



AGENDA

COUNCIL MEETING

THURSDAY, 23RD JUNE 2022 – 5.30 PM

Members of the Council are summoned to a meeting of the Mid Suffolk District Council at King Edmund Chamber, Endeavour House, 8 Russell Road, Ipswich on Thursday, 23rd June, 2022 at 5.30 pm.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Arthur Charvonja".

Arthur Charvonja
Chief Executive



MSDC COUNCIL	
DATE:	THURSDAY, 23 JUNE 2022 5.30 PM
VENUE:	KING EDMUND CHAMBER, ENDEAVOUR HOUSE, 8 RUSSELL ROAD, IPSWICH

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

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| 1 | 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 | MC/22/5 TO CONFIRM THE MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL MEETING HELD ON 26 MAY 2022 | 7 - 18 |
| 4 | MC/22/6 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS | 19 - 20 |
| 5 | LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS | |
| 6 | TO RECEIVE NOTIFICATION OF PETITIONS IN ACCORDANCE WITH COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULES | |

In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 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.

- 7 **QUESTIONS BY THE PUBLIC IN ACCORDANCE WITH COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULES**
- The Chairman of the Council to answer any questions from 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 12.
- 8 **QUESTIONS BY COUNCILLORS IN ACCORDANCE WITH COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULES**
- The Chairman of the Council, Chairs 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 13.
- 9 **MC/22/7 THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT BUSINESS PLAN** 21 - 88
- Cabinet Member for Housing
- 10 **MC/22/8 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT 2021/22** 89 - 108
- Chair of Overview and Scrutiny Committee
- 11 **MC/22/9 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PLAN 2022/23** 109 - 114
- Chair of Overview and Scrutiny Committee
- 12 **MC/22/10 STOWMARKET, HEALTH, EDUCATION AND LEISURE FACILITIES (SHELF)** 115 - 128
- Cabinet Members for Economic Growth and Health and Wellbeing
- 13 **COUNCILLOR APPOINTMENTS**
- 14 **MOTIONS ON NOTICE**

15 **EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC (WHICH TERM INCLUDES THE PRESS)**

To consider whether, pursuant to Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, the public should be excluded from the meeting for the business specified below on the grounds that if the public were present during this item, it is likely that there would be the disclosure to them of exempt information as indicated against the item. The author of the report proposed to be considered in Part 2 of the Agenda is satisfied that the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

PART 2

16 **RESTRICTED APPENDICES - STOWMARKET, HEALTH, EDUCATION AND LEISURE FACILITIES (SHELF)** 129 - 174

Cabinet Members for Economic Growth and Health and Wellbeing

Date and Time of next meeting

Please note that the next meeting is scheduled for Thursday, 21 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@babberghmidsuffolk.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.

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Agenda Item 3

MID SUFFOLK DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the Annual meeting of the **MID SUFFOLK COUNCIL** held in the King Edmund Chamber, Endeavour House, 8 Russell Road, Ipswich on Thursday, 26 May 2022

PRESENT:

Councillors:	Oliver Amorowson	Gerard Brewster
	David Burn	Terence Carter
	James Caston	Austin Davies
	Rachel Eburne	Paul Ekpenyong
	John Field	Julie Flatman
	Jessica Fleming	Dr Helen Geake
	Peter Gould	Kathie Guthrie
	Lavinia Hadingham	Matthew Hicks
	Barry Humphreys	Sarah Mansel
	John Matthissen	Andrew Mellen
	Richard Meyer	Suzie Morley
	David Muller	Penny Otton
	Timothy Passmore	Harry Richardson
	Keith Scarff	Andrew Stringer
	Rowland Warboys	Keith Welham
	John Whitehead	

In attendance:

Officers:

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

Apologies:

Mike Norris
Stephen Phillips
Dr Daniel Pratt

1 ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN OF THE COUNCIL

- 1.1 On the proposal of Councillor Morley and seconded by Councillor Hadingham, Councillor James Caston was nominated for the position of Chairman of the Council.
- 1.2 On the proposal of Councillor Mellen and seconded by Councillor Eburne, Councillor John Field was nominated for the position of Chairman of the Council.
- 1.3 The nominations were **PUT** to the Council for voting, by 17 votes for and 13 votes against,

It was RESOLVED:

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

- 1.4 Before vacating the chair, Councillor Ekpenyong Councillor Ekpenyong congratulated Councillor Caston on being elected as Chair. Councillor Ekpenyong thanked Karen Sayer, Civic Officer for providing support during his chairmanship and announced that a cheque for £1,565 had been presented to his charity.
- 1.5 Councillor Ekpenyong also thanked other officers for their support in Council meetings.
- 1.6 Councillor Caston thereupon made his Declaration of Office.
- 1.7 Councillor Caston thanked everyone who had voted for him and paid tribute to the outgoing Chairman, Councillor Ekpenyong for chairing the Council with distinction through the pandemic, providing an excellent example of how the duty should be carried out.
- 1.8 Councillor Caston also announced that his chosen charity for his term of office was Stowmarket ASD Saturday Club, which supports five to eleven year olds with Autism.

2 ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIRMAN OF THE COUNCIL

- 2.1 On the proposal of Councillor Flatman and seconded by Councillor Hadingham, Councillor Ekpenyong was nominated for the position of Vice-Chairman of the Council.
- 2.2 On the proposal of Councillor Mellen and seconded by Councillor Field, Councillor Rowland Warboys was nominated for the position of Vice-Chairman of the Council.
- 2.3 The nominations were **PUT** to the Council for voting, by 17 votes for and 14 votes against,

It was RESOLVED:

That Councillor Paul Ekpenyong be elected as Vice-Chair of the Council for the municipal year 2022/23.

- 2.4 Councillor Ekpenyong thereupon made his Declaration of Office.

3 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS BY COUNCILLORS

- 3.1 There were no declarations of interests by Councillors.

4 MC/22/1 TO CONFIRM THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 21 MARCH 2022

It was RESOLVED:

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 21 March 2022 be confirmed and signed as a true record.

5 MC/22/2 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

5.1 The report was noted.

6 LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

6.1 Councillor Morley introduced her report and made the following announcements.

6.2 As always, I want to highlight some of the fantastic things the Council has been delivering since we last met, but I also want to begin by acknowledging how wonderful it is to be able to hold our Annual Council meeting in our Council Chamber with so few Covid restrictions. I say 'few' because whilst it is great to see some sense of normality has returned, we must also be mindful that Covid hasn't suddenly disappeared. The arrival and spread of monkeypox is perhaps a useful reminder of how quickly such things can spread in humans in today's society. Most importantly though, there are still those in our communities in Mid Suffolk, and in our own cohort of Councillors, who are more vulnerable and so it is our duty to continue to try and keep everyone safe and well.

6.3 I also wanted to begin by again reiterating our thoughts and support for the people of Ukraine. I know we have consistently done this at our Council meetings, and I know we are all united in this regard. I feel it is vitally important though that we continue to ensure that the war remains in the spotlight and at the front of our minds. Suffolk as a whole, and Mid Suffolk in particular is playing its part as the public sector in welcoming and supporting those refugees who are fortunate enough to have escaped and come here. And I also want to pay tribute to the generosity and compassion of our residents who have flung open their homes, and whole communities, to our Ukrainian friends.

6.4 Away from the national stage, and of far less importance in the grand scheme of things, it was wonderful to be at the opening of the Duck & Teapot at Needham Lake. It is unbelievable to think that this is the delivery of a 20 year ambition for the town. Although we wouldn't have wished the provider there to have been overwhelmed in their first week, it is a really positive sign of the support and level of demand that so many people have flocked there. I know the provider has made changes to be able to cater for the level of demand and will especially be increasing capacity for the forthcoming bank holidays.

6.5 Absolutely vital to this new facility is not just the catering aspect of course but also the brand-new Changing Places facilities. And it is wonderful news that we have been successful in our bid to secure funding for two more Changing Places facilities, at the Food Museum in Stowmarket, and at Stradbroke Swimming Pool and Fitness Centre. This is of course in addition to the over £1m that we paid across to 49 towns and parishes in April from the Community Infrastructure Levy to ensure other vital local infrastructure can continue to be improved or added across Mid Suffolk.

6.6 Of course, the other major news since we last met was the start of infrastructure works at Gateway 14. I was immensely proud to be asked to put the first spade in the ground on site on behalf of all of you. I will not go on now about how wonderful Gateway 14 will be for our residents, for employment, for skills, for Stowmarket, for the whole district, and for the wider Freeport area; but this is our largest single investment in recent years (if not ever) as Mid Suffolk to directly deliver an economic stimulus that will build a thriving and more sustainable future for our residents. I know we are all looking forward to celebrating the next milestones in this project as the site begins to take shape. Gateway 14, however, doesn't sit alone and is of course part of our wider strategic approach, particularly to restarting and regrowing our local economy following the pandemic. I can only echo Councillor Brewster's words as he launched our 'Economic Recovery Plan' last month:

"Our ambition is to support strong growth across the district, to encourage innovation and creativity, to upskill our communities and help stimulate a wide range of job opportunities. To achieve this, we need to continue building strong working relationships with a range of partners, encouraging investment, connecting our communities and promoting our towns and villages as places that people want to call home."

6.7 One of key aspects of our economy in this region is Energy. With Bacton, Sizewell and Off-shore wind, as well as an increasing number of local energy schemes, it is hard not to see us as powering the nation! And of course energy and in particularly energy prices have become international news over recent months.

6.8 Whilst the energy itself is important, so too is how that electricity is transported. As you will know we are currently being consulted as part of National Grid's East Anglia Green Energy Enablement (GREEN) project, which is a proposal to build a new high voltage network reinforcement between Norwich, Bramford and Tilbury. This is just the first stage of consultation for this project, but it has the potential to have a significant impact on large swaths of our district.

6.9 As such, I have already been engaging with our local MP, Dan Poulter and I was really pleased that we were able to provide a briefing for all of our Towns and Parishes earlier this week. Cabinet is due to consider the issue in detail on Monday 6th June on behalf of the Council. However, I do not believe this is, nor should be, a party-political matter and as such I have ensured that there will be the opportunity for all Councillors to speak and help shape the Council's response to the consultation at that meeting.

- 6.10 Having said that I do not want to pre-empt that debate I do also feel it is safe to say that many of us and our communities believe that the best option would be for the power to be transported under the sea rather than across land. I am looking forward to having the fuller discussion though on 6th June.
- 6.11 In the meantime, although it is unusual to single out individual officers for praise at Council meetings, I would like to take this opportunity to put on public record our thanks to Bron Curtis whose expertise and professionalism in all things relating to energy and planning continues to be invaluable to us. Thank you Bron.
- 6.12 Of course I can't talk about energy without also mentioning the cost of living crisis. I am hopeful that during the course of today, whilst writing my speech, the Chancellor will have announced a further package of support for those most in need; going beyond the payments of £150 which we are already administering for those in Council Tax Bands A to D. In addition to that though we have just published our own draft emergency 5-point plan to help tackle the crisis over the next 6 months. This again is due to be debated at the same Cabinet meeting on 6th June and I would encourage as many of you as possible to attend to ask questions.
- 6.13 Finally on a much lighter, and more celebratory, note we of course have the Queen's Jubilee and bank holidays next week. There are a plethora of activities going on across the district and the bunting will be out everywhere. I know you will all want to promote the celebrations happening in your wards both next week and as part of the wider Festival of Suffolk throughout the year. And I hope you will all be able to join me roadside, following Cabinet on 6th June, to cheer on the cyclists as the Women's Tour again flies through Mid Suffolk.
- 6.14 Councillor Mellen stated that he was grateful the opportunity for members affected by the National Grid's East Anglia Green Energy Enablement (GREEN) project to contribute to the upcoming Cabinet meeting and asked if their comments would be able to amend what the Council is going to respond to the consultation.
- 6.15 Councillor Morley replied that everyone had the opportunity of putting in their own representations online independently of the Councils response.

7 DESIGNATION OF COMMITTEES AND JOINT COMMITTEES

7.1 On the proposal of Councillor Richardson and seconded by Councillor Morley,

It was RESOLVED:

That the following Committees and Joint Committees be appointed:

- **Mid Suffolk Overview and Scrutiny Committee**
- **Development Control Committee A**

- **Development Control Committee B**
- **Planning Referrals Committee**
- **Mid Suffolk Licensing and Regulatory Committee**
- **Joint Audit and Standards Committee**
- **Joint Appointments Committee**

8 MC/22/3 POLITICAL BALANCE AND COMPOSITION OF COMMITTEES

8.1 The Monitoring Officer introduced the report.

8.2 On the proposal of Councillor Mellen and seconded by Councillor Muller,

It was RESOLVED:

1.1 That the Committees' size and numerical allocation of seats be approved as detailed in Appendix A of the report.

1.2 That Committee Members be appointed as set out in Appendix B to the report.

9 ELECTION OF CHAIRS AND VICE-CHAIRS OF COMMITTEES

9.1 On the proposal of Councillor Mellen and seconded by Councillor Morley,

It was RESOLVED:

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

9.2 On the proposal of Councillor Mellen and seconded by Councillor Field, a nomination for Councillor Keith Scarff to be Vice-Chair of Overview and Scrutiny Committee was tabled.

9.3 On the proposal of Councillor Muller and seconded by Councillor Guthrie, a nomination for Councillor Caston to be Vice-Chair of Overview and Scrutiny Committee was tabled.

9.4 The nominations were **PUT** to the Council for voting.

It was RESOLVED:

That Councillor James Caston be elected as Vice-Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for the Municipal year 2022/23.

9.5 On the proposal of Councillor Meyer and seconded by Councillor Morley, a nomination for Councillor Hicks to be Chair of Development Control Committee A was tabled.

9.6 On the proposal of Councillor Mellen and seconded by Councillor Davies, a nomination for Councillor Mansel to be Chair of Development Control Committee A was tabled.

9.7 The nominations were **PUT** to the Council for voting.

It was RESOLVED:

That Councillor Matthew Hicks be elected as Chair of the Development Control Committee A for the municipal year 2022/23.

9.8 On the proposal of Councillor Muller and seconded by Councillor Hadingham, a nomination for Councillor Humphreys to be Vice-Chair of Development Control Committee A was tabled.

9.9 On the proposal of Councillor Mellen and seconded by Councillor Davies, a nomination for Councillor Mansel to be Vice-Chair of Development Control Committee A was tabled.

9.10 The nominations were **PUT** to the Council for voting.

It was RESOLVED:

That Councillor Barry Humphreys be elected as Vice-Chair of the Development Control Committee A for the municipal year 2022/23.

9.11 On the proposal of Councillor Muller and seconded by Councillor Burn, a nomination for Councillor Guthrie to be Chair of Development Control Committee B was tabled.

9.12 On the proposal of Councillor Mellen and seconded by Councillor Field, a nomination for Councillor Stringer to be Chair of Development Control Committee B was tabled.

9.13 The nominations were **PUT** to the Council for voting.

It was RESOLVED:

That Councillor Kathie Guthrie be elected as Chair of the Development Control Committee B for the municipal year 2022/23.

9.14 On the proposal of Councillor Guthrie and seconded by Councillor Hicks, a nomination for Councillor Muller to be Vice-Chair of Development Control Committee B was tabled.

9.15 On the proposal of Councillor Mellen and seconded by Councillor Amorowson, a nomination for Councillor Stringer to be Vice-Chair of Development Control Committee B was tabled.

9.16 The nominations were **PUT** to the Council for voting.

It was RESOLVED:

That Councillor Dave Muller be elected as Vice-Chair of the Development Control Committee B for the municipal year 2022/23.

9.17 On the proposal of Councillor Fleming and seconded by Councillor Morley, a nomination for Councillor Guthrie to be Chair of Licensing and Regulatory Committee was tabled.

9.18 On the proposal of Councillor Mellen and seconded by Councillor Field, a nomination for Councillor Otton to be Chair of Licensing and Regulatory Committee was tabled.

9.19 The nominations were **PUT** to the Council for voting.

It was RESOLVED:

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

9.20 On the proposal of Councillor Guthrie and seconded by Councillor Flatman, a nomination for Councillor Muller to be Vice-Chair of Licensing and Regulatory Committee was tabled.

9.21 On the proposal of Councillor Mellen and seconded by Councillor Mansel, a nomination for Councillor Otton to be Vice-Chair of Licensing and Regulatory Committee was tabled.

9.22 The nominations were **PUT** to the Council for voting.

It was RESOLVED:

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

9.23 On the proposal of Councillor Whitehead and seconded by Councillor Morley, a nomination for Councillor Muller to be Co-Chair of Joint Audit and Standards Committee was tabled.

9.24 On the proposal of Councillor Mellen and seconded by Councillor Warboys, a nomination for Councillor Eburne to be Co-Chair of Joint Audit and Standards Committee was tabled.

9.25 The nominations were **PUT** to the Council for voting.

It was RESOLVED:

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

9.26 On the proposal of Councillor Richardson and seconded by Councillor Flatman, a nomination for Councillor Morley to be Co-Chair of the Joint Appointments Committee was tabled.

It was RESOLVED:

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

10 MC/22/4 APPOINTMENTS TO OUTSIDE BODIES FOR 2022/23

10.1 Councillor Morley introduced the report and proposed the recommendations which were seconded by Councillor Richardson.

10.2 The Corporate Manager – Governance and Civic Office drew the Councils attention to the amendments made to the report to remove the Haven Gateway Partnership and amend the name of the Museum of East Anglian Life to the Food Museum.

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
Armed Forces Covenant	1	Barry Humphreys
Association for Suffolk Museums	1	Richard Meyer
East of England Assembly of Leaders	1	The Leader
East of England Local Government Association	1	Suzie Morley
East Suffolk Drainage Board	3	James Caston John Field Keith Welham
East West Rail Consortium	1	Gerard Brewster
Home-Start Mid Suffolk	1	Lavinia Hadingham
Ipswich Strategic Planning Area Board	1 (+1 substitute)	David Burn (Sub: John Field)
Local Government Association – Sparse	1	Suzie Morley
Local Government Association Assembly	1	Suzie Morley Observer: Andy Mellen
Mid Suffolk Domestic Abuse Forum	1	Stephen Phillips
Museum of East Anglian Life Ltd	1 Trustee	Richard Meyer
Suffolk Flood Risk Management Scrutiny Sub Committee	1 (+1 substitute)	James Caston (Sub: Keith Welham)
Suffolk Health and Wellbeing Board	1 (+1 substitute)	Harry Richardson (Sub: Penny Otton)

Suffolk Health Scrutiny Committee	1 (+1 substitute)	Julie Flatman (Sub: Sarah Mansel)
Suffolk Police and Crime Panel	1 (+1 substitute)	Sarah Mansel (Sub: Keith Welham)
Suffolk Violence and Abuse Partnership	1 Trustee	Stephen Phillips
Suffolk Waste Partnership (SWP)	1	Jessica Fleming
Western Suffolk Community Safety Partnership (WSCSP)	1 (+1 substitute)	Sarah Mansel (Sub: Harry Richardson)

11 APPOINTMENT OF COUNCILLORS TO THE SHARED REVENUES PARTNERSHIP JOINT COMMITTEE

11.1 On the proposal of Councillor Ekpenyong and seconded by Councillor Richardson,

It was RESOLVED:

That Councillors Suzie Morley and John Whitehead be appointed as members of the Shared Revenues Partnership Joint Committee and that Councillors Gerard Brewster and Jessica Fleming be appointed as substitute members for the municipal year 2022/23.

12 APPOINTMENTS TO THE SUFFOLK JOINT STANDARDS BOARD

12.1 On the proposal of Councillor Eburne and seconded by Councillor Muller,

It was RESOLVED:

That Councillors Paul Ekpenyong, John Matthissen and Mike Norris be appointed as members of the Suffolk Joint Standards Board for the municipal year 2022/23.

13 APPOINTMENTS TO THE JOINT GYPSY AND TRAVELLER STEERING GROUP

13.1 On the proposal of Councillor Mansel and seconded by Councillor Geake,

It was RESOLVED:

That Councillors Julie Flatman, John Field, Lavinia Hadingham and Andrew Stringer be appointed to the Joint Gypsy and Traveller Steering Group for the municipal year 2022/23.

14 APPOINTMENTS TO COUNCIL WORKING GROUPS

14.1 On the proposal of Councillor Muller and seconded by Councillor Richardson,

It was RESOLVED:

- 1.1 That Councillors Suzie Morley, Sarah Mansel, John Whitehead and Penny Otton be appointed to the Community Governance Review Working Group.**
- 1.2 That Councillors Matthew Hicks, Sarah Mansel, Suzie Morley and Keith Scarff be appointed to the Constitution Working Group.**
- 1.3 That Councillors Suzie Morley, Rachel Eburne, Julie Flatman and Stephen Phillips be appointed to the Member Learning and Development Working Group.**
- 1.4 That Councillors David Burn, John Field, Kathie Guthrie and Andrew Stringer be appointed to the Local Plan Working Group.**

The business of the meeting was concluded at 6.34 pm.

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Chair

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Agenda Item 4

MC/22/6

MID SUFFOLK DISTRICT COUNCIL - 23 JUNE 2022

CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

EVENT	LOCATION	DATE	CHAIRMAN	VICE CHAIR
JUNE 2022				
Suffolk Show President's Lunch	The Suffolk Show	01-Jun	✓	
Beacon Lighting for H.M. The Queen's Platinum Jubilee	Abbey Gardens, Bury St Edmunds	02-Jun	✓	
Jubilee Service of Thanksgiving	St Mary's Church, Bramford	03-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		✓
Suffolk Pride 2022	Ipswich Waterfront	18-Jun	✓	
Suffolk Day 2022	Framlingham Castle	21-Jun	✓	

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Agenda Item 9

MID SUFFOLK DISTRICT COUNCIL

TO: Council	REPORT NUMBER: MC/22/7
FROM: Cllr Lavinia Hadingham Cabinet Member for Housing	DATE OF MEETING: 23 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 Mid Suffolk 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 Mid Suffolk 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

- 3.2 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)	Mid Suffolk District Council
Income 2022/23	£16.2m
Income 2025/26	£20.0m
Responsive Repairs	£17.6m
Capital Expenditure	£23.9m
New Build/ 141 Receipts	£62.2m
New Borrowing	£33.1m

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
<p>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</p>	<p>1 – Highly Unlikely</p>	<p>4- Disaster</p>	<p>Regular monitoring of the HRA Business Plan through effective budget monitoring and budget setting. Approved by Cabinet.</p> <p>The use of specialist external consultancy to act as a critical friend and business support.</p> <p>The use of an independent business model which ensures all medium and long-term income and expenditure is recorded</p>
<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>

The HRA Business Plan is not relatable to by its stakeholders and hence does not achieve the outcomes and goals desired	2 - Unlikely	3 – Bad/Serious	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.
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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 Mid Suffolk and 300 from Babergh) 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 **MC/21/22** 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

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Mid Suffolk District Council 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 Council's 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.

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

The HRA Business Plan for the Council has been developed using a number of Baseline Assumptions, these are as follows:

- Revised inflation assumptions
- 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 EPC-C investment assumptions
- Spending pressures met from within existing budgets
- EPC-C investment by 2030 included in the Baseline assumptions
- Each authority to provide at least 65 new units a year (on average) between 2022 and 2025/26
- Strategic Priorities Reserve available to spend (s/t £1.000m minimum balance)
- Rent loss from voids assumed at 2%
- Investment in existing housing stock will continue at current levels

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

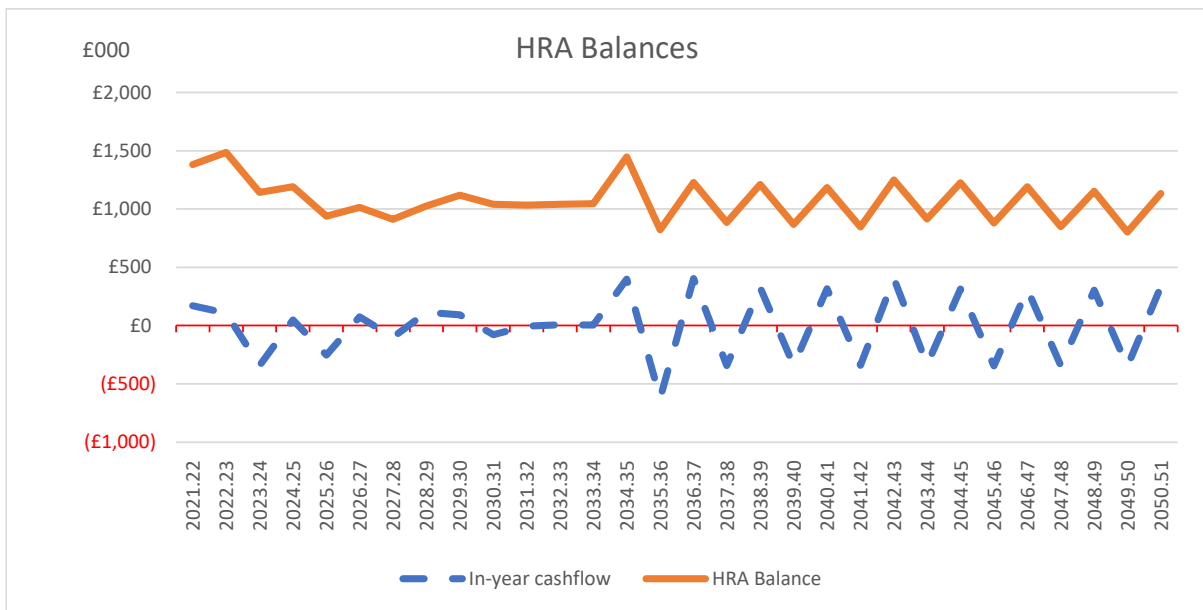
Mid Suffolk Baseline

Mid Suffolk Baseline Description	HRA Business Plan				
	1 2021.22 (,000)	2 2022.23 (,000)	3 2023.24 (,000)	4 2024.25 (,000)	5 2025.26 (,000)
Income					
Gross Rental Income	£14,691	£15,492	£17,181	£19,171	£19,244
Void Losses	-£323	-£310	-£344	-£383	-£385
Tenanted Service Charges	£704	£675	£714	£732	£747
Non-Dwelling Income	£355	£352	£373	£382	£390
Other Income	£19	£43	£46	£47	£48
Total income	£15,445	£16,254	£17,971	£19,949	£20,043
Expenditure					
General Management	-£3,143	-£3,246	-£3,424	-£3,505	-£3,571
Bad Debt Provision	-£92	-£97	-£108	-£120	-£121
Responsive & Cyclical Repairs	-£3,639	-£4,148	-£4,390	-£4,523	-£4,637
Total expenditure	-£6,874	-£7,491	-£7,922	-£8,148	-£8,329
Capital financing costs					
Interest paid on debt	-£2,968	-£2,968	-£3,930	-£4,099	-£4,245
Interest paid on 141 receipts	£0	-£88	-£217	-£270	-£260
Interest Received	£6	£3	£4	£4	£4
Depreciation	-£3,911	-£4,452	-£4,942	-£5,237	-£5,382
Capital financing costs	-£6,873	-£7,505	-£9,085	-£9,602	-£9,884
Appropriations					
RCCO	-£1,527	-£1,151	-£1,308	-£2,151	-£2,084
Appropriations	-£1,527	-£1,151	-£1,308	-£2,151	-£2,084
Net income/ (expenditure)	£171	£106	-£344	£48	-£253
HRA Balance					
Opening Balance	£1,210	£1,381	£1,488	£1,144	£1,192
Generated in year	£171	£106	-£344	£48	-£253
Closing Balance	£1,381	£1,488	£1,144	£1,192	£939

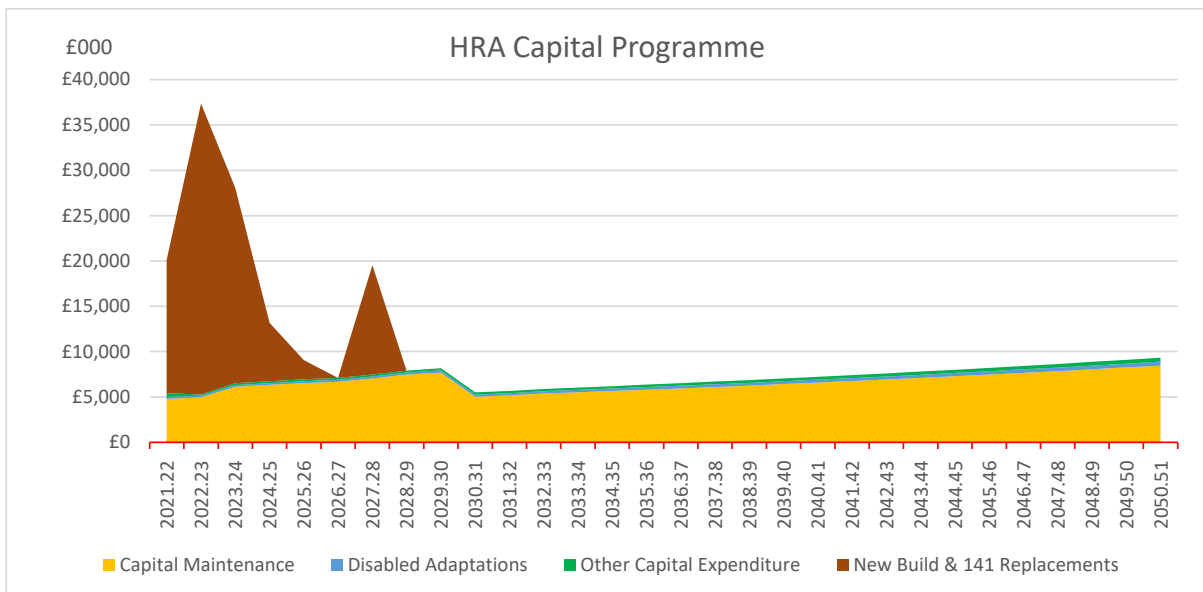
Mid Suffolk Capital Programme

Mid Suffolk 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	-£4,773	-£4,950	-£6,119	-£6,333	-£6,529	
Disabled Adaptations	-£232	-£200	-£200	-£200	-£206	
Other Capital Expenditure	-£416	-£111	-£200	-£200	-£206	
New Build & 141 Replacements	-£14,661	-£32,102	-£21,566	-£6,434	-£2,114	
Total expenditure	-£20,082	-£37,363	-£28,085	-£13,168	-£9,055	
Financing						
RCCO	£1,527	£1,151	£1,308	£2,151	£2,084	
HRA Reserve	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	
Strategic Priorities Reserve	£4,705	£0	£0	£0	£0	
MRR	£3,911	£4,452	£4,942	£5,237	£5,382	
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	£527	£666	£683	£700	£718	
Gen Cap Reserve	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	
SO Receipts	£238	£2,566	£4,052	£355	£0	
Leaseholders' reserve	£26	£0	£0	£0	£0	
HRA Reserve 4	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	
RTB - 141 Receipts	£3,650	£7,111	£6,255	£2,010	£803	
Capital Grant	£355	£945	£945	£0	£0	
S106	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	
Returned to Capital Reserve	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	
Borrowing	£5,142	£20,472	£9,901	£2,716	£67	
Total financing	£20,082	£37,363	£28,085	£13,168	£9,055	
Net over/ (under) financing	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	

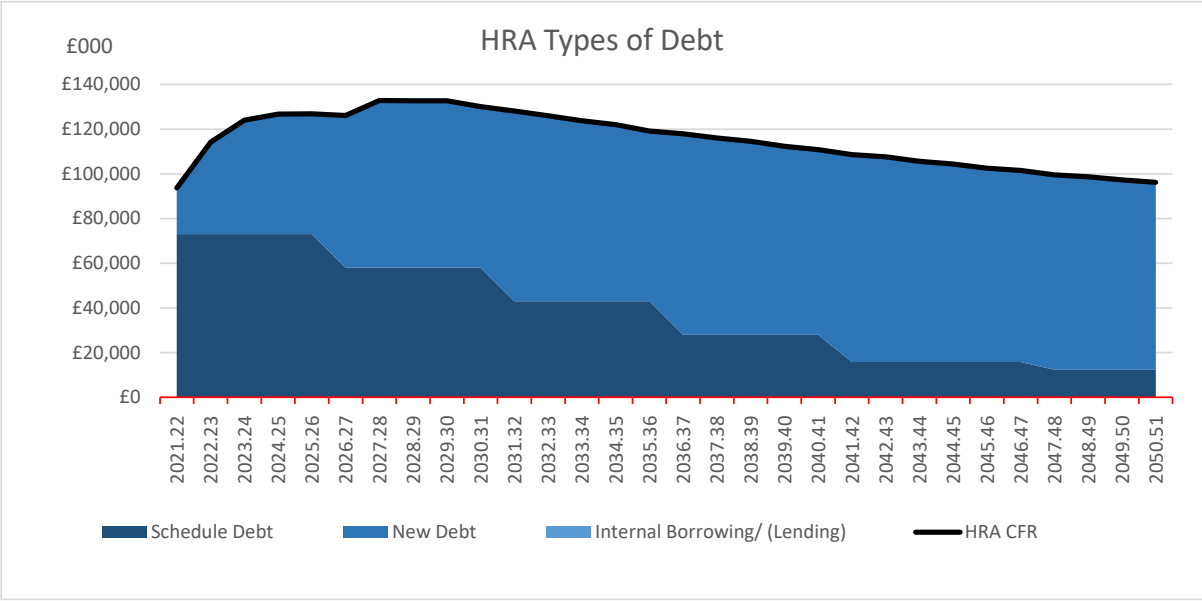
Baseline – HRA Balances – Mid Suffolk



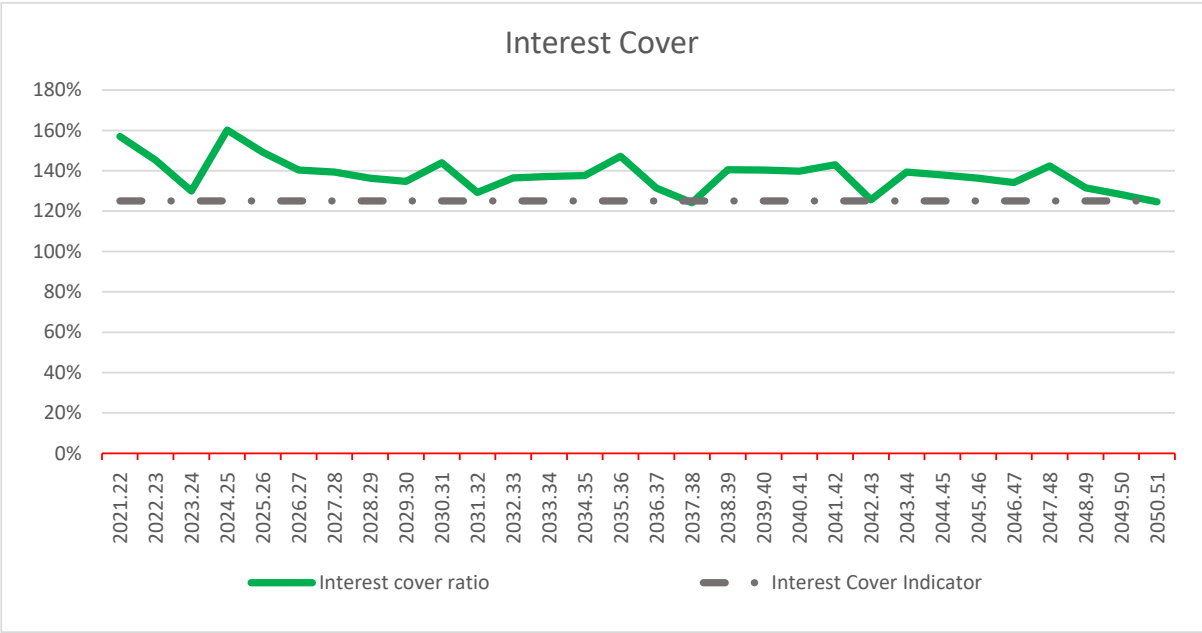
Baseline – HRA Capital Programme – Mid Suffolk



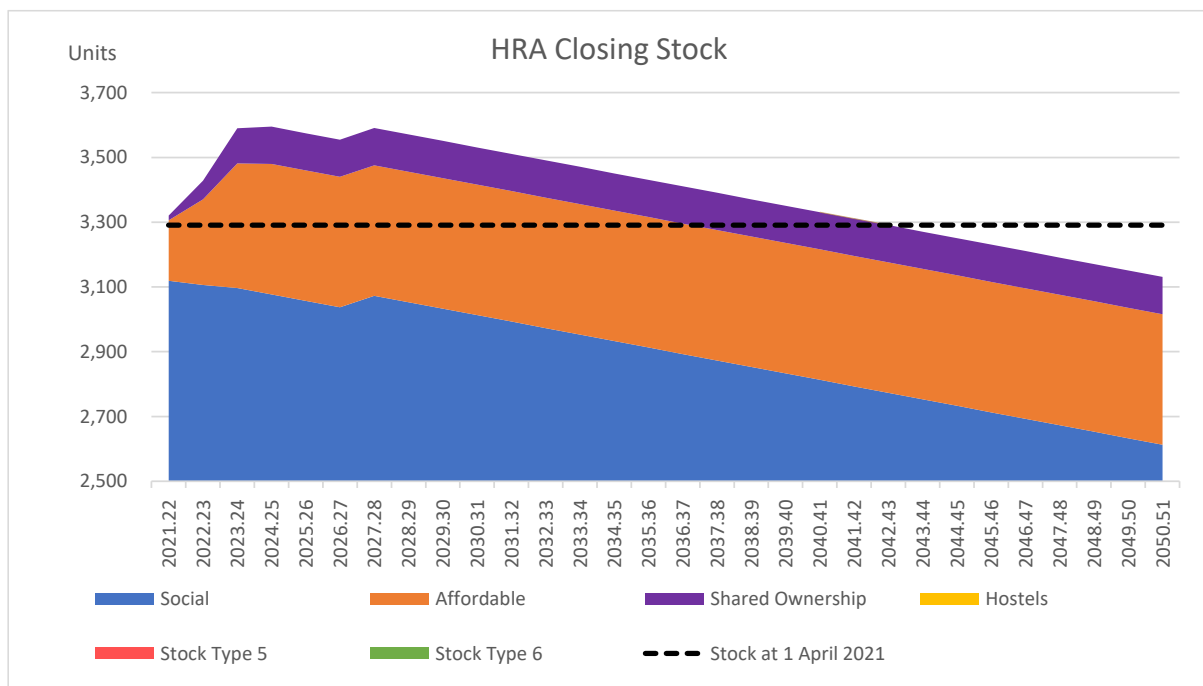
Baseline – HRA Debt – Mid Suffolk



Baseline – Interest Cover – Mid Suffolk



Baseline – Closing Stock – Mid Suffolk



In summary the baseline position evidences

- Peak debt: £132.776m in 2027/28
- £96.161m debt remaining in 2050/51
- Interest cover maintained at 138% to 160%
- Interest cover declines over the long term, indicating reducing affordability
- Minimum Revenue Balance maintained

Mid Suffolk Baseline demonstrates some borrowing will be required to deliver the baseline capital programme. With Mid Suffolk income being enough to repay some debt within a reasonable timescale.

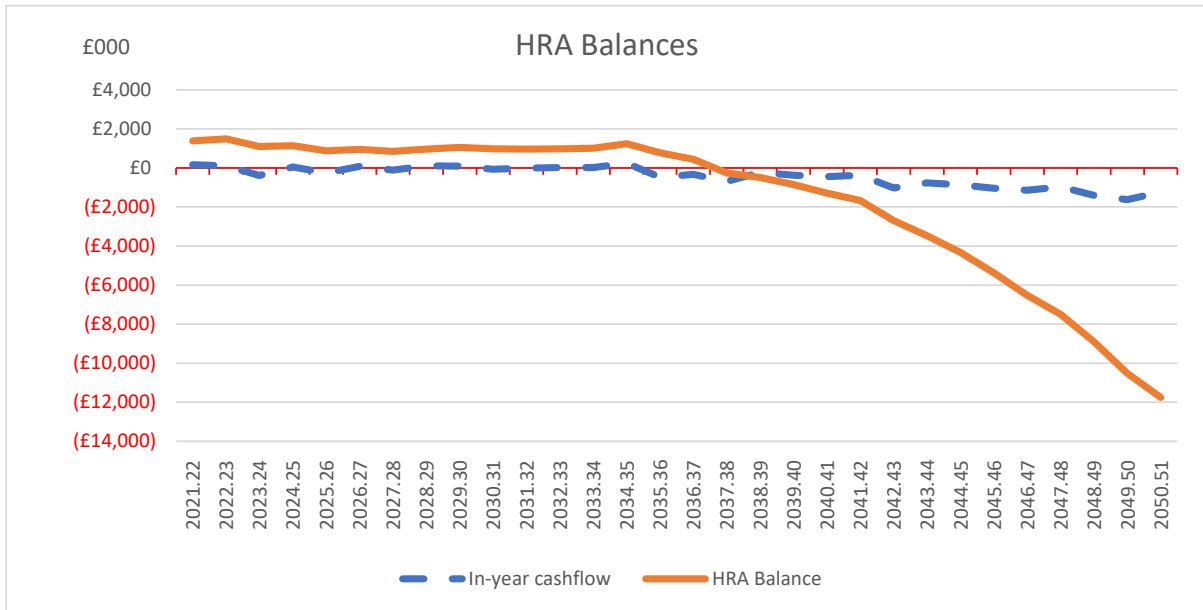
Current gaps in data relating to stock condition, need to be plugged and the intention is to use current stock condition data to update the plan during 2022/2023.

Scenario 1 – Deliver additional zero carbon measures by 2050

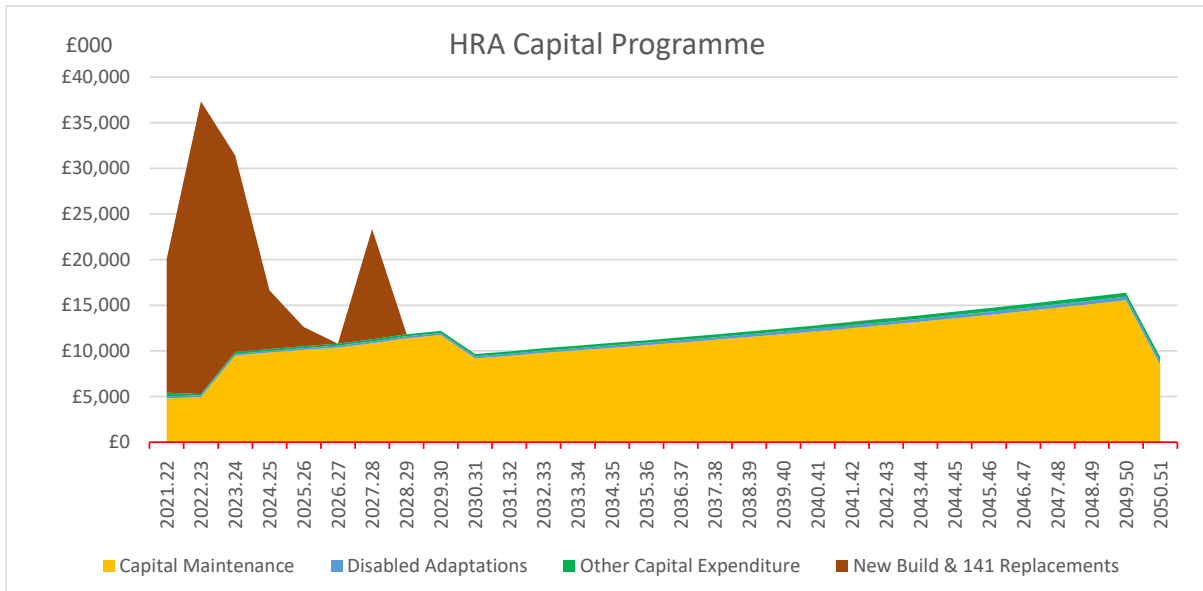
Assumptions include: The HRA Baseline position + deliver zero carbon measures by 2050 with a Retrofit cost of £24k per property. To be completed over 27 years, starting in 2023/24

Scenario 1 - Deliver additional zero carbon measures by 2050

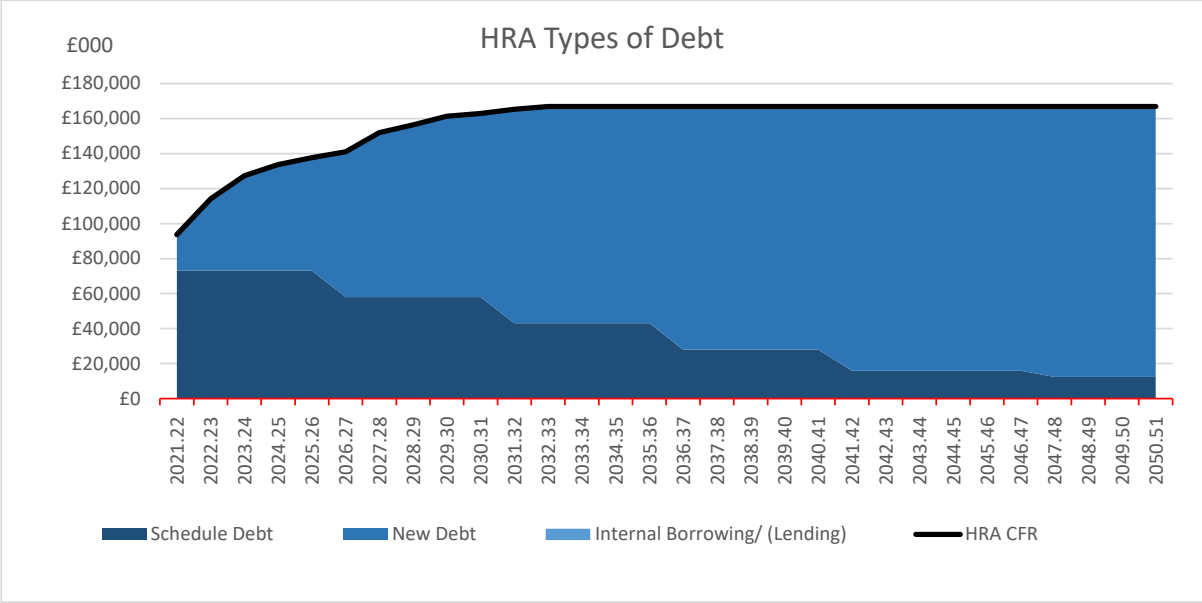
HRA Balances – Mid Suffolk



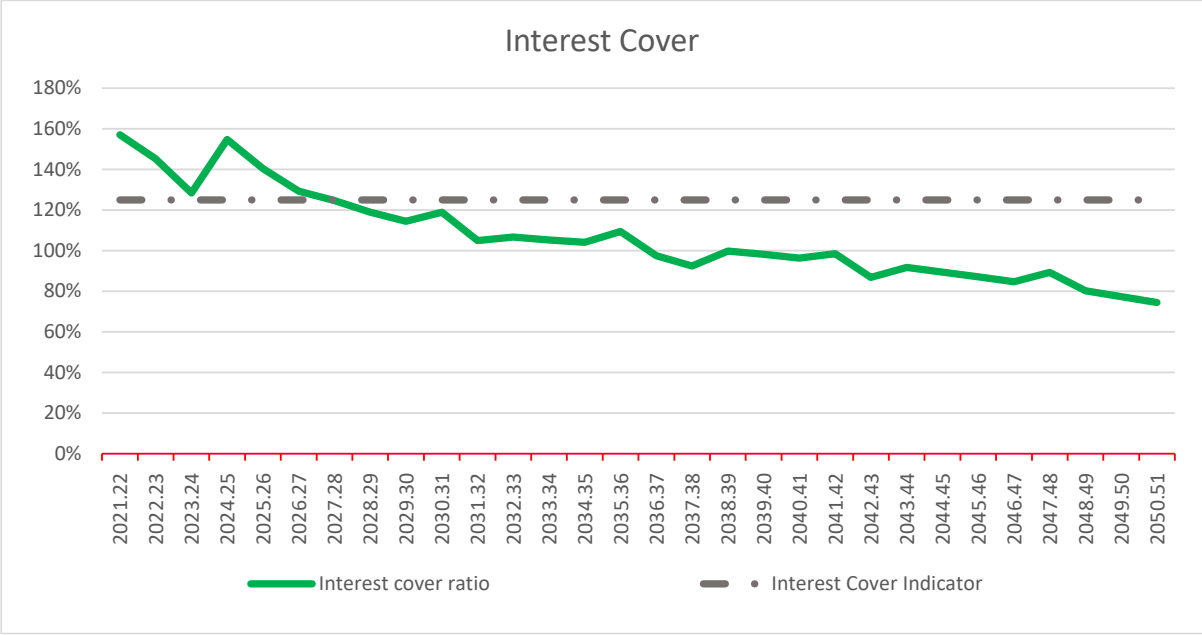
Scenario 1 – HRA Capital Programme – Mid Suffolk



Scenario 1 – HRA Debt – Mid Suffolk



Scenario 1 – Interest Cover – Mid Suffolk



In Summary

- Peak debt: £166.853m from 2032/33
£34.077m more than in the baseline position and occurs 5 years later
- Residual debt: £166.583m after 30 years Which Mid Suffolk would be unable to repay debt
- Unable to deliver the full capital programme over 30 years
A £90.400m shortfall by year 30
- Interest cover not acceptable. With debt unaffordable over the long term
- Minimum revenue balance not maintained. HRA goes into deficit by end of the period

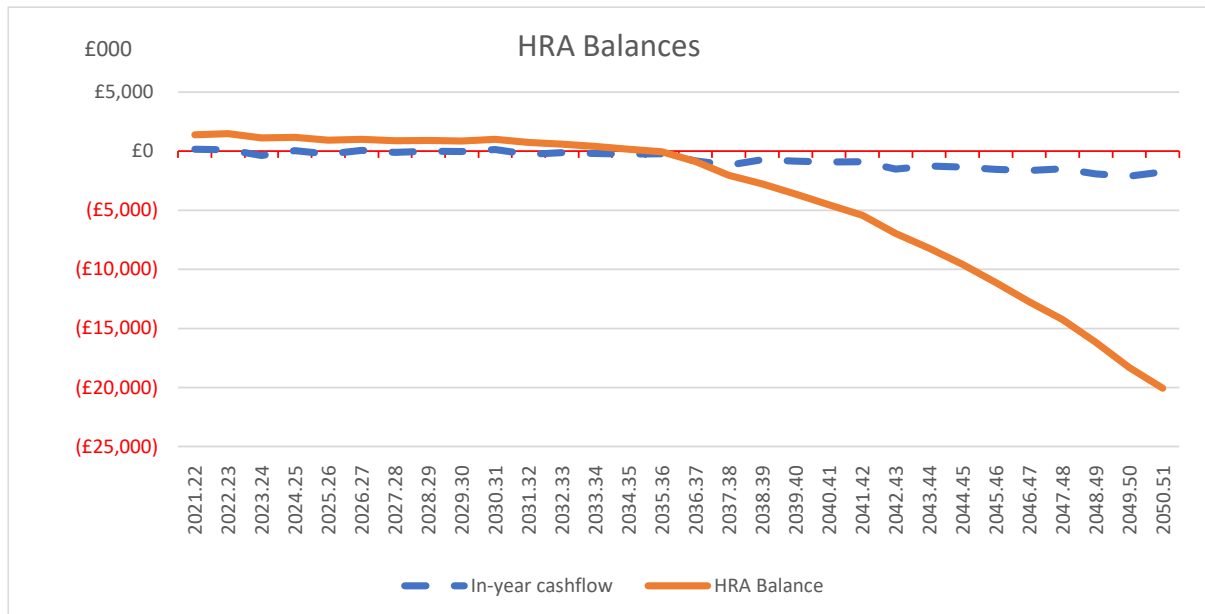
In summary the Authority would be carrying very high debt. With the Capital programme not fully deliverable and not financially sustainable, unless something else changes e.g. higher income, reduced costs or additional grants to subsidise the overall cost of environmental measures.

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

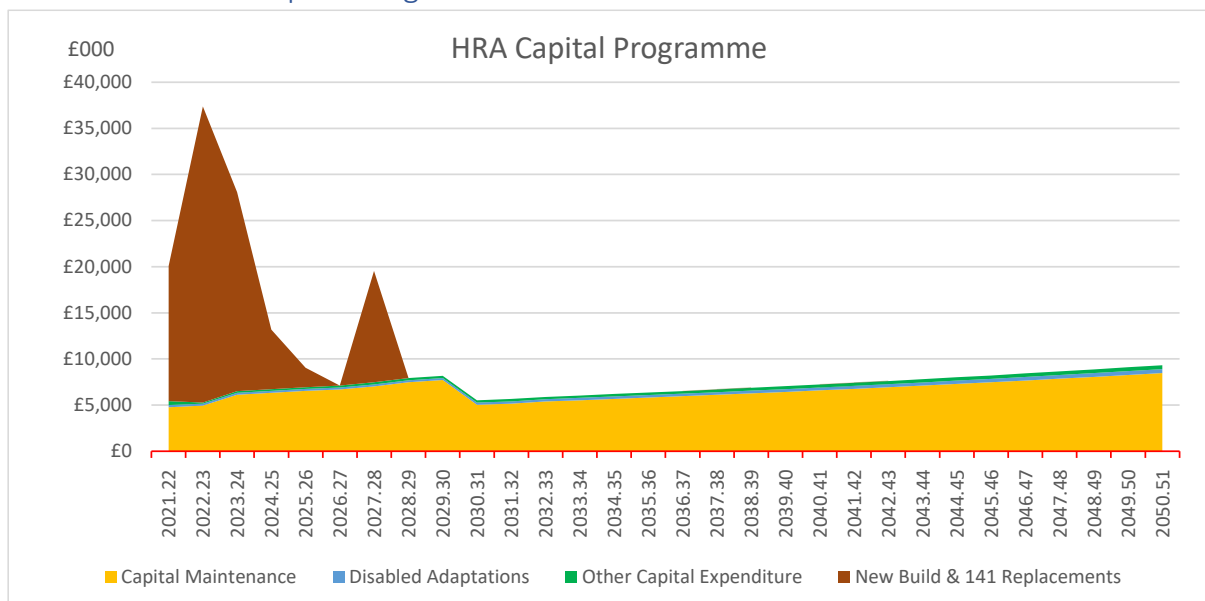
The following scenario considers the baseline, with a 1-year rent freeze in 2023/24

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.

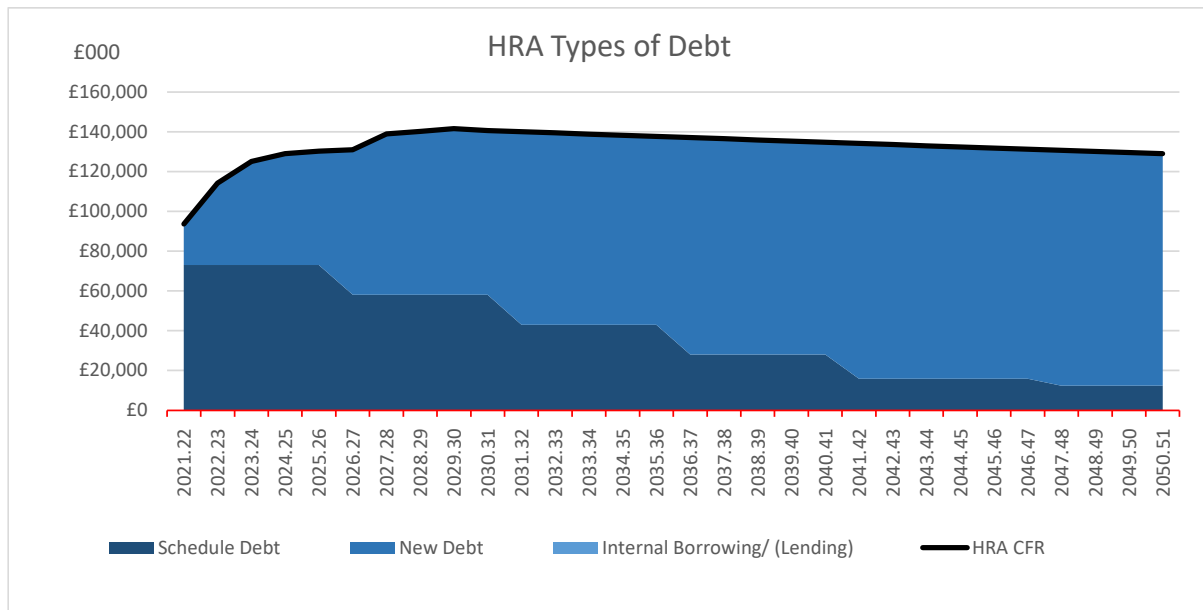
HRA Balances – Mid Suffolk



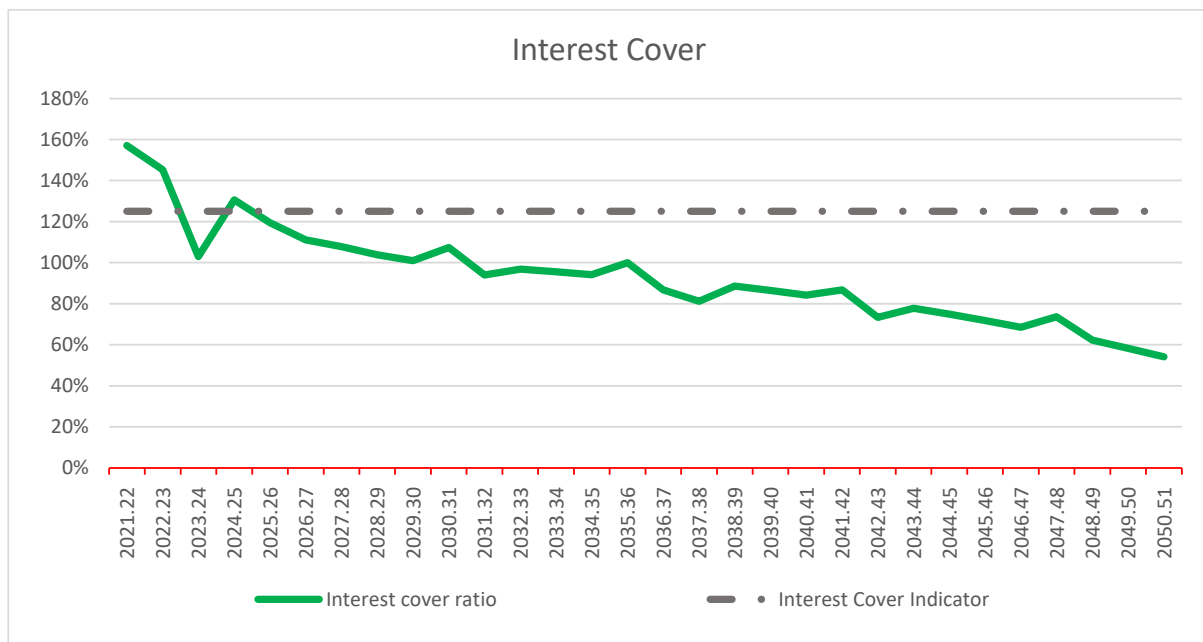
Scenario 2 – HRA Capital Programme – Mid Suffolk



Scenario 2 – HRA Debt – Mid Suffolk



Scenario 2 – Interest Cover – Mid Suffolk



In Summary:

- Peak debt: £141.527m in 2029/30
 - An additional +£8.751m
 - Which occurs 2 years later
- Residual debt: £ 29.023m after 30 years
 - Minimal repayment of debt
- Able to deliver the full 30 year capital programme
- Interest cover is unacceptable. Projections are unaffordable after the medium term

- Minimum revenue balance not maintained. HRA goes into deficit mid-plan

This scenario requires higher debt for the authority, but lost income reduces ability to service that debt. It becomes not affordable or sustainable for Mid Suffolk. With Interest cover at levels that would not be acceptable with the HRA going into deficit mid-plan.

Hence any decision to freeze rents would need to be accompanied by compensating measures that reduce overall costs.

Conclusion

In Conclusion after allowing for EPC – C investment, but before adding zero carbon works Mid Suffolk's HRA has a relatively weak underlying position and hence would be able to repay less debt within a reasonable timescale and less able to maintain the minimum HRA Balance.

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 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.

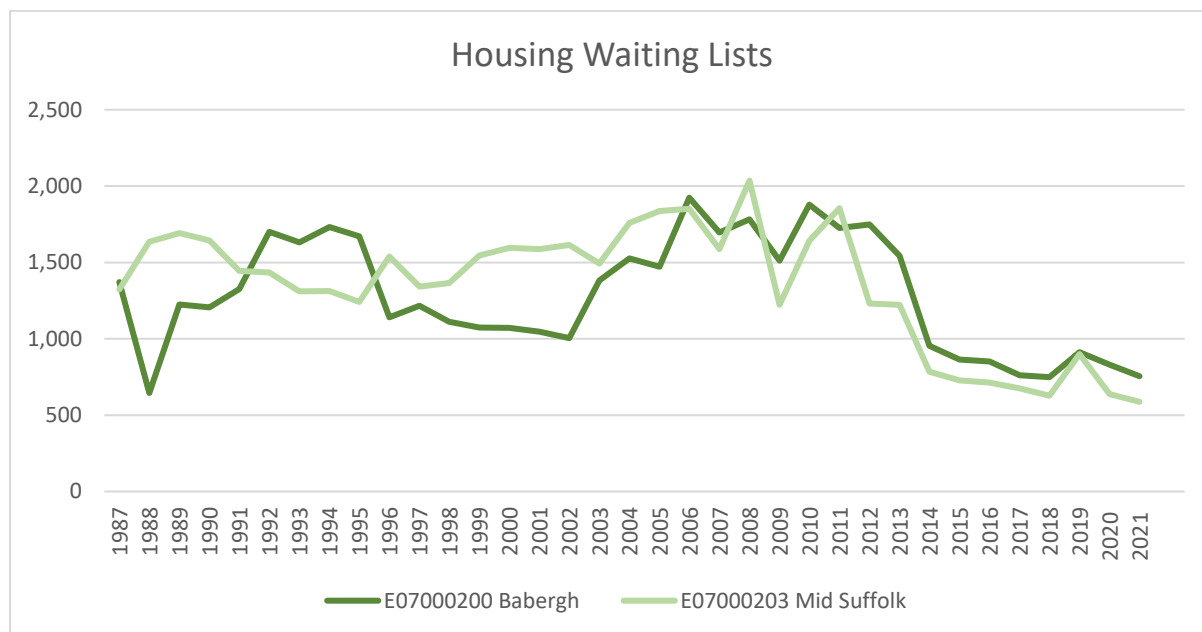
It is therefore the intention to bring forward a plan over the next 12 months which looks to evidence how operating costs can be reduced; this includes the development of Invest to Save Initiatives. This would reduce costs in the long term, along with the use of business process reengineering and lean 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 will support and contribute towards the cost of retrofit measures and which have deliberately been excluded from this financial scenario work.

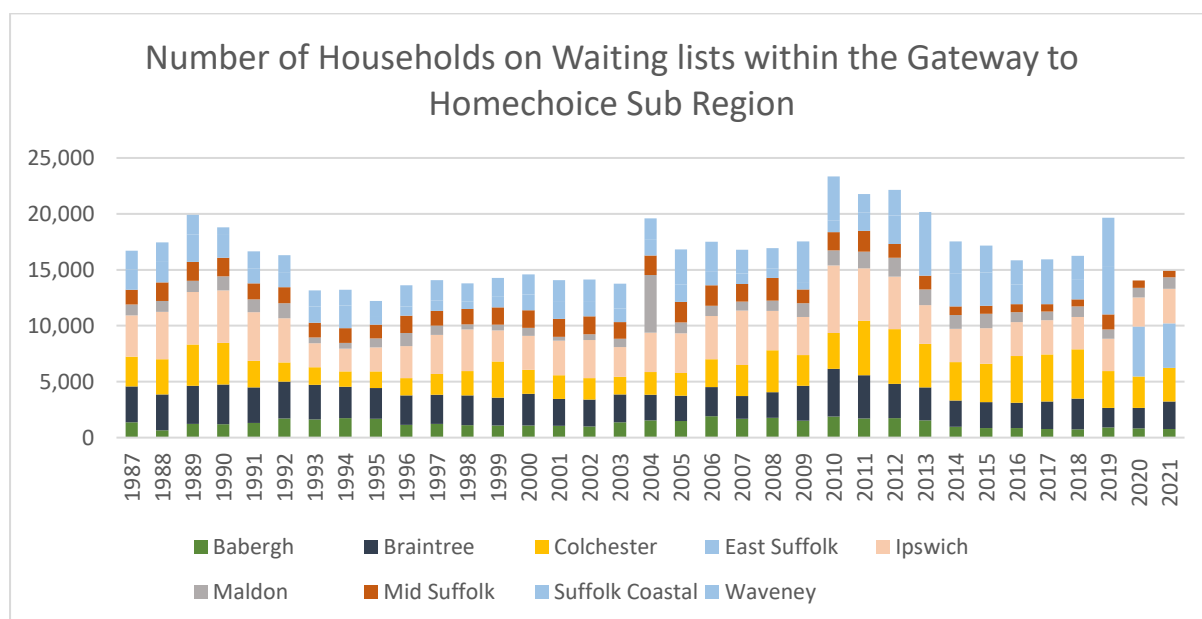
Housing those in need

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.

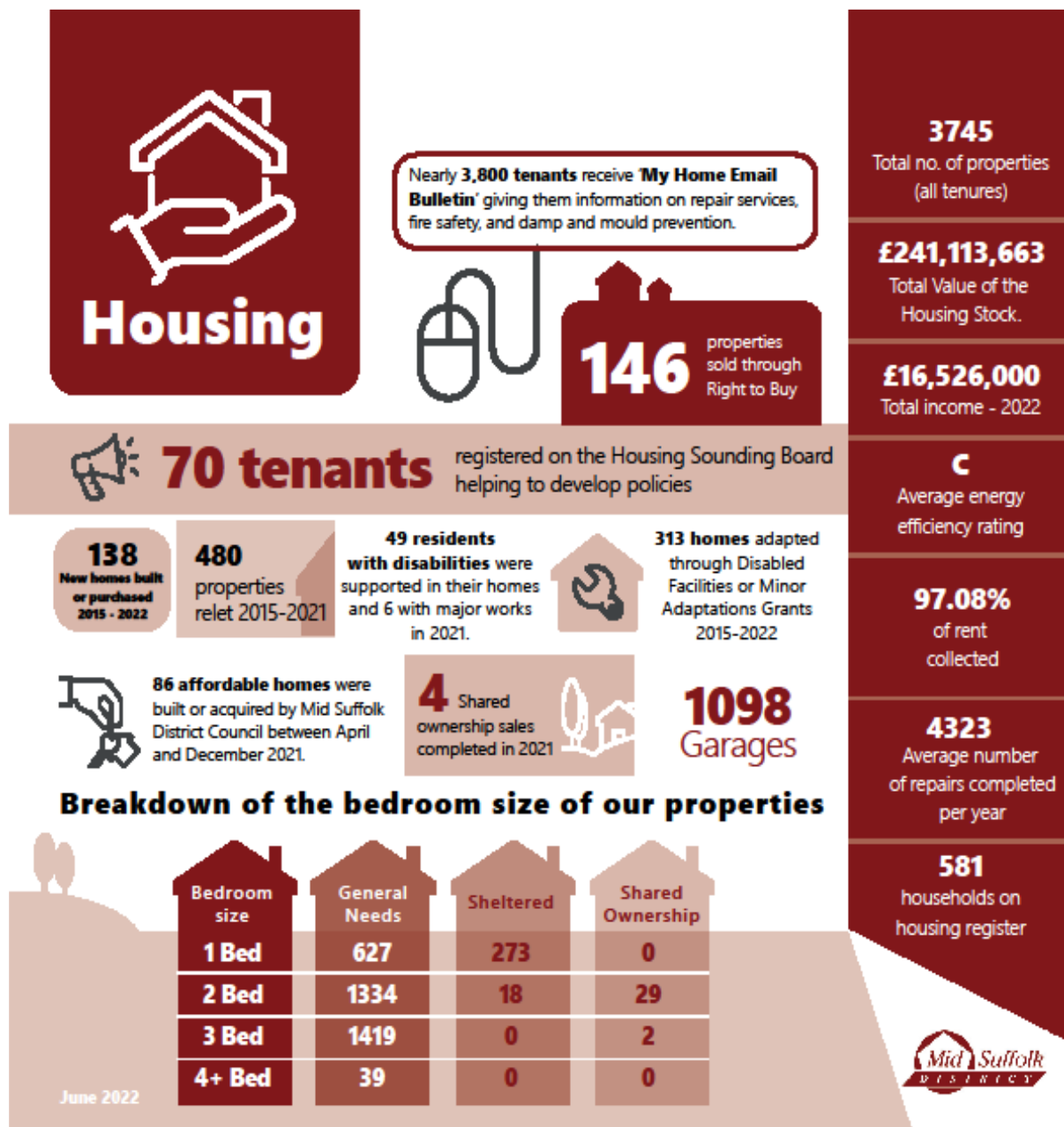
Further national developments focus on the review of the Decent Homes Standard that sets the minimum standards for council owned homes. This is expected to report in 2022 and to focus on how councils' impact on wider "place" and communities across its stock and the delivery of measures to improve energy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

Mid Suffolk – The cost of meeting EPC C by 2030

MID SUFFOLK	EPC	SAP	Number	%	Ave cost	Totals
	A	92+	20	1	-	Already C+
	B	81-91	577	18	-	Already C+
	C	69-80	1,388	42	-	Already C+
	D	55-68	1,133	34	£10,000	£11,330,000
	E	39-54	138	4	£17,000	£2,346,000
	F/G	21-38	37	1	£24,000	£888,000
Total			3,293	100		£14,564,000

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 whom require assistance more education on how they can use their home; to encourage and support minimising energy bills and reduce 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 supports 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 and 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 together with Suffolk partners 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 reduce our costs and improve our environment and 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 and 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. It 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 Appendix) 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 undertaken 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 is 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 plays 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, as well as 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 option 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. This 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 and 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, safety, and how it spends its money, 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 the 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 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:

- Regenerate, Redesign, and redevelop 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
- Increase 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 to not 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. This 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 teams 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 also 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. It will increase 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 tenancy 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 tenancy including 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.

The introduction of 'digital tenancies' 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' It's important to us that we can provide a 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 we are 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 and 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.

The Housing management cost per property (which is the cost of core landlord services including specialist staff such as Housing Officers and 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 - 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.

Design Guide

Housing Design Guide

May 2022



APPENDIX Five

Technical Specification

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

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Agenda Item 10

MID SUFFOLK DISTRICT COUNCIL

TO: Council	REPORT NUMBER: MC/22/8
FROM: Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee	DATE OF MEETING: 23 June 2022
OFFICER: Henriette Holloway – Senior Governance Officer	

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. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 That the 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 Mid Suffolk 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 Mid Suffolk 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 Mid Suffolk Overview and Scrutiny committee takes account of the Council's key risks when determining its work plan and carry out its reviews.

9. CONSULTATIONS

9.1 Members of the Mid Suffolk 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 Mid Suffolk Overview and Scrutiny Committee as the year progresses.

11. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

11.1 None.

12. APPENDICES

Title	Location
(a) Appendix A - Mid Suffolk Overview and Scrutiny Committee Annual Report 2021/22	Attached

13. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

13.1 None.

MID SUFFOLK
DISTRICT COUNCIL
ANNUAL REPORT
2021/22

Overview & Scrutiny



MID SUFFOLK DISTRICT COUNCIL ANNUAL REPORT

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

Having met virtually throughout the previous municipal year, it was such a relief to meet in person again in June 2021, and throughout the year. Presentations by officers, questioning, and debate have greater impact when we are all in the room together, whether it be in the King Edmund Chamber or a meeting room in Endeavour House.

As in previous years, most of the meetings during the year have been joint meetings with Babergh Overview and Scrutiny members, with Mary McLaren (Chair of Babergh Overview and Scrutiny) and I alternating the Chairing role. Separate meetings are held when items are relevant only to one or other of the two sovereign councils, for example scrutiny of the General Fund Budget and the Housing Revenue Account Budget and to deal with the call in of a Cabinet decision.

Our Work Plan for 2021/2022 included a number of topics which are scrutinised annually, and others which were chosen by the Joint Committee. We have carried out scoping exercises and set up a Task and Finish Group to look at the unmet transport needs of our residents. We have received presentations from senior officers and invited witnesses and received information bulletins. A summary of our discussions on each topic, together with our agreed recommendations and how we added value to the work of the Council, are included in the main body of this report.

Our meetings are planned at monthly Chairs' and Vice Chairs' meetings, where we discuss with officers the content of reports and information bulletins which they will be presenting at future committee meetings. These informal meetings and Task and Finish Group meetings have been held virtually; MS Teams is appropriate for meetings with fewer participants, some of whom are present for only part of a meeting.

The work of scrutiny relies heavily on the commitment of officers, and we have benefited greatly from the input and support of Henriette Holloway, Jan Robinson and Emily Yule. I would like to record my thanks to them and also to Robert Carmichael, Bethany Webb and Alicia Norman who have also assisted for part of the year. I am grateful too for the input and support of James Caston, our Vice Chair, and to Mary McLaren, Chair of Babergh Overview and Scrutiny, and all members of both Overview and Scrutiny Committees.

Planning for next municipal year was delayed when two members of the Babergh Committee took on Cabinet portfolios and resigned from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Nevertheless, a draft Work Plan is presented to Council for noting in June 2022. This will need to be built upon when the newly appointed committee is able to meet for the first time.

Keith Welham Chair, Mid Suffolk Overview & Scrutiny Committee.

Co-Chair, Babergh & Mid Suffolk Joint Scrutiny Committee. June 2022.

**MEMBERS OF THE MID SUFFOLK OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
2021/22**



Chair - Cllr Keith Welham

Vice Chair - Cllr James Caston

Cllr Terence Carter



Cllr Keith Scarff

Cllr Paul Ekpenyong

Cllr Dave Muller

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 a 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 workplan. 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 Babergh 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.

Reviews Carried out by the Mid Suffolk Overview and Scrutiny Committee 2021/22

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

In June 2021 the Joint Committee reviewed the performance of CIFCO during 2020/21 and considered the draft business plan for 2021/22.

The Assistant Director - Assets and Investments and the Mid Suffolk Cabinet Member for Assets and Investments, presented the main report. Four witnesses, who were members of the CIFCO Board of Directors, presented the essential details relating to the proposed business plan. Member questioning included the value of shares, opportunistic investments, the location of the investments, late payment of interest, borrowing costs, reletting and refurbishment of properties, whether the KPI measures were appropriate and effective, debt collection start date, weighted average unexpired lease term, future targets for sustainability, the management fee and possible shortfall in repayments.

RESOLVED

That the Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee had considered the four bullet points in paragraph 1.2 of the Executive Summary and that the Committee was satisfied that the CIFCO Capital Ltd Business Plan and Investment Plan was robust for 2021/22.

VALUE ADDED

A range of concerns were raised by members of the Joint Committee, and these were considered by officers and Directors of CIFCO in preparing a report to the sovereign councils. The annual scrutiny of CIFCO ensures that the Business Plan is robust and provides the invited Board members for 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

In June 2021, the Joint Committee scrutinised the Joint Parking Strategy and timeline for introducing changes. The Assistant Director – Environment and Commercial Partnerships introduced the report and informed Members that the timeline had changed, as an external consultant would be engaged to carry out parking surveys and other pre-consultation work. Members welcomed the shortening of the timescale and were given an assurance that the new proposed date for completing pre-consultation work of summer 2022 took account of the need for Cabinet and Council decisions.

RESOLVED

- 1.1 That the Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee noted the contents of report JOS/21/3.**
- 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 paragraph 4.6:**
 - Voluntary groups**
 - Emergency services**
 - Electricity supply companies and EV charging providers.**

And that the following topics should be considered:

- Pavement parking**
 - Town centre on-street parking**
 - Impact of car park maintenance and management on climate change**
 - Park and ride, park and walk, park and cycle**
 - Hospital and health and social care centre 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's issues within both Districts and in doing so recognised 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 raised a range of concerns about parking, including the need to take account of legislation and enforcement in respect of pavement parking and more detailed issues listed in the recommendations. By raising these issues and concerns, the Committee has added value to the pre-consultation process by influencing the scope of pre-consultation work.

3. LAND ADOPTIONS POLICY INFORMATION BULLETIN

At the July 2021 meeting of the Joint Committee, the Corporate Manager for Strategic Property presented an Information Bulletin and invited questions and comments. Members raised questions and concerns about maintenance of open spaces on housing developments, maintenance of roadside verges, the scope of mapping software, maintaining an accurate record of open spaces and responsibility for maintaining them, and the role of planning enforcement if open spaces are not properly laid out and maintained, during and after completion of new developments.

VALUE ADDED

The Corporate Manager agreed that the points raised would be taken into account as work proceeds on developing a Land Adoptions Policy.

4. INSOURCING PUBLIC REALM PROJECT INFORMATION BULLETIN

At the July 2021 meeting of the Joint Committee, the Assistant Director for Environment and Commercial Partnerships outlined the work being undertaken to insource the service provided in Babergh and provide an in-house service to both Districts. Mid Suffolk Members agreed that the in-house service provided in that district was well run and would not wish its effectiveness to be diluted. Babergh Members outlined concerns about the current service provision in Babergh, which was provided under a contract which was nearing its end date. The Assistant Director gave details of progress made and next steps required, including the transfer of contractor's staff to the Councils.

VALUE ADDED

The positive comments made by Mid Suffolk Members gave reassurance that an in-house service could be provided effectively. Concerns raised in respect of potential understaffing if operatives chose not to transfer, had been considered by officers and Members were assured that steps would be in place to hire staff at short notice if necessary.

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

In September 2021, the Joint Overview & Scrutiny Committee met and received a presentation by the Housing Needs and Standards Manager to inform Members on the progress to date on actions identified in the strategies, the actions currently underway, and future actions planned over the remaining period of the strategies.

Queries were raised concerning redevelopment of partly redundant garage blocks, housing for rough sleepers and the effects of the pandemic on housing needs and supply.

MSDC Members suggested that joint working between Citizens Advice staff and Housing Officers could be improved and further suggested consideration be given to the creation of a new post to be jointly funded by Citizens Advice and MSDC. An additional proposal to that effect was made and a separate vote of MSDC Members only was taken.

RESOLVED by the Mid Suffolk Overview and Scrutiny Committee:

In relation to 3.13, this committee recommends that urgent action is taken, to build improved joined up working with Citizens Advice and recommends that this is a top priority. Furthermore, that consideration is given to creating a jointly funded post by Cabinet, in order to move this priority and critical area forward.

RESOLVED

- 1.1 That the content of the action plan was noted and the Committee asked for further information on the day to day activities of the action plan.**
- 1.2 That the homes and housing strategy and homelessness and rough sleeping strategy be reviewed twice yearly.**

VALUE ADDED

Members raised concerns about the apparent lack of joint working with Local Citizens Advice centres. Officers had considered ways of providing a more joined up service, particularly to help avoid debt and homelessness.

6. REVIEW OF THE SHARED LEGAL SERVICE

In November 2021, the Joint Committee received a report on the Shared Legal Service. The Service Manager introduced the report which outlined the way the service operated across Babergh and Mid Suffolk Councils. The Service reports to a Legal Services Steering Board made up of representatives of the two Councils and to the Senior Leadership Team. There is a close working relationship between the Service Manager and the Assistant Director for Law and Governance.

There were questions around recharging costs and performance management arrangements and whether the fees paid by each authority were in the same proportion as the value of work done for each of the separate authorities. Members felt that the Steering Board should review recharging mechanisms and performance monitoring arrangements and their findings and recommendations be reported back to the Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

RESOLVED

- 1.1 That the Legal Services Steering board review the recharging 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 the Overview and Scrutiny Committee via an information bulletin after its meeting in December.**

- 1.2 That the information bulletin in recommendation 1 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 in six months into the new financial year demonstrating the split of new legal matters between Babergh and Mid Suffolk.

VALUE ADDED

Members expressed a range of concerns and asked for historical and current data on costs, recharging and performance to be presented to the Joint Committee to allow a better understanding of the recharging mechanism and performance trends.

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

RESOLVED

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

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

RESOLVED

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.

9. REVIEW OF LOCAL CITIZENS ADVICE (LCA)

In December 2021, the Chief Officer of Citizens Advice (Sudbury) and the Chief Officer of Citizens Advice (Mid Suffolk) presented to the Committee outlining how the Local Citizens Advice (LCA) had adapted their services since the start of the Covid-19 Pandemic.

A wide range of aspects of the LCA's work was discussed. In response to questions about the process for assisting people who owed debts to multiple sources, the Chief Officer of Citizens Advice (Mid Suffolk) responded that the LCA supported people with their debts, in particular working with the Shared Revenue Partnership to allow Council Tax and housing benefit to be viewed jointly under a single view of debt.

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 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.**

RESOLVED by the Mid Suffolk Overview and Scrutiny Committee:

Mid Suffolk Cabinet to confirm that funding previously allocated to Thetford and Diss LCA be allocated to Mid Suffolk LCA.

VALUE ADDED

There was general agreement that the LCA presentation had given sufficient reassurance that there was help for residents to access services. However, the joint way of working for a single view of debt needed to be introduced at the earliest opportunity. Members also agreed that an increase in funding in line with inflation on a three-year rolling plan should be recommended again to both Cabinets.

10. DRAFT GENERAL FUND AND FOUR-YEAR OUTLOOK

In January 2022, Mid Suffolk Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered the 2022/23 budget and asked that the Cabinet Member for Finance have regard to their comments before finalising his budget and presenting it to Council.

Detailed comments were made in respect of staffing and vacancy rates, and the very high level of reserves, which it was planned to increase.

A more general concern was the timing of scrutiny of the budgets. Members considered that there would be greater value in reviewing the budget process and assumptions made in developing a detailed budget. This would allow a more strategic approach to scrutinising the budget.

RESOLVED

- 1.1 That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee notes the General Fund budget 2022/23 and Four-year Outlook and asks that the Cabinet Member for Finance and officers take into consideration the comments made at the meeting.**

- 1.2 That the budget preparation process is reviewed by the S.151 Officer and the Monitoring Officer to ensure that the O&S Committee can be involved earlier in the development of the budget, enabling a more strategic approach to scrutinising the budget. Further, that the Monitoring Officer and Constitution Working Group review the terms of reference for the O&S Committee and the JAS Committee to ensure that financial scrutiny is being undertaken in the most appropriate way.**

VALUE ADDED

Comments made by members of the Committee were taken account in the drafting of the budget and report presented to full Council in February. A review of the involvement of Overview and Scrutiny Committee in the budget setting process is being reviewed, along with the Terms of Reference of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the Joint Audit and Standards Committee.

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

In January 2022, Mid Suffolk Overview and Scrutiny Committee expressed concern about the large amount of planned maintenance carry forward, and asked how much of this work could be completed in the forthcoming year. The Assistant Director – Housing responded that to ensure the fund carry over would be spent, the staffing resource, existing contracts and their renewal had been looked at. He explained that retrofitting energy saving measures would be a great percentage of the planned maintenance schedule.

Members also queried whether sufficient funding would be available for updating council homes and the justification for the proposed increase in council house rents.

RESOLVED

- 1.1 That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee noted the Housing Revenue Account 2022/23 and Four-year Outlook.**
- 1.2 That information be provided for the level of council rents compared with other authorities for benchmarking for the current year and the number of tenants receiving rent rebate in the current financial year be provided to Council in February and to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for their review of the Budget in the next municipal year.**

VALUE ADDED

Comments made by Members of the Committee were taken account in preparing the report to the February full Council meeting. Furthermore, additional information surrounding the level of council house rents in comparison to other authorities' properties and information about the number of tenants in receipt of a rent rebate in the current year has since been provided.

12. CALL IN OF THE DECISION FROM THE MID SUFFOLK CABINET MEETING 6 DECEMBER 2021 MCA/21/32

The Lead Signatory, Councillor Mellen, highlighted the reasons for the call in. He explained that the environmental implications were not satisfactorily explained in the report upon which the Cabinet made their decision. He and Councillor Stringer gave examples of information, which they considered Cabinet should have been made aware of.

The Cabinet Member for Environment, Councillor Fleming, provided her summary of the events at Cabinet and suggested that the main issues related to the desire for a mandatory timetable for transition to EVs and that the wider implications of this transition were not fully considered.

Members of the Committee sought and received clarification on a number of issues, followed by speeches by way of summary from Councillor Fleming and Councillor Mellen.

Asked by the Chairman to present a summary, Councillor Fleming said that in order to have an environmentally secure service the policy needed to be approved. It was the result of both informal and formal work, which had produced a balanced policy that provided safety and accessibility for taxi and private hire vehicles.

Councillor Mellen summarised that he believed that much of the policy had been well considered, however it should be revisited in order to align with Mid Suffolk's environmental objectives. A timetable would also be needed in order to provide incentives to the trade around mandating EVs, and formal responses around this issue were needed.

Councillor Mellen, Councillor Stringer and Councillor Fleming left the meeting and Committee members debated the issues. Some members strongly expressed views which supported the policy and process and others felt strongly that not all available information had been provided to Cabinet. During the debate, Members made the following observations:

- That insufficient evidence of the pre-consultation regarding mandating conversion of vehicles to EV was made available to Cabinet and further consultation with trade operators was recommended.
- That Cabinet needed further information in respect of plans to provide on- and off-street taxi ranks and on- and off-street EV charging, following further consultation with taxi providers.
- That an action plan was needed to be agreed for the incentive scheme as mentioned in the Cabinet report.
- That Cabinet needed to give further consideration of the discussion of the Licensing and Regulatory Committee and its reasons for recommending the policy to Cabinet.

RESOLVED

- 1.1 Refer the matter back to the Cabinet for reconsideration, together with the observations of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Cabinet will then take a final decision and that decision cannot be called in.**
- 1.2 The Overview and Scrutiny Committee referred the matter back to Cabinet with the following observations.**
- 1.3 Insufficient evidence of the pre-consultation regarding mandating conversion of vehicles to EV, and further consultation with trade is recommended.**
- 1.4 That Cabinet needs further information in respect of plans to provide on- and off- taxi ranks and on-and off- street EV charging, following further consultation with taxi providers.**
- 1.5 That an action plan is needed to be agreed for the incentive scheme as mentioned in 6.1.1 of the Cabinet report.**
- 1.6 That Cabinet needs to give further consideration of the discussion of the Licensing and Regulatory Committee and its reasons for recommending the policy to Cabinet.**

VALUE ADDED

The availability of the Call-In to give an opportunity for Overview and Scrutiny to review a Cabinet decision is an important element of the Council's Constitution. This item gave the opportunity for a fuller examination of all aspects of the preparation of the policy and the policy itself. The policy was discussed again by Cabinet with more information available.

13. TO REVIEW THE ACTIVITY OF THE WESTERN SUFFOLK COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIP (WSCSP)

In March 2022, the Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee reviewed the work of the WSCSP. Councillor Derek Davis, Babergh Cabinet Member for Communities and Chairman of WSCSP, introduced the report highlighting the work of the partnership over the previous year including the work that had been undertaken on Modern Slavery, the new Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy (VAWG), and the progress that had been made by the partnership in relation to anti-social behaviour. MSDC Councillor Sarah Mansel, Vice Chairman of the WSCSP, explained that domestic abuse figures for the partnership are higher than the national average, and that this is a priority area for the WSCSP, and will focus on prevention and support for victims.

Superintendent Wratten of Suffolk Police and the Corporate Manager – Communities were present to respond to queries from the Committee. Members raised concerns about modern slavery, the effectiveness of CCTV in Sudbury and Hadleigh, and whether or not enough emergency accommodation was available in Suffolk. Queries were raised about under-reporting and what was being done to reduce the current crime rate. Members felt that the name of the partnership, whose area stretches to the Shotley Peninsula, was confusing.

RESOLVED:

- 1.1 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 the WSCSP.**
- 1.3 That the reporting toolkit 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 is circulated to all councillors with the O&S chair's report to full council on this item.**
- 1.6 Review the timing of the WSCSP report based on the meeting cycle of the partnership and 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 a strategic focus.**
- 1.7 To explore whether the strategic assessment is available from the County Council.**

VALUE ADDED

The Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee reviews the work of the WSCSP annually; through questioning of witnesses and debate, a better understanding of the work of the partnership evolves and information is gathered and passed on to all council members and their residents.

14. DRAFT EMPTY HOMES POLICY

In April 2022, the Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered a report on the policy and process for bringing empty homes back into occupation.

Councillor Jan Osborne introduced the report to the committee and the Senior Environmental Health Officer, and the Housing Needs and Standards Manager presented the process of bringing an empty home back into use, including the use of 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.

In response to a query about whether, with an additional Empty Homes Officer appointed by Mid Suffolk, a fair and equal service could be ensured for Babergh, the Housing Needs and Standards Manager responded that through the case management system it was ensured that work would be allocated to officers equally for each Council. Councillor Jan Osborne added that the workload would be monitored by Cabinet to determine whether an additional officer would be needed for Babergh.

There followed an extensive debate during which suggestions were made for consideration when finalising the policy.

RESOLVED:

- 1.1 That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee compliments 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 was insufficient and asked that Cabinet raise the level of loans and consider if a nominal rate of interest should be applied.**
- 1.3 That loans for works to improve for energy efficiency of homes should also be available.**
- 1.4 That the information in the communication plan be strengthened including publicity via Parish Council and local community groups and that a briefing note be circulated to Councillors when the policy was adopted.**
- 1.5 That Cabinet be asked to monitor the budget for empty homes this year and consider whether an increase was 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.**

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 Committee gave recommendations to officers to address before the policy was presented to Cabinet.

USE OF TASK AND FINISH GROUPS

PROVISION OF TRANSPORT WITHIN THE DISTRICTS

This group first met in August 2021 to discuss how to approach a review of the availability of public transport within the two districts. There was discussion around what aspects of transport provision should be scrutinised and suggestions made that the focus should be on identifying gaps in service provision.

In September, the Group received presentations from officers of SCC and BMSDC and representatives of Connecting Communities and reported back to the Joint Committee in November, when Members agreed that the Task and Finish Group proceed with a review. The Group met three times but, before their work could be completed, two of the BDC members were appointed to Cabinet positions and resigned from the Task and Finish Group. A further meeting will be held when BDC are able to appoint members to the Group.

SCOPING OF REVIEWS

Members have prepared two scoping documents during the year to give advance guidance to officers and witnesses in preparation for scrutiny of the following topics:

- Provision of transport within the districts.
- Local Citizens Advice Services

INFORMATION BULLETINS

Members received two information bulletins in September 2021:

Customer Service Update

Anti-Social Behaviour

There were questions to seek clarification of some of the details in the papers, after which each of the Information Bulletins was noted.

Agenda Item 11

MID SUFFOLK DISTRICT COUNCIL

TO: Council	REPORT NUMBER: MC/22/9
FROM: Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee	DATE OF MEETING: 23 June 2022
OFFICER: Henriette Holloway – Senior Governance Officer	

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 the 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 Mid Suffolk 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 Mid Suffolk Overview and Scrutiny Committee has one Chair and meets every month. Mid Suffolk and Babergh District Council conduct joint Committees on a regular basis when similar topics have been deemed suitable to be scrutinised jointly. The Charing 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 Mid Suffolk 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 Mid Suffolk 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 Mid Suffolk Overview and Scrutiny Committee as the year progresses.

11. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

11.1 None.

12. APPENDICES

Title	Location
Appendix A – Mid Suffolk Overview and Scrutiny Committee Work Plan 2022/23	Attached

13. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

13.1 None.

MID SUFFOLK 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			
18 AUGUST 2022				
15 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	
20 OCTOBER 2022				

Updated 09 June 2022
Bethany Webb
Trainee Governance Officer Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils
Enquiries: Bethany.Webb@babergmidsuffolk.gov.uk
www.midsuffolk.gov.uk and www.babergh.gov.uk

17 NOVEMBER 2022				
15 DECEMBER 2022				
Annual Review of Local Citizens Advice	To review the Funding Arrangements for LCA in the two Districts.	Corporate Manager Communities	Cabinet Member for Communities	
19 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 Member 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 Member for Finance	
16 FEBRUARY 2023				
16 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 Member for Communities	
20 APRIL 2023				
PRE-ELECTION PERIOD				
18 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
- Land Adoptions Policy
- Information Bulletin on the cost of maintenance of tenanted properties.

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Agenda Item 12

MID SUFFOLK DISTRICT COUNCIL

TO: Council	REPORT NUMBER: MC/22/10
FROM: Cabinet Members for Economic Growth and Health and Wellbeing	DATE OF MEETING: 23 June 2022
OFFICER: Fiona Duhamel	KEY DECISION REF NO. N/A

STOWMARKET, HEALTH, EDUCATION AND LEISURE FACILITIES (SHELF)

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To update Mid Suffolk Council on progress on the Stowmarket, health, education, and leisure facility (SHELF) project and to acknowledge Mid Suffolk Cabinet approval for the initial business case and Masterplan designs.
- 1.2 To update members on the proposed costs of the scheme, the draft funding strategy and request Council to approve the next stage costings to take the project to detailed design phase and submission of a planning application.

2. OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 2.1 Several options for the scheme have been considered with partners, other landowners and key stakeholders, and the option presented in this report provides for the optimum use of the land available to secure maximum wellbeing outcomes.
- 2.2 An initial option to just provide additional facilities on the High school site was considered but this does not create the best opportunities for maximising partnerships and collaboration across all stakeholders.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

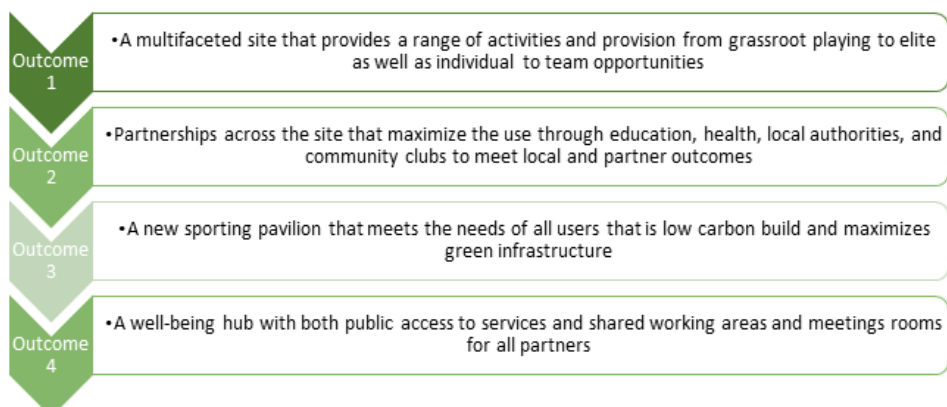
- 3.1 Council to note Cabinets' approval of the Masterplan (appendix a), and initial Business case (appendix b - restricted) for the proposed scheme which includes an indicative cost plan and funding strategy
- 3.2 Council to note the work to date on the partnership strategy (appendix e - restricted) and future management models (appendix d – restricted) for the new scheme.
- 3.3 Council recommended to approve the funding of £700,000 (as outlined in 6.2) to complete detailed design stage and submission of a planning application, next stage of operational management modelling and to appoint a partnership co-ordinator to fully maximise current and future partnership working and collaboration across the site, outlined in 6.4
- 3.4 To create a Member advisory working group for the development of the scheme that includes relevant Cabinet Members and local Ward Members.

REASON FOR DECISION

This development provides a unique opportunity to create a holistic wellbeing hub in Stowmarket which brings together on one site, education, sport, leisure and health facilities and users. The proposal meets many Council, local partnership and government outcomes but also creates the conditions to stimulate some new and exciting partnerships which enhance opportunities for local communities and provide a regionally significant centre in the town.

4. KEY INFORMATION

- 4.1 The proposed Masterplan brings together two key sites, shown in Appendix A. Currently the facilities are operated by different organisations and are home to a high school, leisure centre, three sports clubs and a children's nursery. The sites, whilst operating well, do not benefit from the wider opportunities which could be created in terms of partnership working; including better sharing of facilities to maximise use day and night.
- 4.2 Whilst initially a project set up to resolve issues the school site had with poor quality and a lack of sports facilities for students, it became obvious that opportunities existed to review a wider site area and to take a more holistic look at the partnerships which could be created on the site to maximise use, increase sports participation, and provide positive health and wellbeing impacts for the local community.
- 4.3 The proposed Masterplan and Initial Business Case in Appendix B (restricted) have been developed in partnership with a number of key stakeholders and with Suffolk County Council as owners of part of the site, along with Mid Suffolk Council who own the remainder of the land. These partners range from the High school, a current local primary school and a new primary school under development, the Leisure centre operator, representatives from the local Clinical Commissioning Groups, Active Suffolk, and Sport England.
- 4.4 The Council and its partners commissioned local architects Saunders Bolton, alongside specialist sports management consultants to develop a masterplan which was capable to operating across stakeholders and provided real benefits to the local community.
- 4.5 The initial business case outlines the strategic, economic, commercial, financial and management case for the proposals and outlines the proposed outcomes to be achieved from the scheme. In summary these are:



4.6 Specifically, the Masterplan will create the following facilities which directly contribute to the Councils refreshed Sport and Leisure Strategy adopted in 2021. It is important to acknowledge that *'Physical activity is the single most important thing you can do to improve your physical and mental health and with 25.4% of adults in Mid Suffolk doing less than 30 minutes of exercise per week improved facilities and integrated support is more important than ever.* This was documented within the Sport England Active Lives Survey within the April 2022 Data Release.

Proposed facilities on the site are;

- A 4g football pitch
- A 2g pitch (a range of sports and activities can be played on the pitch)
- A mini track athletics facility
- A new Sport pavilion to replace existing
- A multi-agency wellbeing hub for use by a range of partners
- A Multi Use Games area
- 4 new indoor sport courts
- Additional parking at the Wellbeing hub and pavilion
- Reshaping of the current car parking on the Chilton Fields site
- New cricket square and new nets
- Multi surface perimeter track to encourage information walking and cycling

4.6 Early in the project the Council established a Sports Stakeholder Forum which includes a large number of local sports clubs and societies but particularly those clubs currently using the wider site in some way. The Forum has met regularly and worked with the Council to review plans and provide information on current and planned future use.

4.7 The Council has also engaged with a range of national and regional governing bodies for sport including Suffolk FA, England Athletics, England Netball, Suffolk Rugby and Cricket, British Gymnastics, England Hockey, and others. Their input into the masterplan has been significant as will their ongoing involvement be with their local clubs to support growth, development and future partnership working.

4.8 More recently discussions with health partners have expanded to consider a new Wellbeing Hub building on the site. Whilst discussions with Health and County Council partners are still at an early stage, there is an exciting opportunity to explore new ways to deliver community wellbeing services on a single site, bring together health teams in one place and develop more collaborative working across education, sport and leisure and health services. Some of this work is already underway on the site with the development by the High school of new mental health provision for its students, working alongside local provider, the Mix and mental health services. The delivery of this scheme could enable further development of such partnerships.

5. LINKS to CORPORATE PLAN

5.1 Our organisational vision is "Great communities with bright & healthy futures that everyone is proud to call home" alongside our mission to provide strong, proud, and inspirational leadership; striving for excellence, and together building great communities for everyone to live, work, visit and invest in. This project is more than buildings; the site will enable stakeholders to form stronger partnerships to deliver a range of services to benefit local communities, ensuring that provision is accessible to all.

- 5.2 The project will encourage and provide a wide range of opportunities for our communities to become active. The partnerships between health, sport clubs, leisure provider and education can provide targeted interventions linked to increased activity and promote wellbeing. This will specifically address the pockets of health inequality within Stowmarket.
- 5.3 The project links directly to the Council's Communities and Wellbeing Strategies and its Economic Recovery Plan but also meets partners strategic outcomes and the recently launched Sport England "Uniting the Movement" strategy 2022-25.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 The initial business case and supporting cost plan outlines the projected capital costs of the scheme although much more detailed work will be carried out over the coming months. As part of the business case there is a draft funding strategy outlining external and internal funding opportunities to support the scheme delivery. At this stage it should be stressed that the Funding Strategy requires further detailed conversations both locally and with national funders and this will take place over the coming months. However, it is likely that there will be a need for the Council to become a primary funder of the scheme.
- 6.2 Further work is now required to refine the Masterplan design to obtain more robust capital costs and explore long term financial sustainability and management costs of the site and its proposed facilities. For the next stage of work consultants will be instructed to carry out the work packages identified below.
- Further detailed design work to RIBA 3 – which will enable a planning application to be submitted, a detailed cost plan to be developed and enable detailed funding requests and bids to be submitted
 - Further income and cost projection and modelling to better understand the operational running costs of the new site, any income produced and assess new and existing legal and occupational structures to ensure long term and financial sustainability of the site, facilities, and partnerships
 - Consideration will need to be given in particular to funding of the Wellbeing Hub the costs of which are a large part of the overall project. It is anticipated that space will be leased out to partnership organisations and any subsequent rent could form part of a wider Final Business case on scheme viability. However, this analysis will form the next stage of financial assessment, although it should be noted that any borrowing request will include Minimum Revenue Provision and interest costs to be built into cost projections.
- 6.3 In respect of the modelling and economic forecasting of the site several assumptions have been made.
- The operational of the site will be revenue cost neutral to the Council except for the early years of the scheme which may require some seed funding
 - That all net revenues from site operations will be re invested into the long-term maintenance (whole life cost) and management of the site to achieve set objectives and outcomes

- That existing partners operating on the site will be left in no worse financial position from the new facilities and operating model

6.4 The next stage of costs outlined under 6.2 above are detailed in the table below.

Cost for next stage of delivery	Total
Further detailed design work	£450,000
Surveys	£87,000
Stakeholder action plan delivery and governance model	£32,000
Sport England grant application costs (if invited to submit)	£15,000
Partnership officer (2-year post)	£62,000
Pre app and Planning application fee (estimated)	£22,000
Building control fee	£2,000
Legal fees	£5,000
Contingency cost	£25,000
Total	700,000

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 The current legal structures on the site are complex and require further analysis before any final business case is approved. The sites are broadly in 2 ownerships; Mid Suffolk Council who own the leisure centre, land adjacent and the Chilton Fields Sports sites and Suffolk County Council who own the high school site as education authority. The school site is leased to the Waveney Valley Academies Trust and strict guideline exist in respect of sale or alternatives uses of school land.
- 7.2 The Chilton Fields sports site whilst in MSDC ownership is subject to a lease to the Stowmarket Rugby Club. Negotiations regarding a new lease to the club are currently on hold whilst we move forward discussions around the new facilities.
- 7.3 Whilst it is assumed that no existing clubs or partners will be left in any worse position in terms of site occupancy than they currently have, there is a need to review all structures to ensure that future operation of the whole site is managed in accordance with a set of agreed outcomes and principles. The Councils Sports consultants have outlined some initial concepts in respect of the future management of the site and respective legal structures but as outlined above, further work is required with stakeholders to conclude this area of work and any future recommendations will be brought back to Cabinet as part of the final business case.
- 7.4 The new Wellbeing Hub building is likely to have a range of partners sharing space and consequently will need to have careful consideration of long terms management and legal and operational structures. This will also form part of the final report and Business case to be presented to Cabinet at a later stage.

8. RISK MANAGEMENT

- 8.1 The key risks are set out in the initial business case RESTRICTED appendix B, page 24.

9. CONSULTATIONS

- 9.1 Extensive engagement and consultation have been carried out with a range of partners and this is detailed in the initial business case.
- 9.2 However following approval of the initial business case and recommendations contained in this report it is intended to carry out further consultation in Stowmarket Town Centre as part of the “What’s next for Stowmarket Vision event planned for early September. It is planned to commence consultation with students at the primary and high school, teachers, and users of the sports facilities currently on the site in July.
- 9.3 Work is ongoing in terms of consultation with sports clubs, national governing bodies, NHS partners and other potential occupiers of the site. The partnership project group continues to provide overarching governance to the project through monthly meetings and internal officer project group also meets monthly.
- 9.4 Formal consultation will be carried out as part of any future planning application.

10. EQUALITY ANALYSIS

An initial screening Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) has been completed highlighting the need for a full EQIA will be required at a later stage. The initial screening Equality Impact Assessment is attached in Appendix F.

11. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1 Development of the site would have associated environment impacts requiring assessment and mitigation. The initial design work has proposed roof mounted solar PV and air source heat pumps, to provide self-consumption energy opportunities and cost savings for occupiers. Electric vehicle and bicycle charging points and biodiversity planting and features are proposed to further embed green infrastructure and mitigate carbon impacts.

12. APPENDICES

Title	Location
(a) Masterplan	Attached
(b) RESTRICTED Initial business case – Stowmarket Health, Education and Leisure Facilities	Attached in Part 2
(c) RESTRICTED Funding strategy	Attached in Part 2
(d) RESTRICTED Stowmarket SHELF Management models	Attached in Part 2

(e) RESTRICTED Stowmarket SHELF Partnership strategies	Attached in Part 2
(f) EQIA Initial Screening SHELF	Attached

13. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

13.1 Leisure, Sport, and Physical Activity Strategy – Update 2021

13.2 Wellbeing Strategy 2021 – 2027

13.3 Communities Strategy 2019 - 2036

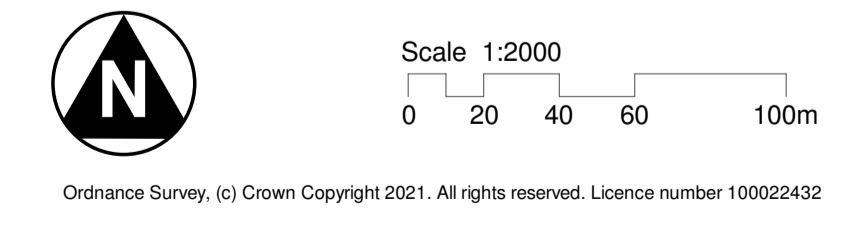
14. REPORT AUTHORS

14.1 Kate Parnum, Project Regeneration Manager

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- KEY**
- Sports hall**
4 courts sports hall (34.5 x 20m)
Further 4 courts shown dotted
 - Wellness Hub including:**
Health / NHS
Office
Diagnostic
Consultation
Meeting spaces
Flexible studio
Nursery
Family Hub
 - Community pavilion including:**
8 changing rooms
Social viewing area
Community spaces
 - Community park run track**
6-lane 130m straight (length circa 1.5 km)
 - Floodlit area**
 - Proposed path through the site



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Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) Initial Screening Form



Screening determines whether the policy has any relevance for equality, ie is there any impact on one or more of the 9 protected characteristics as defined by the Equality Act 2010. These are:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Marriage and civil partnership*
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race
- Religion or belief (including lack of belief)
- Sex
- Sexual orientation

<p>1. Policy/service/function title</p>	<p>Stowmarket Health, Education and Leisure Facilities (SHELF) project</p>
<p>2. Lead officer (responsible for the policy/service/function)</p>	<p>Kate Parnum</p>
<p>3. Is this a new or existing policy/service/function?</p>	<p>New</p>
<p>4. What exactly is proposed? (Describe the policy/service/ function and the changes that are being planned?)</p>	<p>The proposed Masterplan brings together two key sites, shown in Appendix A. Currently operated and operated by different organisations and currently home to a high school, leisure centre, three sports clubs and a children’s nursery the sites whilst operating well, do not benefit from the opportunities which could be created in terms of partnership working including better sharing of facilities to maximise use day and night.</p>
<p>5. Why? (Give reasons why these changes are being introduced)</p>	<p>An exciting opportunity became available to maximise the opportunities and provide communities services in a collaborative and initiative way. Investment in sport and leisure facilities and wellbeing provision for Stowmarket and surrounding villages with the right facilities, that provide paths for all to get involved. This will maximise the options and offers to the community and maximises delivery costs and provide seamless transition from formalised health services to groups and clubs to continue the progress.</p>

<p>6. How will it be implemented? (Describe the decision making process, timescales, process for implementation)</p>	<p>Cabinet to approve the masterplan, initial business case and indicative cost plan and funding strategy</p> <p>Mid Suffolk Council approve the masterplan, initial business case and indicative cost plan and funding strategy and funding to devleope the scheme to RIBA 3</p>
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7. Is there potential for differential impact (negative or positive) on any of the protected characteristics?	No
8. Is there the possibility of discriminating unlawfully , directly or indirectly, against people from any protected characteristic?	No
9. Could there be an effect on relations between certain groups ?	No
10. Does the policy explicitly involve, or focus on a particular equalities group , i.e. because they have particular needs?	No
<p>If the answers are 'no' to questions 7-10 then there is no need to proceed to a full impact assessment and this form should then be signed off as appropriate.</p> <p>If 'yes' then a full impact assessment must be completed.</p> <p>Curently this is high-level masterplan, the next stage a full EQIA will be completed</p>	
<p>Authors signature Kate Parnum</p> <p>Date of completion 6th May 2022</p>	

Any queries concerning the completion of this form should be addressed to the Equality and Diversity Lead.

* Public sector duty does not apply to marriage and civil partnership.

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Agenda Item 16

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of the Local Government Act 1972.

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