



AGENDA

COUNCIL MEETING

TUESDAY, 21ST JUNE 2022 – 5.30 PM

Members of the Council are summoned to a meeting of the Babergh District Council at King Edmund Chamber, Endeavour House, 8 Russell Road, Ipswich on Tuesday, 21st June, 2022 at 5.30 pm.

For those wishing to attend, there will be time for reflections 5 minutes prior to the commencement of the Council meeting.

Arthur Charvonja
Chief Executive



BABERGH COUNCIL	
DATE:	TUESDAY, 21 JUNE 2022 5.30 PM
VENUE:	KING EDMUND CHAMBER, ENDEAVOUR HOUSE, 8 RUSSELL ROAD, IPSWICH

This meeting will be broadcast live to YouTube and will be capable of repeated viewing. The entirety of the meeting will be filmed except for confidential or exempt items. If you attend the meeting in person you will be deemed to have consented to being filmed and to the possible use of the images and sound recordings for webcasting/ training purposes.

The Council, members of the public and the press may record/film/photograph or broadcast this meeting when the public and the press are not lawfully excluded.

**PART 1
MATTERS TO BE CONSIDERED WITH THE PRESS AND PUBLIC PRESENT**

Page(s)

- | | | |
|---|--|---------|
| 1 | APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE | |
| | To receive apologies for absence. | |
| 2 | DECLARATION OF INTERESTS BY COUNCILLORS | |
| | To receive declarations of disclosable pecuniary interests, other registrable or non-registrable interests by Members. | |
| 3 | BC/22/5 TO CONFIRM THE MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL MEETING HELD ON 25 MAY 2022 | 7 - 20 |
| 4 | BC/22/6 ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM THE CHAIRMAN AND LEADER | 21 - 22 |
| | In addition to any announcements made at the meeting, please see Paper BC/22/6 attached, detailing events attended by the Chairman and Vice-Chairman. | |
| 5 | TO RECEIVE NOTIFICATION OF PETITIONS IN ACCORDANCE WITH COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULES | |
| | In accordance with Council Procedure Rule No. 11, the Chief Executive will report the receipt of any petitions. There can be no debate or comment upon these matters at the Council meeting. | |

- 6 **QUESTIONS BY THE PUBLIC IN ACCORDANCE WITH COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULES**
- The Chairman of the Council to answer any questions by the public of which notice has been given no later than midday three clear working days before the day of the meeting in accordance with Council Procedure Rule No. 12.
- 7 **QUESTIONS BY COUNCILLORS IN ACCORDANCE WITH COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULES**
- The Chairman of the Council, the Chairmen of Committees and Sub-Committees and Portfolio Holders to answer any questions on any matters in relation to which the Council has powers or duties or which affect the District of which due notice has been given in accordance with Council Procedure Rule No. 13.
- 8 **BC/22/7 THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT BUSINESS PLAN** 23 - 86
- Cabinet Member for Housing
- 9 **BC/22/8 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT 2021/22** 87 - 108
- Chair of Overview and Scrutiny Committee
- 10 **BC/22/9 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PLAN 2022/23** 109 - 114
- Chair of Overview and Scrutiny Committee
- 11 **BC/22/10 GENERAL EXCEPTION DECISION TAKEN BY CABINET UNDER DELEGATED POWERS IN ACCORDANCE WITH PART 2 OF THE CONSTITUTION** 115 - 118
- Leader of the Council
- 12 **COUNCILLOR APPOINTMENTS**
- 13 **MOTIONS ON NOTICE**

Date and Time of next meeting

Please note that the next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, 19 July 2022 at 5.30 pm.

Webcasting/ Live Streaming

The Webcast of the meeting will be available to view on the Councils YouTube page:
https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCSWf_0D13zmegAf5Qv_aZSg

For more information about this meeting, including access arrangements and facilities for people with disabilities, please contact Committee Services on: 01473 296472 or Email: Committees@baberghmidsuffolk.gov.uk

Introduction to Public Meetings

Babergh/Mid Suffolk District Councils are committed to Open Government. The proceedings of this meeting are open to the public, apart from any confidential or exempt items which may have to be considered in the absence of the press and public.

Domestic Arrangements:

- Toilets are situated opposite the meeting room.
- Cold water is also available outside opposite the room.
- Please switch off all mobile phones or turn them to silent.

Evacuating the building in an emergency: Information for Visitors:

If you hear the alarm:

1. Leave the building immediately via a Fire Exit and make your way to the Assembly Point (Ipswich Town Football Ground).
2. Follow the signs directing you to the Fire Exits at each end of the floor.
3. Do not enter the Atrium (Ground Floor area and walkways). If you are in the Atrium at the time of the Alarm, follow the signs to the nearest Fire Exit.
4. Use the stairs, not the lifts.
5. Do not re-enter the building until told it is safe to do so.

This page is intentionally left blank

Agenda Item 3

BABERGH DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the Annual meeting of the **BABERGH COUNCIL** held in the King Edmund Chamber, Endeavour House, 8 Russell Road, Ipswich on Wednesday, 25 May 2022

PRESENT:

Councillors:	Clive Arthey	Susan Ayres
	Melanie Barrett	Simon Barrett
	Peter Beer	David Busby
	Sue Carpendale	Trevor Cresswell
	Derek Davis	Siân Dawson
	Mick Fraser	Jane Gould
	Richard Hardacre	Michael Holt
	Bryn Hurren	Leigh Jamieson
	Robert Lindsay	Elisabeth Malvisi
	Margaret Maybury	Alastair McCraw
	Mary McLaren	Mark Newman
	Zachary Norman	John Nunn
	Adrian Osborne	Jan Osborne
	Alison Owen	Lee Parker
	Stephen Plumb	John Ward

In attendance:

Officers:	Chief Executive (AC)
	Monitoring Officer (EY)
	Assistant Director – Corporate Resources (ME)
	Corporate Manager – Governance and Civic Office (JR)

Apologies:

Kathryn Grandon
John Hinton

1 ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN OF THE COUNCIL

- 1.1 On the proposal of Councillor Arthey and seconded by Councillor Ward, Councillor Kathryn Grandon was nominated for the position of Chair of the Council.
- 1.2 On the proposal of Councillor Simon Barrett and seconded by Councillor Norman, Councillor Sue Ayres was nominated for the position of Chair of the Council.
- 1.3 The nominations were **PUT** to the Council for voting, by 20 votes for and 10 votes against.

It was **RESOLVED**:

That Councillor Kathryn Grandon be elected as Chair of the Council for the municipal year 2022/23.

2 ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIRMAN OF THE COUNCIL

- 2.1 On the proposal of Councillor Clive Arthey and seconded by Councillor Gould, Councillor Derek Davis was nominated for the position of Vice Chair of the Council.
- 2.2 This nomination was **PUT** to the Council for voting and by 18 votes for, 9 votes against and 3 abstentions.

It was RESOLVED:

That Councillor Derek Davis be elected as Vice Chairman of Babergh District Council for the municipal year 2022/23.

- 2.3 Councillor Davis thereupon made his Declaration of Office.
- 2.4 Councillor Davis thanked everyone who had voted for him and paid tribute to the outgoing Chair, Councillor Adrian Osborne for giving 'a good innings' and being a credit to Babergh District Council during challenging and difficult times.
- 2.5 Councillor Davis took the Chair for the remainder of the meeting.

3 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS BY COUNCILLORS

- 3.1 There were no declarations of interests by Councillors.

4 BC/22/1 TO CONFIRM THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 22 MARCH 2022

It was RESOLVED:

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 22 March 2022 be confirmed and signed as a true record.

5 BC/22/2 ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM THE CHAIRMAN AND LEADER

- 5.1 The report from the Chairman was noted.
- 5.2 The Vice-Chairman invited Councillor Ward to present his report as Leader of the Council.
- 5.3 Councillor Ward made the following announcements:

LU & Regeneration Bill

The Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill was announced in the Queen's Speech earlier this month. The bill is a long one: it has 11 parts to it and 338 pages, but I just want to highlight a few of the proposals in the Planning and Infrastructure Levy parts.

It specified a number of amendments to existing legislation regarding planning and local plans, for example:

- local plans will be simplified by providing national policies in general areas so there is no need for local policies
- there will be mandatory design codes
- plan making will be streamlined by:
 - gateway checks on plans before examination
 - replacing the LDS with a simpler Local Plan Timetable process
 - And the 5YLS requirements for the first 5 years of a plan will be removed

All these amendments are designed to ensure that it takes no longer than 30 months to produce a plan.

There will be a new infrastructure levy, replacing CIL:

- It will be locally set and collected
- It will be charged on the sale value of a property; the threshold will provide a build cost allowance to negate viability debates
- There will be a new right to require an affordable percentage
- The neighbourhood share retained
- The Infrastructure Delivery Strategy will specify use of the levy with priorities; there will be a duty to engage with providers

He could provide a more detailed summary for anyone who would like it.

What's Next for Sudbury Exhibition

You will have seen last week's media release that we will be holding a new public exhibition showcasing plans and proposals for Sudbury next month. This will update residents on progress on several projects since our last exhibition in January 2020.

While we focused on providing support for our communities and businesses during the Covid lockdowns, we also made progress on our plans, particularly the regeneration of the Hamilton Road Quarter, which is a very complex and difficult scheme.

Visitors to the exhibition will be able to get an update on plans for the future of Market Hill, development of the Hamilton Road Quarter and the new café at Belle Vue Park, developments on the Virtual High Street and the new Innovation Lab in Borehamgate which will provide a resource for start-up and small businesses. There will also be a range of other initiatives and projects on show, including Gainsborough's House, St Peter's Church and the solar car port in the Station Road car park.

Finally, visitors will also see the new initiatives from the Bridge Project and will be able to find out about the work of the Sudbury Culture Group which promotes the town's attractions and heritage.

He was sure it would be a great success and generate a lot of comment and feedback.

Careeriosity

Our next Careeriosity event takes place in Sudbury on the 1st June. Careeriosity is a skills and education initiative for young people aged 13- 24 led by Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils, which aims to inform young people about the fantastic and varied range of jobs available in Suffolk and how to access them. The Sudbury event is about the marketing industry and is being hosted by branding & marketing agency Mackman group in Meadow Lane, who are really committed to the event. Feedback from past events has been excellent and those attending have found them worthwhile and meaningful. More information can be found on the website. So please encourage any young people you know to attend and mention it to schools and youth groups if you get a chance.

Sudbury ATM

And finally, yesterday evening the Chief Executive and I were kindly invited to the Sudbury Annual Town Meeting to tell everyone what Babergh has been up to in the past year. Now I am used to getting quite a warm welcome when I go to my parishes and my ward, indeed only last week at a fairly full church in Higham after I delivered my annual report, I got a round of applause. So, it was with some surprise and gratitude that following an hour of giving our reports and taking questions we also received a round of applause from the attendees at the annual town meeting, it was very worthwhile event, there were some very good questions and everyone was really appreciative of the fact that we are trying our best to engage more with the town and improve what has admittedly at times been a fractious relationship. I had a good chat with the clerk and also the new Mayor Ellen Murphy and she was very appreciative of the fact that we put in the effort to do that, and they were very interested in what we had to say so all in all a very good evening for us both.

6 DESIGNATION OF COMMITTEES AND JOINT COMMITTEES

6.1 On the proposal of Councillor Carpendale and seconded by Councillor Ward,

It was RESOLVED:

That the following Committees and Joint Committees be appointed:

- **Babergh Overview and Scrutiny Committee**
- **Planning Committee**
- **Babergh Licensing and Regulatory Committee**
- **Joint Audit and Standards Committee**
- **Joint Appointments Committee**

7 BC/22/3 POLITICAL BALANCE AND COMPOSITION OF COMMITTEES

- 7.1 Councillor Beer questioned the allocation of placements on the Planning Committee.
- 7.2 The Monitoring Officer confirmed the rules for political proportionality of committees and confirmed that the allocation of placements was correct.
- 7.3 Councillor Busby **Proposed** the recommendation contain in the report which was **Seconded** by Councillor Plumb.
- 7.4 Councillor Beer **Proposed** an amendment to the recommendation to increase the membership of the Conservatives from 3 to 4 seats and decrease the membership of Independent Conservatives from 2 to 1 seat on the Planning Committee and to change one seat on the Joint Audit and Standards Committee from Conservative to Independent Conservative. This was **Seconded** by Councillor Dawson.
- 7.5 This amendment was rejected by Councillor Busby and Councillor Plumb as proposer and seconder of the original recommendation.
- 7.6 The Monitoring Officer clarified that the amendment proposed was for the planning committee to remain at 11 places, the Conservative group would have 4 of those places and the Independent Conservative group would have 1 place and the Joint Audit and Standards Committee would remain at 5 places, the Conservative group would have 1 place and the Independent Conservative group would have 1 place. However, as the Independent Conservatives have 3 out of their 4 members on Cabinet, they would not be able to fill the 2 seats on the Joint Audit and Standards Committee.
- 7.7 By a vote of 10 votes for and 20 votes against the amendment was lost.
- 7.8 The original recommendations were **PUT** to the Council for voting, by a vote of 20 votes for and 10 votes against,

It was **RESOLVED**:

- 1.1 **That the Committees' size and numerical allocation of seats be approved as detailed in Appendix A to the report.**
- 1.2 **That Committee members be appointed as set out in Appendix B to the report.**

8 ELECTION OF CHAIRS AND VICE-CHAIRS OF COMMITTEES

- 8.1 On the proposal of Councillor Ward and seconded by Councillor Arthey, Councillor John Hinton was nominated for the position of Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

8.2 On the proposal of Councillor Sue Ayres and seconded by Councillor Maybury, Councillor Sian Dawson was nominated for the position of Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

8.3 The nominations were **PUT** to the Council for voting, by a vote of 20 votes for and 10 votes against.

It was RESOLVED:

That Councillor John Hinton be elected as Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for the municipal year 2022/23.

8.4 On the proposal of Councillor Ward and seconded by Councillor McCraw, Councillor Adrian Osborne was nominated for the position of Vice Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

8.5 The nomination was **PUT** to the Council, by a vote of 20 votes for, 9 votes against and 1 abstention.

It was RESOLVED:

That Councillor Adrian Osborne be elected as Vice-Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for the municipal year 2022/23.

8.6 On the proposal of Councillor Ward and seconded by Councillor Arthey, Councillor Stephen Plumb was nominated for the position of Chair of the Planning Committee.

8.7 On the proposal of Councillor Simon Barrett and seconded by Councillor Norman, Councillor Peter Beer was nominated for the position of Chair of the Planning Committee.

8.8 The nominations were **PUT** to the Council for voting, by 20 votes for and 10 votes against.

It was RESOLVED:

That Councillor Stephen Plumb be elected as Chair of the Planning Committee for the municipal year 2022/23.

8.9 On the proposal of Councillor Plumb and seconded by Councillor Arthey, Councillor Leigh Jamieson was nominated for the position of Vice Chair of the Planning Committee.

8.10 The nomination was **PUT** to the Council for voting, by 21 votes for and 9 votes against.

It was RESOLVED:

That Councillor Leigh Jamieson be elected as Vice-Chair of the Planning Committee for the municipal year 2022/23.

8.11 On the proposal of Councillor Arthey and seconded by Councillor Lindsay, Councillor Lee Parker was nominated for the position of Chair of the Licensing and Regulatory Committee.

8.12 On the proposal of Councillor Beer and seconded by Councillor Holt, Councillor Margaret Maybury was nominated for the position of Chair of the Licensing and Regulatory Committee.

8.13 The nominations were **PUT** to the Council for voting, by 18 votes for and 12 against,

It was RESOLVED:

That Councillor Lee Parker be elected as Chair of the Licensing and Regulatory Committee for the municipal year 2022/23.

8.14 On the proposal of Councillor Hurren and seconded by Councillor Malvisi, Councillor Sue Carpendale was nominated for the position of Vice Chair of the Licensing and Regulatory Committee.

8.15 The nomination was **PUT** to the Council for voting, by 22 votes for, 6 against and 2 abstentions,

It was RESOLVED:

That Councillor Sue Carpendale be elected as Vice-Chair of the Licensing and Regulatory Committee for the municipal year 2022/23.

8.16 On the proposal of Councillor Carpendale and seconded by Councillor Busby, Councillor Bryn Hurren was nominated for the position of Co-Chair of the Joint Audit and Standards Committee.

8.17 The nomination was **PUT** to the Council for voting, by 22 votes for, 5 against and 3 abstentions,

It was RESOLVED:

That Councillor Bryn Hurren be elected as Co-Chair of the Joint Audit and Standards Committee for the municipal year 2022/23.

8.18 On the proposal of Councillor McCraw and seconded by Councillor Ward, Councillor Clive Arthey was nominated for the position of Co-Chair of the Joint Appointments Committee.

8.19 The nomination was **PUT** to the Council for voting, by 20 votes for and 10 votes against,

It was RESOLVED:

That Councillor Clive Arthey be elected as Co-Chair of the Joint Appointments Committee for the municipal year 2022/23.

9 BC/22/4 APPOINTMENTS TO OUTSIDE BODIES FOR 2022/23

9.1 Councillor Ward introduced the report and asked for someone to take up the second position on the East Suffolk Internal Drainage Board and for a replacement for Councillor McLaren on the Suffolk Violence and Abuse Partnership.

9.2 Councillor Maybury volunteered to take up both positions.

9.3 On the proposal of Councillor Ward and seconded by Councillor Arthey,

It was RESOLVED:

That Councillors be appointed to the Outside Bodies detailed below:

NAME OF BODY OR PANEL	NUMBER OF REPRESENTATIVES TO BE APPOINTED	NAME OF MEMBER NOMINATED
Association for Suffolk Museums	1	John Nunn
East of England Assembly of Leaders	1	The Leader
East Suffolk Internal Drainage Board	2	Alistair McCraw Margaret Maybury
Gainsborough House Society	1	Simon Barrett
Greenways Countryside Project JAC	2	Ric Hardacre Zachary Norman
Ipswich and District Citizens Advice Bureau	1 (observer)	Bryn Hurren
Ipswich Strategic Planning Area Board	1 (+1 substitute)	Lee Parker (Sub: Clive Arthey)
Joint Advisory Committee and Partnership to Dedham Vale (AONB)	2	John Nunn Derek Davis
Joint Advisory Committee and Partnership to Suffolk Coast and Heath	2	John Nunn Derek Davis

Local Government Association – Sparse	1	John Ward
Local Government Association Assembly	1	The Leader
Pin Mill Bay Management Community Interest Company	1	Bryn Hurren
Sudbury and District Citizens Advice Bureau	2 (observers)	Adrian Osborne Alison Owen
Suffolk Coastal Forum	1	Derek Davis
Suffolk Flood Risk Management Scrutiny Sub-Committee	1 (+1 substitute)	Alistair McCraw (Sub: Jane Gould)
Suffolk Health and Wellbeing Board	1 (+1 substitute)	Mary McLaren (Sub: Jane Gould)
Suffolk Health Scrutiny Committee	1 (+1 substitute)	Margaret Maybury (Sub: Sue Ayres)
Suffolk Police and Crime Panel	1	Peter Beer
Suffolk Violence and Abuse Partnership	1	Margaret Maybury
Suffolk Waste Partnership	1	Clive Arthey
The Quay Theatre Sudbury Board of Trustees Observer	1	Melanie Barrett
Western Suffolk Community Safety Partnership	1 (+1 substitute)	Derek Davis (Sub: Melanie Barrett)

10 APPOINTMENT OF COUNCILLORS TO THE SHARED REVENUES PARTNERSHIP JOINT COMMITTEE

10.1 On the proposal of Councillor Adrian Osborne and seconded by Councillor McLaren,

It was RESOLVED:

That Councillors Jan Osborne and Alastair McCraw be appointed as members of the Shared Revenues Partnership Joint Committee and that Councillors John Ward and Clive Arthey be appointed as substitute members for the municipal year 2022/23.

11 APPOINTMENTS TO THE SUFFOLK JOINT STANDARDS BOARD

11.1 Councillor Arthey nominated Lee Parker to fill the vacancy on the Suffolk Joint Standards Board, which was seconded by Councillor Hurren.

11.2 The positions on the Suffolk Joint Standards Board as detailed in the tabled papers, with the inclusion of Councillor Parker were **PUT** to the Council for voting.

It was RESOLVED:

That Councillors Bryn Hurren, Adrian Osborne and Lee Parker be appointed as members of the Suffolk Joint Standards Board for the municipal year 2022/23.

12 APPOINTMENTS TO THE JOINT GYPSY AND TRAVELLER STEERING GROUP

12.1 On the proposal of Councillor Jan Osborne and seconded by Councillor Hurren,

It was RESOLVED:

That Councillors Sue Ayres, Lee Parker, Jane Gould and Alison Owen be appointed to the Joint Gypsy and Traveller Steering Group for the municipal year 2022/23.

13 APPOINTMENTS TO COUNCIL WORKING GROUPS

13.1 On the proposal of Councillor Arthey and seconded by Councillor McCraw,

It was RESOLVED:

1.1 That Councillors Zac Norman and Lee Parker be appointed to the Community Governance Review Working Group.

1.2 That Councillors Dave Busby, Stephen Plumb and Elisabeth Malvisi be appointed to the Constitution Working Group.

1.3 That Councillors Sue Carpendale, Adrian Osborne and Derek Davis be appointed to the Member Learning and Development Working Group.

1.4 That Councillors Clive Arthey, Sue Carpendale, Peter Beer, Leigh Jamieson, John Ward and Dave Busby (substitute) be appointed to the Local Plan Working Group.

14 QUESTIONS BY THE PUBLIC IN ACCORDANCE WITH COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE 12

14.1 The Vice-Chair invited Mr Ferguson, a member of the public to ask his question to the Leader of the Council.

Question 1 Mr Ferguson to Councillor Ward, Leader of the Council

My question to Cllr Ward refers to the introduction of revised car parking charges in Babergh. Cabinet Minutes from last year show that as Leader of Babergh District Council and the Conservative Group, you originally supported a Cabinet decision to introduce increased car parking charges in the District. Subsequently you changed your position on this matter when, with the support of additional Conservative Cabinet members, it was agreed that increased car parking charges would not be introduced in the foreseeable future. As you have now resigned from the Conservative Group and crossed the floor to become an Independent Member of Babergh District Council, have you changed your most recent position on car parking, namely, that Babergh District Council will not introduce additional car parking charges in the remaining period of this current Administration.

Response

Thank you for your question, Mr Ferguson regarding the vexed matter of car parking charges. Firstly, I would like to say that I am not an Independent councillor: like you and several others currently in this chamber were, I am an Independent Conservative councillor.

I do acknowledge that this is the most controversial and divisive decision that Babergh has ever made and so I would first briefly like to provide a reminder of the original Cabinet decision in February 2021. Currently, we have three hours free parking, with a limit of three hours in short-stay car parks and charges for stays longer than this in long-stay car parks. The changes we approved will reduce this free period to one hour, with very modest charges of between £1 and £2 for stays between one and three hours, depending on location. The average dwell time in our town car parks is 64 minutes and so a large number of users would be unaffected by this change.

As you are aware, the Cabinet decision had cross-party support as, indeed, did the 2021/22 budget which included the financial impact based on a proposed implementation start date of July 2021. As a result of the then ongoing effects of the Covid pandemic, the Conservative group changed its mind, and the start date was postponed in the autumn of last year.

Irrespective of my personal view, the Cabinet decision from February 2021 still stands. The implementation date has not been decided yet but will be announced well in advance of new charges being introduced.

Supplementary Question

The Council's declared intention to start developing the old council accommodation at corks lane later this year, can you tell me how Babergh intends to replace the about 100 car parking places across the river that will be lost as the current car parks are now at full capacity even without the planned growth and there does not appear to be any alternative site available in Hadleigh.

Response

This is not really a supplementary to your original question however, what I will say is that the car parking to which you are referring to are not official parking spaces and when I have passed by, and I do several times a week, those car parking areas are not heavily utilised and in any event we have carried out surveys on the official car parks in Hadleigh which show that there is plenty spare capacity on pretty much every day of the week.

15 QUESTIONS BY COUNCILLORS IN ACCORDANCE WITH COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE 13

15.1 The Vice-Chair invited Councillor Dawson to ask her question to Councillor Busby, Cabinet Member for Finance, Assets and Investments.

Question 1 Councillor Dawson to Councillor Busby, Cabinet Member for Finance, Assets and Investments

At last year's Full Council on 18th Nov, I requested clarification on the financial position of Corks Lane. On 4th Jan, 2022 as Cabinet Member for Assets and Investments you provided a breakdown summary of the full annual running costs £500/- (against a budget cost of £342/-) and future recalculated development costs £13m, (against a budget of £12.9m). You advised development works would commence Spring 2022. As we are now past that development date again, please could you provide a definitive date when this project is expected to commence?

Response

Thank you for your question relating to the former HQ property in Corks Lane, Hadleigh. A report is tabled for the Cabinet in June to consider the next steps in relation to this development which, subject to the Cabinet's decision, could mean that works could start on site in August.

Supplementary question

I think as Ward Councillor, it has been very damaging so what bothers me is the approach agreed by the Cabinet in December 2018 would enable the scheme to be brought forward quickly using a construction group, this would overcome the necessity for a lengthy procurement and in December you said this would be coming forward and here we are in May, and we haven't heard anything. The risk management describes the description cannot be delivered on budget or within time scales and any delay could lead to increased costs, this was considered unlikely however I believe the timing is significantly delayed and materials and everything have increased from 18 to 35 percent so therefore I think the figures given for capital funding is not going to be sufficient. Would you not agree with that?

Response

No, the £3.77 million is the borrowing ceiling that we are referring to, the costs are in the region of about £13 million. Depending upon the phasing of the work, depends on how much borrowing that you need at any one particular point in time. If you do the work quickly you need a higher borrowing requirement, but you can be more certain about the overall price because contractors will hold their prices if we spread the work over a longer period, we can work with a lower debt requirement but we cannot guarantee the prices.

Question 2 Councillor Beer to Councillor Arthey, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Planning

Could you advise me and the tax payers of Babergh if the extra hundred thousand pounds allocated in the budget for the Joint local Plan is good value for our residents as we seem unable to deliver a satisfactory scheme?

Response

Thank you for your question and the answer is yes, our planning teams have done a fantastic job during a difficult couple of years and the cost of the Joint Local Plan is good value for our residents who I believe expect some certainty for the future of Babergh and consistency in our decision making. As a former chairman of the planning committee and a member of the cross-party working group that helped to develop the plan for submission, I would have thought you would be aware that we are now in the hands of the planning inspector for examination and modifications which will be subject to public consultation later this year.

Supplementary question

How much extra money will the Joint Local Plan cost, since the inspector gave instructions to officers to review and resubmit the plan?

Response

I don't know that amount yet and I don't suppose anybody else does either, we know it is going to cost more money because we have got more work to do. I can try and get you a more accurate figure probably later in the year.

The business of the meeting was concluded at 7.08 pm.

.....
Chair

This page is intentionally left blank

BABERGH DISTRICT COUNCIL - 21 JUNE 2022

CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

EVENT	LOCATION	DATE	CHAIRMAN	VICE CHAIR
JUNE 2022				
Suffolk Show President's Lunch	The Suffolk Show	01-Jun	✓	
RAF Honington Freedom Parade and Platinum Jubilee Parade and Sunset Ceremony for H.M. The Queen	Angel Hill, Bury St Edmunds preceded by a Cocktail Reception in the Athenaeum	09-Jun	✓	
The Queen's Platinum Jubilee County Service of Celebration	St Edmundsbury Cathedral	12-Jun		✓
Suffolk Pride 2022	Ipswich Waterfront	18-Jun		✓
Armed Forces Day Flag Raising	Wattisham Base and Hadleigh War Memorial	20-Jun	✓	
Suffolk Day 2022	Framlingham Castle	21-Jun	✓	
Armed Forces Day Event and Parade	Market Place, Hadleigh	23-Jun	✓	

This page is intentionally left blank

Agenda Item 8

BABERGH DISTRICT COUNCIL

TO: Council	REPORT NUMBER: BC/22/7
FROM: Cllr Jan Osborne, Cabinet Member for Housing	DATE OF MEETING: 21 June 2022
OFFICER: Gavin Fisk – Assistant Director, Housing	KEY DECISION REF NO. N/A

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT BUSINESS PLAN

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 This report sets out the work that has taken place to date to develop a robust and financially sustainable Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Business Plan for the period 2022 - 2052 for Babergh District Council. It provides an oversight of the consultation with key stakeholders and how this feedback and insight has shaped and developed the plan.
- 1.2 This report provides an evidence base highlighting the priorities that have been defined within the HRA Business Plan. The final plan will be presented to Cabinet in July 2022 along with evidence the plan has been robustly stress tested and which is deliverable both in the medium and longer term.
- 1.3 This report seeks support of the Council to commit to the current version of the plan based on the priorities set out in this report.

2 OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 2.1 To continue with the current version of the HRA Business Plan, which was adopted in 2017. However, it is felt this would prevent us managing the HRA effectively as many changes have occurred since 2017, including the Climate Emergency declared by both Councils in 2019.
- 2.2 To develop an HRA Business Plan that supports Babergh District Councils Vision for the Housing Revenue Account, which is recommended as it reflects the changing external factors, as well as the Councils own aspirations. It has sought to consider opportunities to not only review the financial capacity within the HRA, but the approach and direction to the delivery of Council Housing Services, including meeting the requirements set out in the Social Housing White Paper.

3 RECOMMENDATION

- 3.1 It is recommended that Full Council note the approach that has been taken and the progress that has been made in developing the proposed HRA Business Plan along with the overarching aims as set out in this report.

REASON FOR DECISION

To provide oversight of the proposed HRA Business Plan, which will be presented to Cabinet in July for approval.

4 KEY INFORMATION

- 4.1 The Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Business Plan sets out the priorities, plans and actions for council housing over the next 5 and 30 years. The HRA Business Plan was last revised in May 2017, therefore, it was pertinent that after five years, a fundamental review of the plan and its priorities took place.
- 4.2 The purpose of such plans is to show that we can maintain our existing housing assets and deliver a quality customer-focused service, as well as improve homes and neighbourhoods, whilst supporting and endeavouring to achieve the visions of the current organisations' key strategies.
- 4.3 An effective HRA Business Plan has become ever more crucial since central government announced the reform of the rules governing local authority housing finance and the introduction of the self-financing system a decade ago.
- 4.4 Work to develop the HRA Business Plans has been focussed heavily on research, consultation, scenario testing, and design this includes ensuring the final version of the plans have specific, measurable, realistic targets.
- 4.5 To do so, research and development has been invested in the organisations proposed '*New Build Design Guide*' and '*Technical Specification*'. Along with far greater intelligence and insight on the energy performance of our existing stock portfolio. This specific piece of work has led to working with the Energy Saving Trust to produce individual reports on every council owned home, which is based on more than 80 separate measures. This work has allowed us to accurately predict the levels of future expenditure and investment required to ensure every Council owned home meets the Government target of EPC C, by 2030.
- 4.6 To ensure the plan is achievable, it has required officers to produce a baseline position taking into account actual income and expenditure including planned works.
- 4.7 Summer 2021 saw both tenant, staff and member consultation with more than 2,000 separate survey responses to three different consultations, which is evidenced in section nine of this report. As a direct result of this feedback, we have ensured the final version of the HRA Business Plan has been fully costed will provide the following outcomes for all stakeholders, associated with the Housing Revenue Accounts.
- 4.8 During the first half of 2022 we surveyed a further 600 tenants and used this insight to further develop the HRA Business Plan.

What will our Plans deliver?

Investing in our Homes

- 4.9 It is intended that we will see significant investment in retrofitting of existing homes to make them energy efficient (EPC Level C), and compliant with existing legislation.

With an aspiration to provide additional investment in existing homes to support them reaching a higher level of energy performance above EPC C during the lifespan of these plans.

- 4.10 We will need to make decisions in the future in relation to our stock profile, this could include making decisions on which HRA assets to develop, redevelop, or dispose of, to ensure we consistently provide homes which are cost effective to maintain and provide the highest levels of quality for tenants.
- 4.11 Ensure our homes exceed tenants' expectations, this includes the fabric and condition of the home as well as the services they receive. In the future this is likely to include investment in 'smart' technology to allow homes to be monitored for future repair or maintenance or standards e.g., Smart sensors to monitor the boiler or moisture within the home.
- 4.12 Enhanced 'Void' standards, which ensure that when empty homes are returned to the Council, as a landlord, we are focussed on quality rather than cost and time. In the longer term it is envisaged this will lead to savings on repairs and maintenance and improved levels of tenant satisfaction.

Climate Change

- 4.13 Investment in all homes to improve overall energy efficiency will be a key focus and will require long term investment beyond historic and existing levels of investment in capital improvements.
- 4.14 This will be led through retrofitting and improved energy efficiency of homes. Including monetary investment to ensure every Council owned home meets EPC C by 2030. Supported by practical education for tenants on how to best use and manage the home to gain the greatest benefits, leading to lower energy costs for tenants.
- 4.15 This work will support both organisational and Suffolk wide Climate change ambitions, which will be complemented by greater levels of Biodiversity within our estates and neighbourhoods. A practical example of this approach could be community allotments, which provide a sense of place and belonging, and which exceed tenants needs.

Building and Buying New Council Homes

- 4.16 There will continue to be an ambition to build or acquire additional new homes. It is proposed that 65 new homes are built or acquired each year, for each of the next five years. Through the development of the HRA Business Plan, the Council will be able to identify how many new homes it can build and develop over the medium term. These new homes will be developed using the New Build Design Guide and Technical Specification. Whilst the Councils will continue to work with Homes England to obtain funding through the Affordable Homes Programme, which will enable more homes to be developed rather than solely funding development via the HRA.
- 4.17 An emphasis on good quality design, energy efficiency, low running costs, sustainability, and the use of modern methods of construction, where appropriate.
- 4.18 Right to Buy receipts will be used efficiently ensuring they are maximised and contribute effectively to any affordable housing programme.

- 4.19 Whilst there will continue to be a focus on new homes, the Business Plans will focus on how the HRA's and the council housing service makes efficient use of existing homes through for example, incentives to downsize.
- 4.20 Within the housing portfolio there will continue to be a continuous review of existing HRA Assets which will include acquisition, disposal, and remodelling, to maximise revenues and minimise the cost of maintenance, repair and renewal of stock which is poorly performing.

Improving the service we provide to our tenants

- 4.21 It is imperative that we continually improve on existing levels of service and performance. We must ensure that every single tenant feels listened to and satisfied with the service they receive, whilst identifying BMSDC Landlord services as being exemplar in its approach to placing Tenants at the 'Heart' of what we do including decision making.
- 4.22 This will require a greater emphasis on performance, scrutiny, and satisfaction ensuring building safety and compliance at all times with regulation and Housing law.
- 4.23 We will learn from every complaint. Measuring satisfaction in real time and ensure we do not only meet the new regulatory framework and standards as set by the Regulator of Social Housing but exceed them.

Improving our Neighbourhoods

- 4.24 We know all stakeholders identified improvements that could or should be made through the consultation. Therefore, this is an area that we will identify and target to ensure improvements for which tenants identify and benefit from. To support this important work and to take account for the variety of neighbourhoods throughout the District, a Neighbourhoods Strategy will be developed to provide an overarching approach.
- 4.25 We will develop a programme to reduce the number of garages in areas where there is low demand and utilise this space for alternative uses e.g., additional parking, housing solutions or amenity land.
- 4.26 Improve existing car parking provision and develop the opportunities for Electrical Vehicle (EV) charging.
- 4.27 Increased Biodiversity and Environmental Improvements.
- 4.28 Improved quality of estates through enhanced standards and quality which may be achieved through effective service charging, where appropriate.
- 4.29 These and other measures and improvements will aim to ensure neighbourhoods are identified as being safe, secure, pleasant, enjoyable and fun to live within, which leads to increases in tenant satisfaction as a direct result.

Involving Tenants in running of the service

- 4.30 We will ensure that through the business plan, there are opportunities for active decision making for tenants through a person-centred approach.
- 4.31 Development of an innovative Governance model that could introduce a Housing Board (equivalent to our Companies or a Housing Association Board) with officers, tenant/s, members and key specialists actively involved and part of decision making, performance and the development of the service in the long term.
- 4.32 Delivery of an action plan that supports a model of engagement that places tenants at the heart of decision making (in line with Tenant Participatory Advisory Service (TPAS) accreditation).

Digital Transformation

- 4.33 The service will move to a cloud-based software system, which enables greater flexibility for staff and tenants and creates efficiencies.
- 4.34 We will support more tenants with both the skills and tools to embrace digital methods as a result of direct feedback from our digital skills survey. This will enable and encourage users of the service to self-serve 'on the go'. For those that desire, we will provide digital tenancies that are more intuitive and that negate the need to use traditional communication channels to engage with the landlord service, providing a greater level of self-serve on the go than is currently available.
- 4.35 Whilst the use of digital tools and technology will support staff to manage the service effectively e.g., Using digital dashboards to provide a clear picture of performance in 'real time' along with greater functionality using tablets and software.

5 LINKS TO CORPORATE PLAN

- 5.1 Homes and Housing is one of the six key priorities within the Joint Corporate Plan and plays a significant role in achieving the Council's overarching vision to build 'great communities with bright and healthy futures that everyone is proud to call home'.
- 5.2 The intention is to ensure that the Councils own Housing stock and its tenants are supported through the Business Plan to maintain our housing stock and continue providing good quality, sustainable council homes, which meet a range of needs for today and for future generations. We will do this by:
- Achieving and maintaining high standards of housing management and effective tenant involvement;
 - Assisting people in housing need to access social housing; Support vulnerable tenants in maintaining their tenancy and living independently;
 - Responding to and pre-empting changing demand patterns by maintaining a balanced portfolio of housing which addresses a wide range of needs;
 - Increasing the environmental sustainability of our housing stock
- 5.3 Our work is inherently about the provision of safe, affordable and decent homes, which support people's quality of life, sense of place and identity. The HRA Business plan must therefore prioritise the way all of its Housing services operate and how we can influence others to play their part.

5.4 The Housing Revenue Account Business Plan will signpost to the other strategies in the Corporate Plan that play a key role in delivering Council Housing outcomes and which enables our tenants to feel empowered to have their say in how their homes are managed and to ensure everyone has accommodation they are proud to call home.

6 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 The HRA Business Plan includes a set of financial assessments including scenario testing and projected income and expenditure between 2022 – 2027. This includes actual income and expenditure both now and projected going forward, along with evidence to support the plans as to what is and what is not affordable and how the finite income associated to the HRA Account will be apportioned to meet both the medium term aims of this plan for the period 2022 – 2027 and the long term aims for the period 2022 – 2052.

6.2 This plan was developed using a suite of baseline assumptions which included:

- Revised inflation assumptions
- Consumer Price Index (CPI) projections reflect Bank of England Monetary Policy Report (Feb 2022)
- Rent increases reflect CPI +1% until 2024/25, then CPI only from 2025/26
- Updated Capital and Revenue budgets
- Updated Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) - C investment assumptions
- Spending pressures met from within existing budgets
- EPC-C investment by 2030 included in the Baseline assumptions
- To provide at least 65 new units a year (on average) between 2022 and 2027/2028
- Strategic Priorities Reserve available to spend (s/t £1M minimum balance)
- Rent loss from voids assumed at 2%
- Investment in existing housing stock will continue at current levels

6.3 A series of financial scenarios were also developed which included:

- Scenario 1 – Deliver zero carbon measures by 2050
- Scenario 2 – Deliver 500 extra homes in each authority over 10 years
- Scenario 3 – Increase budgets to reflect additional spending pressures
- Scenario 4 – Invest to Save initiatives
- One new initiative a year for four years, starting from 2022/23, Each initiative requires £50k to introduce, Ongoing running costs are £50k pa per initiative, Each initiative reduces costs by £100k pa from its second year
- Scenario 5 – Effects of a 1-year rent freeze in 2023/24
- Scenario 6 – Combined effects of scenarios 1, 2 & 3
- Scenario 7 – Optimised version of scenario 6

6.4 In summary the overall plan between 2022 and 2026 evidences:

(Figures are all Millions)	Babergh District Council
Income 2022/23	£18.3m
Income 2025/26	£21.6m

Responsive Repairs	£17.2m
Capital Expenditure	£30.1m
New Build/ 141 Receipts	£45.4m
New Borrowing	£26.1m

7 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

7.1 There are no legal implications of this report.

8 RISK MANAGEMENT

8.1 This report is most closely linked with the Council's Corporate / Significant Business Risk No. 13. We may be unable to react in a timely and effective way to financial demands. Key risks are set out below:

Risk Description	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigation Measures
Failure to develop a financially sustainable HRA Business plan could lead to in year deficits and an inability to provide an effective Housing service in the long term	1 – Highly Unlikely	4- Disaster	Regular monitoring of the HRA Business Plan through effective budget monitoring and budget setting. Approved by Cabinet. The use of specialist external consultancy to act as a critical friend and business support. The use of an independent business model which ensures all medium and long-term income and expenditure is recorded

<p>Failure to accurately identify and plan for all future investment and expenditure could lead to the Councils being unable to provide both the quality of accommodation and landlord services that everyone expects</p>	<p>2 - Unlikely</p>	<p>4 - Disaster</p>	<p>Research, profiling and insight into future costs of investment and expenditure have been conducted using specialist support.</p> <p>The plan articulates where legislation requires a specific approach going forward</p> <p>Budgets are monitored on a monthly basis and monitored through quarterly outturn reports with a robust budget setting process</p>
<p>The HRA Business Plan is not relatable to by its stakeholders and hence does not achieve the outcomes and goals desired</p>	<p>2 - Unlikely</p>	<p>3 – Bad/Serious</p>	<p>Consultation has taken place with all stakeholders. Research has taken place on what the plan needs to achieve to provide the highest levels of service to tenants and to be an exemplar.</p>

9 CONSULTATIONS

- 9.1 During a period in the second half of 2021 there were a total of 619 consultees that responded to an online survey (584 tenants, 27 Staff and 8 Members). A further 14 took part in a virtual workshop.
- 9.2 The following seven areas were identified in priority order with details of the key issues identified during the consultation.
- 9.3 Investing in our current homes
- 71% of respondents did not feel we invested enough in existing homes.
 - Improving home insulation, installing environmentally friendly heating systems and upgrading doors and windows were the priority investment items identified for all existing homes.

- 9.4 Climate change
- 70% of respondents felt we should be doing more to address climate change.
 - Improving the energy efficiency of homes should be the top priority.
- 9.5 Building and buying new Council housing
- Consultees were concerned about a lack of local affordable housing.
 - Building more homes and encouraging under occupiers were considered the most effective ways to increase supply of affordable homes.
- 1.6 Improving the services, we provide our tenants
- Staff thought Housing Officers should visit tenants in their home once a year; tenant preference was for only when requested.
 - 83% of tenant respondents did not want the Housing Service to provide non-housing advice
- 9.7 Improving our neighbourhoods
- 87% of tenants like the neighbourhoods they live in. The friendliness of existing communities was particularly highly valued.
 - Lack of car parking was the issue tenants were most unhappy about.
 - Staff and Members felt neighbourhoods looked untidy or unkempt and poorly maintained.
- 9.8 Involving tenants in the running of the housing service
- 56% felt tenants should be given more opportunities to be involved.
 - 61% of tenants did not feel listened to.
 - Digital surveys were the preferred method for tenants to have their say (however, this may be because this consultation exercise was digital, therefore, those without digital access were not as represented).
- 9.9 Digital Transformation
- There was generally a low awareness of the online 'My Home' portal amongst tenants and Members
 - Only 28% of tenants had signed up to the 'My Home' portal
 - Tenants mainly use it to contact a member of the housing service
 - 46% of staff said they actively promote Digital channels to tenants
 - Not being aware of the My Home portal was the main reason for not signing up
 - Being able to book and track repairs was the favoured feature to add to the My Home Portal.
- 9.10 A further 1,500 separate surveys were received in relation to Sheltered Housing and Digital Access and Skills of tenants. These results will help shape further changes to our 'offer'.
- 9.11 In March 2022, we gained 600 Tenant Satisfaction responses (300 from Babergh and 300 from Mid Suffolk) which have given us a rich picture of current tenant satisfaction and performance which has been incorporated into the final version of the plan.

10 EQUALITY ANALYSIS

- 10.1 There are no equality and diversity implications arising directly from this report, at this stage. When individual specific projects are brought forward, as identified as part of the HRA Business Plan, Initial screening, and where necessary, full Equality Impact Assessments will be carried out.

10.2 It should be noted that a key component of the Business Plans will be to ensure equality and diversity as well as ensuring anyone with a protected characteristic is supported whilst as a tenant of Babergh or Mid Suffolk District Councils.

11 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

11.1 There are no environmental implications arising directly from this report, at this stage.

11.2 It is intended that there will be positive environmental implications associated with the HRA Business Plans, specifically, that of our existing Carbon Reduction Management Plan and Bio-Diversity Plan and the emerging wider Environmental Strategy.

11.3 This will include:

- Improving the existing energy efficiency of all council owned homes ensuring that every home meets an Energy Performance Certificate (C) by 2030;
- All existing council owned homes are carbon neutral (wherever possible) by 2050;
- New affordable housing built in the future by the Councils will be delivered to the highest levels of energy performance and standards achievable (on a scheme-by-scheme basis);
- Along with ensuring HRA amenity land provides greater levels of biodiversity, which will support and enhance the natural environment and the wellbeing of local communities.

12 APPENDICES

Title	Location
(a) HRA Business Plan Inc Affordable Housing Strategy, New Build Design Guide, Technical Specification and Financial Scenarios	Attached

13 BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

13.1 **BC/21/26** The Development of the HRA Business Plans

13.2 The Housing Revenue Account Business Plan – including Affordable Housing Strategy, New Build Design Guide and Technical Specification and Financial Scenarios.

REPORT AUTHORS

14.1 Gavin Fisk – Assistant Director Housing

Babergh Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Business Plan

Executive Summary

This document sets out the framework that is the HRA business plan. It is essentially a document that sets a broad context for both future financial planning and investment decisions, as well as a medium-term strategy for the HRA and outcomes on behalf of tenants and leaseholders.

The plan must ensure that the Council's housing stock related priorities and programmes are supported and delivered whilst demonstrating sound financial management within existing budgets and through the use of additional debt headroom. The main priorities and programmes aim to;

- Increase the stock of social housing owned by the HRA through an ambitious development programme.
- Develop new homes that are built to the highest standard, contributing to the Council's effort to ensure carbon neutrality.
- Improve the quality of existing homes and communal areas and reduce the carbon footprint of existing council homes through investment in assets, community led regeneration and working with communities and individuals.
- Ensure that our homes, and the management of them, maintain and improve wellbeing outcomes for individuals, families and communities alongside other Council services and partners.
- Making sure the HRA Business Plans continuously remain financially viable and sustainable.

Introduction

The HRA is a ringfenced pot of money that is used solely for council-owned housing. All rent and service charge income goes into it, and all expenditure (management, maintenance etc) comes out of it. The purpose of the business plan is to record expenditure and income of maintaining our housing stock and closely related services or facilities, which are provided primarily for the benefit of our tenants. The business plan must have due regard to the longer-term income expectations as well as any opportunities provided by the additional debt headroom, which allows additional prudential borrowing to meet the Councils ambitions.

More information about what a Housing Revenue Account is and how it can be used can be found [here](#).

The main priorities of the Councils' landlord service can be summarised as follows:

- Tackling and adapting to climate change
- Developing new Council housing
- Investing in our current homes
- Involving our tenants in the running of the housing service
- Improving the services that we provide our tenants
- Improving the neighbourhoods that we manage
- Implementing digital transformation

Financial considerations and securing efficiencies

Whilst the HRA is ring-fenced, there still needs to be a focus on maximising income and gaining efficiencies across all services to make sure services deliver the very best value for money to our customers.

The reinvestment of these savings and efficiencies back into tenant services is key – the funds would be reinvested back into the HRA to deliver the right service priorities for tenants. The savings will benefit our residents and would help fund the following activities, plus more, depending on evolving priorities:

- Enhanced housing management and estate management services provided for the benefit of tenants (e.g. additional resource to address anti-social behaviour, additional support for vulnerable tenants).
- Improved maintenance of existing homes.
- Increased new build activity to increase the number of much needed affordable homes.
- Increased programme to retrofit existing stock and meet the national climate emergency target of being zero carbon by 2050, with the added benefit of lowering fuel bills for tenants.

A financial scenario that we explored through the development of the Business Plan was the introduction of 'Invest to Save' initiatives. The principles of this were:

- One new initiative a year for four years
- Starting from 2022/23
- Each initiative requires £50k to introduce
- Ongoing running costs are £50k pa per initiative
- Each initiative reduces costs by £100k pa from its second year

The impact on the long-term financial plan was significant savings over the medium to long term. We will actively look to identify projects that could meet these criteria. Whether it be individual projects or a group of small, combined projects.

Financial Assumptions

In order to develop the HRA Business Plan its important to create a financial baseline. The assumptions that have been used are as follows:

- Revised inflation assumptions
- Consumer Price Index (CPI) based on ONS (September 2021) and Bank of England Monetary Policy report (November 2021)
- Retail Price Index (RPI) tracks at 1% above CPI
- CPI set at 3.1% for 2022/23 budgets
- Rents increase by 4.1% in April 2022 (CPI +1%)
- Rent increases reflect CPI +1% until 2024/25, then CPI only from 2025/26
- Updated Development Programme
- EPC-C investment by 2030
- Strategic Priorities Reserve available to spend (s/t £1.000m minimum balance)
- Rent loss from voids assumed at 2% from 2022/23
- Assume investment in existing homes continues at current levels

Naturally these assumptions will need to be continually monitored and updated due to the level of uncertainty within the wider environment, for example the rate at which CPI increases and the cost-of-living crisis being faced during 2022.

HRA Business Plan Scenarios

The HRA Business Plan has been developed by evaluating the opportunities and risks of a range of scenarios these were:

Scenario 1 – Deliver zero carbon measures by 2050

Scenario 2 – Deliver 500 extra homes in each authority over 10 years

Scenario 3 – Increase budgets to reflect additional spending pressures

Scenario 4 – Invest to save initiatives

Scenario 5 – Effects of a 1-year rent freeze in 2022/23

Scenario 6 – Combined effects of scenarios 1, 2 & 3

Scenario 7 – Optimised version of scenario 6

HRA Financial Scenarios

Once these baselines assumptions had been agreed and developed the following charts show how these impact the overall performance of the Organisations Business Plan:

- Balances within the Plans
- The levels of investment through the Capital Programme
- Levels of Debt/Borrowing
- Levels of Interest Cover
- Levels of overall Stock holding

Babergh Baseline

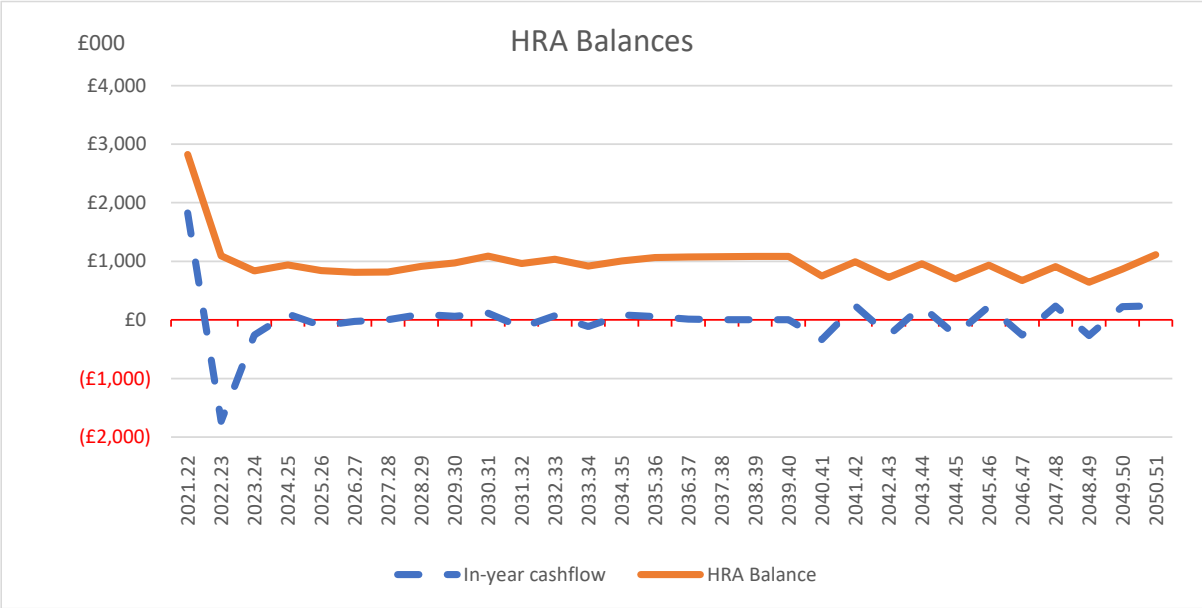
Babergh District Council -					
Baseline	1	2	3	4	5
Description	2021.22	2022.23	2023.24	2024.25	2025.26
Income	(,000)	(,000)	(,000)	(,000)	(,000)
Gross Rental Income	£16,527	£17,839	£19,452	£20,786	£21,076
Void Losses	-£35	-£357	-£389	-£416	-£422
Tenanted Service Charges	£584	£597	£631	£647	£660
Non-Dwelling Income	£183	£183	£194	£198	£202
Other Income	£11	£48	£50	£52	£53
Total income	£17,271	£18,310	£19,938	£21,267	£21,569
Expenditure					
General Management	-£2,959	-£3,044	-£3,212	-£3,290	-£3,352
Bad Debt Provision	-£139	-£150	-£164	-£175	-£177
Responsive & Cyclical Repairs	-£3,564	-£4,033	-£4,273	-£4,407	-£4,523
Total expenditure	-£6,662	-£7,227	-£7,649	-£7,871	-£8,053
Capital financing costs					
Interest paid on debt	-£3,161	-£3,161	-£3,052	-£3,280	-£3,474
Interest paid on 141 receipts	£0	-£29	-£91	-£178	-£299
Interest Received	£6	£4	£4	£4	£3
Depreciation	-£4,280	-£4,548	-£4,922	-£5,158	-£5,384
Capital financing costs	-£7,435	-£7,734	-£8,061	-£8,612	-£9,153
Appropriations					
Revenue provision (HRA CFR)	£0	£0	£0	-£4,681	-£4,463
RCCO	-£1,198	-£5,079	-£4,486	£0	£0
Other appropriations	-£150	£0	£0	£0	£0
Appropriations	-£1,348	-£5,079	-£4,486	-£4,681	-£4,463
Net income/ (expenditure)	£1,826	-£1,730	-£258	£102	-£100
HRA Balance					
Opening Balance	£1,000	£2,826	£1,095	£838	£940
Generated in year	£1,976	-£1,730	-£258	£102	-£100
Appropriated in	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0
Appropriated out	-£150	£0	£0	£0	£0
Procurement Fees	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0
Rolled forward unfinanced spend		£0	£0	£0	£0

Babergh Capital Programme – Baseline

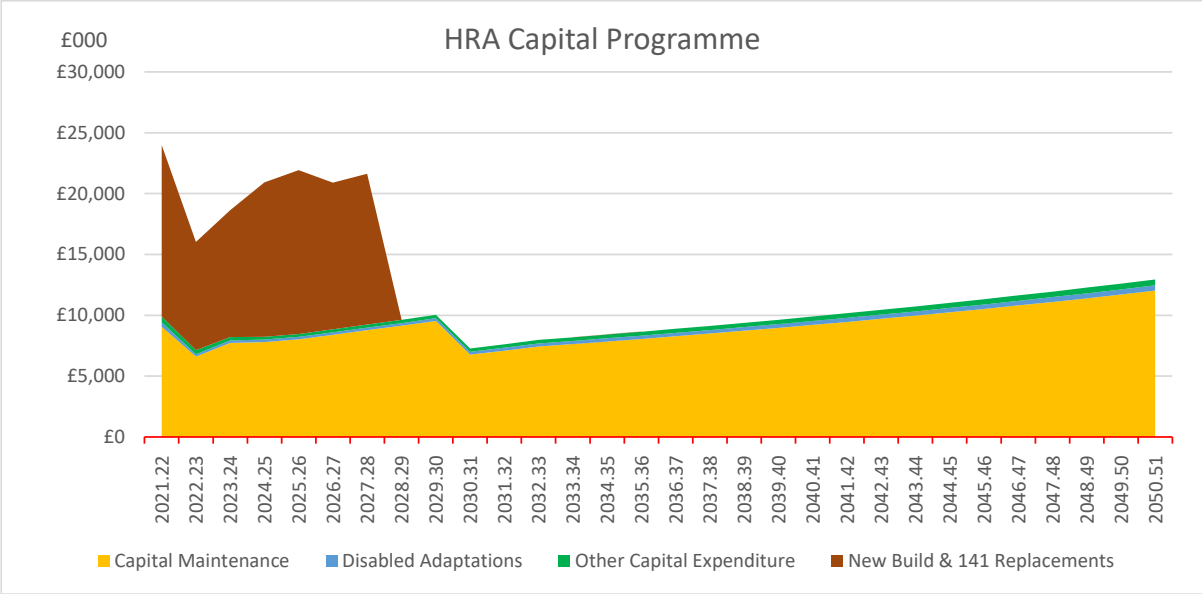
Babergh District Council Capital Programme - Baseline					
HRA Business Planning Model					
Description	1	2	3	4	5
	2021.22	2022.23	2023.24	2024.25	2025.26
Expenditure	(,000)	(,000)	(,000)	(,000)	(,000)
Capital Maintenance	-£9,044	-£6,600	-£7,737	-£7,806	-£8,019
Disabled Adaptations	-£374	-£200	-£200	-£200	-£206
Other Capital Expenditure	-£473	-£337	-£280	-£230	-£237
RTB Buyback Expenditure	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0
Acquisitions	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0
Demolitions	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0
New Build & 141					
Replacements	-£14,092	-£8,883	-£10,418	-£12,692	-£13,460
Procurement Fees	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0
Rolled forward unfinanced spend		£0	£0	£0	£0
Total expenditure	-£23,983	-£16,020	-£18,635	-£20,928	-£21,922
Financing					
RCCO	£1,198	£5,079	£4,486	£0	£0
HRA Reserve	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0
Strategic Priorities Reserve	£14,779	£0	£0	£0	£0
MRR	£3,990	£4,838	£4,922	£5,158	£5,384
RTB - Allowable Debt	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0
RTB - LA Share	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0
RTB - Transaction Costs	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0
RTB Buyback Allowance	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0
Other Capital receipts	£0	£0	£0	£0	£2,674
Gen Cap Reserve	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0
SO Receipts	£1,198	£1,072	£0	£0	£0
Leaseholders' reserve	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0
HRA Reserve 4	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0
RTB - 141 Receipts	£3,497	£3,105	£4,167	£5,077	£5,384
Capital Grant	£519	£0	£0	£0	£0
S106	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0
Returned to Capital Reserve	-£1,198	£0	£0	£0	£0
Borrowing	£0	£1,926	£5,061	£10,693	£8,480
Total financing	£23,983	£16,020	£18,635	£20,928	£21,922
Net over/ (under) financing	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0

Babergh Charts

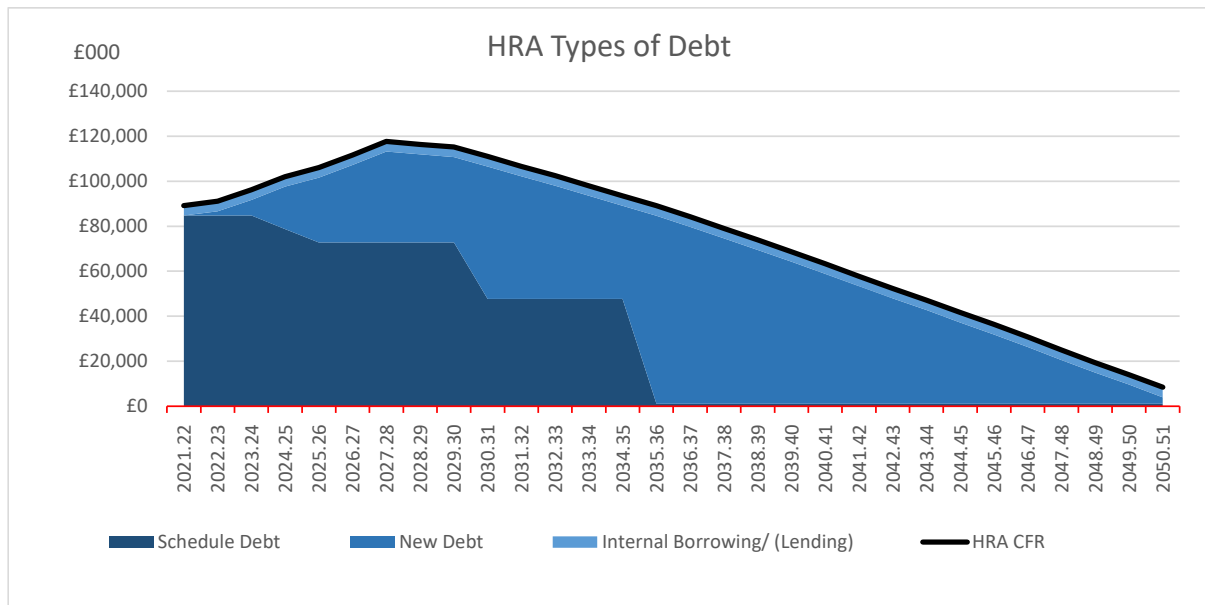
Baseline – HRA Balances – Babergh



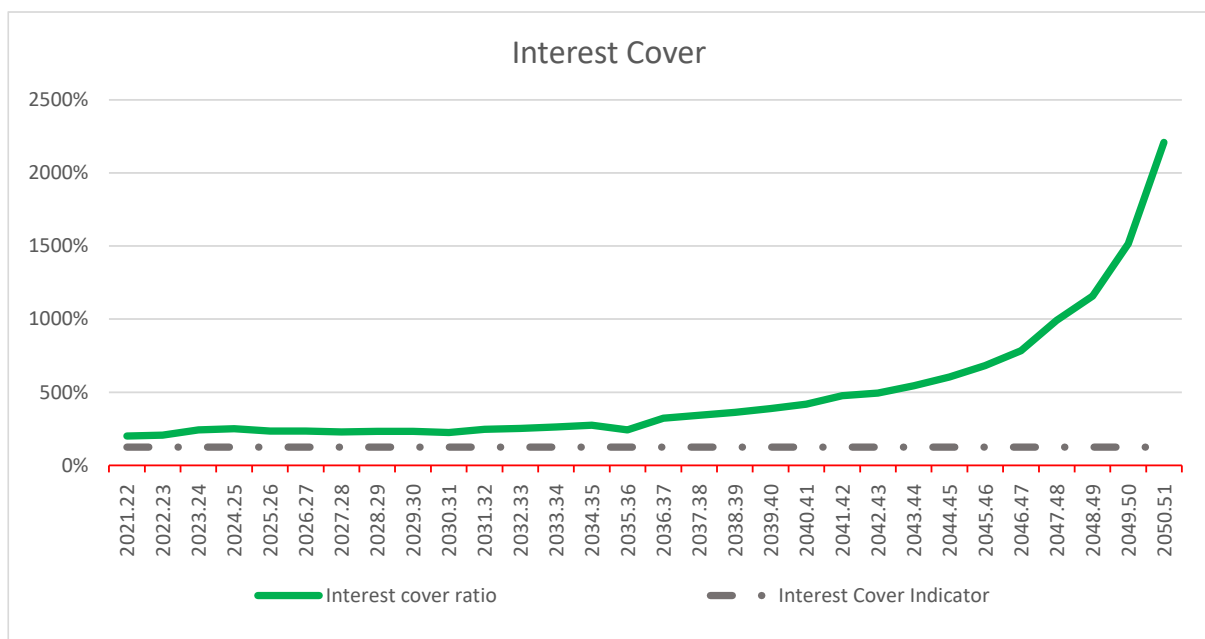
Baseline – HRA Capital Programme – Babergh



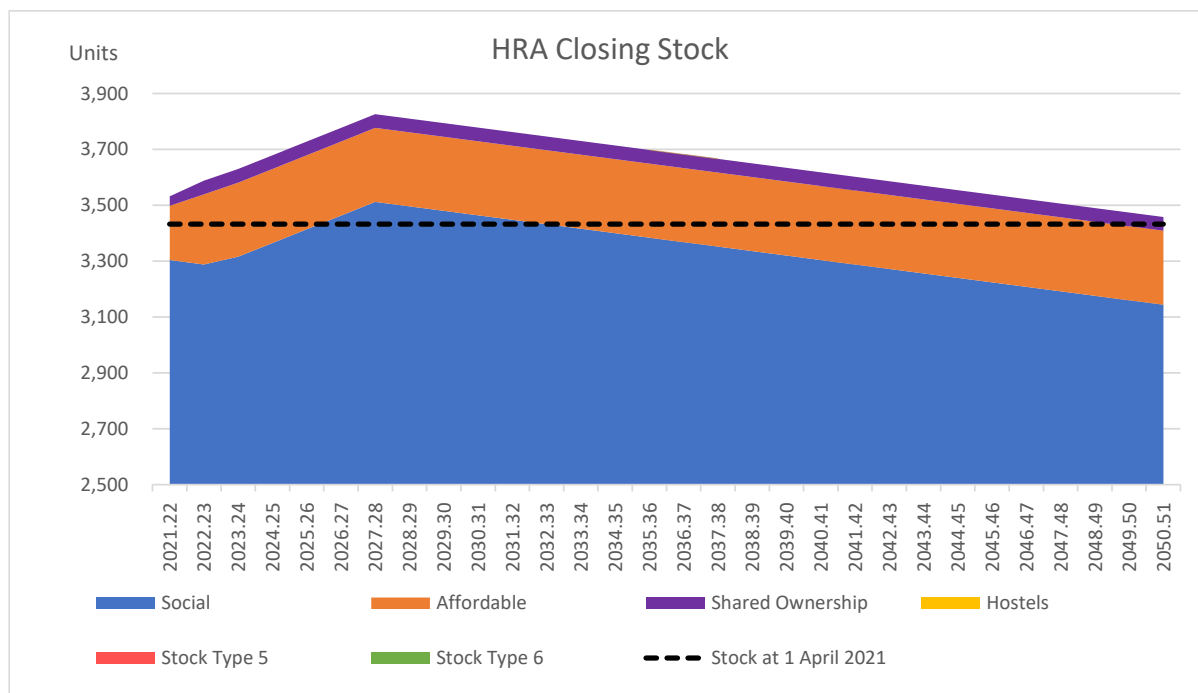
Baseline – HRA Debt – Babergh



Baseline – Interest Cover – Babergh



Baseline – Closing Stock – Babergh



In Summary:

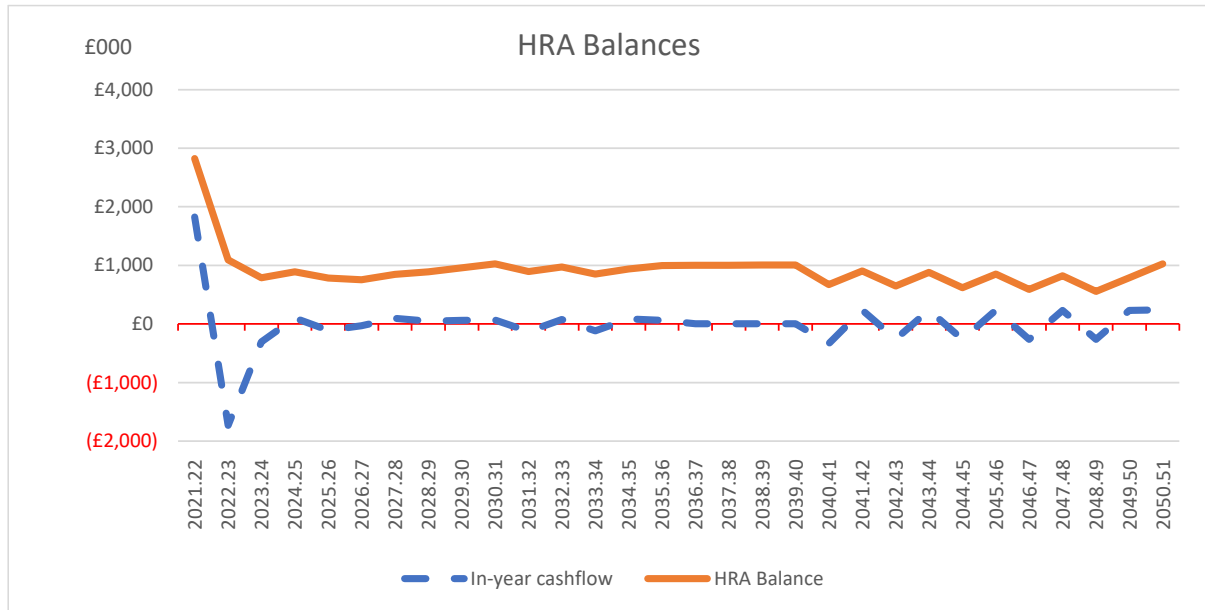
- Peak debt: £117.698m in 2027/28
- £8.430m debt remaining in 2050/51
- Interest cover maintained at 200% or above
- Interest cover increases, indicating good affordability
- Minimum Revenue Balance maintained

Babergh has a sound Baseline position whilst some borrowing is required to deliver the baseline capital programme. Babergh’s income is enough to repay most debt within a reasonable timescale. Current gaps in data relating to stock condition, need to be plugged and the intention is to use current stock condition data to update the plan during 2022/2023.

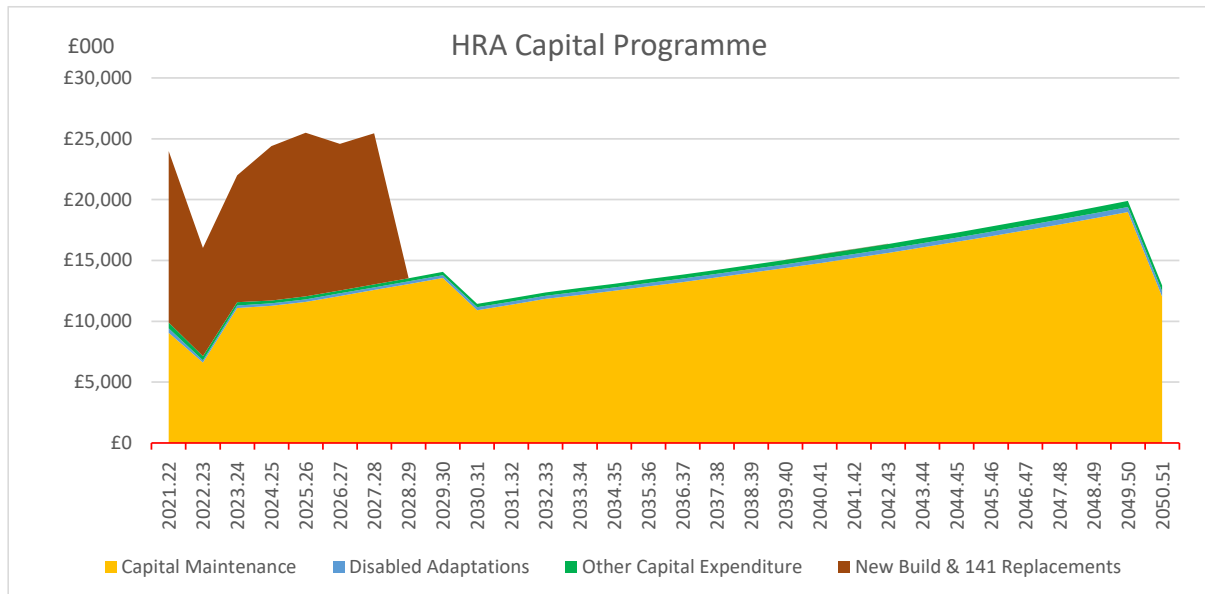
Scenario 1 – Deliver additional zero carbon measures by 2050

Assumptions include: The HRA Baseline position + deliver zero carbon measures by 2050 with a Retrofit cost of £24k per property. To be completed over 27 years, starting in 2023/24

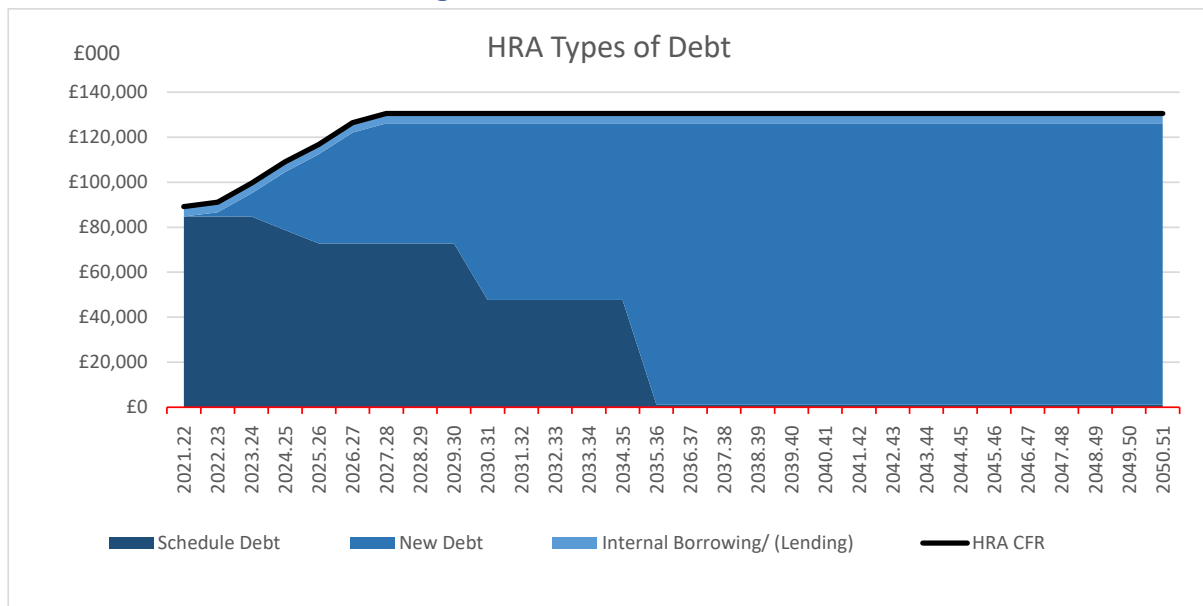
HRA Balances – Babergh



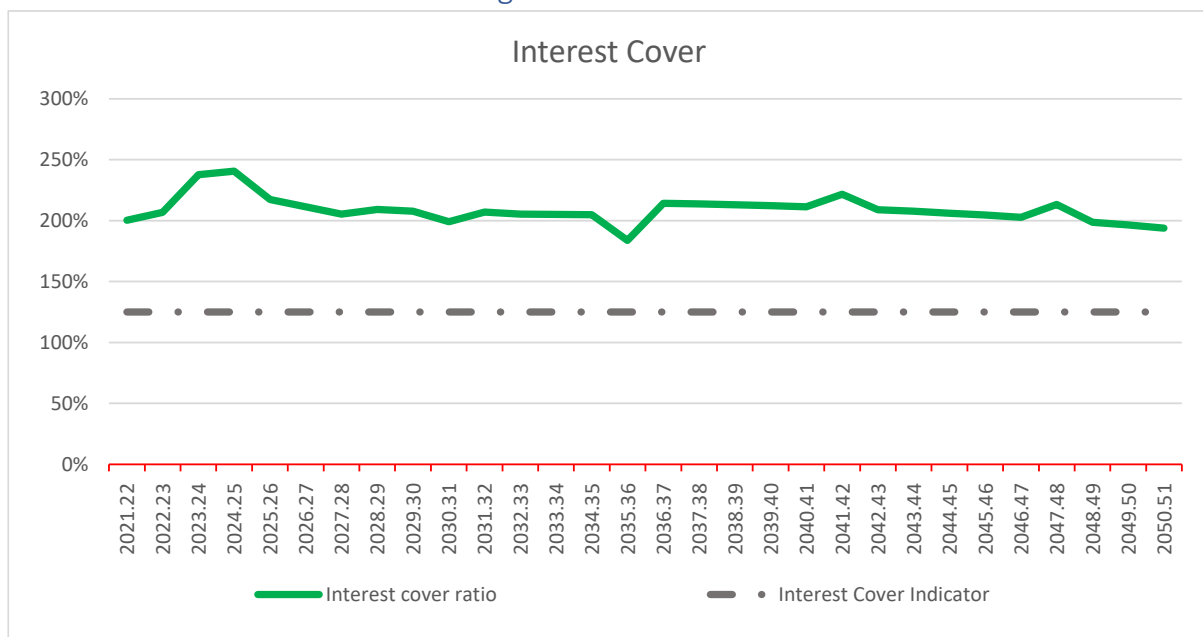
Scenario 1 – HRA Capital Programme – Babergh



Scenario 1 – HRA Debt – Babergh



Scenario 1 – Interest Cover – Babergh



In summary:

- Peak debt: £130.582m from 2027/28
+£12.884m on the baseline position but occurs in the same year
- Residual debt: £130.582m after 30 years Leaving Babergh unable to repay debt.
- Unable to deliver the full capital programme over 30 years
Approximately an £82.733m shortfall by year 30
- Interest cover is acceptable, but in decline
- Minimum revenue balance is maintained

This results in very high debt and a Capital programme which is not fully deliverable for the authority.

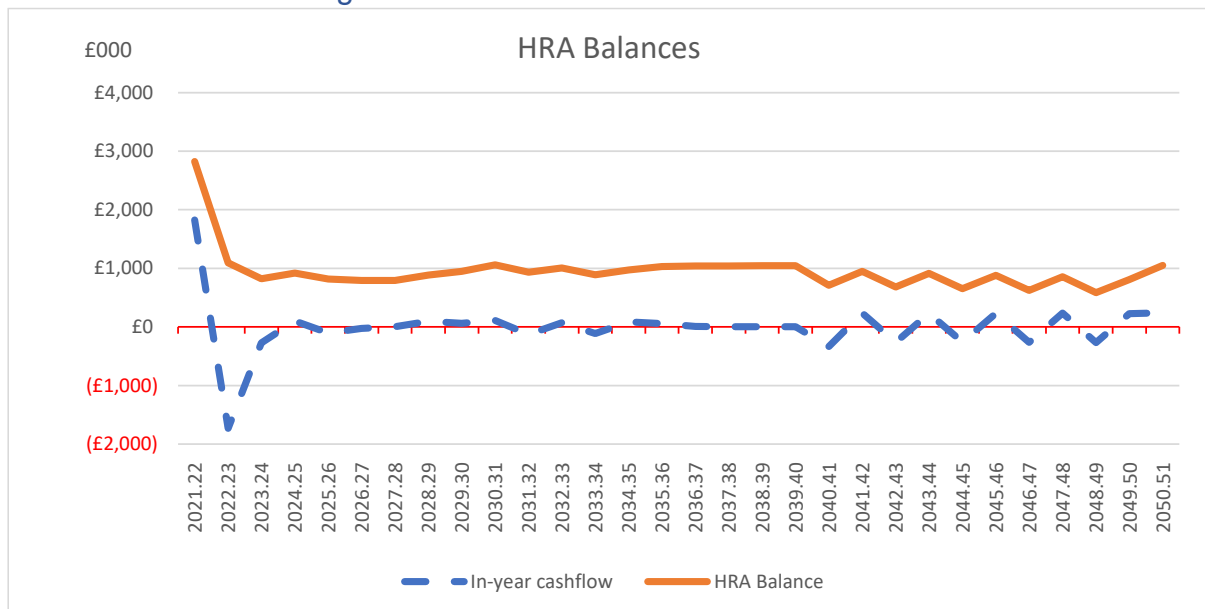
This approach would not be financially sustainable unless something else changes.

Scenario 2 - Effects of a 1-year rent freeze in 2023/24

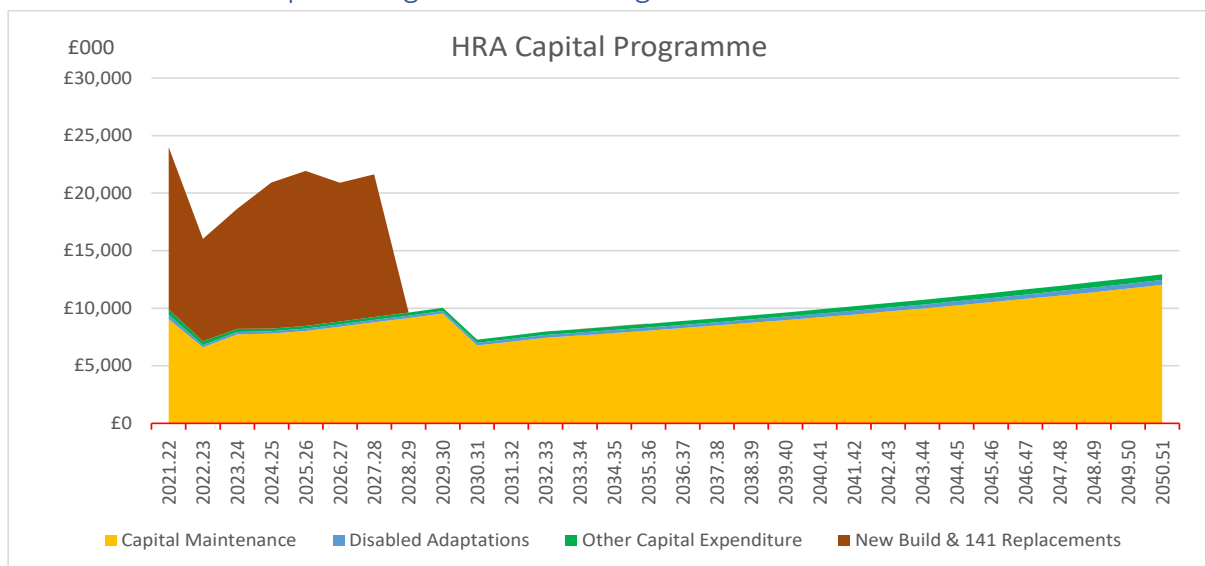
The following scenario considers the baseline, with a 1-year rent freeze in 2023/24

This would reflect a local decision by the authority to implement a zero-rent increase. With Rents continuing to increase by maximum levels from 2024/25 and Formula rents continue to be uplifted in line with Government policy.

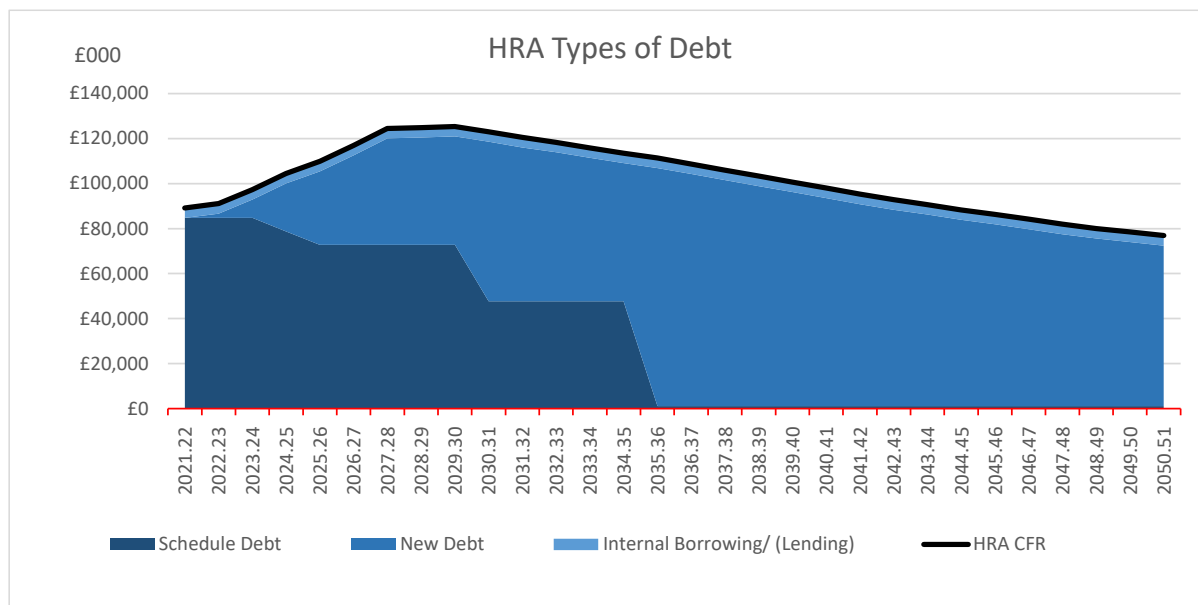
HRA Balances – Babergh



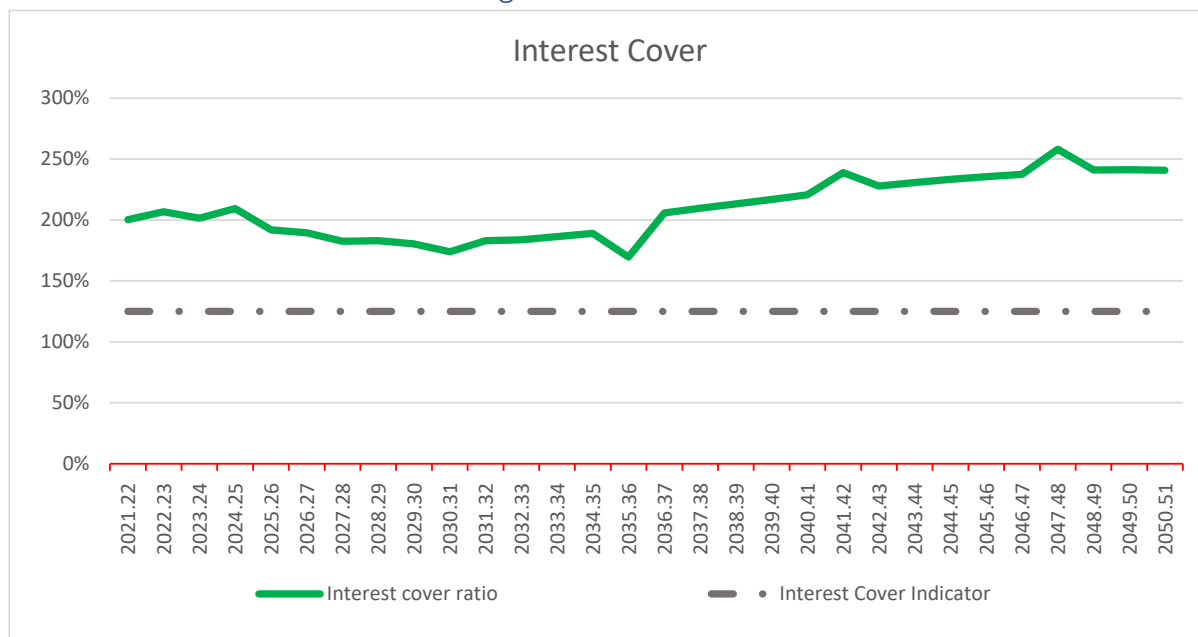
Scenario 2 – HRA Capital Programme – Babergh



Scenario 2 – HRA Debt – Babergh



Scenario 2 – Interest Cover – Babergh



In Summary this scenario requires higher debt for the Authority, but lost income reduces ability to service that debt. Whilst it remains affordable and sustainable for Babergh. A decision to freeze rents would need to be accompanied by compensating measures that reduce costs.

In Conclusion Babergh has a strong underlying position and is able to repay debt within a reasonable timescale.

The introduction of additional zero carbon works (Scenario 1) exposes the limits of the HRA for the council. Whilst any freeze of rents for a year (Scenario 2) would require the authority to borrow more to compensate for lost income.

At present the authority struggles to deliver both new homes and zero carbon investment. As such steps need to be taken to address these challenges over the next 12 -24 months. It is proposed therefore the Business Plan should be reviewed and update annually with consideration to be made as how to address the competing priorities of spending more on both new and existing homes whilst managing any reductions in Income in the long term.

It is therefore the intention to bring forward a plan over the next 12 months which looks to evidence how operating costs can be reduced this includes the development of Invest to Save Initiatives. Which would reduce costs in the long term, along with the use of business process reengineering and lean systems thinking to create efficiencies.

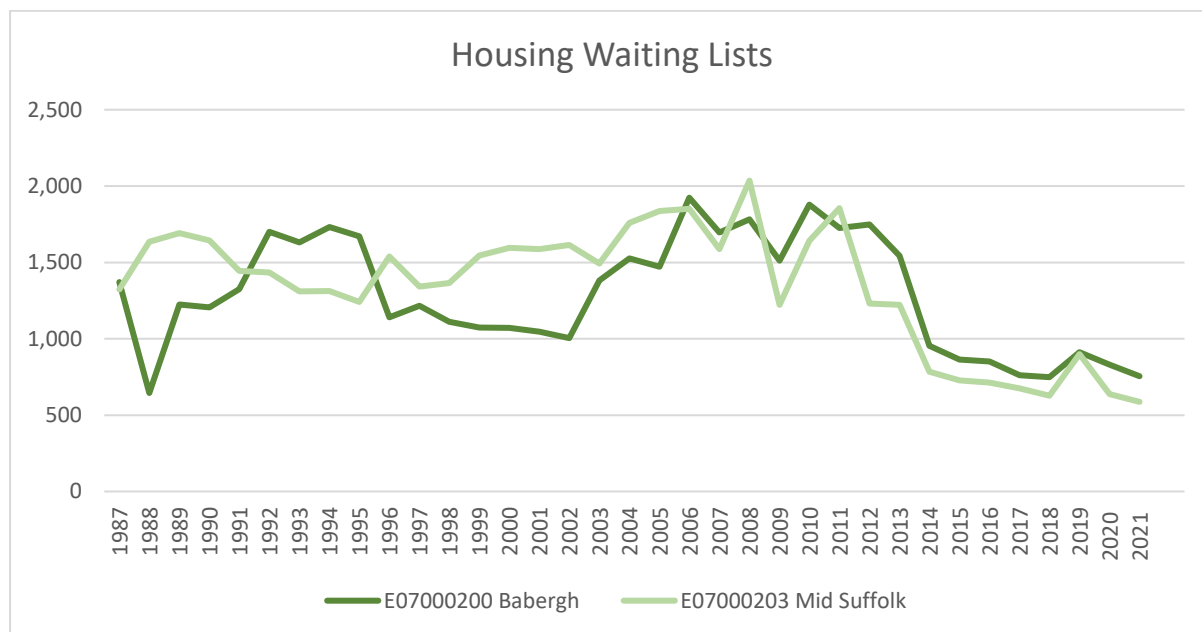
In addition, we will look to maximise income this will initially be through the introduction of a Rent and Service Charge Policy during 2022 with the introduction of Service Charges following and applying Rent Flexibility (as and when the Council) feels it would be appropriate and would be affordable to tenants.

It will also be important to capitalise on any opportunities to bring into the Council additional Government grants through schemes such as the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund which would go along way to support and contribute towards the cost of retrofit measures and which has deliberately been excluded from this financial scenario work.

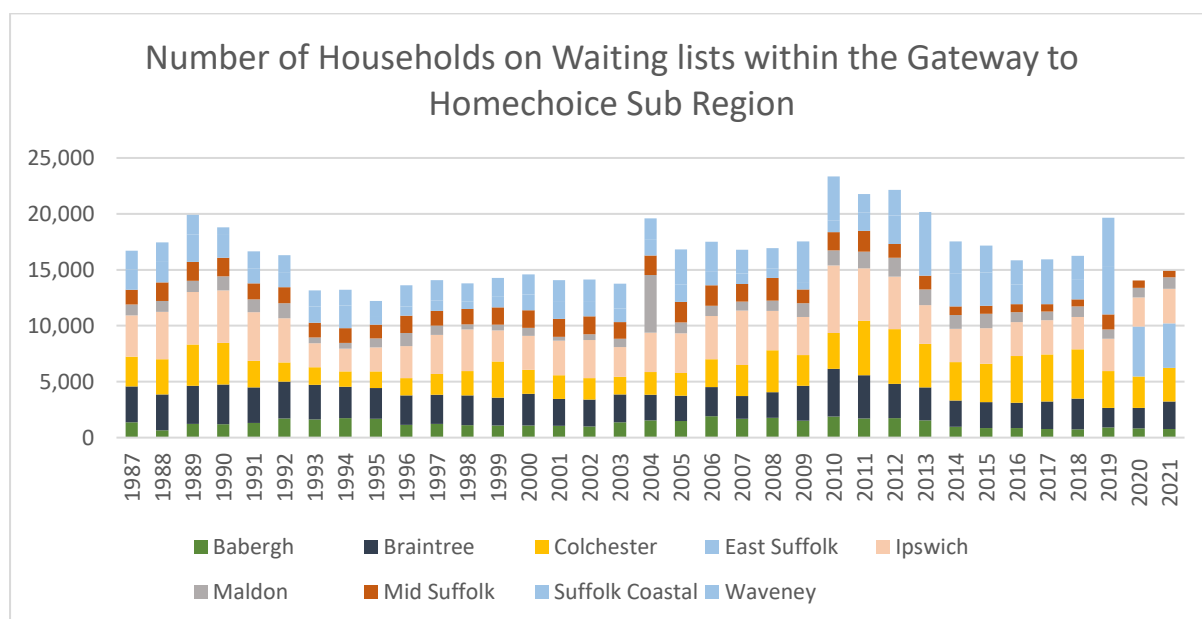
Housing those in need

The following charts show how Housing Waiting lists have evolved over the past 34 years.

Babergh & Mid Suffolk – Housing Waiting Lists



Number of Households on Housing Waiting Lists across the current Sub Region



The Localism Act 2011, which came into force in 2012, gave local authorities the power to set their own qualification criteria determining who may or may not go onto the housing waiting list.

Previously, local authorities were only able to exclude from their waiting list people deemed guilty of serious unacceptable behaviour. The Localism Act changes have contributed to the decrease in the number of households on waiting lists since 2012.

As of March 2022, the demand for housing is as follows:

	Babergh	Mid Suffolk
Households requiring 1 bedroom	155	125
Households requiring 2 bedrooms	338	253
Households requiring 3 bedrooms	262	173
Households requiring more than 3 bedrooms	39	28
Total	796	568

Housing Waiting List data by Band

Priority	Babergh	Mid Suffolk
Band A	59	22
Band B	201	152
Band C	160	121
Band D	26	29
Band E	350	255
Total	796	579

Based upon reasonable Housing Preference (Band A – Band C) there are 420 (52%) households in need of Housing in Babergh and 295 (51%) households in need of Housing in Mid Suffolk.

Developing the Housing Revenue Account Business Plan

The priorities for the Housing Directorate in the medium term are determined by several elements, which this section will consider. It outlines both the national and local context for our spending decisions, the commitments already made that will impact on budgets in the future, and the views of Tenants, Elected Members, and Housing staff.

National Policy Context

In the context of the Grenfell tragedy in June 2017, national policy around social housing has gained significant focus over the last few years. This has culminated in a White Paper published in November 2020, 'The Charter for Social Housing Residents'. The key principles embedded within this include increased resident voice and empowerment to shape services, increased redress for residents, increased regulation across the whole social housing sector including in-house council housing services, improved quality of homes, improved fire safety and an increased focus on new build with options for home ownership.

A Building Safety Bill was published in July 2020. There is clear guidance within the bill about the direction of travel – greater accountability for fire safety, improved standards and greater regulation.

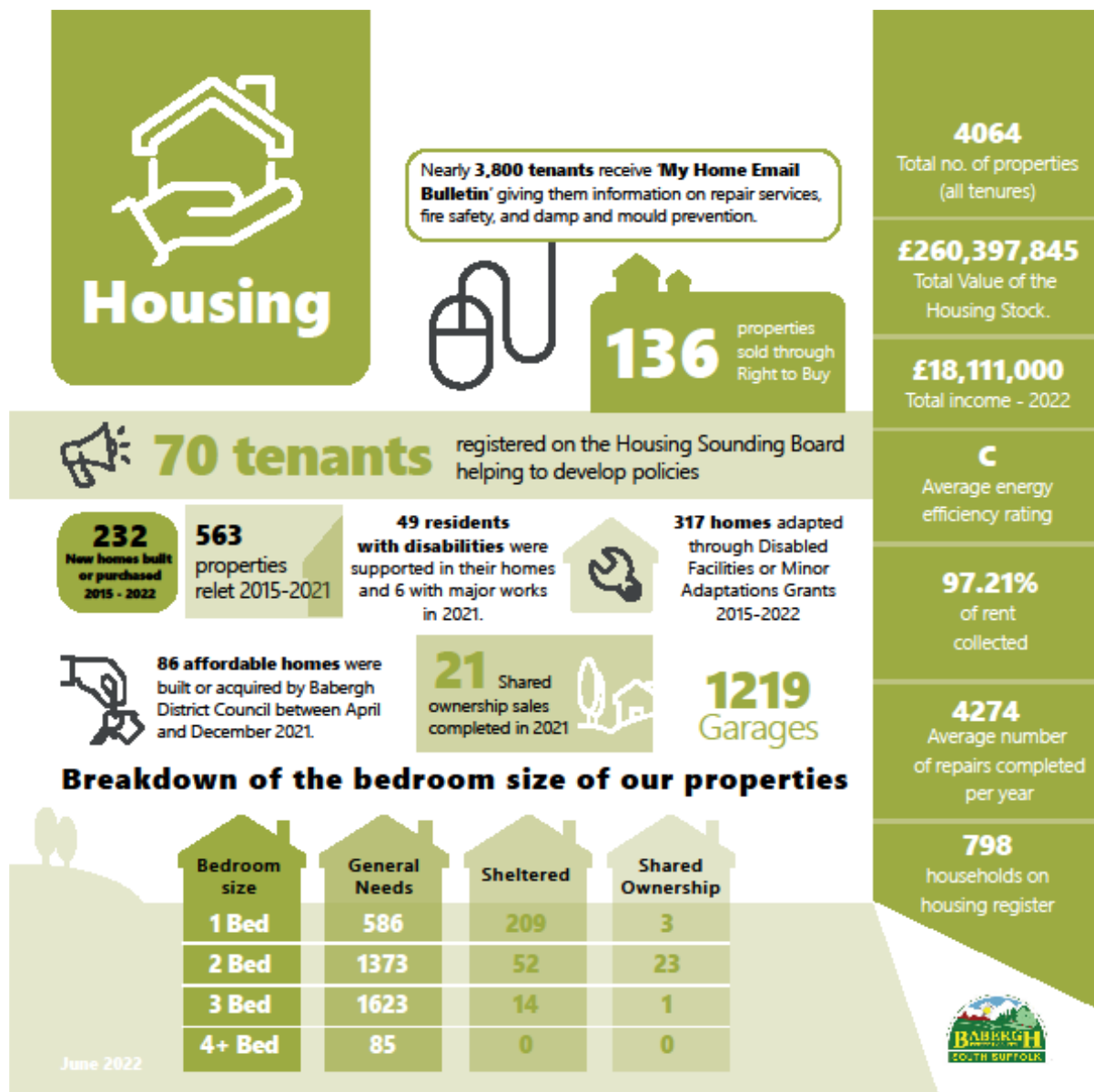
Further national developments focus on the review of the Decent Homes Standard that sets the minimum standards for council owned homes. This is expected to report in 2022 and to focus on how councils' impact on wider "place" and communities across its stock and the delivery of measures to improve energy efficiency across all council owned stock.

Council owned stock will also be subject to the wider national policy statements around energy efficiency as well as the local declaration of the climate emergency. To meet national carbon targets all housing, including council housing, must meet net zero carbon levels by 2050, and all Council homes meeting EPC C by 2030.

The White Paper and the focus on regulation is also being supported by an enhanced role for the Housing Ombudsman. The development of thematic reviews, 'naming and shaming' providers with poor standards and taking a more aggressive approach where the benefit of the doubt no longer rests with the landlord, suggest a time of greater focus on the quality of experience of the resident than has not been seen for the past 10 years nationally.

The future of our council housing stock across both Districts clearly needs to embrace these agendas more proactively and innovatively to make sure we deliver excellent services for our residents.

Local Context



Declaration of climate emergency

As a landlord, we understand our housing stock needs to be prepared for the challenges of climate change; both in terms of reducing emissions from UK homes and ensuring homes are adequately prepared for the future impacts of climate change.

In 2019, following our climate emergency declarations, Babergh and Mid Suffolk set up an Environment and Climate Change Task Force to look at the climate challenge the districts face.

We have been given a target of 2030 to meet the Government’s Clean Growth Strategy, which sets an ambition to upgrade all Social Housing to an energy performance rating of C. Our properties currently on average have a rating of C.

The Government has also set a target for all new homes to be "net zero" in relation to carbon emissions by 2030. As such, this plan will incorporate the recent development and adoption of a Design Guide and Specification for all new housing the Councils build in the future.

Rural districts, some deprivation, unaffordable housing market

Suffolk has double the national average of people resident in rural areas and this rural population is older (higher percentage of those aged 65+) than its urban population.

A recent All Party Parliamentary Group inquiry into rural housing shows:

- People living in very rural areas, like ours, experience more limited social networks, isolation, and loneliness which can be exacerbated by poor transport.
- To avoid rural decline there is an urgent need to provide affordable housing for people wanting to live and work in the most rural communities, whilst rural homes are 20% more expensive than in urban areas

Ageing population

Over the next 20 years the population across both Districts is projected to increase by 9% (18,200). The biggest increase is projected to be in people over 75.

Community engagement events during recent years lead us to believe an increasing number of retirees are choosing our districts for a later life move due to the attractive towns and villages, proximity to major cities and relatively lower house prices compared to London and the southeast commuter belt.

Compared to relatively more affordable urban areas the impact of fewer entry level homes in rural areas means there can be less 'churn' / housing turnover per annum – in time this may effectively act as a block to encouraging thriving, vibrant and sustainable communities.

Successful Homelessness and Rough Sleeper work

Preventing Homelessness is a priority for Babergh and Mid Suffolk. Everyone needs somewhere to live and a place that they can call home.

Our vision is to end rough sleeping in our Districts. We have already gone some way to achieving this through our work to date by helping families to access accommodation in the private sector, reduced the use of B&B accommodation, bringing empty homes back into use, and developing and purchasing additional properties to add to our existing Housing Stock.

Our [Housing and Homelessness Rough Sleeping Strategy](#) sets out our commitments up to 2024.

Local Plans

In March 2021, the Babergh and Mid Suffolk Joint Local Plan was formally submitted to the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government for independent examination.

The Joint Local Plan sets out a planning framework to guide development and facilitate growth in Babergh and Mid Suffolk Districts over the long term. It will play an important role in shaping our future – how towns and villages develop, how we protect and enhance our natural environment, develop our local economy, improve leisure and visitor facilities, improve social infrastructure and support more sustainable forms of travel.

Homes & Housing Strategy

We all need and deserve somewhere to live and call home. Having a place to call our own provides belonging, contributes to positive health and wellbeing and strengthens community spirit.

Our Housing vision is for residents to live in affordable and high-quality homes that enable them to build settled, safe and healthy lives, within sustainable and thriving communities.

Our Homes and Housing Strategy sets out how we will meet this challenge.

Consultation and current situation

During the summer of 2021 all tenants, Members and Housing staff were asked to give their views on what priorities should be funded using the HRA over the long term. Feedback was given via digital surveys, with the option of telephone surveys for those not online, and a virtual workshop.

The results identified the following seven priorities which are listed from highest to lowest priority. A brief description on commitments to date are included:

Investing in our current homes

Consultation feedback: 75% of respondents did not feel we invest enough in maintaining our properties. Better home insulation is the most important investment to be made, closely followed by new windows and doors and new heating systems.

Properties require constant investment to maintain their quality. In some cases, this could be as simple as replacing kitchens and bathrooms, but in some cases, more significant upgrades may be required; retrofitting properties to improve insulation, lower household fuel bills, and reduce the carbon cost per property.

Building and buying new council housing

Consultation results: To increase the Council Housing available to local people we should build more homes and encourage tenants in large properties with spare rooms to downsize.

We have large numbers of local people on the waiting list for social housing and know that there is considerable need within our communities. At the same time, we lose a steady stream of homes to the Right to Buy. Hence our focus on building or acquiring new homes which has been extremely successful in recent years.

Climate change

Consultation results: 70% of respondents think we should be doing more to address climate change. Improving the energy efficiency of homes was the preferred choice for tackling climate change. This will be achieved through retrofitting and every Council home achieving an Energy Performance Certificate Level C.

Both Councils have declared a climate emergency and are committed to implementing change that will reduce the impact of human activities on the climate and help us adapt to the climate change that is already happening. through initiatives that reduce carbon and increase biodiversity.

We have gone paperless on a number of processes and introduced a new scheduler module for booking repairs appointments, which enables us to make the most efficient use of our operatives in an area, reducing travel in the district.

Improving the services that we provide our tenants

Consultation results: Respondents would prefer their Housing Officer to visit when requested or once a year. 65% would like to see more Housing Staff in their neighbourhood.

Different social landlords can take very different approaches to the services they offer tenants. On the one hand, a landlord could let the property but then do very little for the tenants other than provide basic services.

Alternatively, a landlord could employ staff that are focused on providing support, advice, and assistance to try and help our most vulnerable tenants improve their lives.

Improving our neighbourhoods

Consultation results: 87% of respondents like their neighbourhood. Friendly neighbours or community is the top reason they liked their area, but a lack of parking was the main reason for disliking the area.

The quality of the built environment varies across our estates, but there are some common themes; a lack of car parking, uninspiring landscaping, neglected garage sites, which this plan will aim to rectify through additional investment.

Involving tenants in the running of the housing service

Consultation results: 61% of respondents do not feel listened to and 55% want more opportunities to be involved. Digital surveys were the preferred method for getting involved.

We recognise the importance of involving our tenants in important decision-making and the running of our service, but we accept that there is much more we could do in this area.

Digital transformation

Consultation results: 52% of respondents regularly access our services online. 28% of respondents had signed up to the 'My Holme' an online tenant portal and mainly used it to contact the housing service. The main reason for not signing up was not knowing it existed or preferring to speak to someone.

We are living in an ever more digitally connected world, and most services can now be accessed online. In the last two years we have introduced a large number of new digital tools and services including an online tenant portal for tenants to manage their rent account, regular electronic communication to tenants, new online systems for managing rent, Anti-Social Behaviour cases, contact from customers and scheduling repairs appointments. Our performance is recorded and reported digitally enabling improved consistency and trend analysis. We have also used digital platforms to engage with customers via surveys and virtual meetings, increasing the accessibility for more customers to work with us.

Digital transformation is important to us and our customers and over the next two years we will be delivering an ambitious programme including booking repairs online, upgrading our whole Housing Management system, new modules for managing voids and the materials our operatives use and carry in their vans to improve the services we deliver.

We will be increasing our digital engagement with customers through social media and continue to develop the digital services we already have in place to ensure we are making the most of the tools available to maximise our services to our customers

What will the Plan Deliver?

This section shows what the plan aims to deliver under each of the 7 priority areas identified above.

Investing in our current homes

It is vitally important that we continue to invest in existing homes, the introduction of the Building Safety Act, the launch of Decent Homes 2 along with new legislation as a result of Social Housing reforms and the Climate emergency. Requires us to

proactively invest in homes both in respect to day-to-day repairs and planned and capital investment in our stock.

In 2020/21 Babergh spent £1,058 per property on Responsive repairs and Void works whilst it spent £1,151 per property on Major works and Cyclical works.

In 2020/21 Mid Suffolk spent £1,061 per property on Responsive repairs and Void works whilst it spent £1,011 per property on Major works and Cyclical works.

We expect these values to increase over the next 3 – 5 years as we see the cost of materials, professional skills and consultancy and wages for certain roles that are in significant demand increase. We will embark on ambitious programmes to ensure every home meet EPC C by 2030, whilst ensuring every home is safe and of a high quality.

We will:

- Make decisions on our future stock profile – including disposal/redevelopment of the poorest and worst performing stock
- Invest in new technology to improve the maintenance of existing homes
- Introduce an enhanced ‘void’ standard based on quality rather than cost and time
- Develop long term savings on repairs and maintenance
- Develop a ten-year Capital Investment Programme (2023 – 2033)
- Exceed tenant expectations

Make decisions on our future stock profile – including disposal/redevelopment of the poorest and worst performing stock It is vital that we invest the limited resources we have in the right place at the right time. This includes making investment decisions on our existing Housing stock. For example, we do not want to invest in a poorly performing home, that is of the wrong size, in the wrong location.

We will introduce a review process which allows us to overlay a variety of existing data streams to make decisions on our stock profile. Utilising stock condition, demand and need data, along with local intelligence to make decisions on future investment and disposals.

Invest in new technology to improve the maintenance of existing homes We intend to invest in homes by introducing smart devices/sensors that can fight fuel poverty and provide remote data insights that could cut maintenance costs and improve resident well-being. Using sensors, that could understand occupancy and optimise heating settings, saving residents costs on their energy bills. This data is

then used to produce a dashboard displaying a range of welfare and maintenance including mould risk, poor insulation, fuel poverty risk, boiler performance and abandonment risk. Plus, a messaging service which could conduct surveys, book in maintenance visits and post announcements directly to the in-home display.

Introduce an enhanced 'Void' standard based on Quality rather than cost and time We know that an area of investment and improvement that our tenants have asked us to prioritise is the quality of homes when they are presented to new tenants. This can lead to complaints, higher repair costs, and lower satisfaction.

We will introduce an enhanced standard which will enable us to ensure every home is let to the highest standard and quality based on value for money, whilst ensuring all tenants maintain their homes to an acceptable level and that homes are returned to the Council in an acceptable standard.

Average void costs are £4,500 whilst the sector average for void costs is currently £5,829 whilst upper quartile performance is £2,183.

Develop long term savings on repairs and maintenance We know that a significant amount of our costs are spent maintaining existing homes, this involves existing maintenance staff crisscrossing the districts responding to repairs as they are reported. We intend to develop a Business Case on the introduction of a new Housing MOT, along with the use of remote technology which would allow us to plan work by conducting a raft of repairs/improvements to each home before moving on to the next. This will ensure homes are well maintained, whilst reducing the reactive nature of conducting repairs currently.

Develop a ten-year Capital Investment Programme (2023 – 2033) We will develop a 10-year planned maintenance schedule, which will allow us to accurately predict where investment needs to take place. By creating programmes of activity that support the delivery of wider ambitions, we will ensure that every home is of the highest quality, energy efficient and sustainable. This programme will allow us to inform tenants of exactly what improvements they can expect and when this will take place.

Exceed tenant expectations We know that our existing performance in relation to the maintenance, repair and renewal of homes does not always meet the expectations of tenants.

We expect the improvements outlined in this Business Plan to over the next 2 to 3 years increase satisfaction to 'upper quartile' performance in comparison to fellow social housing landlords.

Tackling and adapting to climate change

The UK has set in law a target to bring all greenhouse gas emissions to net zero by 2050. To achieve this, as a social housing provider we need to insulate homes and replace fossil fuel heating systems with 'clean heat' technologies such as heat pumps and heat networks.

Decarbonising homes is not only an essential part of tackling the climate emergency, but it also combats fuel poverty, supports the economy, creates jobs, and creates warmer homes and cleaner air.

We like all Social Housing providers face the challenge of how to cut carbon emissions and tackle climate change whilst delivering safety measures work and building new homes.

We will:

- Retrofit – and improve the energy efficiency of homes
- Aspire to provide additional investment in existing homes to reach a higher level of energy performance
- Lower energy costs for tenants
- Educate tenants in how to use the home to gain the greatest benefits
- Use new technology and building methods
- Support organisational and Suffolk wide Climate change ambitions
- Deliver greater levels of Biodiversity within our estates and neighbourhoods
- Ensure neighbourhoods meet tenants needs e.g. community allotments, sense of place and belonging

Retrofit – and improved energy efficiency of homes As part of the government's Clean Growth Strategy, ministers set a target that all social homes must have an EPC rating of 'C' by 2030. The National Housing Federation (NHF) has previously warned that the target would be a "challenge" and government support would be needed. Research last year estimated that the cost of retrofitting all social homes in the UK to zero carbon could cost £100bn.

We have undertaken a comprehensive review of all of our homes in conjunction with the Energy Saving Trust (EST), which has enabled us to plan and understand the cost of improvement measures, to each home, based on ensuring the use of the most cost-effective measures whilst providing the greatest level of enhancement on SAP ratings.

Babergh – The cost of meeting EPC C by 2030

BABERGH	EPC	SAP	Number	%	Ave cost	Totals
	A	92+	0	0	-	Already C+
	B	81-91	507	15	-	Already C+
	C	69-80	1,555	45	-	Already C+
	D	55-68	1,158	33	£10,000	£11,158,000
	E	39-54	174	5	£17,000	£2,958,000
	F/G	21-38	65	2	£24,000	£1,560,000
Total			3,459	100		£16,098,000

Aspiration to provide additional investment in existing homes to reach a higher level of energy performance We have already begun the work to identify how Babergh and Mid Suffolk can exceed the target of meeting EPC C by 2030. This would be achieved by introducing a long-term ambitious programme of improvement activity which would aim to ensure all properties are of a standard with good levels of insulation including new windows.

With Air Source Heating together with associated enlarged radiators and water tanks, ground floor insulation giving opportunity for under floor heating and making Air Source Heating more efficient. As well as additional external insulation to bring properties to an EPC of A. This will require significant additional investment and rely on accessing grant monies when available. We intend to bring forward plans as to how this will be afforded over the medium to long term, as we identify the opportunities to maximise grants and budgets and minimise costs.

Lower energy costs for tenants We will continue to develop solutions including the installation of energy efficient and low-cost heating solutions. This includes expanding our air source heating programme, external wall insulation programmes, and more energy efficient boilers etc

Education of tenants in how to use the home to gain the greatest benefits We recognise that we need to provide tenants, that require assistance, more education on how they can use their home to encourage and support minimising energy bills and reducing the risk of damp and mould.

We will develop a range of helpful YouTube videos and information guides as well as providing bespoke advice and support, where appropriate.

Use of new technology and building methods We recognise that the world is changing, and the use of new building methods and construction materials support us exploring new ways to develop and deliver new homes as well as maintaining existing stock. This includes the use of modern methods of construction, the use of off-site prefabrication, energy efficient products and sensors that enable us to provide and maintain low-cost housing. This will be incorporated through our Design Guide, Technical specification, and Capital Programme.

Support organisational and Suffolk wide Climate change ambitions We are actively involved in working with Suffolk partners together to support and guide our residents, communities, and businesses to make the changes required to best set Suffolk on the path for carbon neutrality by 2030.

<https://www.greensuffolk.org/app/uploads/2021/07/Suffolk-Climate-Emergency-Plan.pdf>

Greater levels of Biodiversity within our estates and neighbourhoods We identify that there is so much more we can do to improve estates and neighbourhoods this includes creating habitats and wildlife corridors. We can achieve this by planting wildflowers, reducing grass cutting and using natural solutions, this in turn can both reduce our costs, improve our environment and our tenant satisfaction at the same time. We will work with Tenants and our Neighbourhoods and Public Realm Teams to develop local solutions.

Neighbourhoods that meet tenant needs e.g. community allotments, sense of place and belonging We want to support tenants and residents to embrace their Neighbourhoods and Communities. This will ensure everyone has ownership of their place, their homes, streets, estates, and neighbourhoods. Providing the ability to influence how neighbourhoods look and feel to live, work and play in. We will achieve this through active and participatory approaches offering tenants, the ability to make decisions this could include for example (but not limited to) Community allotments, play areas, community orchards, community shops.

Building and buying new Council housing

We will:

- Introduce an Affordable Housing Strategy
- Have the ambition to build/acquire 65 new homes, in each District, per year, for each of the next six years
- Implement a New Build Design Guide and Technical Specification
- Place an emphasis on Good Quality Design, Energy Efficiency, low running costs, Sustainability, Modern Methods of Construction
- Ensure efficient use of Right to Buy Receipts
- Ensure efficient use of what we have – Downsizing Programme
- Remodel and make an efficient use of our existing estate – Housing Asset Review

Introduction of an Affordable Housing Strategy As part of the HRA Business Plan we recognise the importance of articulating our Affordable Housing Strategy that provides a backdrop to the ambitions we have to build more new Affordable Homes in our districts over the next few years. Articulating our approach and how new homes will be brought forward and developed.

Councils’ development purpose under this strategy will be the provision of new homes at affordable rent or for affordable home ownership, and where financially viable social rent.

Where possible and appropriate these sites will be subsidised through additional funding, which could include Homes England grant funding, Right to Buy receipts, commuted sums received through S106 planning agreements, and other forms of subsidy.

The Councils’ will identify a pipeline of sites looking forward over the period of the medium-term financial strategy. These sites will include land already in Council ownership. It is unlikely that the aspirations for housing delivery will be met by existing landholdings and therefore the following will also be considered:

- Acquired properties from developers ‘off the shelf’
- Acquisition of land or buildings
- Regeneration projects and opportunities with existing land assets
- Refurbishment/conversion of existing buildings

Financial control, Viability and Risk Management

Members will set the strategic direction of the development programme through the approval of this HRA Business plan and Affordable Housing Strategy and delegate (subject to viability tests and criteria laid out in the attached appendice) the Assistant Director for Assets and Investments, or Assistant Director for Housing operational authority to proceed with schemes.

Each project will be assessed to ensure it meets the following criteria:

- a) Meets housing need and housing demand for affordable home ownership products
- b) That the financial viability is fully assessed and that the basis on which it can proceed is fully understood. The Councils' chosen methodology for this is through the use of 'Proval' software. Project managers will ensure viability assessments are looked at the following scheme stages so that viability can be accurately understood for each scheme.
 - Offer stage (for S106 acquisitions) or RIBA Stage 2
 - Sign of formal contract or award of contract
 - Practical completion (handover)
- c) The development where appropriate meets the design guide, housing technical specification, Building Regulations, and other planning/policy requirements.
- d) That the development has adequate funding (or that it can be obtained) to cover all costs during the development period.
- e) That individual project risk registers are maintained and fed into programme and corporate risk registers.

Delivery of affordable home ownership products

The provision of shared ownership/shared equity/First Homes involves greater short term financial risk. To minimise the exposure to these risks Babergh and Mid-Suffolk District Councils will:

- a) Appropriately balance the mix of rented and affordable home ownership products on a development and across the programme based on housing need and market intelligence.
- b) Consider options for the conversion of affordable home ownership products to rent if there are difficulties with sales.
- c) Implement sales and marketing processes at an early stage to avoid 'voids' on affordable home ownership properties.
- d) Enable staircasing on shared ownership to 100%, except where this is restricted through the planning system.
- e) Shared ownership leases to be provided on a term of at least 990 years as per Homes England model shared ownership lease.

Ambition to build/acquire 65 new homes, in each District, per year, for the next six years across both districts. It's our ambition that over the next six years each Council will build or acquire up to 65 new homes each year. That's a total of 390 homes per Council. These homes will be built in accordance with the Affordable Housing Strategy as set out above.

New Build Design Guide and Technical Specification Our Councils are committed to delivering a housing pipeline to benefit the residents of Babergh and Mid Suffolk. We recognise the important role that the Council play in defining emerging housing quality, design and sustainability to provide a positive legacy for the places in which we reach, together with the environment and standard of living for residents.

This Housing Design Guide [Design Guide V9.pdf](#) sets out a clear and ambitious design framework which captures characteristics in design that we will aim to adopt generally in our projects, and further aspirational objectives that we hope to incorporate where suitable, viable and beneficial.

This Housing Design Guide reflects the high-level design outcomes we aspire to and shall be used to redefine the Councils developments in the future. The Guide is to be read in conjunction with the Technical Specification. The Housing Design Guide and Technical Specification respond to industry movement in design standards, residents' expectations and the recently declared Climate Emergency.

This Design Guide is established around four key design topics, referencing the National Design Guide Characteristics:

- Context and Identity
- Movement, Nature and Public Spaces
- Homes and Buildings (Including the Build Form and Uses)
- Towards Zero Carbon (Resources and Lifespan)

Our Design Guide and Technical Specification can be found alongside this HRA Business Plan as accompanying and supporting documents that will be approved as part of this Business Plan.

Emphasis on Good Quality Design, Energy Efficiency, low running costs, Sustainability, Modern Methods of Construction Our Design Guide and Technical Specification will focus on emphasising good quality design, energy efficiency, low running costs, sustainability, and modern methods of construction. Broadly this will consider:

Context and Identity - Context and Identity looks at how our work can enhance the existing surroundings with attractive and distinctive developments.

This relates to the holistic design character of the development. It explores aspirational objectives and common themes that we will actively look to incorporate.

Movement, Nature and Public Spaces *Movement, nature and public spaces* covers specific principles relating to these topics. It looks at ways we can enhance accessibility and ease of movement around our developments.

The ways in which we can both enhance and optimise the role of nature in our built environment. And the ways we will champion a safe, social and inclusive public realm.

Homes and Buildings (Including the Build Form and Uses) Homes and Buildings looks at principles we will incorporate to develop a coherent pattern of development, which is both mixed and integrated. It sets goals to ensure our buildings will be functional, healthy, and sustainable.

Towards Zero Carbon (Resources and Lifespan) In 2019 all Suffolk Local Authority members declared a 'climate emergency'. As part of this, the Suffolk Climate Change Partnership, SCCP, will work together with partners across the county and region towards the aspiration of making the county of Suffolk carbon neutral by 2030. This section sets positive and ambitious goals for meeting this pledge, delivering efficient and resilient developments made to last.

All Developments Innovation is encouraged across all scales of development, with Design teams encouraged to meet as many 'we aspire to' statements as practical in addition to all of the 'mandatory' statements. With additional requirements for major developments as outlined below. The approach taken will vary dependent on the nature, scale, location and context of each proposal. The 'we aspire to' statements are included to inspire innovation and the pursuit of higher standards by providing examples of how the councils development objectives can be addressed. These approaches are all underpinned by industry best practice.

Major Developments are defined as ten or more dwellings or a site area of 0.5 hectares or more. Additional Requirements At least one 'we aspire to' statement must be met under each of the following topic headings:

- Movement, Nature and Public Spaces
- Homes and Buildings (including Built Form and Uses) And at least two 'we aspire to' statements must be met under:
- Towards Zero Carbon (Resources and Lifespan) Design teams will be expected to outline their approach to meeting the selected aspirational goals and how these will be monitored to ensure success and to inform future council projects and iterations of the Design Guide.

Efficient use of Right to Buy Receipts We already ensure we make best use of our Right to Buy Receipts.

However, we intend to go further it is current Government policy that any new council homes built since July 2008 are eligible for exclusion from the provisions in the pooling regulations relating to Right to Buy sales.

This means that, if these replacement homes were subsequently sold under the Right to Buy, the Councils would be able to retain the whole receipt with no conditions or the same constraints placed on the use of 1-4-1 receipts. (Receipts from sales of properties built since July 2008 can be spent on any eligible capital purpose - affordable housing, regeneration projects or the paying down of HRA debt).

An exception to this is where homes sold were built with social housing grant. In this case the balance of the initial grant will be returned to the Homes England 'pot' enabling them to reinvest in building more affordable rented homes.

An Agreement will be made under powers provided by section 11(6) of the Local Government Act 2003 permitting the council to retain the full capital receipt on any subsequent sale of excluded properties.

Efficient use of what we have – Downsizing Programme We recognise that we need to ensure that we have a sufficient supply of the right homes of the right size in the right place. Whilst building and developing more homes is one alternative. It is important we consider making best use of existing assets as such we will proactively identify those tenants that are currently under occupying their homes, then consider how we can proactively support those that would like to consider downsizing.

Remodelling, efficient use of existing estate – Housing Asset Review We recognise that many of our estates were built in a post war period and now would benefit from a wider review which would involve surveying estates and neighbourhoods. To identify improvements to the hard and soft landscaping including remodelling of estates, neighbourhood improvements, and regeneration. This will be a long-term review that will rely on up-to-date stock condition data, feedback from tenants and residents, opportunities such as available land etc.

Improving the services that we provide our tenants

It is imperative that we continually improve existing levels of service and performance. We want every single tenant to feel listened to and satisfied with the service they receive. We want our tenants to experience an exemplar landlord service and we will place tenants at the heart of our decision making.

We know this will require a greater focus on ensuring our data, performance, scrutiny, and satisfaction all evidences the approach being taken is the right one; and that our tenants are satisfied with the services they receive.

We will:

- Place Tenants at the ‘Heart’ of what we do, including decision making
- Develop a coherent approach to Data, Performance, Scrutiny and Satisfaction
- Benchmark our performance and report on it
- Exceed the new Regulatory Framework and Standards as set by the Regulator of Social Housing.
- Learn from every Complaint
- Measure satisfaction in ‘real time’ and in accordance with the newly developed RSH Tenant Satisfaction Measures
- Conduct a review of staff training and qualifications to improve services and ensure residents’ complaints are dealt with effectively
- Introduce a Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system to manage demand

Place Tenants at the ‘Heart’ of what we do including decision making. Tenants should be at the centre of decision making and have choice as to how services are delivered. We want our tenants to feel empowered and equipped to be able to hold us to account and will therefore co-design with tenants a Tenant Engagement Strategy which provides both variety and choice on how, and when, tenants can be actively involved and engaged.

It’s important to us all tenants have their voice heard, for example, through regular meetings, scrutiny panels or being part of decision making. We will ensure we provide support, where it is wanted, and provide the right tools to ensure we actively listen.

Develop a coherent approach to Data, Performance, Scrutiny and Satisfaction. We know that ensuring we have accurate data will enable us to make informed decisions on how we deliver services.

This will enable us to use data intelligence to provide a more bespoke and tailored approach to meeting tenants needs. Data will drive decision making and ensure we can manage performance and trends effectively.

We want to ensure by collecting, recording and evaluating data we will be able to offer a more inclusive and accessible service to meet the specific needs of our tenants.

We will ensure our performance is actively scrutinised by both our existing organisational Overview and Scrutiny function as well as providing opportunities for those tenants who are actively involved and want to make a difference.

We know it is vital that we can evidence how our landlord service is performing, including on repairs, complaints, and safety, and how it spends its money, and so that our tenants have access to the information they require to hold us to account.

Benchmark our performance and report on it Where we collect data and performance measures, we will ensure that we benchmark our services against the sector and publicly report and promote our performance. This will ensure that we learn from those performing well, as well as, ensuring we continuously improve in the areas in need of development and celebrate our successes.

Learn from every Complaint We want to ensure that everyone can have their complaints dealt with promptly and fairly, with access to a strong ombudsman who will provide swift and fair redress when needed.

We value complaints. We will ensure we learn valuable lessons from every complaint we receive.

Whilst we strive for high standards in everything we do, we recognise that sometimes we will not always get it right. When tenants take the time to inform us of their views and opinions, we will ensure that we identify any lessons learnt and demonstrate where we have improved our services. We will provide opportunities for tenants to be involved in regular reviews of complaint themes and lessons learnt and publish our performance on customers' satisfaction with complaint handling.

Exceed the new Regulatory Framework and Standards as set by the Regulator of Social Housing In 2020, the government published [The charter for social housing residents – social housing white paper](#), which set out ways to improve experiences for people living in social housing. We want to ensure that we do not only meet all the requirements as set out by legislation and the Regulator of Social Housing's (RSH) Standards but exceed the framework.

Identifying where we can go further and how we can ensure our function and responsibilities as a landlord is identifiable as leading by example. This would for example involve setting stretching Key Performance Indicators and aspirational outcomes for the service.

Measure satisfaction in ‘real time’ and in accordance with the newly developed RSH Tenant Satisfaction Measures Following the publication of the Charter for social housing one of the proposed steps was introducing a set of consistent tenant satisfaction measures throughout the sector. The aims of these measures are to provide visibility to tenants around how their landlord is performing and enable them to compare and identify areas for improvement.

These measures have been refined and can be found in attached appendix. We will undertake a commitment to ensure all tenants have access and the ability to provide us with their opinions and views through a suite of Tenant Perception Surveys, each year. We expect these to be managed independently of us as the landlord and to ensure consistency as well as compliance with the RSH expectations.

We will ensure that we continuously review our performance against these standards and take steps to develop actions if we identify areas in need of improvement.

Conduct a review of staff training and qualifications to improve services and ensure residents’ complaints are dealt with effectively A review of qualifications and professional training will drive up standards by making sure our housing staff are better equipped to support tenants, deal effectively with complaints, and make sure homes are safe and of good quality.

We know that the Regulator is reviewing the Professional Standards expected of Housing Professionals with key stakeholders and will put forward recommendations to the government. It will also consider if additional training is required to improve the service provided to residents.

We will ensure that everyone working within the Housing Service not only meets our own organisation values and behaviours, but they are equipped with the most appropriate level of qualifications and training to ensure our tenants receive the highest levels of service now and in the future. This includes specialist training and experience for example supporting someone that has a recognised mental health condition in a professional manner.

Introduce Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system to manage demand Data organised and presented by a CRM platform leads to a better understanding of our customers’ needs and requirements. This leads to greater intelligence which helps us to offer a more efficient customer experience. This tool will enable our teams to collaborate more easily, break down silo working and improve our communication. A CRM system will ensure tenants only need to tell us once and enable us to get it right first time.

Improving the neighbourhoods that we manage

We know that the environment in which tenants live is important to them and it can support strong levels of satisfaction along with a sense of community, safety, security and wellbeing. Its therefore important that we support tenants by providing attractive, clean, welcoming and appealing neighbourhoods and estates to live in and enjoy.

We Will:

- Regeneration, Redesign, and redevelopment of estates (where appropriate and necessary)
- Improve existing parking provision, inc EV charging
- Increase biodiversity and environmental improvements
- Improve quality of estates through the development of a Neighbourhoods Strategy
- Neighbourhoods that are identified as being safe, secure, pleasant, enjoyable and fun to live within
- Increases in tenant satisfaction in respect of where they live

Regeneration, Redesign, and redevelopment of estates (where appropriate and necessary) We recognise that our existing estates and neighbourhoods were historically built to high standards and to the needs of those choosing to live there. However, of course, needs, wants, and desires evolve and change over time. We need to be responsive to these changes and this includes developing solutions fit for purpose not just for now but the future. We will actively review each of our larger estates and actively engage tenants and stakeholders on how we could develop solutions this could include identifying opportunities to develop additional new homes, improve the environment, and create neighbourhoods that are attractive and desirable to all.

Improved existing parking provision, including EV charging We recognise the rising number of cars utilising the existing parking provision that is available, with the expectation that in the short term more and more tenants will require alternative solutions including EV charging. We will actively review existing estates and neighbourhoods in a holistic way that allows us not to just focus on one issue or one solution. This will require exploring opportunities to fund the work through the introduction of a Neighbourhood Renewal Fund which is funded proportionately by existing funds where the Communities are diverse with a blend of homeowners and tenants and leaseholders.

Increased biodiversity and environmental improvements Urban green spaces are important places for wildlife in the UK, but many are not as good as they could be. We will proactively utilise the Biodiversity Toolkit which provides information on how we can improve, maintain and monitor green spaces around estates and neighbourhoods for wildlife. Early engagement with staff and residents will be key to success. Codesigning green space will be a great way to bring together wildlife enthusiasts within our Housing and Neighbourhoods team and residents and help bring a sense of ownership to all involved in the project.

We will review all of the biodiversity management options. Then choose which of the options as a team, we want to implement on site.

https://www.shgroup.org.uk/media/1023167/biodiversity-toolkit_23022021.pdf

Improved quality of estates through the development of a Neighbourhoods Strategy

We intend to develop a Neighbourhoods Strategy in conjunction with tenants, residents, members, and stakeholders. This strategy will provide a backdrop for how we will ensure:

- To have neighbourhoods that we, and our customers and the community are proud of.
- To ensure we have clear standards so that residents know what to expect from our service.
- To ensure our services deliver value for money.
- To maintain a regular, visible presence on our estates e.g. estate inspections.
- To ensure we comply with all Health & Safety requirements.
- To encourage residents to take responsibility for their environment/neighbourhood.
- To take a robust approach to environmental crime which includes fly-tipping, abandoned cars and dog fouling

Neighbourhoods that are identified as being safe, secure, pleasant, enjoyable and fun to live within

It is vital that neighbourhoods are places which provide multiple benefits, including being safe and secure and creating a sense of safety and security. We believe through the introduction of a Neighbourhood Fund from 2023 alongside other funding streams we can prioritise improvements that can have mutual benefits such as increasing biodiversity, improving the appearance and creating opportunities to have fun, and play.

Increases in tenant satisfaction in respect of where they live

We anticipate through the approaches described we will see increases in the levels of satisfaction of tenants and residents. However, we will not make assumptions and will continually review whether the improvements improve the happiness and well being of tenants, residents, and communities. This may be through perception surveys and feedback.

Involving tenants in the running of the service

We recognise both the importance and value of active participation by tenants in the running of the Housing service. Whilst our existing Governance structures support elected Members to make decisions on the development and delivery of key Strategies, Policies and Key Decisions. We will create an environment which empowers tenants to be actively involved in the development and management of our landlord services.

We will:

- Active Decision Making for tenants through a person-centred approach
- Development of an innovative Governance model that would introduce a Housing Advisory Board
- Delivery of an action plan that supports a model of engagement that places tenants at the heart of decision making (in line with TPAS accreditation)
- Increase levels of satisfaction that the landlord listens to tenant views and acts upon them
- Reduce the ‘Stigma’ associated with being a tenant

Active Decision Making for tenants through a person-centred approach We believe a person-centred approach will enable our officers and members to work collaboratively with tenants who use services. Person-centred supports tenants to develop the knowledge, skills and confidence they need to more effectively manage and make informed decisions about the services they personally receive. It is coordinated and tailored to the needs of the individual. And, crucially, it ensures that people are always treated with empathy and respect. We will ensure this is a culture that runs through everything we do.

Development of an innovative Governance model that would introduce a Housing Board This would involve the creation of an advisory board composed of Council Members, tenant representatives, and independent members with expertise in the field to oversee performance, contribute to strategy and operating plan/budget, as well as consider policy or service changes before formal approval through the council’s established decision-making routes as per the constitution. The purpose of an advisory board can be summarised as overseeing the activity of and offering advice, expertise, and insight to the council, in the delivery of services to tenants.

In greater detail, the advisory board would:

- Assist the service to meet the objectives set by the council in consultation with tenants.
- Oversee and monitor the performance of the service against its targets, annual operating plan and the HRA Business Plan.

- Offer advice, expertise, and insight in seeking continuous improvements and innovation in performance and service delivery.
- Assist the council to develop strategies for the service to be reviewed from time to time, and an annual operating plan to deliver our Strategies and Business plan
- Within the budgetary envelope set by the council for the HRA, assist and support in the development of the annual HRA budget report and associated operating plan.
- Ensure that the service and the council as landlord meet the revised and enhanced landlord expectations embodied in the housing White Paper.
- Ensure that the service meets the new enhanced regulatory expectations in respect of safety, compliance and the consumer standards.
- Ensure that principles of resident involvement and engagement are fully embedded in the work of the new service, that the views and needs of residents are clearly considered in delivering and improving services and that 'Together with Tenants' commitments are delivered as anticipated by the White Paper.
- Receive and act on reports from tenant scrutiny panels.

Delivery of an action plan that supports a model of engagement that places tenants at the heart of decision making (in line with TPAS accreditation)

We will ensure we develop and deliver an action plan which aims to meet the requirements of Tenant Participation Advisory Service TPAS - National Tenant Engagement Standards. This includes:

- There is a clearly defined and agreed role for residents in the governance arrangements of the organisation
- Scrutiny activity works to the five TPAS Scrutiny key principles; Independent, Inclusive, Positive, Constructive & Purpose
- Residents are meaningfully engaged in the co-creation, monitoring, and review of the organisation's engagement strategy to make sure it delivers clear impact and value
- Residents are meaningfully engaged in the development, monitoring and review of the organisation's policy; service; budget and strategic development as well as any local offers for service delivery
- All information provided to residents is clear and understandable with key points summarised, using an inclusive range of methods and in a format to suit the intended recipient
- The organisation provides sufficient resources to deliver effective engagement and residents have the opportunity to influence the decision about the resources made available

- There is an appropriate menu of engagement opportunities that; reflects the resident profile; responds to the different needs in relation to equality strands and any additional support, which can be evidenced in the delivery of their services, engagement activities and communications to promote widespread engagement

Increase levels of satisfaction that the landlord listens to tenant views and acts upon them We want to initially capture a baseline of tenants' views and opinions on how well (or not) we listen and act on tenants' views. We will then regularly monitor progress by making incremental improvements to what we do and how we do it in response to tenants' views which may include feedback, complaints, and survey results.

Reduce the 'Stigma' associated with being a tenant The government acknowledged it in its green paper of 2018, a new deal for social housing, recognising that stereotypes shaped by the negative language used by politicians and the media can be reinforced by the way social housing is managed and run.

Conversations with tenants to inform the green paper emphasised the sense of 'institutional indifference' they can experience from landlords. The causes of stigma are many and varied. They include the way in which the media represents and reports on social housing and the people who live in it creating and reinforcing unfair stereotypes. Housing policy which promotes home ownership as superior to renting also plays a part.

We will create a culture that ensures through every aspect of what we do. Tenants feel assured that 'stigma' does not exist within Babergh and Mid Suffolk.

Implementing digital transformation

Like most Landlords within the sector, external factors continue to impact on our Business Plan. For example, the period of rent reduction in recent years.

At the same time, our customers' aspirations are increasing, and we've found they are requesting a 24-hour approach, more self-service, and an alternative to phoning our customer services teams during working hours.

In response to this shifting backdrop, we have taken a step back to look ahead at the future and how we can run a strong, growing landlord service which creates more opportunities to thrive.

We will:

- Move to a cloud-based software system to enable greater flexibility for staff and tenants
- More tenants with both the skills and tools to embrace digital tools (Digital Survey)
- Self-serve on the go
- Move towards 'Digital Tenancies'
- Use of dashboards to provide a clear picture of performance 'in real time'

Move to a cloud-based software system to enable greater flexibility for staff and tenants by 2023 we aim to move to a new cloud-based Housing Management System that will provide secure, resilient, and agile infrastructure. Which increases the opportunity and ability for both our staff and tenants to access services digitally with greater flexibility and reliability.

More tenants with both the skills and tools to embrace digital tools (Digital Survey) Our Digital Skills survey conducted during 2021 provided a clear direction of travel and the need to support and assist more tenants to gain the skills, confidence, and ability to access and utilise Digital Services. Whilst having access to (Tablets, Computers, and devices to access the Internet). We will develop a programme of activities including access to learning, development, and training which will provide more tenants to not only access our services including the 'My Home' portal and self-serve their tenancies but the ability to access other services on the go.

Self-serve on the go We have seen significant numbers of tenants signing up to the 'My Home' portal which provides them with the ability to self-manage more of their tenancies including managing their rent and having an active role in understanding what is going on within the Housing Service.

We want to go much further and support tenants to actively self-serve and manage their tenancies this includes reporting and monitoring repairs, contacting officers through online chat as well as uploading pictures or video conferencing with staff.

Move towards 'Digital Tenancies' We know many of our tenants do not need to contact us day to day and would choose to have more flexibility and freedom in managing their homes if given the opportunity. We want to provide more choice including the introduction of 'Digital Tenancies'. These would enable people to sign their tenancy, book a repair, pay rent, report anti-social behaviour and more, with all their documents available via a digital portal.

One of the most significant parts of this is the introduction of 'digital tenancies', which signals the start of being able to handle the complete landlord-tenant relationship online. One of the major advantages for tenants is that it significantly reduces paperwork and time and costs.

This is part of wider organisational transformation which means our employees are working in a much more agile way, and everyone is working much more smartly.

Use of dashboards to provide a clear picture of performance 'in real time' Its important to us that we can provide a really clear picture of how well we are performing at any time ensuring we are compliant with regulation but able to evidence to tenants, staff and members how well were doing. This would provide an opportunity to drill down to a tenant's own address and provide them with a complete digital library of information including all documents, certificates, instructions for the use of systems within their home.

Performance and Benchmarking

Rent arrears and management of empty homes performance have been challenging over the past decade due to the combined effects of austerity measures, welfare reform and increases in personal debt.

When benchmarked, Babergh and Mid Suffolk's landlord service is seen to be performing adequately when compared nationally and with comparator organisations.

Benchmarking Data from 2020/21

We already work with Housemark a provider of benchmarking comparable data within the Social Housing sector. We receive both monthly and annual performance summaries which shows us, at a glance, what the numbers mean to our tenants, our people, and our business. With Housemark we receive on-time data and insight needed to pivot services and build an agile data driven culture. These reports compare our costs and performance with a peer group of similar social landlords.

We know that our overheads cost per property in 2020/21 was £141 in Babergh and £185 in Mid Suffolk. These were down £47 per property on 2019/20 in Babergh and £28 in Mid Suffolk. Overheads include premises spend, ITC, HR and other central back-office costs. These costs compare to a 'Peer Median of £339 per property.

However we commit to a complete review of the current 'Recharge to the General Fund' to ensure the Housing Revenue Account is receiving value for money.

Whilst the Housing management cost per property (which is the cost of core landlord services including specialist staff such as Housing Officers, Income Officers) was £177 in Babergh in 2020/21 and £211 in Mid Suffolk compared to a 'Peer Median' of £245 per property.

In line with the recommendations in the Social Housing White Paper we will publish performance data on the Tenant pages of our website and share this directly with tenants via the My Home Bulletin on a quarterly basis.

Our aim is to perform even better whilst supporting the people we work with by developing genuine relationships with each of them to realise their potential.

Performance – Tenant Survey Results 2022

Babergh & Mid-Suffolk District Council commissioned Acuity Research & Practice (Acuity) to carry out an independent survey of residents to collect data on their opinions and attitudes towards their landlord and the services provided. The survey shows that there are some positive results but also highlights areas for improvement.

A good percentage of residents are satisfied with the overall service provided by Babergh & Mid Suffolk (70%). More are satisfied that they are treated fairly and with respect (77%), are kept informed (74%).

With satisfaction of the repairs service, they received in the last 12 months (74%).

That they know how to make a complaint should they need to (73%) and that the home provided by BMS is safe and well-maintained (71%).

Slightly fewer are satisfied with the quality of their homes (69%) and that BMS are easy to deal with (68%). Considerably fewer are satisfied that BMS provides a positive contribution to their neighbourhood (56%), the repairs and maintenance service (55%), that BMS listens to their views and acts upon them (53%) and their approach to handling complaints (51%).

When asked what one thing Babergh could improve, comments were grouped into three main themes, which provides appropriate focus for individual service areas, as well as the Council may wish to investigate further.

The results of the key driver analysis should also be taken into consideration. Through the development of the Business Plan and the goals set out it is recognised we should concentrate our efforts upon the following three areas. It is likely there would be a noticeable increase in resident satisfaction as a direct result.

Resident Engagement Satisfaction - with being kept informed about the things that matter to residents is the strongest driver of overall satisfaction in the present survey and performed well. This measure is often linked to listening to views and acting upon them.

Customer Services - being easy to deal with is also a key driver of overall satisfaction and can be linked to complaints handling, one of the areas with the highest level of dissatisfaction in the survey. When asked what one thing BMS could do to improve its services, customer contact was mentioned often by residents, primarily answering phones, and overcoming accessibility and language barriers.

The Home - the quality of the home is often driven by the performance of the repairs and maintenance service, and this is likely to be the case for BMS. The repairs and maintenance service produced the highest level of dissatisfaction in the survey (34%) and when asked what could be improved, residents most often mentioned outstanding or forgotten repairs and the timescales to complete repairs.

Through the development of this plan, we expect to demonstrate to tenants that we have actively listened to their feedback and will take every opportunity to improve the services we provide throughout the landlord function and duties to provide high quality, safe homes and the highest levels of customer service and customer satisfaction. We will monitor progress through regular tenant satisfaction perception surveys.

Conclusion

In considering an aspiration for the future of the housing service, and the delivery of HRA Business Plans, that everyone can commit to for the next few years.

The following seven aims will drive the service forward in the medium term. These will in themselves be partly driven by national and local considerations as well as best practice elsewhere and linked to the Council's corporate objectives.

- **Investing in our current homes**
- **Tackling and adapting to climate change**
- **Building and buying new Council housing**
- **Improving the services that we provide our tenants**
- **Improving the neighbourhoods that we manage**
- **Involving tenants in the running of the service**
- **Implementing digital transformation**

A detailed 'smart action plan will be developed in response to this plan being adopted by both Councils and will run alongside the existing Homes and Housing Action Plan and the organisations Outcomes framework.

It is recognised that whilst it is five years since the last Housing Revenue Account Business Plan was adopted moving forward an annual review of progress will be undertaken that considers both financial performance of the accounts alongside the qualitative outcomes being delivered and the satisfaction of tenants and leaseholders.

An Annual Report published in May each year will publicly demonstrate the progress being made by looking back at the previous 12 months. This approach will also enable us to look forward at least a year ahead ensuring that we continuously adjust the Business Plan to reflect the environment around us including identifying what's working and what's not. What has changed and what we need to do differently.

Whilst the seven aims will set the destination and future of the service it should be accepted that the objectives may need to adapt and flex to meet all stakeholders' expectations.

In summary these will be:

- To provide new homes that are energy efficient and improve the efficiency of existing homes to tackle the climate emergency.
- To engage with residents to reduce fuel poverty and raise awareness of climate friendly actions.

- To manage our external communal areas and green spaces well so that residents can enjoy these areas and be proud of where they live.
- To develop and provide affordable housing in a range of tenures and types to the highest standard of construction that can be afforded.
- To maintain and manage our homes to deliver the best outcomes for those living in them.
- To provide homes that are safe and healthy to live in by ensuring that all building safety standards are met, and residents can easily raise concerns.
- To deliver services that are influenced by and reflect the needs of local communities.
- To work in partnership with many agencies to promote social inclusion and support residents to be involved and thrive in their local communities.
- To deal effectively with complaints of anti-social behaviour and ensure there is appropriate support for victims.
- To work in partnership to support the needs of vulnerable residents to enable them to lead safe and independent lives.
- To work in partnership to reduce poverty wherever possible and to promote financial inclusion.
- To provide support for residents so they can manage and maintain their tenancies.
- To make the best use of technology and deliver new ways of working that benefit our residents.
- To ensure staff receive appropriate training and development to enable them to provide a high standard of service.
- To ensure that our services are responsive to diverse needs and that residents can access these in ways that are most convenient to them.
- To continually benchmark service delivery and ensure cost and performance outcomes are upper quartile.
- To promote resident involvement in service development and review by providing support, information, and resources to individual tenants and community organisations.

- To robustly measure resident satisfaction and provide services that are shaped by the views of our residents.
- To provide transparent information to residents about how well we are performing including how we deal with complaints.

APPENDICES

Appendix One	Annual financial assumptions and scheme approval process
Appendix Two	Tenant Satisfaction Measures
Appendix Three	Affordable Homes Development Strategy
Appendix Four	New Build Design Guide
Appendix Five	Technical Specification

Appendix One

Annual financial assumptions and Scheme approval process

These are to be reviewed on an annual basis with the Finance and Housing teams.

Rented Schemes

- Net Present Value (NPV) Discount rate – 4.5%
- Loan repayments based on 50-year loan repaid under annuity method.
- Development interest rate – at prevailing rate
- Short term investment rate receivable
- Inflation – Retail Price Index
- Rent on completion
- Rent increase – as per Government Rent Policy
- Allowance for voids and bad debts – 2%
- Management costs - £400 per property per annum
- Maintenance (day to day) - £500 per property per annum
- Major works – 0.8% of works from year 15

Shared Ownership schemes

- Sales initial tranche rate of 30%
- Households will not purchase further shares in their property

Approvals and Delegations

Net Present Value (NPV) will be used for determining the level of internal approval required and schemes proceeding. Net Present Value is the value of all future cash flows (positive and negative) over the entire lifetime of an investment and discounted to the present.

The following table sets out the approval process to be followed when a scheme is presented or varied: -

Category	Criteria	Approving body
1	Within the terms of the development strategy and Net Present Value – positive after 50 years	Assistant Director – Assets and Investments or Assistant Director for Housing

2	Outside of Development Strategy or Net Present Value – negative after 50 years	Member Approval
---	--	-----------------

Note

A positive NPV assessment over 50 years means that a scheme will generate sufficient income to cover its running costs and repay the loan needed to undertake the initial construction within 50 years. A negative NPV assessments means that the initial loan will only be repaid at some stage after year 50.

APPENDIX Two – Tenant Satisfaction Measures

Keeping properties in good repair

01: Homes that do not meet the Decent Homes Standard	Measured by landlords directly
02: Repairs completed within target timescale	Measured by landlords directly
03: Satisfaction with repairs	Measured by doing tenant perception surveys
04: Satisfaction with time taken to complete most recent repair	Measured by doing tenant perception surveys

Maintaining building safety

05: Gas safety checks	Measured by landlords directly
06: Fire safety checks	Measured by landlords directly
07: Asbestos safety checks	Measured by landlords directly
08: Water safety checks	Measured by landlords directly
09: Lift safety checks	Measured by landlords directly
10: Electrical safety checks	Measured by landlords directly
11: Satisfaction that the home is well maintained and safe to live in	Measured by doing tenant perception surveys

Respectful and helpful engagement

12: Satisfaction that the landlord listens to tenant views and acts upon them	Measured by doing tenant perception surveys
13: Satisfaction that the landlord keeps tenants informed about things that matter to them	Measured by doing tenant perception surveys
14: Agreement that the landlord treats tenants fairly and with respect	Measured by doing tenant perception surveys

Responsible neighbourhood management

15: Anti-social behaviour cases relative to the size of the landlord	Measured by landlords directly
16: Percentage of communal areas meeting the required standard	Measured by landlords directly
17: Satisfaction that the landlord keeps communal areas clean, safe and well maintained	Measured by doing tenant perception surveys
18: Satisfaction that the landlord makes a positive contribution to neighbourhoods	Measured by doing tenant perception surveys
19: Satisfaction with the landlord's approach to handling of anti-social behaviour	Measured by doing tenant perception surveys

Effective handling of complaints

20: Complaints relative to the size of the landlord	Measured by landlords directly
21: Complaints responded to within Complaint Handling Code timescales	Measured by landlords directly

APPENDIX Three

Babergh and Mid-Suffolk Joint Affordable Homes Development Strategy

April 2022

1) Councils' development purpose

The Councils' development purpose under this strategy will be the provision of new homes at affordable rent or for affordable home ownership, and where financially viable social rent.

Where possible and appropriate these sites will be subsidised through additional funding, which could include Homes England grant funding, Right to Buy receipts, commuted sums received through S106 planning agreements, and other forms of subsidy.

The Councils' will identify a pipeline of sites looking forward over the period of the medium term financial strategy. These sites will include land already in Council ownership. It is unlikely that the aspirations for housing delivery will be met by existing landholdings and therefore the following will also be considered

- Acquired properties from developers 'off the shelf'
- Acquisition of land or buildings
- Regeneration projects and opportunities with existing land assets
- Refurbishment/conversion of existing buildings

2) Financial control, Viability and Risk Management

Members will set the strategic direction of the development programme through the approval of this strategy and delegate (subject to viability tests and criteria laid out in Appendix 1) the Assistant Director for Assets and Investments, or Assistant Director for Housing operational the authority to proceed with schemes.

Each project will be assessed to ensure it meets the following criteria:

- a) Meets housing need and housing demand for affordable home ownership products
- b) That the financial viability is fully assessed and that the basis on which it can proceed is fully understood. The Councils' chosen methodology for this is through the use of 'Proval' software. Project managers will ensure viability assessments are locked at the following scheme stages so that viability can be accurately understood for each scheme.
 - Offer stage (for S106 acquisitions) or RIBA Stage 2
 - Sign of formal contract or award of contract
 - Practical completion (handover)
- c) The development where appropriate meets the design guide, housing technical specification, Building Regulations and other planning/policy requirements.
- d) That the development has adequate funding (or that it can be obtained) to cover all costs during the development period.
- e) That individual project risk registers are maintained and fed into programme and corporate risk registers.

3) Delivery of affordable home ownership products

The provision of shared ownership/shared equity/First Homes involves greater short term financial risk. To minimise the exposure to these risks Babergh and Mid-Suffolk District Councils will:

- a) Appropriately balance the mix of rented and affordable home ownership products on a development and across the programme based on housing need and market intelligence.
- b) Consider options for the conversion of affordable home ownership products to rent if there are difficulties with sales.
- c) Implement sales and marketing processes at an early stage to avoid 'voids' on affordable home ownership properties.
- d) Enable staircasing on shared ownership to 100%, except where this is restricted through Designated Protected Area status.
- e) Shared ownership leases to be provided on a term of at least 990 years as per New Homes England model shared ownership lease.

Annual financial assumptions and Scheme approval process

These are to be reviewed on an annual basis with the Finance and Housing teams.

Rented Schemes

NPV Discount rate – 4.5%

Loan repayments based on 50 year loan repaid under annuity method.

Development interest rate – at prevailing rate

Short term investment rate receivable

Inflation – Retail Price Index

Rent on completion

Rent increase – as per Government Rent Policy

Allowance for voids and bad debts – 2%

Management costs - £400 per property per annum

Maintenance (day to day) - £500 per property per annum

Major works – 0.8% of works from year 15

Shared Ownership schemes

Sales initial tranche rate of 30%

Households will not purchase further shares in their property

Approvals and Delegations

Net Present Value (NPV) will be used for determining the level of internal approval required and schemes proceeding. Net Present Value is the value of all future cash flows (positive and negative) over the entire lifetime of an investment and discounted to the present.

The following table sets out the approval process to be followed when a scheme is presented or varied:-

Category	Criteria	Approving body
1	Within the terms of the development strategy and Net Present Value – positive after 50 years	Assistant Director – Assets and Investments or Assistant Director for Housing
2	Outside of Development Strategy or Net Present Value – negative after 50 years	Member Approval

Note

A positive NPV assessment over 50 years means that a scheme will generate sufficient income to cover its running costs and repay the loan needed to undertake the initial construction within 50 years. A negative NPV assessments means that the initial loan will be repaid at some stage after year 50.

APPENDIX Four

New Build Design Guide – [Design Guide V9.pdf](#)

APPENDIX Five

Technical Specification

SharePoint link - [New Homes Technical Specification v7.pdf](#)

Agenda Item 9

BABERGH DISTRICT COUNCIL

TO: Council	REPORT NUMBER: BC/22/8
FROM: Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee	DATE OF MEETING: 21 June 2022
OFFICER: Henriette Holloway – Senior Governance Officer	

BABERGH OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT 2021/22

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 In accordance with the constitution, the Committee must report annually to Council on its work during the last year.

2. OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 2.1 No other options were considered.

3. RECOMMENDATION
3.1 That Babergh Overview and Scrutiny Committee's Annual Report for 2021/22 (Appendix A) be noted.
REASON FOR DECISION
That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee comply with Constitutional requirements.

4. KEY INFORMATION

- 4.1 The role of the Babergh Overview and Scrutiny Committee is defined as having the key purposes of:
- Scrutinising the work of external stakeholders and service providers.
 - Holding the Cabinet to account.
 - Being the home of "call in".
 - Being the home of Member Call for Action.
- 4.2 The Babergh Overview and Scrutiny Committee has one Chair and meets every month. Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Council conduct joint Committees on a regular basis when similar topics have been deemed suitable to be scrutinised jointly. The Chairing of these Committees are alternated between the two Chairs of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees.

5. LINKS TO THE CORPORATE PLAN

5.1 This report itself does not link directly to the Joint Corporate Plan. Links to the delivery of the Joint Corporate Plan are considered in the selection of topics for review.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 The main financial implications have been the costs of officer time, normal allowances for Members, and Member and officer training costs that are included in the budget.

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

7.1 None.

8. RISK MANAGEMENT

8.1 There are no inherent risks associated with this report. The Babergh Overview and Scrutiny Committee takes account of the Council's key risks when determining its work plan and carrying out its reviews.

9. CONSULTATIONS

9.1 Members of the Babergh Overview and Scrutiny Committee have been consulted on an on-going basis on topics to be included in the future work plan.

9.2 The review of the Scrutiny function has involved consultations with a range of Members and officers including Scrutiny Members, Leaders and Senior Leadership Team.

10. EQUALITY ANALYSIS

10.1 There are no inherent equality implications within this report.

10.2 Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) not required. Equality analysis considerations for individual topics will be included in reports to Babergh Overview and Scrutiny Committee as the year progresses.

11. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

11.1 None.

12. APPENDICES

Title	Location
(a) Babergh Overview and Scrutiny Committee Annual Report 2021/22	Attached

13. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

13.1 None.

BABERGH DISTRICT
COUNCIL
ANNUAL REPORT
2021/22

Overview & Scrutiny



BABERGH DISTRICT COUNCIL ANNUAL REPORT

FOREWORD BY THE CHAIR OF BABERGH OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 2021/22

At the Annual Council Meeting on 25 May 2021 in Wherstead Park, I became the Chairman of the Babergh District Council Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Co-chair of the Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Babergh & Mid Suffolk). As a member of that Committee since 2019 I did not fully appreciate the background work undertaken by the Chairs, Vice Chairs and Democratic Services to ensure that the function of Overview and Scrutiny maintains the integrity and rigour of such a committee.

At this point I would like to thank all the people who have supported us throughout the year with wise counsel, patience, and practical solutions. They are Henriette Holloway and Robert Carmichael, Governance Officers, Committee Services, Emily Yule, Assistant Director for Law and Governance, Jan Robinson, Corporate Manager of Democratic Services and Governance and more recently Bethany Webb and Alicia Norman who undertakes the live stream technology.

I welcome the proposed addition of a permanent post within Democratic Services to provide full time support to the Overview and Scrutiny function which generates in-depth research and clerical work.

We were very pleased to actually meet as a Joint Committee in the King Edmund Chamber from June 2021 onwards, though all Chairman's Briefings, officer discussions, meetings with Leaders and Task and Finish Groups continue to operate on Teams.

What was unforeseen was the absence of our Vice Chair Kathryn Grandon for personal reasons, so her insight and support was sorely missed. However, the unprecedented rapid turnover of Committee members was the biggest threat to the Constitutional Working of this Committee and its quoracy.

Working with Mid Suffolk Overview and Scrutiny Committee was one of cooperation and collaboration throughout the Municipal year. Working with my Co-Chair Keith Welham and Vice Chair James Caston was very proactive and together we were making progress in raising the expectation among Members that Overview & Scrutiny is a necessary presence within the Constitution of the Council and reviewing new work-areas for scrutiny was the way forward. The previous Work Plans had repeated familiar subjects, so it was time to explore those services that impact our residents but are not necessarily within the immediate remit of the Council.

One of the interesting occasions was being invited to discuss Overview and Scrutiny at the District Peer Review. Our discussions with the team were lively and informative for them and us, as in other Districts the Overview and Scrutiny Committees may only report to the Council annually, or at the most 3 monthly and all reports are written for them.

I wish to thank Keith Welham for a great working relationship. His experience and breadth of District and County Council experience helped me, so due to the change in my responsibilities I am very sad to relinquish my role as Chair of the Babergh Overview and Scrutiny Committee. I wish my successor all the best for the future.

MARY MCLAREN Chair, Babergh Overview & Scrutiny Committee, Co-Chair, Babergh & Mid Suffolk Joint Scrutiny Committee. May 2022.

MEMBERS OF THE BABERGH OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 2021/22



Cllr Mary McLaren – Chair



Cllr Kathryn Grandon – Vice-Chair



Cllr Jane Gould



Cllr Simon Barrett



Cllr Sian Dawson



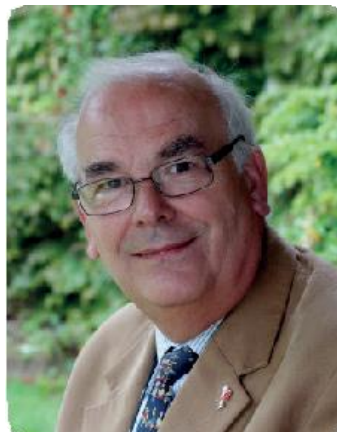
Cllr Margaret Maybury



Cllr Melanie Barrett



Cllr Adrian Osborne



Cllr John Hinton



Cllr Robert Lindsay

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY

In May 2017 Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils adopted the Leader/Cabinet model for each Council. This resulted in the Joint Scrutiny Committee being decommissioned and the formation of separate Overview and Scrutiny Committees for each Council.

The Committee consists of six members of the Council, who can be any Member except Cabinet Members. No Member is allowed to scrutinise a decision where they have been part of the decision-making process. Substitutes for Members on the Committee must be from the same political group and Council. The Committee sets its own workplan and can set up task and finish groups, as and when considered appropriate.

The Babergh and Mid Suffolk Overview and Scrutiny Committees undertake joint meetings on regular basis, whilst each sovereign Overview and Scrutiny Committee will call additional Committee meetings for scrutiny of respective issues if this is required.

THE ROLE OF OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

The role of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee is defined as having the key purposes of:

- Scrutinising the work of external stakeholders and service providers.
- Holding the Cabinet to account.
- Being the home of “call in”.
- Being the home of Member Call for Action.

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee reviews items in relation to the Joint Corporate Plan and Strategic Priorities and where the Committee can add value; avoiding duplication with any other Committees or working groups and ensuring that, where changes have been made, a significant time has lapsed before a review has been undertaken if this is deemed a valuable approach. These suggestions are worked up by the Chairs, Vice Chairs and officers into a forward plan, which is put to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for agreement.

Overview and Scrutiny forms an important part of the democratic process within the Council and wider community by examining topics and continuing to monitor the outcome of its work. Where it is considered necessary to follow up on the outcome of a scrutinised topic, the Committee will conduct further scrutiny or receive updates on the topic to enable the Council to continue to deliver the best service for all residents in the District.

THE STRUCTURE FOR OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETINGS

At the public meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Assistant Directors and report authors are present to respond to questions. Cabinet Members, who are invited to attend and respond to questions within their relevant portfolio. Other Members of the Council are able to attend and are often allowed, at the discretion of the Chair, to ask questions with regards to the items presented at the meeting.

TRAINING

Committee Members received in-housing training at the beginning of the municipal year and in 2022 a joint workshop was held, focusing on identifying areas to scrutinise within the Corporate Strategies.

THE ORGANISATION OF THE WORK PLAN

The Work Plan is updated at the Chairs' briefings and any Member can propose possible items for consideration for the work plan. Each item is evaluated to determine relevance and purpose by the Scrutiny Chairs and scrutiny officers will work with colleagues to prepare reports and background information to be presented at Committee.

Other items on the Work Plan are the Information Bulletins, brief updates on topics, areas of interest or fact-finding pieces of work for items the Committee may wish to scrutinise in the future.

COMMITTEE DEVELOPMENT THROUGHOUT 2021/22

The Committee is continuing to work jointly with Mid Suffolk Overview and Scrutiny Committee and in 2021/22 most meetings were joint as the Committees were scrutinising identical topics. The Committee invites outside witnesses to provide information on areas outside the Councils' remit, and on matters where specific knowledge, expertise or experiences have been sought to provide a better foundation for the scrutiny process. Scrutiny of the Local Citizens Advice, CIFCO and the West Suffolk Community Safety Partnership were assisted by the contributions from representatives of these and other outside organisations.

The Work of Babergh Overview and Scrutiny Committee 2021/22

1. CAPITAL INVESTMENT FUND COMPANY (CIFCO CAPITAL LTD) BUSINESS TRADING AND PERFORMANCE REPORT

In June 2021, the Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee met to scrutinise CIFCO.

The Committee were asked to consider the following:

- Does the current performance of CIFCO deliver good value to both Councils?
- Are the KPIs appropriate measures of performance?
- Is the business plan robust and appropriate for the next 12 months?
- Is there sufficient confidence in the management of CIFCO?

Two written questions in relation to share allocation and registration were raised by a member of the public prior to member's questions. These highlighted the importance that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee be transparent and recognise that the public do watch the live stream and take an interest.

Members questioned the value of shares, opportunistic investments, late payment of interest, borrowing costs reletting and refurbishing of properties to highlight a few. Members debated the issues and were reassured by the details of the report.

RESOLVED

That the Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee had considered the four bullet points in the Executive Summary and that the Committee were satisfied that the CIFCO Capital Ltd Business Plan and Investment Plan for 2021/22 was robust.

VALUE ADDED

The annual scrutiny of CIFCO ensures that the Business Plan is robust and provides the Board Members of CIFCO Capital Ltd. the opportunity to account for the decisions taken in relation to the Business Plan and subsequent managing of the property portfolio.

2. SCRUTINY AND REVIEW OF THE JOINT PARKING STRATEGY PROCESS AND TIMELINE

At the June 2021 meeting, Members were advised that the timeline had changed as an external consultant would be engaged to carry out parking surveys and other pre-consultation work. The pre-consultation period could be concluded in the summer 2022 rather than December 2022.

Members welcomed the shortening of the timescale and were given an assurance that the new proposed date took account of the Cabinet and Council decisions needed.

Members raised concerns in respect of pavement parking, electric charging points, disabled access, on street parking, car pooling, park and ride and the urgent need for resident car parking schemes.

In order to make an impact towards meeting climate change targets, the strategy should look for opportunities to influence motorist behaviour.

RESOLVED

- 1.1 That the Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee noted the contents of the report.**
- 1.2 That the Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee noted that by employing consultants to carry out some of the identified tasks, the timeline can be amended and requested that the final report be presented to Cabinet in June 2022.**
- 1.3 That the Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee recommended that the following should be added to the list of stakeholders in the Officers report:**

- Voluntary Groups**
- Emergency Services**
- Electricity supply companies and EV charging providers.**

And that the following topics should be considered:

- Parking on pavements and verges,**
 - Town Centre on street parking,**
 - Impact of car park maintenance and management on climate change,**
 - Park & Ride, Park & Walk, Park & Cycle,**
 - Hospital Car Parks,**
 - Car Pooling,**
 - Opportunities for using the Strategy to encourage walking, cycling, and Public Transport.**
- 1.4 That the Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee recognised that there was an urgent need for a resolution to resident parking permit scheme issues within both Districts and in doing so that both Districts would have to consider potential financial commitments to such a scheme.**
 - 1.5 That work on this subject must be carried out within the Joint Parking Strategy.**

VALUE ADDED

Members' questioning and subsequent debate identified areas to be included in the Joint Parking Strategy and the recommendation for emergency services, voluntary and Community Groups, and energy suppliers were added to the list of stakeholder involvement in the Cabinet report. The Committee also raised concerns for a resolution to residents parking permit scheme.

This Meeting was closed prematurely due to some members of the Babergh Overview & Scrutiny Committee leaving the meeting early and thus rendering the meeting inquorate.

Outstanding items from this meeting were deferred to the July Meeting.

3. QUESTIONS BY THE PUBLIC

A question by a member of the public read out at the June meeting was received. The question was in regard to the Shared Legal Service, which had been operating across both Councils since July 2018. There had been a number of occasions relating to successful or conceded challenges against both Councils. This raised potential issues around the quality of advice provided by the Shared Legal Service.

VALUE ADDED

Questions from the public allowed the Committee to identify a topic for review that was of concern to residents. The Shared Legal Service was then reviewed at the Joint Committee on 22nd November 2021.

4. LAND ADOPTIONS POLICY INFORMATION BULLETIN

In July 2021, Members received an Information Bulletin in the form of a presentation by the Assistant Director, Environment and Commercial Partnerships and the Corporate Manager for Strategic Property.

The Corporate Manager for Strategic Property re-affirmed that the Land Adoption Property Review was intended to capture points such as ownership of open spaces, Section 106 Agreements within time constraints and the use of verges and their ownership.

5. INSOURCING PUBLIC REALM PROJECT INFORMATION BULLETIN

Members also received an Information Bulletin presented by the Assistant Director of Environment and Commercial Partnerships highlighting that Public Realm was one of only two services that remained to be integrated under the "Working Together" arrangements.

The Bulletin summarised the work of the group of cross-functional team of officers set up to manage development and delivery of the project.

BOTH INFORMATION BULLETINS WERE NOTED.

6. TASK AND FINISH GROUP – SCOPING OF TRANSPORT IN BOTH DISTRICTS

In July 2021, the Chair introduced the item for a Task and Finish Group to scope a potential item for scrutinising Transport in the Babergh and Mid Suffolk Districts.

A motion “That Overview and Scrutiny scoping Transport is outside the remit of the Committee” was lost.

A counter motion to create a Task and Finish Group for the scoping of Transport was carried.

RESOLVED

That the Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee does create a Task and Finish Group for the scoping of Transport in the districts.

That the Chairs of BDC and MSDC Overview and Scrutiny Committees formulate the Task and Finish group with two members from each Council excluding Chairs.

VALUE ADDED

A Task and Finish Group allows members a more comprehensive view of rural transport and to identify possible recommendations to the Scrutiny Committee.

7. ANNUAL REVIEW OF JOINT HOMES AND HOUSING STRATEGY AND HOMELESSNESS AND ROUGH SLEEPING REDUCTION STRATEGY 2019-2024

In September 2021, the Housing Needs and Standards Manager gave a presentation to Members of the Committee on the progress to date, the actions that are currently underway and the future action planned over the remaining two and half years of the strategy. Queries by Members whether the Draft Joint Local Plan had correctly identified the number of affordable dwellings actually needed during the past 18 months were re-assured that the service had been flexible in responding to demand during that time.

RESOLVED

1.1 That the content of the action plans be noted and asked for further information on the day to day activities of the action plan.

1.2 That the Homes and Housing Strategy and the Rough Sleeper Strategy be reviewed twice yearly.

VALUE ADDED

The scrutiny of the report and the presentation indicated that the strategies were robust, and that the delivery of services had been met. The Committee was satisfied that residents received a good standard of support.

8. INFORMATION BULLETINS

Members received two information bulletins at the September 2021 meeting:

Customer Service Update

Anti-Social Behaviour

Members sought clarification on some of the details.

BOTH INFORMATION BULLETINS WERE NOTED

9. REVIEW OF THE SHARED LEGAL SERVICE

In November 2021, the Shared Legal Service Manager introduced the report outlining that the service worked equally across Babergh, Mid Suffolk and West Suffolk Councils. The Service reported to a Steering Committee that had representatives from all three Councils and reported to the leadership teams in each Authority.

Members were reassured that the costs of all staff were split proportionally across the whole service though the number of direct staff employed differed in each authority.

Records of external costs and the time spent on cases was undertaken by individual officers and reported, however no cost per case was calculated if out-sourcing was needed for any matter. Time spent on cases was assessed by a complex scoping method for referrals in order to determine a predicted time frame that a case could be completed in.

RESOLVED

- 1.1 That the Legal Services Steering Board review the charging mechanism for the costs of the legal service and consider whether the performance monitoring arrangements are sufficient and that the findings of the Legal Services Steering Board be presented back to Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee via an Information Bulletin after its meeting in December 2021.**
- 1.2 That the Information Bulletin in the previous recommendation also include historical and current performance monitoring data which would enable the Committee to observe the trends in performance over time.**
- 1.3 That a further information bulletin be presented to the Committee six months into the financial year demonstrating the split of new legal matters between Babergh and Mid Suffolk Councils.**

VALUE ADDED

Following a question from the public received at the 21 June meeting, the Shared Legal Service was scrutinised by the Committee to establish whether the performance of the service is being maintained, and to reassure the public that the Shared Legal Service is performing to a satisfactory standard.

10. TASK AND FINISH GROUP FOR SCOPING OF TRANSPORT IN THE DISTRICTS

Members received a report of the first meeting with Suffolk County Council officers and Community Transport providers within Babergh and Mid Suffolk. It was found that there had been very little in promotion and publicity since 2016 in relation to Community Transport Providers for local residents and communities and some Members were unaware that these services operated in their Wards.

It was felt that Suffolk County Council would have little interest in the work of the Task and Finish Group.

RESOLVED

That the Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee resolved that the Task and Finish Group scope and carry out the exercise.

VALUE ADDED

The scrutiny process established that Scrutiny of transport in the district is a difficult topic to approach as there are local and volunteer services operating separately from that provided by Suffolk County Council.

11. SCOPING OF THE REVIEW OF LOCAL CITIZENS ADVICE (LCA)

The Annual Review by the Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee of the Citizens Advice Services across Babergh and Mid Suffolk required a new approach. The past two years had changed the nature of the services provided and the overall needs of their clients had increased.

In November 2021, it was agreed to develop a scoping document for the Committee and the Citizens Advice Services in order to inform the purpose and focus of the review. It was also agreed that only two Citizen's Advice Representatives would be invited.

RESOLVED

That the Committee resolved to approve the scoping document included in the tabled papers with amendments as discussed at the meeting and that delegation be given to the Monitoring Officer to complete the remainder of the scoping document.

VALUE ADDED

Enabled the Committee to carry out a focused and thorough review of Local Citizens Advice and ensure that the review provided the most value.

12. REVIEW OF LOCAL CITIZENS ADVICE (LCA)

In December 2021, the Chief Officers of Citizens Advice from Babergh and Mid Suffolk presented to the Committee how the Local Citizens Advice had adapted their services over the Covid-19 Pandemic.

- A restart of some face-to-face appointments but the LCA have found that the telephone help service has been massively successful and some of the issues presented by clients had been resolved without the need to see clients face to face.
- There had been an increase in the number of 25-35 year olds seeking advice and guidance and 50% of existing clients have an underlying health condition.
- Due to the current financial difficulties, many clients have an increasing number of debt problems which has increased the need for Debt Advice.
- It takes one year for a Debt Advisor to be fully trained and accredited.
- Recruitment and training of new staff and volunteers is a key priority.
- From January 2022 outreach services to commence in Hadleigh.

RESOLVED

- 1.1 To thank the LCA Chief Officers and their respective staff for their work that they have carried out in the last year, particularly during the Pandemic.**
- 1.2 The Committee are re-assured that both LCAs are operating effectively and efficiently and responded well to all questioning from Members.**
- 1.3 That the Councils take a single view of debt and implement an integrated approach for dealing with housing rent and council tax debt.**
- 1.4 That contact be made with food banks with a request that their clients are referred to the LCA for advice on nutrition, budgeting and cookery skills classes.**
- 1.5 That remote virtual operational capability for LCA and other bodies should be provided on an accelerated programme as a matter of urgency defining locations, IT equipment and applications, training and connectivity.**
- 1.6 That Cabinets be asked to consider the previous resolution of the Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee that the 3 year rolling funding arrangements review be subject to indexation on an annual review basis.**
- 1.7 That the Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee review the Local Citizens Advice in December 2022.**
- 1.8 Recommendation to Babergh Cabinet that extra funding be provided to Sudbury Citizens Advice to enable greater provision for debt advice across the whole district.**

VALUE ADDED

The annual scrutiny of the Local Citizens Advice allows the Committee an opportunity to identify issues for the LCAs in the Districts, and how they relate to the services provided by the Council. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee recommended to Cabinet that the funding was increased to aid the service.

13. DRAFT GENERAL FUND AND FOUR-YEAR OUTLOOK

In January 2022, Councillor Simon Barrett – Cabinet Member for Finance introduced the report to the Committee outlining that the budget had been based on a “no increase in council tax”, however an increase would take place, if Cabinet decided, it was necessary.

In addition to this, the Emergency Reserves held by Babergh District Council would be reduced by £200k to £1 million, as there had been no expenditure from this fund during the Covid-19 Pandemic. The excess of £200k could be considered for community projects. He also advised that the Budget had shown a surplus of £403k.

Questions raised by the Committee were wide ranging and demonstrated their appreciation of the various aspects of the Draft General Fund and its importance in maintaining the fiscal integrity of Babergh District Council.

RESOLVED

- 1.1 That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee noted the General Fund budget 2022/23 and Four-Year Outlook.**
- 1.2 That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee received a report from Cabinet on the outcomes of the performance framework on a six-month basis.**

VALUE ADDED

The scrutiny of the General Fund Budget supports the role of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in holding the executive to account.

14. DRAFT HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT (HRA) AND FOUR-YEAR OUTLOOK

Also in January 2022, Councillor Simon Barrett – Cabinet Member for Finance introduced a report to the Committee outlining that the HRA account is in deficit due to additional spending in building services. This had been due to an increased cost of resources such as a competitive labour market, which had led to an increased use of sub-contractors. There had also been a rent increase of CPI+1.

The Assistant Director for Housing - Gavin Fisk further clarified the various reasons for the overspend. This had been due to an increased cost of materials over the past year. To decrease the dependence on external contractors there had been additional training for staff. There had also been the costs to replace vehicles and to change the fleet to HVO.

RESOLVED

- 1.1 That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee noted the Housing Revenue Account 2022/23 and the Four-Year Outlook.**
- 1.2 That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee recommended that the information about the use of sub-contractors be included in the quarterly performance monitoring report. (Financial HRA Outturn Report).**

VALUE ADDED

All Members had received several briefings for both the General Fund Budget and the HRA Budget before the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, however Members ensured that the HRA Budget was sound and would provide the best services for the Council's residents.

15. CALL-IN OF THE BABERGH CABINET DECISION FOR BCA/21/38 ACCOMMODATION AND AGILE STRATEGY – ENDEAVOUR HOUSE

The Call-In to Babergh Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 21 February 2022 was signed by six Babergh District Councillors.

The main details of the Call-In:-

- That paper BCA/21/38 which was presented to the BDC Cabinet on Monday 7 February 2022, did not contain sufficient information on the capital costs of the works proposed for Cabinet to make an informed decision.
- The Capital Costs of £250,000 had no explanation on how it would be spent.
- Cabinet approved the paper, but no Cabinet Member asked questions on costs or debated the elements of this issue.
- The amount to be spent was more than £150,000 and therefore as a key decision needed the Cabinet to demonstrate publicly that they had considered all circumstances of the case and given Councillors the opportunity to comment.

The Lead Signatory Councillor Melanie Barrett presented her reasons for the Call-In.

The Cabinet Member for Assets and Investments, Councillor Busby presented his reasons why the decision had been taken by the Cabinet.

Members debated the lack of questions on finance at the Cabinet Meeting. It was noted that other Members attending that meeting had an opportunity to ask questions but did not do so.

Recognising that the Cabinet may have been informed of the relevant detail, the public decisions to deal with large sums of money should in the interests of transparency include more rigorous questioning by the Cabinet in a public meeting.

Within the protocol of the Call-In process there are only three recommendation options available to Members. Advice by the Section 151 Officer and the Monitoring Officer ruled out Option 2.

RESOLVED

That the decision be upheld and implemented immediately.

VALUE ADDED

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee is the home of the Call-in and as the Committee operates separately from the Executive can provide a critical review of Cabinet decisions. As evidenced in this meeting, questioning and debate can establish that a sound process had taken place.

16. REVIEW OF WESTERN SUFFOLK COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIP (WSCSP)

The Annual Review of the WSCSP by the Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee is required under the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, the Police and Justice Act 2006 and the Crime and Disorder Overview and Scrutiny Regulations 2009.

In March 2022, the Cabinet Member for Communities, Councillor Derek Davis introduced the Corporate Manager Vicky Mosely, who gave a brief overview of the WSCSP report as the Committee had received a very comprehensive and detailed report prior to the meeting. She also defined the Committee's role in relation to the WSCSP and highlighted the partnerships key priorities.

Over the past year the WSCSP discharged its duties by: -

- Carrying out an assessment of crime and disorder in the area (Strategic Assessment)
- Continuing to deliver actions against the three-year plan and an action plan to reflect the priorities of the partnership.
- Carrying out Domestic Homicide Reviews

The Strategic Assessment 2020-2023

The Strategic Assessment is to assist the Partnership in understanding the patterns and trends relating to crime, disorder, anti-social behaviour and community safety issues affecting the WSCSP area and help identify which priorities to focus on in the coming years.

WSCSP Priorities

- Criminal Exploitation
- Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG)
- Hate Crime
- Prevent (prevention of Terrorism)
- Modern Slavery

In addition to the above 5 priority areas that comprise the WSCSP Action Plan, the partnership maintains a close focus on ASB, Domestic Homicide Reviews.

Members debated the content of the report, an update on the tool kit, information resources and a possible Member Briefing with more concise analysis.

RESOLVED

- 1.1 That the Committee noted the contents of the report.**
- 1.2 That the comments made by the Committee regarding the name of the partnership and the format of the Action Plan be reported back to WSCSP.**
- 1.3 That the Reporting Tool Kit for all Members be updated and circulated.**
- 1.4 That a training session be held for all Members to ensure that all Councillors have knowledge and awareness of their role in respect of identifying and reporting crime and safety issues in their area and are able to support their town and parish councils when discussing crime and safety.**
- 1.5 That a simplified version of the Action Plan be circulated to all Councillors with the O&S Chairs Report to full Council on this item.**
- 1.6 Review of the WSCSP report to be based on the meeting cycle of the Partnership ensuring that the most up to date position is reported and to review the format of the report to ensure that the information is clear, concise and has strategic focus.**
- 1.7 To explore whether the Strategic Assessment is available from the County Council.**

VALUE ADDED

The Committee scrutinises the WSCSP annually and this has added value not only to the questioning process, but also to the expectation for witnesses to provide analysis and evaluations against the priorities. There are also opportunities to identify issues across the district and for Members to broaden their understanding of the work of the WSCSP.

17. DRAFT EMPTY HOMES POLICY

In April 2022, Councillor Jan Osborne - Cabinet Member for Housing, introduced the report to the Committee, outlining that bringing empty homes back into occupation, maximised the use of existing private sector housing to meet the local housing needs of both Districts. The Senior Environmental Health Officer and the Housing Needs Officer using an actual case, presented the process of bringing an empty home back into use, including the use of the Empty Homes Loans of up to £20,000 to encourage owners of empty properties to bring them back into use and the Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO) process. Officers highlighted that there were currently 450 identified empty homes in Babergh and 530 in Mid Suffolk.

The number of CPOs per year would be a maximum of two due to the cost involved in purchasing the properties. The Committee thanked the officers for an exceptional presentation.

Because of the disparity between the two Councils regarding the number of Empty Homes Officers employed, Councillor Osborne reassured the meeting that the workload was being monitored in Babergh to determine whether an additional officer would be needed. A long-term empty home was defined by any property being unoccupied for six months or over and being furnished or unfurnished was immaterial.

Identifying an empty home was initially listed and obtained from Council Tax records. However, there was also a reliance on members of the public reporting properties online and officers identifying properties when working within the district.

Following some further broad questioning, Members fully debated all the issues and made various suggestions.

RESOLVED

- 1.1 That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee complimented the officers on the report and presentation and recommended to Cabinet that the policy be adopted taking into account the following recommendations:-**
- 1.2 That Overview and Scrutiny considers that the maximum loan of £20k is insufficient and asks that Cabinet raise the level of the loans and consider if a nominal rate of interest should be applied.**

- 1.3 That loans for works to improve the energy efficiency of homes should also be available.**
- 1.4 That the information in the communication plan be strengthened to include publicity via Parish Councils and local community groups and that a briefing note be circulated to Councillors when the policy is adopted.**
- 1.5 That Cabinet be asked to monitor the budget for empty homes this year and consider whether an increase is required for 2023/24.**
- 1.6 That further quantitative information be provided to members of the committee on the empty homes' loans and the financial implications for the Councils.**
- 1.7 That close working be encouraged with the Homelessness Outreach Officers.**

Babergh Cabinet only

RESOLVED

- 1.8 That the Empty Homes workload be kept under review by Cabinet to explore additional funding options for an Empty Homes Officer.**

VALUE ADDED

Members were able to scrutinise the Draft Empty Homes Policy in detail and gain insight into the work undertaken by the Empty Homes Officers. The scrutiny process highlighted areas that officer might wish to consider in the Policy.

After the meeting on 25 April 2022, a workshop with Emily Yule - Assistant Director and Monitoring Officer and Jan Robinson - Corporate Manager – Governance and Civic Office was held with Joint Committee Members to explore the possible subjects and areas that could be included in the future Overview and Scrutiny Work Plan.

This page is intentionally left blank

Agenda Item 10

BABERGH DISTRICT COUNCIL

TO: Council	REPORT NUMBER: BC/22/9
FROM: Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee	DATE OF MEETING: 21 June 2022
OFFICER: Henriette Holloway – Senior Governance Officer	

BABERGH OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PLAN 2022/23

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 In accordance with the Constitution, the Committee shall forward the approved work programme to Council for information.

2. OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 2.1 No other options were considered.

3. RECOMMENDATION
3.1 That Babergh Overview and Scrutiny Committee's Work Plan for 2022/23 be noted.
REASON FOR DECISION
That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee comply with Constitutional requirements.

4. KEY INFORMATION

- 4.1 The role of the Babergh Overview and Scrutiny Committee is defined as having the key purposes of:
- Scrutinising the work of external stakeholders and service providers.
 - Holding the Cabinet to account.
 - Being the home of "call in".
 - Being the home of Member Call for Action.
- 4.2 The Babergh Overview and Scrutiny Committee has one Chair and meets every month. Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Council conduct joint Committees on a regular basis when similar topics have been deemed suitable to be scrutinised jointly. The Chairing of these committees are alternated between the two Chairs of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees.

5. LINKS TO THE CORPORATE PLAN

5.1 This work programme itself does not link directly to the Corporate Plan. Links to the delivery of the Corporate Plan are considered in the selection of topics for review.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 The main financial implications have been the costs of officer time, normal allowances for Members, and Member and officer training costs that are included in the budget.

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

7.1 None.

8. RISK MANAGEMENT

8.1 There are no inherent risks associated with this report. The Babergh Overview and Scrutiny committee takes account of the Council's key risks when determining its work programme and carry out its reviews.

9. CONSULTATIONS

9.1 Members of the Babergh Overview and Scrutiny Committee have been consulted on an on-going basis on topics to be included in the future work programme.

9.2 The review of the Scrutiny function has involved consultations with a range of Members and officers including Scrutiny Members, Leaders and Senior Leadership Team.

10. EQUALITY ANALYSIS

10.1 There are no inherent equality implications within this report.

10.2 Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) not required. Equality analysis considerations for individual topics will be included in reports to Babergh Overview and Scrutiny Committee as the year progresses.

11. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

11.1 None.

12. APPENDICES

Title	Location
Appendix A - Babergh Overview and Scrutiny Committee Work Plan 2022/23	Attached

13. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

13.1 None.

Appendix A

BABERGH OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PLAN 2022/23:

TOPIC	PURPOSE	LEAD OFFICER	CABINET MEMBER	PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED TO COMMITTEE
27 JUNE 2022 – JOINT				
CIFCO Performance Report and Business Plan	To scrutinise the Business Plan	Assistant Director for Assets and Investment	Cabinet Member for Assets and Investments	28 June 2021 JOS/21/2
18 JULY 2022 – JOINT				
Information Bulletin Shared Legal Service Performance Monitoring	An Information Bulletin brought to Committee as a result of the review on 22 November 2021			
Information Bulletin Shared Legal Service Split of New Legal Matters	An Information Bulletin brought to Committee as a result of the review on 22 November 2021			
22 AUGUST 2022				
19 SEPTEMBER 2022				
Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils Parking Strategy	Scrutiny of the Parking Strategy before being presented to Cabinet.	Service Improvement Advisor, Environment & Commercial Partnerships Assistant Director of Environment and Commercial Partnerships	Cabinet Member for Environment	
Annual Review of Joint Homes and Housing Strategy and Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Reduction Strategy		Assistant Director - Housing	Cabinet Member for Housing	

24 OCTOBER 2022				
21 NOVEMBER 2022				
19 DECEMBER 2022				
Annual Review of Local Citizens Advice	To review the Funding Arrangements for LCA in the two Districts.	Corporate Manager Communities	Cabinet Members for Communities	
23 JANUARY 2023				
Draft General Fund (GF) 2023/24 and Four-year Outlook	Scrutiny of the GF Budget for 2023/2024	Assistant Director – Corporate Resources Corporate Manager – Finance	Cabinet Members for Finance	
Draft Housing Revenue Account (HRA) and Four - year Outlook	Scrutiny of the HRA Budget and Business Plan	Assistant Director – Corporate Resources Corporate Manager – Finance	Cabinet Members for Finance	
20 FEBRUARY 2023				
20 MARCH 2023				
Crime and Disorder Panel meeting	The Committee conduct a scrutiny review of the WSCSP to fulfil the Councils Statutory requirements	Assistant Director – Sustainable Communities Community Safety Professional Lead - Communities	Cabinet Members for Communities	
24 APRIL 2023				
PRE-ELECTION PERIOD				
22 MAY 2023				

Topics identified for review but not currently timetabled:

Improving Access to the Private Rented Sector - Chairs to discuss the timing for bringing this to Committee

Scrutiny of the delivery of services for Transport for both Town and rural areas.

The Census reports to be scrutinised in 2022

The Infrastructure Delivery Plan

Other topics identified:

- Suggestion: Scrutiny of ASB projects and policies – Suggested at the meeting on the 22 March 2021
- Review of Suffolk Association of Local Councils (SALC) and the support they provide to Parishes across Babergh and Mid Suffolk.
- Information Bulletin updating Members on the Electronic Complaints system.
- Scrutiny of the Cabinets' Communication and Sharing of Information
- Stella Maris Review
- Land Adoptions Policy
- Information Bulletin on the cost of maintenance of tenanted properties.

This page is intentionally left blank

Agenda Item 11

BABERGH DISTRICT COUNCIL

TO: COUNCIL	REPORT NUMBER: BC/22/10
FROM: Cabinet	DATE OF MEETING: 21 June 2022
OFFICER: Janice Robinson, Deputy Monitoring Officer	

NOTICE OF KEY DECISION BY GENERAL EXCEPTION (EXEMPT FROM CALL-IN) TAKEN BY CABINET IN ACCORDANCE WITH PART 2 OF THE CONSTITUTION

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 This report details a Notice of a Key Decision by General Exception taken by Cabinet on the 8 June 2022 for a decision over £150K, which was exempt for call-in.
- 1.2 The Chair of the Council agreed that both the decision was reasonable in all circumstance and to it being treated as a matter of urgency.
- 1.3 The Decision is required by the Constitution to be reported at the next ordinary meeting of the Council meeting under Part 3: Scrutiny Procedure Rules of the Constitution.

2. RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 That Council notes the Notice of the Key Decision by General Exception (Exempt from Call-in) as detailed in appendix A.

REASON FOR DECISION

Under Part 3 of the Constitution, Scrutiny Procedure Rules, Paragraph 16 the decision must be reported to the next ordinary meeting of the appropriate Council.

3. KEY INFORMATION

- 3.1 Detailed in Appendix A.

4. LINKS TO THE CORPORATE PLAN

- 4.1 N/A

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 Detailed in Appendix A.

6. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 The Council is required to comply with the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012, the provisions of which are reflected in the Council's constitution. The Cabinet has complied with these regulations when taking this decision under the General Exception rules and by reporting this decision to the Full Council.

7. RISK MANAGEMENT

- 7.1 There are no risks associated with the reporting of this decision to Council. The risk assessment for the decision itself is contained within the Cabinet report.

8. CONSULTATIONS

- 8.1 N/A

9. EQUALITY ANALYSIS

- 9.1 N/A

10. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 N/A

11. APPENDICES

Title	Location
(A) Notice of General Exception Decision (Exempt from call-in) Accordance with Part 3 of the Constitution	Attached

12. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

[Notice of Key Decisions » Babergh](#)



NOTICE OF KEY DECISION

THE LOCAL AUTHORITIES (EXECUTIVE ARRANGEMENTS) (MEETINGS AND ACCESS TO INFORMATION) (ENGLAND) REGULATIONS 2012

Notice of Key Decisions – General Exception

Regulation 9 of the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012 requires 28 clear days notice to be published of the Council's intention to make key decisions.

Regulation 10 (1) allows, that if it is impracticable for the Council to give the required 28 days notice, the decision may still be made if the Chairman of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee has been given notice in writing of the matter about which the decision is to be made, a copy of the notice is made available for inspection by the public and is published on the Council's website, and at least 5 clear days have elapsed following the day on which the notice is made available for inspection by the public.

Notice is hereby given under Regulation 10 (3) of the Council's intention to make a key decision at its Cabinet meeting on 8 June 2022, regarding:

BABERGH FORMER HQ DEVELOPMENT SITE

The reason publication in accordance with Regulation 9 was impracticable in this case was due to:

Significant inflationary pressures in the construction industry have resulted in a shortening of tender validity periods- to a period of a few weeks and sometimes only days, compared with several weeks, or months previously.

The contractor's price for phase 1 of the HQ redevelopment is valid until 10th June 2022 and therefore a decision needs to be made before this date to enable Babergh Growth to determine whether they can award the contract or not. Babergh Growth cannot award the contract until increased funding has been secured. Further delay to the award of contract in the current market would result in price increases.

Arthur Charvonja
Chief Executive
Babergh Council

23 May 2022

This page is intentionally left blank