets has increased from 10 in 2021 to 16 in 2022.



**109** affordable housing units delivered in the city Q4 2022/23  
Last year: 34

**£326,750** median house price Q3 2022 higher than England (£275,000)

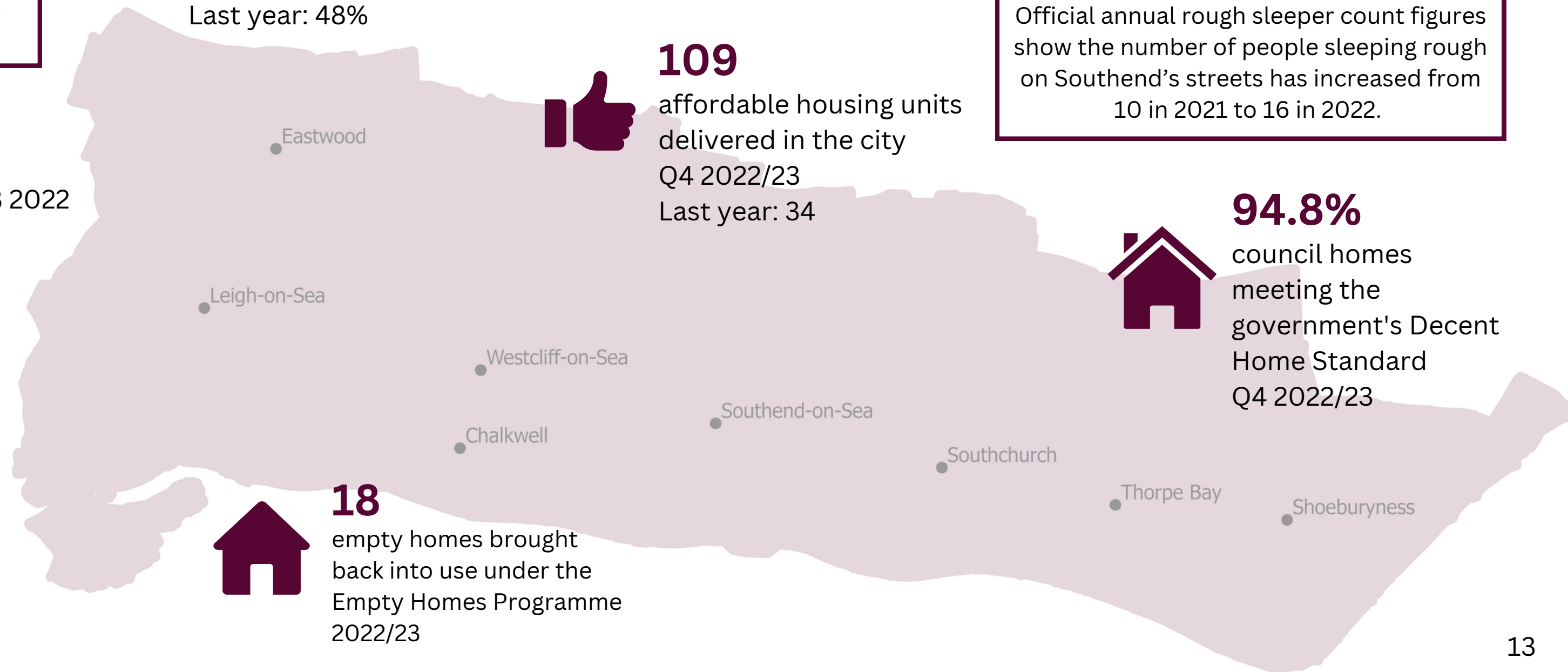
We have implemented our Selective Licensing Scheme in designated areas of the city to improve the quality of private rented properties. Over 3,000 licences have been issued in the first year of the scheme.



**18** empty homes brought back into use under the Empty Homes Programme 2022/23



**94.8%** council homes meeting the government's Decent Home Standard Q4 2022/23



# Resources

**We will continue to strive to ensure the council remains financially stable and resilient for the future. This will get more challenging. Demand for core statutory services of social care for adults, children and the most vulnerable continues to go up and cost pressures are increasing weekly, with UK inflation remaining at high levels.**

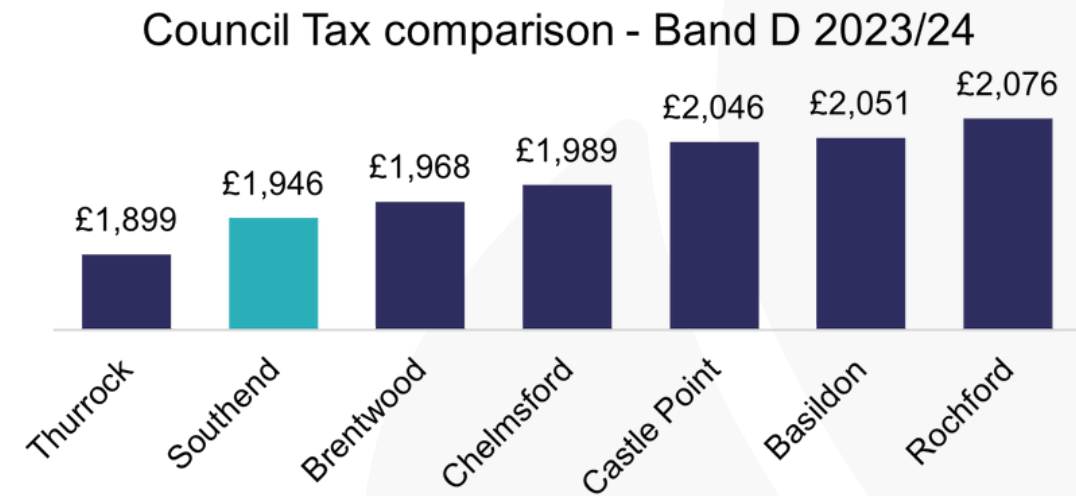
The council’s net budget overspend in 2022/23 was £6.9m, which comprised several overspent areas offset by some favourable variances and use of non-service specific grants. The vast majority of the overspend was in the statutory areas of children’s social care and adult services (£8.3m). This was mainly due to the very high and increasing cost of residential care placements and for children with complex needs.

Increases in costs were not matched by an increase in government funding. The Revenue Support Grant increased by 14% in 2022/23, but now only accounts for around 2% of the council’s income. The Public Health Grant, for public health expenditure, increased by 2.9% in 2022/23 and will increase by 3.26% in 2023/24. This is below current inflation rates of around 10%.

We collected 97.5% of Council Tax due in-year. This compares favourably with the rest of the country. We also collected 98.7% of Business Rates due in year, which is the highest level of performance for over a decade.

Council Tax in Southend-on-Sea is to rise by 4.99% in 2023/24. This is to help deal with the ongoing pressures and demand in social care.

As the chart below shows, the Band D Council Tax level in Southend-on-Sea in 2023/24 is still lower than many of our nearest neighbours. We are determined to minimise the financial burden on council taxpayers. It is also worth noting that over 70% of properties in the city are in Council Tax bands A to C, which will pay lower levels of Council Tax.



Decisions have been underpinned by our updated Financial Sustainability Strategy 2022 to 2032 and Medium-Term Financial Strategy for 2022/23 to 2026/27, helping to target resources and consider and manage a range of financial impacts. Despite the challenges, the council is determined to build on the solid financial foundation we have worked so hard to create. We will maintain robust financial planning, scrutinise budgets, be prudent in managing risks and always strive to deliver better value for money for people.

We will continue to show leadership and engage with residents and communities. We want to take as much control over our financial future as possible and to deliver the priorities in our Corporate Plan 2022 to 2026.

# Looking forward

This year we developed our **Corporate Plan 2022 to 2026**, articulating the council's focus for the next four years. We will build on this with the introduction of service plans, setting out the activity of each service area, how it will contribute to the delivery of the corporate plan and how success will be measured.

We will also work to achieve our **Equality Objectives**, which were reviewed in 2022 in consultation with residents and partners. In parallel, the council has embarked on an improvement journey of its equality, diversity and inclusion practices, following an external audit by Umbrella HR in 2022. We have a set of recommendations to work towards over three years, with an ambition to reach the 'Excellent' standard within the Local Government Association's Equality Framework by year three.

**The Local Government Association Corporate Peer Challenge** in October 2022 provided the opportunity for an improvement led review of the council and the challenges we face. Feedback from the review includes:

- we are very self-aware
- we have huge potential
- there are many positive attributes within the council and the city, including the strong community ethos, ambitious regeneration projects and sound financial management
- our approach to leadership, governance and decision making is impacting our capacity to progress

Following the Corporate Peer Challenge, a number of recommendations were made, mainly relating to governance and decision-making. The council has developed an action plan to strengthen and improve these areas.

Our approach to the financial challenge is the **Transformation Programme**. It provides a framework for transforming our organisation with service redesign. This will help us to understand:

- how the council operates
- how services could be optimised
- what is needed to enable change to happen

The programme will allow us to rethink how we offer council services. We will work with services and enable them to become more resident-focused and digitally-enabled in their delivery. By approaching our budgetary challenges with service redesign, we are taking proactive steps to deal with the predicted budget challenges and avoid potentially more difficult financial decisions in the future.





Welcome

Our priorities

A year in the life...

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Contact us:



01702 215000



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Southend-on-Sea City Council  
Civic Centre  
Victoria Avenue  
Southend-on-Sea  
Essex  
SS2 6ER



The Prince's Responsible Business Network

Race at Work Charter signatory



July 2023