

# Public Document Pack



<b>MID SUFFOLK CABINET</b>	
<b>DATE:</b>	<b>MONDAY, 5 DECEMBER 2022 10.30 AM</b>
<b>VENUE:</b>	<b>KING EDMUND CHAMBER, ENDEAVOUR HOUSE, 8 RUSSELL ROAD, IPSWICH</b>

<b>Councillors</b>
<u>Conservative and Independent Group</u> David Burn Julie Flatman Jessica Fleming Peter Gould Lavinia Hadingham Suzie Morley (Chair) Harry Richardson (Vice-Chair) John Whitehead Gerard Brewster

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

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

## **AGENDA**

### **PART 1**

#### **MATTERS TO BE CONSIDERED WITH THE PRESS AND PUBLIC PRESENT**

Page(s)

- 1 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**
- 2 **DECLARATION OF INTERESTS BY COUNCILLORS**
- 3 **MCa/22/28 TO CONFIRM THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 7 NOVEMBER 2022**
- 4 **TO RECEIVE NOTIFICATION OF PETITIONS IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE COUNCIL'S PETITION SCHEME**
- 5 **QUESTIONS BY COUNCILLORS**
- 6 **MATTERS REFERRED BY THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY OR JOINT AUDIT AND STANDARDS COMMITTEES**

## 7 FORTHCOMING DECISIONS LIST

Please note the most up to date version can be found via the website:

[Forthcoming Decisions List » Mid Suffolk](#)

### 8 **MCa/22/29 GENERAL FUND FINANCIAL MONITORING 2022/23 - 5 - 16 QUARTER 2**

Cabinet Member for Finance

### 9 **MCa/22/30 HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT (HRA) FINANCIAL 17 - 24 MONITORING 2022/23 - QUARTER 2**

Cabinet Member for Finance

### 10 **MCa/22/31 QUARTER 2 PERFORMANCE 2022/23 25 - 60**

To note the information contained within the papers for the performance across the whole Council for the period 1 July to 30 September 2022 giving the opportunity to reflect and comment on progress made against the key priorities aligned to the Corporate Plan 2019 – 2027.

Cabinet Member for Customers, Digital Transformation and Improvement.

### 11 **MCa/22/32 COST OF LIVING CRISIS: 5 POINT ACTION PLAN 61 - 92 PROGRESS REPORT (PHASE 1) AND PHASE 2 ACTION PLAN**

Cabinet Member for Communities, Health and Wellbeing

## **Date and Time of next meeting**

Please note that the next meeting is scheduled for Monday, 9 January 2023 at 10.30 am.

## **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](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 the Committee Officer, H. Holloway on: 01449 724681 or Email: [Committees@baberghmidsuffolk.gov.uk](mailto:Committees@baberghmidsuffolk.gov.uk)

### **Introduction to Public Meetings**

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

### **Domestic Arrangements:**

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

### **Evacuating the building in an emergency: Information for Visitors:**

If you hear the alarm:

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

This page is intentionally left blank

# Agenda Item 8

## MID SUFFOLK DISTRICT COUNCIL

<b>COMMITTEE:</b> Cabinet	<b>REPORT NUMBER:</b> <b>MCa/22/29</b>
<b>FROM:</b> Councillor John Whitehead, Cabinet Member for Finance	<b>DATE OF MEETING:</b> 5 December 2022
<b>OFFICER:</b> Melissa Evans, Director, Corporate Resources	<b>KEY DECISION REF NO.</b> CAB365

### GENERAL FUND FINANCIAL MONITORING 2022/23 – QUARTER 2

#### 1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 This report considers the revenue and capital financial performance for the period April to June and highlights any significant variances expected for the financial year 2022/23.
- 1.2 As at 30<sup>th</sup> September the Council is reporting a forecast overspend of £839k on net expenditure. The Council set up an Inflationary Pressure Reserve of £500k in 2021/22 to mitigate against the impact of inflation in 2022/23. This would be used to fund part of the forecast overspend and the budgeted contribution of £3.351m to the Growth & Efficiency Fund would be reduced to £3.012m, as shown in section 5.5.

#### 2. OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 2.1 At this stage in the year, the financial position is for noting only.

#### 3. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 That, subject to any further budget variations that arise during the rest of the financial year, the net expenditure overspend position of £839k and forecast reserve movements, referred to in section 5.5 and Appendix A of the report, be noted;
- 3.2 The revised 2021/22 Capital Programme referred to in Appendix B and section 5.9 be noted.

#### REASON FOR DECISION

**To ensure that Members are kept informed of the current budgetary position for both General Fund Revenue and Capital.**

#### 4. KEY INFORMATION

##### Background

- 4.1 In February 2022 Mid Suffolk District Council approved the General Fund Budget 2022/23 and Four-Year Outlook. The budget setting approach for 2022/23 recognised that the Council has tended to underspend the budget that has been set in recent years, generally due to additional income being received.

- 4.2 Managers have traditionally used a worst case scenario when putting their budget proposals together. Amalgamating these assumptions across the whole organisation has, in recent years, resulted in underspends. The unintended consequence is that resources are committed during the budget process that could be used for other priorities or alternatively savings have to be made that are not actually needed.
- 4.3 For 2022/23 stretching, but realistic, assumptions were used when putting budget proposals together across both expenditure and income. There is a risk that this approach and events that happen during the year could result in an overspend position, but this will be monitored through the regular quarterly reporting to Cabinet and action taken if necessary. The Council has sufficient reserves to be able to manage that scenario should it come to fruition.

### **Inflationary pressures**

- 4.4 The UK rate of inflation increased to around 10% in September 2022 due to higher food, energy and petrol prices. An assessment of the potential impact of inflation has been undertaken and the following have been identified as areas where inflation could have a significant impact during 2022/23:

#### Employees

Employee costs are approximately 40% of the Councils revenue expenditure budget and an increase of 2.2% is included in the budget. The national pay award offer for 2022/23 of £1,925 from 1 April 2022 has been agreed for all staff. This equates to an increase of approximately 8% and an additional cost of £638k.

#### Electricity

The Council procures electricity via Vertas. The price for summer 2022 has been agreed and is 207% higher than summer 2021. The Government energy price cap has reduced the potential impact of winter price increases but costs are still forecast to be 169% higher in 2022/23 than in 2021/22.

#### Gas

- 4.5 Prices have increased significantly, however the price that the Council pays is fixed until September 2023 through its contract with Vertas.

#### Fuel

- 4.6 Petrol and diesel prices increased by over 40% in the year to 13th June 2022. A 40% increase in fuel prices gives a budget pressure of around £14k. HVO prices have not been affected to the same extent and a 10% increase in cost is expected.

#### Contracts

- 4.7 Many of the Council's contracts are fixed and will not be impacted by inflation in 2022/23. There may be an impact from the Shared Revenues Partnership (SRP) from the pay award. A pay increase of 3.1% is included in the SRP budget but it is currently expected that a pay award up to 5% could be absorbed within the budget.

### Interest

- 4.8 Rates for 1-year borrowing have increased from 0.10% in July 2021 to 2.1% in July 2022, with further moves to the end of September to around 4%. The Bank of England have signalled the likelihood of further interest rate rises in its need to control inflation and the latest predictions are that these could reach 4.75%.

All of the Council's existing borrowing is at a fixed rate and will not be impacted by changes in rates. The current forecast does not include any further borrowing during 2022/23 and borrowing needs are being managed through cash flow, using internal cash balances to reduce external borrowing. We are keeping cash flow under close review and will update members in Q3 if there is a variance that we cannot manage away.

### Other costs

- 4.9 Inflation is also expected to push up costs in other areas with the most significant being professional and consultancy fees, repairs, software licences and waste gate fees.

### Income

- 4.10 Fees and charges are currently fixed for 2022/23 and will not rise for inflation, However, demand could be negatively impacted by the cost of living crisis for services such as garden waste, trade waste, planning fees and car park income. The situation will be kept under review.
- 4.11 The current estimate of the impact of inflation on the General Fund is reflected in the variances in each of the services budgets in section 5.4 and Appendix A. These will continue to be monitored as the year progresses.

## **5. 2022/23 OUTTURN POSITION**

- 5.1 The report covers:
- The General Fund Revenue Budget
  - The General Fund Capital Programme.
- 5.2 Budget monitoring is a key tool and indicator on the delivery of the Council's plans and priorities for the year. There will, of course, always be reasons why there are variances such as:
- Economic conditions and those services that are affected by demand
  - Uncertainties relating to funding or other changes that were not known at the time the budget was approved.
- 5.3 Based upon financial performance and information from April to June (with emerging trends extrapolated to the end of the financial year) and discussions with budget managers and the Senior Leadership Team, key variations on expenditure and income compared to budget have been identified.
- 5.4 The key projected variances for 2022/23 at Quarter 2 are shown below:

<b>Service</b>	<b>Full Year Budget £'000</b>	<b>Full Year Forecast £'000</b>	<b>Variance £'000</b>
Assets & Investments	576	715	139
Communities & Wellbeing	707	693	(14)
Customers, Digital Transformation and Improvement	1,978	1,999	21
Economic Growth & Climate Change	270	259	(11)
Corporate Resources	1,710	2,500	790
Housing	520	518	(2)
HR & Organisational Development	461	467	6
Law & Governance	927	931	4
Operations	3,571	3,440	(132)
Planning & Building Control	1,323	1,203	(120)
Senior Leadership Team	700	784	84
<b>Net Expenditure on Services</b>	<b>12,743</b>	<b>13,509</b>	<b>765</b>
Recharge to HRA/Capital	(1,511)	(1,511)	0
Capital Financing Costs	(2,462)	(2,388)	74
<b>Total Budget Requirement</b>	<b>8,770</b>	<b>9,610</b>	<b>839</b>
Council Tax	(6,667)	(6,667)	0
Collection Fund Surplus	(293)	(293)	0
Business Rates less Tariff	(2,901)	(2,901)	0
Business Rates Pooling Benefit	(486)	(486)	0
Distribution of 2020/21 deficit	(438)	(438)	0
Rural Service Delivery Grant	(454)	(454)	0
S31 Grant	(1,409)	(1,409)	0
New Homes Bonus	(1,779)	(1,779)	0
Lower Tier Services & CT Support Grant	(102)	(102)	0
Services Grant	(157)	(157)	0
Business Rates Enterprise Zone	0	0	0
<b>Total Funding</b>	<b>(14,686)</b>	<b>(14,686)</b>	<b>0</b>
Commercial Development Risk Reserve	1,865	1,865	0
Growth & Efficiency Fund (Strategi Priority Loan)	700	700	0
Growth and Efficiency Fund	3,351	3,012	(339)
Inflationary Pressures Reserve	0	(500)	(500)
<b>Total Variance</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>

### **Earmarked Reserves**

Earmarked reserve balances were £24.262 m as at 1 April 2022. The table below shows the projected balance at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023.



	Balance at 31st March 2022 £'000	Movement 22/23 £'000	Estimated balance 31 March 2023 £'000
<b>MID-SUFFOLK</b>			
Business Rates & Council Tax	5,286	(1,120)	4,166
Business Rates Retention Pilot (BRRP)	283	(222)	61
Carry Forwards	399	(399)	0
Climate Change and Biodiversity	927	(72)	855
Commercial Development Risk Management	4,131	1,687	5,818
Community Housing Fund	185	(25)	159
Commuted Maintenance Payments	579	(32)	546
COVID 19	1,357	(441)	916
COVID 19 Business Recovery	0	0	0
Elections Equipment	35	0	35
Elections Fund	119	20	139
Government Grants	347	(17)	330
Growth and Efficiency Fund	7,025	(3,013)	4,012
Homelessness	495	(125)	370
Joint Local Plan	100	(100)	0
Neighbourhood Planning Grants	109	113	222
Planning (Legal)	1,182	(70)	1,112
Planning Enforcement	45	0	45
Repair & Renewals	293	0	293
Rough Sleepers	35	(16)	19
Strategic Planning	81	0	81
Temporary Accommodation	284	96	380
Waste	269	0	269
Welfare Benefits Reform	7	0	7
Well-being	191	(108)	83
Inflationary Pressures Reserve	500	(500)	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>24,262</b>	<b>(4,343)</b>	<b>19,918</b>

## Capital

- 5.5 Use of capital and one-off funds is critical and needs to be linked into our future delivery plans.
- 5.6 With complex capital schemes it is difficult to accurately assess the level of payments that will be made during the financial year. The Council continues to embark on new projects relating to investments and commercial delivery where it is difficult to accurately predict how payments will fall. Councillors should therefore focus on whether overall outcomes are being achieved because of the capital investment rather than variances against the plan for a particular year.
- 5.7 Capital expenditure for the period April to September 2022 totals £6.2m, against a revised programme (including carry forwards) of £35.1m, as set out in Appendix B. The profile of the anticipated spend for 2022/23 is difficult to assess at this stage of the year and it is likely that there will be slippage in the delivery of some programmes.

5.8 Some items in the capital programme, such as the Strategic Investment Fund, are unlikely to be fully spent in the year, and some projects may be delayed due to the general supply and delivery issues, so the figures in Appendix B anticipate that a request will be made to carry forward some unspent balances at year-end. These will be reviewed as part of the 2023/24 budget setting process, with a view to establishing whether all projects will be required.

## 6. LINKS TO THE CORPORATE PLAN

6.1 Ensuring that the Council makes best use of its resources is what underpins the ability to achieve the priorities set out in the Corporate Plan. Specific links are to financially sustainable Councils, managing our corporate and housing assets effectively, and property investment to generate income.

## 7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

7.1 These are detailed in the report.

## 8. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

8.1 There are no specific legal implications.

## 9. RISK MANAGEMENT

9.1 This report is most closely linked with the Council's Significant Risk No. 4 – We may be unable to respond in a timely and effective way to financial demands and Significant Risk No. 13 – Additional cost pressures may result in a significant overspend that needs to be funded from reserves. Other key risks are set out below:

<b>Risk Description</b>	<b>Likelihood</b>	<b>Impact</b>	<b>Mitigation Measures</b>
If the forecast savings and efficiencies are not delivered, then it will have a detrimental impact on the resources available to deliver services and the strategic priorities	3 - Probable	2 - Noticeable	Monitored throughout the year by Finance Teams, Corporate Managers, Assistant Directors and the Senior Leadership Team
If economic conditions and other external factors are worse than budgeted for it could have an adverse effect on the Councils 2022/23 and medium-term financial position (MTFS).	3 - Probable	2 - Noticeable	The impact of inflation is being closely monitored. An Inflationary Pressure reserve was set up at the end of 21/22 to mitigate against additional costs.  Ongoing pressures will be considered when setting the 2023/24 budget and MTFS.

<b>Risk Description</b>	<b>Likelihood</b>	<b>Impact</b>	<b>Mitigation Measures</b>
If the cost of living crisis increases demand for the Council's services it could have an adverse effect on the Councils 2022/23 and medium-term financial position (MTFS).	3 - Probable	2 - Noticeable	Work being undertaken to determine risk of increasing demand across the Councils services and will be included in financial monitoring.  Ongoing pressures will be considered when setting the 2023/24 budget and MTFS.

## **10. CONSULTATIONS**

10.1 Consultations have taken place with Directors, Corporate Managers and other Budget Managers as appropriate.

## **11. EQUALITY ANALYSIS**

11.1 An equality analysis has not been completed because there is no action to be taken on service delivery as a result of this report.

## **12. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

12.1 There are a number of areas that as a result of COVID19 have had a positive effect on the Council's environmental impact as well as the financial position. They include for example, reduced travel, less printing and reduced utility costs.

12.2 Directors, Corporate Managers and other Budget Managers continue to consider the environmental impact of their budgets and take the opportunity to reduce their carbon footprint as opportunities arise.

12.3 Into 2022/23 in support of the Council's commitment to be Carbon Neutral by 2030, several initiatives have and are being undertaken from a combination of the Council's own resources and those secured from external sources. Some of these are set out below.

12.4 A solar multi-function carport to generate electricity is being installed at Stowmarket Leisure Centre. The CO<sub>2</sub> savings are nearly 9 times the volume of the Royal Albert Hall and it will generate enough power to supply 52 average homes in Stowmarket.

12.5 The Council's leisure centres have been successfully transferred to certified low carbon tariffs for electricity use.

12.6 £1m of funding has been secured from the Government's Public Sector Decarbonisation Fund for carbon-saving measures at council leisure centres including solar panels and air source heat pumps.

12.7 The new Needham Market Lake visitors centre & café has been designed to complement the surrounding natural environment with several environmental

features including bird boxes, solar panels, sustainable drainage, an air source heat pump, and the use of sustainable building materials.

**13. APPENDICES**

Title	Location
Explanation of Major Variances	APPENDIX A
Capital Programme	APPENDIX B

**14. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS**

24 February 2022 General Fund Budget 2022/23 and Four-Year Outlook – MC/21/26

5 September 2022 General Fund Financial Monitoring 2022/23 - Quarter 1 - MCa/22/15

## Explanation of Major Variances

	Budget £'000	Forecast £'000	Variance £'000	Key variances
Assets & Investments	576	715	139	Delay in moving to one floorplate in Endeavour House compared to budgeted timescale £48k Depot soakaway treatments £18k. Action is being taken to reduce future call outs. NNDR costs higher than budgeted £12k ElectricityWingfield Barns repairs £41k
Communities & Wellbeing	707	693	(14)	Underspends for vacancies are offset partly by the pay award
Customers, Digital Transformation and Improvement	1,978	1,999	21	Underspends relating to vacancies across the service teams (predominantly in Policy, Performance and Insight) are offset to a large extent by additional costs relating to the agreement of the pay settlement and identification of additional ICT software costs that had not been originally budgeted for.
Economic Growth & Climate Change	270	259	(11)	Underspends for vacancies are offset partly by the pay award
Corporate Resources	1,710	2,500	790	Bank charges for Pay360 higher than budgeted £69k Insurance contract due for renewal in January 2023 - 10% increase in cost forecast £30k The budgeted Vacancy Management Factor of £500k is included within Corporate Resources. This offsets forecast vacancy underspends in all services.
Housing	520	518	(2)	
HR & Organisational Development	461	467	6	Increase in staff costs for pay award and project support.
Law & Governance	927	931	4	Central postage costs forecast to overspend by £36k. This increase is being investigated. This is offset by staff vacancies.
Operations	3,571	3,440	(132)	Gate fees have been significantly lower than budget & recycling credits are favourable resulting in a forecast underspend of £86k. Other underspends are forecast due to staff vacancies.
Planning & Building Control	1,323	1,203	(120)	A reduction in planning income of £147k is forecast but this is offset by increased income for building control (£68k), reductions in professional fees (£100k) and staff vacancies.
Senior Leadership Team	700	784	84	Due to use of interims whilst permanent posts recruited to - also includes recruitment costs.
<b>Net expenditure on services</b>	<b>12,743</b>	<b>13,509</b>	<b>765</b>	
Interest Payable	835	910	75	Assuming no further borrowing in 2022/23
Minimum Revenue Provision	1,333	1,332	(1)	
			<b>839</b>	

## 2022/23 Capital Programme

MID SUFFOLK CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2022/23	Original Budget	Carry Forwards / Budget Adjustments	Current Budget	Actual Spend	Full Year Forecast at Q2	Expected Carry Forward	Full Year Forecast LESS Budget (favourable)/ adverse	Comments
GENERAL FUND	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	
<b>General Fund Housing</b>								
Mandatory Disabled Facilities Grant	698	458	1,156	165	454	702	-	New social media campaign to increase DFG applications & MAGS
Renovation/Home Repair Grant (formerly Discretionary Housing Grants)	100	48	148	33	70	78	-	
Empty Homes Grant	100	269	369	-	100	269	-	New Empty Homes Officer progressing cases and applications expected for this grant.
Grants for Affordable Housing	-	340	340	-	170	170	-	Potential schemes being considered for support
<b>Total General Fund Housing</b>	<b>898</b>	<b>1,115</b>	<b>2,013</b>	<b>198</b>	<b>794</b>	<b>1,219</b>	<b>-</b>	
<b>Environment and Projects</b>								
Replacement Refuse Freighters - Joint Scheme	2,200	-	2,200	-	2,129	71	-	New refuse trucks have been ordered in 2022/23
Recycling Bins	100	-	100	109	175	-	75	Higher demand due to development. More bins purchased at an agreed cheaper rate to guarantee availability and to protect against price increases.
Electric Buses	560	-	560	-	-	560	-	To take a paper to Cabinet in February to agree the project and the profile of expenditure
<b>Total Environmental Services</b>	<b>2,860</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>2,860</b>	<b>109</b>	<b>2,304</b>	<b>631</b>	<b>75</b>	
<b>Communities and Public Access</b>								
Streetcare - Vehicles and Plant Renewals	90	64	154	58	154	-	-	
Needham Lake Footpath	60	-	60	-	60	-	-	
Planned Maintenance / Enhancements - Car Parks	95	288	383	11	11	372	-	Unlikely to be significant car park budget spend. Needs to carry over to 23/24 to support delivery of car parking strategy
<b>Total Community Services</b>	<b>245</b>	<b>352</b>	<b>597</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>225</b>	<b>372</b>	<b>-</b>	

## 2022/23 Capital Programme

MID SUFFOLK CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2022/23	Original Budget	Carry Forwards / Budget Adjustments	Current Budget	Actual Spend	Full Year Forecast at Q2	Expected Carry Forward	Full Year Forecast LESS Budget (favourable)/ adverse	Comments
GENERAL FUND	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	
<b>Sustainable Communities</b>								
Play Equipment	50	150	200	-	-	200	-	Play equipment project started, unlikely to spend this year, all required to carry over
Public Sector Decarbonisation	-	-	-	1	1	-	1	To be financed from Public Sector Decarbonisation grant
S106 Open Spaces Grants	-	-	-	76	76	-	76	All to be financed from S106 monies
Community Development Grants	189	181	370	44	220	150	-	Expectation is that the budget will be fully allocated, if not spent, by the end of the financial year
<b>Total Sustainable Communities</b>	<b>239</b>	<b>331</b>	<b>570</b>	<b>121</b>	<b>297</b>	<b>350</b>	<b>77</b>	
<b>Leisure Contracts</b>								
Stowmarket Leisure Cent - Improvements	-	1,422	1,422	-	300	1,122	-	Major works required including re roofing and cladding to reduce carbon footprint.
Stradbroke Pool - Improvements	-	571	571	22	240	331	-	Electrical works and re roofing required. Plan to tender for re roofing in 2022/23.
Solar Car Ports	-	-	-	(0)	-	-	-	Timescales have slipped into 2022/23 due to component shortage. Expect to complete by year end. Outstanding invoices were accrued in 2021/22.
<b>Total Leisure Contracts</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>1,993</b>	<b>1,993</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>540</b>	<b>1,453</b>	<b>-</b>	

## 2022/23 Capital Programme

MID SUFFOLK CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2022/23	Original Budget	Carry Forwards / Budget Adjustments	Current Budget	Actual Spend	Full Year Forecast at Q2	Expected Carry Forward	Full Year Forecast LESS Budget (favourable)/ adverse	Comments
GENERAL FUND	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	
<b>Assets and Investments</b>								
Other Corporate Buildings	330	105	435	-	300	135	-	Includes Endeavour House refurbishment to complete by year end. Plus Joint Depot Hub project to carry forward
CIL Funded Infrastructure Grants	-	-	-	442	442	-	442	Being financed from CIL
Strategic Investment Fund	-	2,929	2,929	-	1,000	1,929	-	There may be opportunity to buy property for income generation.
Regeneration Fund	-	-	-	17	193	-	193	Adverse variance relates to Woolpit Health Centre £18k, not recovered from CIL and £175k for bringing into use Units at Gipping Way (approval required for Gipping Way to be financed from Strategic Investment Fund)
Regeneration Fund - Former Council Offices	-	688	688	135	688	-	-	
Gateway 14	-	17,750	17,750	5,000	17,750	-	-	
Mid Suffolk Growth	4,250	-	4,250	-	4,250	-	-	
Wingfield Barns	20	20	40	-	40	-	-	
Needham Lake Visitors Centre	-	141	141	65	98	-	(43)	Centre opened in May 2022. Expected that the scheme will be finished by the end of December 2022 (snagging etc ongoing).
SHELF Project	-	-	-	-	330	-	330	
Business Hub, Cross Street, Eye	285	-	285	-	100	185	-	Construction constraints have impacted delivery. Will finish in 2023/24.
<b>Total Assets and Investments</b>	<b>4,885</b>	<b>21,633</b>	<b>26,518</b>	<b>5,659</b>	<b>25,191</b>	<b>2,249</b>	<b>922</b>	
<b>Total Customers, Digital Transformation and Improvement</b>	<b>475</b>	<b>109</b>	<b>584</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>478</b>	<b>106</b>	<b>-</b>	
<b>Total General Fund Capital Spend</b>	<b>9,602</b>	<b>25,533</b>	<b>35,135</b>	<b>6,184</b>	<b>29,829</b>	<b>6,380</b>	<b>1,074</b>	



# Agenda Item 9

## MID SUFFOLK DISTRICT COUNCIL

<b>COMMITTEE:</b> Cabinet	<b>REPORT NUMBER:</b> <b>MCa/22/30</b>
<b>FROM:</b> Councillor John Whitehead, Cabinet Member for Finance	<b>DATE OF MEETING:</b> 5 December 2022
<b>OFFICER:</b> Melissa Evans, Director, Corporate Resources	<b>KEY DECISION REF NO.</b> CAB374

### HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT (HRA) FINANCIAL MONITORING 2022/23 – QUARTER 2

#### 1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 This report considers the revenue and capital financial performance for the period April to June and highlights significant variances expected for the financial year 2022/23. As at 30<sup>th</sup> September the revenue position is forecast to be an adverse variance of £770k.

#### 2. OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 2.1 At this stage in the year, the financial position is for noting only.

#### 3. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 That, subject to any further budget variations that arise during the rest of the financial year, the adverse variance of £770k, referred to in section 6.5 of the report, be noted;
- 3.2 The 2022/23 revised Capital Programme referred to in Appendix A and section 6.13 be noted.

#### REASON FOR DECISION

**To ensure that Members are kept informed of the current budgetary position for both the HRA Revenue and Capital Budgets.**

#### 4. KEY INFORMATION

##### Strategic Context

- 4.1 The financial position of the HRA for 2022/23 should be viewed in the context of the 30-year business plan. The budget set in February 2022 showed a forecast surplus position for 2022/23 of £95k.
- 4.2 Following a period of five years that saw annual rent reductions, which ended in March 2020, councils are allowed to increase rents by the maximum of the Consumer Price Index (CPI) +1% for a period of five years from April 2020. Subject to Compliance with the Regulator of Social Housings Rent Standard, this begins to mitigate the impact of the 1% reduction on the 30-year plan.

4.3 With the Council's housing stock at 3,269 homes there will always be unplanned events that affect the level of income and expenditure in any one financial year. Members should therefore consider annual variances in the context of the medium-term outcomes that the Council wishes to achieve.

## **5. Inflationary pressures**

5.1 The UK rate of inflation increased to 10.1% in September 2022 due to higher food, energy and petrol prices. The forecast outturn in section 6.5 includes the estimated impact of inflation in 2022/23. Inflation is having a significant impact for 2022/23 in the following areas:

### **5.2 Employees**

Employee costs within the 2022/23 budget are £2.9m. An increase of 2.2% is included in the budget. However, a pay award of £1,925 per employee has been agreed for all staff on 'Green Book' terms and conditions which is significantly higher (8% on average across the Council). A settlement is yet to be agreed for employees on 'Red Book' terms and conditions.

### **Electricity**

The Council procures electricity via Vertas. The Government energy price cap has reduced the potential impact in 2022/23 but costs are still forecast to be 169% higher in 2022/23 than in 2021/22.

### **Repairs, servicing, tools and equipment**

The Council has seen significant increases in costs relating to repairs and servicing, with some materials more than doubling in price. The impact of cost increases in each area has been built into the forecast and is detailed in section 6.8 below.

5.3 The impact of inflation will continue to be closely monitored.

## **6. Quarter 2 Position**

6.1 The report covers:

- The Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Revenue Budget
- The Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Capital programme

6.2 Budget monitoring is a key tool and indicator on the delivery of the council's plans and priorities for the year. There will, of course, always be reasons why there are variances such as:

- Economic conditions and those services that are affected by demand.
- Uncertainties relating to funding or other changes that were not known at the time the budget was approved.

6.3 Based upon financial performance and information from April to September 2022 (with trends extrapolated to the end of the financial year) and discussions with budget managers and the Senior Leadership Team, key variations on expenditure and income compared to budget have been identified.

6.4 Taking each area in turn, the position on key aspects of the 2022/23 budget is summarised below:

## Revenue

6.5 The original budget set for the HRA for 2022/23 shows a surplus of £95k. The forecast position for the year as at September is a deficit of £675k, an adverse variance of £770k, as detailed in the table below.

	Budget	Q2 Outturn 2022/23	Variance Adverse / (Favourable)	% variance
	£'000	£'000	£'000	
Dwelling Rents	(14,969)	(15,096)	(127)	1%
Service Charges	(675)	(665)	10	-2%
Non Dwelling Income	(352)	(360)	(7)	2%
Other Income	(43)	(49)	(5)	12%
Interest Received	(9)	(2)	8	-83%

<b>Total Income</b>	<b>(16,049)</b>	<b>(16,171)</b>	<b>(122)</b>	<b>1%</b>
---------------------	-----------------	-----------------	--------------	-----------

Housing Management (includes Tenancy Services, Housing Solutions and Corporate Resources)	3,234	3,616	382	12%
Building Services	3,563	3,901	338	9%
Repairs and Maintenance (all areas except Trades Team)	588	760	172	29%
Depreciation	4,452	4,452	-	0%
Interest payable	2,968	2,968	-	0%
Revenue Contribution to Capital	1,058	1,058	-	0%
Bad Debt Provision	92	92	-	0%
<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>15,955</b>	<b>16,846</b>	<b>892</b>	<b>6%</b>

<b>Deficit / (Surplus) for Year</b>	<b>(95)</b>	<b>675</b>	<b>770</b>	
-------------------------------------	-------------	------------	------------	--

6.6 The forecast variances identified within this report will be taken into consideration when setting the budgets for 2023/24.

6.7 The main items that are included in the overall adverse variance are detailed below:

6.8 **Housing Management – an overspend of £382k**

- £132k Increase in staff costs for the pay award and new posts to support service transformation and a Shared Ownership Officer and Defects Co-ordinator
- £64k increased utility costs
- £49k missing 2021/22 Care Plus invoices
- £48k Grounds Maintenance contract increase from Public Realm
- £27k Historically budgeted incorrectly: Pont Enterprises - Moses Walk
- £21k Fire Prevention at Stowmarket-Partridge Court

- £16k DocuSign and Total Mobile software costs missed from Budget
- £22k reduction in sheltered rent and service charge income
- £6k Western Court Water rates not included in budget
- (£3k) small underspends

#### **Building Services – an adverse variance of £338k**

- £638k Repairs overspend on the use of Sub-Contractors to support the Trades Team in completing void properties and a significant increase in cost of materials with some items going up by up to 130%
- £12k inflationary increases to supplies and services
- £10k Premises Insurance Excess
- £5k small unbudgeted spends
- Partially offset by (£279k) increased recharges
- (£48k) savings on surveyors' recharges

#### **Repairs and Maintenance – an adverse variance of £172k**

- £172k Repairs overspend predicted on the use of Sub-Contractors to support the Trades Team in completing a backlog of jobs built up as a result of Covid restrictions.

6.9 The net £770k adverse position means that the total HRA balances as at 31 March 2023 would be £6.316m. This includes a working balance of £1.209m, £5.061m in the Strategic Priorities Reserve and £46k in other earmarked reserves.

#### **Capital**

6.10 Use of capital and one-off funds is critical and needs to be linked into our future delivery plans. A zero-based approach was adopted for the capital programme for 2022/23 to ensure that resources are aimed at delivering the Council's strategic priorities.

6.11 With complex capital schemes it is difficult to accurately assess the level of payments that will be made during a particular financial year. The Council continues to embark on new projects e.g., building new homes, where it is difficult to accurately predict at the planning stage how payments will be scheduled. Members should therefore focus on whether overall outcomes are being achieved as a result of the capital investment rather than variances against the plan for a particular year.

6.12 Actual capital expenditure for the period April 2022 to September 2022 totals £8.29m, against the budget (including carry forwards) of £43.12m, as set out in Appendix A.

6.13 For the capital programme it is difficult to predict what the full year position will be at this stage of the year. We will continue to monitor it as the year progresses. All potential carry forwards will be reviewed as part of the 2023/24 budget setting process, with a view to establishing which projects will be required and what the profile of spend is likely to be across future years.

### **7. LINKS TO CORPORATE PLAN**

7.1 Ensuring that the Council makes best use of its resources is what underpins the ability to achieve the priorities set out in the Corporate Plan. Specific links are to a

financially sustainable Council, managing our housing assets effectively, and property investment to generate income.

## 8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

8.1 These are detailed in the report.

## 9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

9.1 There are no specific legal implications.

## 10. RISK MANAGEMENT

10.1 9.1 This report is most closely linked with the Council's Significant Risk No. 4 – We may be unable to respond in a timely and effective way to financial demands and Significant Risk No. 13 – Additional cost pressures may result in a significant overspend that needs to be funded from reserves. Other key risks are set out below:

Risk Description	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigation Measures
If there are increases in inflation and other variables, then Council Housing self-financing could result in a greater risk to investment and service delivery plans.	Unlikely - 2	Noticeable – 2	Inflation and interest rate assumptions have been modelled in the HRA business plan. Capital receipts and capital programme funding have been reviewed.
If we fail to spend retained right-to-buy (RTB) receipts within the 5-year period, then it will lead to a requirement to repay to the Government with interest.	Unlikely - 2	Bad - 3	Provision has been made in the budget and Investment Strategy to enable match funding and spend of RTB receipts.
If we borrow too much to fund new homes, we will not be able to pay the loan interest.	Unlikely - 2	Bad - 3	Follow the CIPFA Prudential Code which states capital investment plans must be affordable, prudent and sustainable.
If economic conditions and other external factors are worse than budgeted for it could have an adverse effect on the Council's 2022/23 and medium-term financial position.	Probable – 3	Noticeable - 2	Maintain the focus and momentum on reducing the budget deficit throughout the financial year. Impact of inflation is being carefully monitored and ongoing pressures will be considered when setting the 2023/24 budget and MTFs. Maintain sufficient minimum reserve level to withstand the impact.

<b>Risk Description</b>	<b>Likelihood</b>	<b>Impact</b>	<b>Mitigation Measures</b>
If capital data is inaccurate it could lead to problems with treasury management debt and cashflows.	Unlikely - 2	Bad - 3	Work closely with treasury management when setting capital budgets and how this will be financed. Monitor the capital spend quarterly and raise any changes with treasury management.

## **11. CONSULTATIONS**

- 11.1 Consultations have taken place with the Assistant Director, Corporate Managers and other Budget Managers as appropriate

## **12. EQUALITY ANALYSIS**

- 12.1 An equality analysis has not been completed because there is no action to be taken on service delivery as a result of this report.

## **13. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 13.1 In support of the Council's commitment to be Carbon Neutral by 2030, several initiatives have and are being undertaken in relation to the housing and sheltered accommodation stock. These are set out in more detail below.
- 13.2 Since 2020, Mid Suffolk has installed 87 Air Source Heat Pumps in council owned homes.
- 13.3 Working alongside the Energy Savings Trust, every property within our housing stock (via a desktop exercise) has been evaluated, which has provided the council with current energy efficiency levels compared with what could be achieved and the level of investment required to achieve improved energy efficiency. The 'hardest to heat' homes will be targeted first. This now allows us to quantify the cost of capital environmental works to existing homes.
- 13.4 Oil fired / storage communal heating has been replaced with individual heat pumps.
- 13.5 The new homes 'design and technical specification' that incorporates carbon saving solutions will be launched alongside our 30-year Housing Business Plan in 2022.
- 13.6 Surveyors have been studying for the Retrofit Co-ordinators Diploma by the Retrofit Academy to better support the Council's ambition to retrofit existing properties.

## **14. APPENDICES**

Title	Location
APPENDIX A – Capital Programme	Attached

**15. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS**

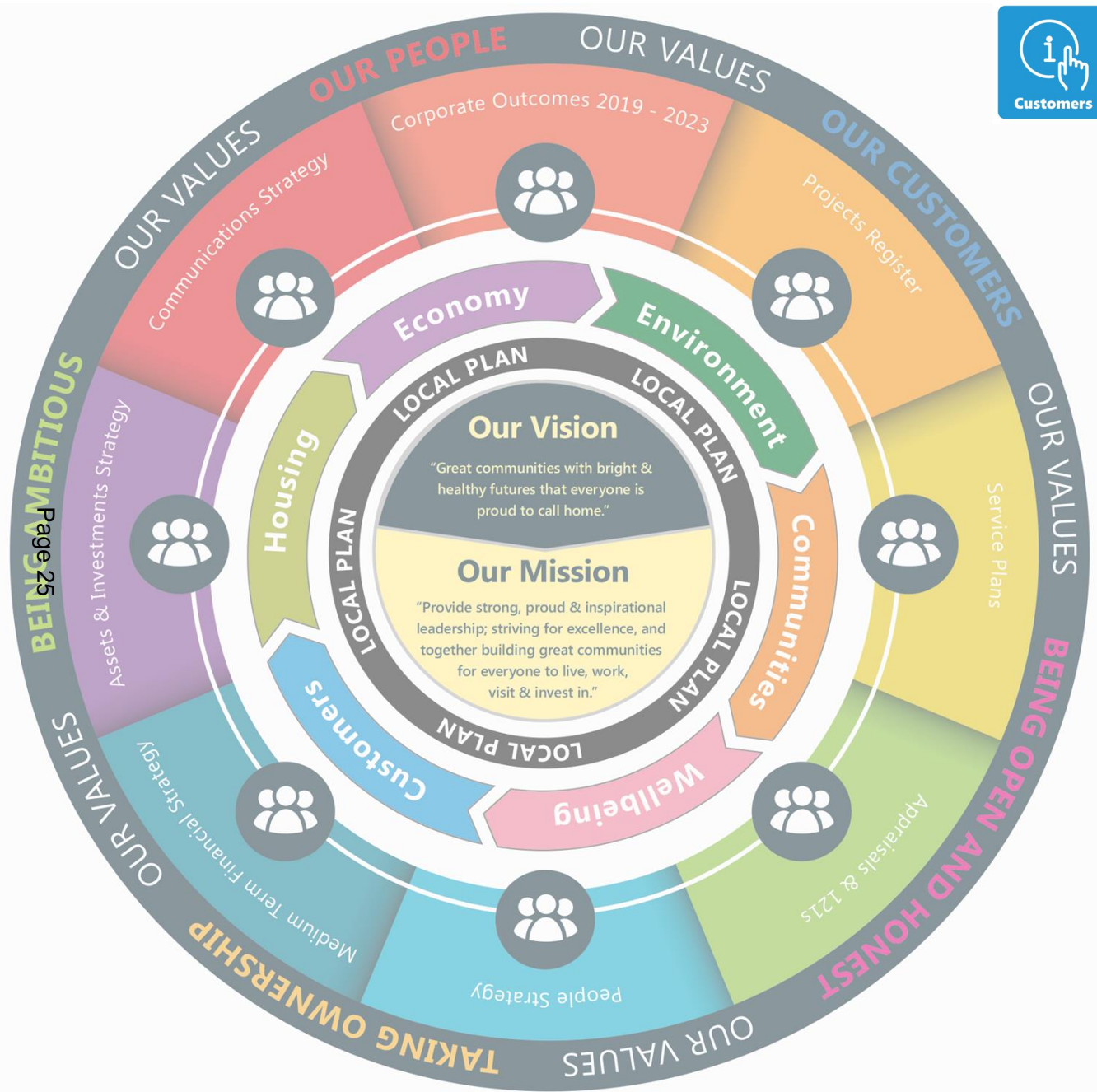
24 February 2022 Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Budget and Four-Year Outlook Report 2022/23 – MC/21/27

5 September 2022 Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Financial Monitoring 2022/23 - Quarter 1 - MCa/22/16

2022/23 Capital Programme

CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2022/23	Original Budget	Carry Forwards / Budget Adjustments	Current Budget	Actual to date	Full Year Forecast at Q2	Potential Carry Forwards	Explanation of Variances
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	
<b>Housing Revenue Account</b>							
<b>Housing Maintenance</b>							
Planned maintenance	4,950	1,890	6,840	1,282	4,226	2,614	There was a lack of technical officer capacity to define needs. Posts subsequently filled and contracts now being procured. Asset Management Strategy will be developed as part of the Building Services Transformation Programme.
ICT Projects	111	-	111	33	66	44	It is expected that the tenant surveys and half of the tenant census exercise will be complete by year end. Carry forward will be to finish the projects in 2023/24.
Neighbourhood Improvements	-	80	80	-	-	80	Actively procureing contracts for fencing and hard landscaping works.
Council House Adaptations	200	19	219	150	219	-	
<b>New Build and Acquisitions</b>							
New Build programme and Acquisitions	12,223	23,651	35,874	6,824	19,970	15,904	Delays in some projects have occurred mainly due to problems with supplies of materials, contractor staff absences and planning issues. It is likely that some of these projects may not be completed before year end. Some projects were scheduled to complete in the next 2-3 years, so it is likely that final delivery will be later than originally intended.
<b>Total HRA Capital Spend</b>	<b>17,484</b>	<b>25,640</b>	<b>43,123</b>	<b>8,289</b>	<b>24,481</b>	<b>18,642</b>	





# Quarter 2 Performance

## Mid Suffolk District Council

### 5<sup>th</sup> December 2022 Cabinet

Agenda Item 10





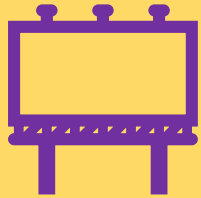
This performance report has been developed in collaboration with Cabinet members, Senior Leadership Team and corporate managers. It covers the period from July to September 2022 (Quarter 2).

Please note:

- This is a high-level report, highlighting how the council is performing against its six key priority areas from the Corporate Plan (2019-27). It also gives a snapshot of the overall health of the organisation (including headline performance indicators) and looks in brief towards projects commencing in the next quarter.
- The report provides high level assurance that the council is delivering against the Corporate Plan.

# Mid Suffolk Economy

## Headline Performance Indicators



What's Next for Stowmarket event held over 22nd – 24th Sept with approx. **340** visitors



**9**

new businesses supported by Innovate Local scheme in Stowmarket



**60**

businesses nominated across 9 categories for the Innovation Awards

# Economy

## Objective 1: Connected & Sustainable:

Our businesses and places benefit from stronger connectivity and opportunities to be more environmentally sustainable.

### Progress:

- Project documentation completed and site design commenced for changing place facilities at Stradbroke Swimming Pool and Leisure Facilities.
- Stowmarket Health, Education, Leisure Facility (SHELF) various stakeholder work commenced and public engagement on scheme completed at the 'What's next for Stowmarket' event.

### What we plan to do next quarter:

- Submit final critical actions for full business case for Freeport East by 14 Oct deadline.
- Submit EOI for Investment Zone designation.
- Complete planning application and draft full business case for SHELF. Continue to work with G14 to explore net zero proposals and development of Innovation & Skills Centre.
- Complete design for changing places facilities at Stradbroke Swimming Pool and Leisure Facilities.
- Development and Launch of new business grants scheme focused on sustainability and carbon reduction.
- Stowmarket Solar Carport launch with Councillors and New Anglia LEP ETA Nov 2022.
- Launch internal behaviour change campaign around sustainable commuting options.
- Continue work with Suffolk County Council and other relevant partners to seek opportunities for, and help to facilitate the delivery of Active Travel schemes.

# Economy

## Objective 2: Innovative & Creative

Babergh and Mid Suffolk's places and economy are supported to be innovative, green and resilient.

### Progress:

- CT Consults appointed to develop Culture, Heritage and Visitor Economy Strategy and delivery plan.
- Tender issued for development of new Inward Investment website
- Phase one complete of the 'Skills and Innovation Hub research commission for Gateway 14.
- Virtual High Street sign up throughout the district ongoing throughout town centres, village high streets, business/retail parks and tourism areas.
- Marketing Campaign via Visit Suffolk (April – 31 August 2022). The total reach of the campaign was 272,957.
- Innovate Local market stalls ongoing offering free market stall space to new businesses in Stowmarket.
- Project planning ongoing for 2nd Innovation Awards – 22nd October 2022 at Wherstead Park.
- Tenders received and assessed for Stowmarket Wayfinding project

# Economy

## Objective 2: Innovative & Creative

Babergh and Mid Suffolk's places and economy are supported to be innovative, green and resilient.

### What we plan to do next quarter:

- Appoint consultant to lead Stowmarket Wayfinding commission.
- Contract award and development of Inward Investment website.
- Phase 2 of Innovation & Skills centre commission, to identify skills gaps and potential delivery models will be progressed leading to initial business case coming to Cabinet in December.
- Support plans for unlocking key employment sites including G14 and Port One.
- Appoint Contractor and operator for Cross Street, Eye.
- Begin project planning for Local Energy Showcase in Spring 2023.
- Collate and review outcomes from "What's Next for Stowmarket" event.
- Work with CT Consults to deliver engagement plan to include stakeholder consultation events, activities, wider sector conversations, research and scoping for Culture, Heritage and Visitor Economy Strategy.
- Produce content for Visit Suffolk and promote additional locations for Screen Suffolk locations database.
- Continue to develop the Love Explore platform to include walks in the North of the District.
- Submission of Rural England Prosperity Fund Investment Plan (addendum to UK SPF) by 30 November 2022.
- Development of workspace strategy and delivery plan across the District to ensure we have sufficient workspace.

# Economy

## Objective 3: Skilled & Successful

Our communities are supported to be the best skilled workforce across the East with high levels of aspiration

### Progress:

- Final development of Knowledge Transfer Partnership (KTP) "Lite" programme with University of Essex.
- Two NHS focused Careeriosity events held in August at the John Peel Centre.
- Local Investment Plans for UK Shared Prosperity Fund Submitted in July 2022.
- Digital Skills for Businesses Programme is ongoing and approximately 40 businesses took part in training and mentoring
- Schools Enterprise challenge launched in September.

Page 31

### What we plan to do next quarter:

- Further Careeriosity sessions scheduled with online options being trialled for the first time.
- Launch KTP "Lite" for small businesses in October 2022.
- Further scoping of Schools Enterprise challenge following school engagement (deadline 24th October)
- Contract skills element of Shared Prosperity Fund

# Mid Suffolk Environment Headline Performance Indicators



*Total garden waste subscriptions remains similar to Q1 which was 18,479*



*Overall trend for fly tipping incidents remains higher than pre pandemic levels*



*This is a decrease from the previous quarter of 0.48%,  
The 12-month rolling average is: 12%*



*Fly tipping data relates to tips on public land only*



# Environment

**Objective 1:** To achieve the Councils' ambition to become carbon neutral by 2030, following the adoption of the Carbon Reduction Management Plan.

## **Progress:**

- The councils' new climate change manager started in post on 16<sup>th</sup> September.
- The bid to the Office of Zero Emission Vehicles (OZEV) has been reduced to 60% of capital costs as has gone forward to bid round 2022/23 as opposed to original 21/22 planned submission date.

## **What we plan to do next quarter:**

- Review current Carbon Reduction Management Plan, refreshed with progress since inception.
- Progress work on bid to OZEV for funding of EV charging points.
- Review possibility of further possible carbon reductions at Leisure Centres
- Establish property list of other emitting buildings for future retrofit consideration
- Deliver 21/22 Greenhouse Gas Report detailing progress on corporate emissions.

# Environment

**Objective 2:** Improve the biodiversity of the district, consistent with the biodiversity pledge adopted by the Council

## **Progress:**

- Trial changes to mowing regimes have resulted in significant new populations of orchids and other wildflowers being discovered. Sites are actively managed to ensure all residents are content.
- Following selection to become a trial organisation for Natural England's Green Infrastructure tool, officers have attended related training workshops.
- Parish tree, hedge and wildflower planting application form and guidance updated for publication.

## **What we plan to do next quarter:**

- Working on mapping sites where changes in mowing regimes will enhance wildflower potential.
- Tree Canopy Report presented to Cabinets for approval. Start of Tree Planting Strategy development.
- Launch of Tree Canopy Survey web maps to provide the public with online access to ward by ward tree canopy data.
- Recruit a Geography Graduate to work on the tree strategy data project, using Natural England Green Infrastructure tools and tree data to identify land suitable for tree planting across the district.
- Launch of 2022/23 Tree, Hedge and Wildflower planting programme with all parishes.

# Environment

**Objective 3:** To promote a safe, healthy, and sustainable environment for our districts

## **Progress:**

- The Food and Safety Team has cleared their backlog of higher risk food hygiene inspections after lockdown. Currently 89% of food business in Mid Suffolk have the highest food hygiene rating of 5.
- Environmental Protection team participated in a multi-agency 'Action Day' in August with partner agencies (VOSA, DVLA, Environment Agency, HMRC, Trading Standards, Home Office).
- Parking Strategy – analysis of the phase 2 online survey complete.

## **What we plan to do next quarter:**

- Parking Strategy taken to Cabinet for consideration on 3<sup>rd</sup> October.
- Ensure that food safety resources are targeted at higher risk inspections and those prioritised by the FSAs recovery plan.
- A new FSA delivery model is currently out to consultation to relevant stakeholders and will be ready for implementation in 2023/24 [Food Law Code of Practice Consultation](#).

# Customers

## Headline Performance Indicators

Combined data for both councils



**1,356**

daily  
web visits (av.)

23% decrease from last quarter. Stricter cookie controls are masking a proportion of visits. We have also seen 31,661 online forms submitted by customers during Q2 (a decrease of 1% from Q1). Top 3 reasons for online forms were council tax, sundry debtors and housing rent.



**556/145**

calls per day (av.) total  
visits to the CAP

12% call reduction from Q1. Total of 145 visits to the Stowmarket CAP (15% decrease from Q1)



**287**

Social media responses  
issued

An increase of 91% This was driven by an increase in electoral queries following the canvas and interest in What's next for Stowmarket event.



**74**

email responded to  
per day (av.)

9% decrease from last quarter.



**46**

compliments

Decrease of 8% from Q1 (or 4 compliments)

# Customers

## Headline Performance Indicators

*Combined data for both councils*



**4.56**  
out of 5

*76% of customers rated 5/5 for our online form process (-1% from last quarter)*



**28%**  
abandon rate

*2% increase from Q1. Whilst we have recruited, we are still not up to full headcount and new starters require training period. At this stage nearly 50% of our team are new starters and training takes approx. 12 weeks and impacts our experienced call handlers also.*



**194**  
stage 1 complaints

*Decrease of 5% from Q1: The top 3 areas of complaint are 76 repairs, 15 asset compliance and 12 waste.*



**5 min & 41 sec**  
wait time (av.)

*Wait time has increased (from 5 mins 03 seconds Q1).*



**3,100/1,769**  
chatbot and automated telephone sessions

*Chatbot activity decreased by 65% and automated telephony down 40% from quarter one's launch of the searchbot and council tax line. However, it's an 84% increase from Q2 2021 on our chatbot and a 160% increase on our automated telephony*

# Customers

**Objective 1:** We will implement the technology capabilities that support and enhance customer and employee experience, invest in our people to give them confidence to use and promote digital services and tools, and underpin this with an ethos and culture of listening and engagement.

## Progress:

- We have recruited our cost-of-living coordinator who started on the 3rd October. This role will help to drive the cost-of-living action plan.
- We have seen a slight dip, following the initial high use of the new searchbot function and will monitor and review opportunities for improving the use.
- We launched a digital mindsets survey for our internal customers to help understand how people feel about digital transformation, to help shape our digital projects.

Page 38

## What we plan to do next quarter:

- The cost of living plan will be refreshed following the 6 month review of our current 5 point action plan.
- We will analyse the results of the digital mindsets survey to help shape how we approach our digital transformation with our teams.
- We will be reviewing the searchbot top searched results to create further improvements.

# Customers

**Objective 2:** We will develop and deliver a phased approach to supporting customers with digital inclusion and digital upskilling by working with like-minded community partners and using insight and intelligence to baseline our approach and measure our success.

## Progress:

- Following on from providing support in the CAPs and understanding the potential digital needs of our customers, we have been developing how we can provide dedicated bookable digital skills sessions in locations across the Districts.
- The Digital Skills team have been supporting the Tea & Tech scheme with Communities Together East Anglia (formerly BSEVC) over the past few months, providing digital skills assistance to a range of individuals.
- We have continued to plan and create the sessions for our sheltered accommodation schemes.

## What we plan to do next quarter:

- Launch bookable digital skills sessions across four locations in the Districts.
- Launch Digital Skills sessions in four sheltered accommodation locations, led by the Digital Skills team to pilot the initial approach in supporting tenants in going online.
- Commence the sheltered tenants digital skills sessions.
- Update the Suffolk Libraries iPad offer to help increase take up and increase feedback from the scheme to see how it can be improved.
- Review the recommendations from Suffolk County Council Cabinet with the Suffolk digital inclusion network, following the Policy Development Panel on Digital Inclusion, where Mid Suffolk presented the work of the District to ensure we are working across the system on digital inclusion.

# Customers

**Objective 3:** We are committed to putting our customers first by reviewing our current processes and re-designing them to ensure that they are simple, intuitive and maximise the use of technology.

## **Progress:**

- We have awarded our digital platform contract to Placecube and have been working on a more detailed plan to share more widely to show when customers can start testing our new website.
- Our shared device with Citizen's advice has now been built, and we will begin testing over late October.
- We have launched our new business process reengineering (BPR) framework with our NVQ champions and through a lunch and learn session internally .

Page 40

## **What we plan to do next quarter:**

- Share our high-level plan more widely regarding our new websites and online forms.
- Begin testing our shared device with citizens advice.
- Commence our new BPR framework in line with our digital platform timeline, to help improve our top online processes for our customers for our new website.





# Mid Suffolk Communities Headline Performance Indicators



## Community Grants

Q2 allocations



**£91,445.76**

Capital Grant Allocation

Page 41

**£8,127.56**

S106 Funds Allocated

**£1,000.00**

Minor Grants Awarded

**19**

VCSE organisations supported through Revenue Grants



## Community Safety

Anti-Social Behaviour cases reviewed by the ASB partnership in Q2;

**39**

ASB cases reviewed

**0.71%**

of ASB cases open more than 6 months

**3**

ASB community triggers called for

Allocation - Grants that have formally been offered to projects/groups.

The Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB), Crime and Policing Act 2014 introduced the Community Trigger.

The trigger is designed to give victims of ongoing ASB the right to request a review of their case, and bring agencies together to take a collaborative approach to finding a solution.

# Communities

**Objective 1:** To create great places to live and to empower local people and communities to shape what happens in their area

## Progress:

- Connect & Catch up session held in July to promote and support the Welcome Home Scheme (supported discharge service from Ipswich Hospital), ensuring knowledge sharing across statutory and voluntary sector to improve services for our Communities.
- Suffolk Volunteering Strategy: Officers are attending working groups to help its development.
- Employee Supported Volunteering Policy and accompanying report has been fully drafted and is now being reviewed by HR for further comment.
- The Family Fun Day in Stowmarket was well attended and gained positive feedback. Many local services were in attendance, including information on health and wellbeing, as well as support with the cost of living. 179 activity spaces were pre-booked by HAF children, with many more joining in on the day. Family picnics were also available for HAF eligible children which were well received.
- 3 Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) bids taken to Cabinet in September for approval or noting, totalling £130,324 all approved.
- CIL expenditure framework review 4 was carried out and approved by full Council in Q2.
- The Redgrave Neighbourhood Plan (NP) was adopted in July. This brings the total number of adopted NPs to 15. Badwell Ash became the latest parish to be designated as a NP Area. Pre-submission consultation on the Wetheringsett NP ended in August.

# Communities

**Objective 1:** To create great places to live and to empower local people and communities to shape what happens in their area

## **What we plan to do next quarter:**

- Connect & Catch Up session planned for October to promote awareness of the Wellbeing Programme being delivered across Suffolk Libraries supporting the Community.
- Youth Forum: Student Life were unable to gain support from young people locally to develop a forum, therefore the team are looking at alternative engagement routes.
- The Employer Supported Volunteering policy and accompanying report will be passed to trade unions for approval before then being taken to SLT.
- We are progressing with the procurement of a service provider for a Youth Social Prescribing offer with the tender to be released in November.
- Officers are in discussion with Everyone Active about providing a 'warm space' for the community to use in Stowmarket and Stradbroke Leisure Centres.
- CIL Neighbourhood parish payments for income received in the first two quarters to be paid to parishes in Q3.
- The Diss & District NP was submitted to South Norfolk Council and MSDC in July. The intention is that the submission consultation on this Plan will take place during Q3.

# Communities

**Objective 2:** To effectively deliver our Community Safety Statutory responsibilities deliver on the priorities agreed within the Western Suffolk Community Safety Partnership (WSCSP) Action Plan

## Progress:

- A WSCSP meeting was held to agree the updated action plan, including the new adopted priority, Fraud.
- Officers are working with the Learning and Development team to create a share point page on domestic violence, providing advice, guidance and information for employees, looking to publish to the organisation.
- A total of 12 new ASB cases were discussed at the Anti-Social Behaviour partnership panel in Q2 and further 39 lower risk ASB cases dealt with by our officers.
- Officers continue to attend the Prevent County Wide Delivery Group, updating actions against the local strands.
- Participation in Modern Day Slavery Awareness Raising week, including sharing information on how to #spotthesignsinSuffolk.
- Joint ASB awareness events in Stowmarket & Eye with Suffolk Police to promote our work in this field.

# Communities

**Objective 2:** To effectively deliver our Community Safety Statutory responsibilities deliver on the priorities agreed within the Western Suffolk Community Safety Partnership (WSCSP) Action Plan

## **What we plan to do next quarter:**

- Supporting the National Hate Crime Awareness week 8th - 15th October, raising awareness of what hate crime is and how to report it. Activities are being planned including a lunch and learn session for employees, working with local businesses to raise the awareness and a co-ordinated partner wide communications plan.
- Planning has commenced for the White Ribbon Campaign scheduled for the 25th Nov - 10th Dec 16 days of action.
- As part of the National Anti-Slavery Day 18th October, we will be launching a new e-learning package developed by SCC to employees.
- Continue to support the WSCSP to drive forward the Action Plan.

# Communities

**Objective 3:** To deliver a Community Grants Services that is inclusive and transparent, supports community participation & activity and works with Voluntary and Community Sector organisations to develop thriving communities

## Progress:

- Community Development Grant was established and opened to applications in Q2. £580,064.83 being applied for in Mid Suffolk from 48 applications.
- Capital grants: 5 projects were allocated funding in Q2 totalling £91,445.76, 52.6% of the budget has now been allocated.  
Minor grants: £1,000.00 allocated to one project in Q2, 52.5% of the budget has now been allocated.
- Locality Awards: 49 applications were processed in Q2 by Locality Officers, 23.6% of the budget has now been spent.
- S106: £8,127.56 allocated to three projects in Q2.

## What we plan to do next quarter:

- Continue to progress pipeline projects.
- Offers will be made for the Community Development Grant in Q3.
- Administer the Winter Warmth Grant.



# Mid Suffolk Wellbeing Headline Performance Indicators



**43**

Children attended Family  
Park Cooking in the  
Summer Holidays

*Attendances between  
Stowmarket, Eye and Woolpit*

Page 47



**92**

Children attended  
Adventure Days in the  
Summer Holidays

*Attendances between  
Stowmarket, Eye and Woolpit*



**56**

Young people attended  
the Mix for activities  
during the Summer  
Holidays



**94**

Children attended Free  
Swimming sessions in  
the Summer in  
Stowmarket



**7**

Primary schools taking part  
in the Active Schools  
programme.



# Mid Suffolk Wellbeing

## Headline Performance Indicators



Page 48

**34,774**

Households supported  
with Council Tax Energy  
Rebate under the  
mandatory scheme



**4,583**

Households supported  
with Council Tax Energy  
Rebate under the  
discretionary scheme

*A total of £5,216,100 spent. The scheme closed  
on 30/9/22.*

*A total of £162,794 spent. All funding  
distributed.*



# Wellbeing

**Objective 1:** To develop the Council's first Wellbeing Strategy to ensure that we put the wellbeing of our communities at the heart of everything we do.

## Progress:

- Holiday Activity Fund Summer Programme: 22 venues were used across the district covering all days of the summer period, with 1,415 spaces booked. Activities included football skills, adventure days, family cooking, dance, boardgames, crafts, film making, mini-Olympics and so much more.
- Working with SPOT Wellbeing to deliver outreach wellbeing programme across four locations in the Mid Suffolk area. The first session has been delivered successfully in Debenham with 15 participants and the cohort continuing to meet as a group.
- MSDC provided funding and officer support for the Suffolk Community Games on the 9th July where school children and their families were invited to access a diverse range of activities including paddleboarding, climbing, BMX, skateboarding, archery, football skills, dance and circus skills to name a few.
- Active Suffolk and The Active Schools Programme has progressed with 7 schools currently engaging in surveys and follow up consultations.
- Developing a programme of work to support those living with dementia across Mid Suffolk, with awareness training for all demographics, dementia provision for care homes and support for community groups.

# Wellbeing

**Objective 1:** To develop the Councils first Wellbeing Strategy to ensure that we put the wellbeing of our communities at the heart of everything we do.

## **What we plan to do next quarter:**

- Plans are underway for the Christmas Holiday Activity Fund programme, there will be a variety of activities for the children to take part in.
- We will be providing activities for children during October Half Term.
- The Ageing Well health & wellbeing programme will commence in Cotton, for the residents of Mendlesham and surrounding areas in October, with planning in motion for Fressingfield and Eye programmes to start in Spring 2023.
- Everyone Active are looking to replicate the Chair Based Exercise course and find suitable members of staff to attend.
- Activities Unlimited initial report received highlighting possible activities, barriers to access and training opportunities. Based on the report, we will be working with activities unlimited to develop an action plan and allocate necessary resources to those actions.
- Exploring options to provide community cuppa events in the Mid Suffolk area.

# Wellbeing

**Objective 1:** To develop the Council's first Wellbeing Strategy to ensure that we put the wellbeing of our communities at the heart of everything we do.

## **What we plan to do next quarter:**

- Silver Sunday – Working with existing community groups and leisure providers to provide activities and refreshments to residents in Stowmarket in October to combat social isolation and loneliness.
- Exercise for Mental Health - Building on the successful GP referral programmes at leisure centres, providing people with mental health issues, who are clients with The Greenlight Trust and The Blossom Charity with free fitness membership through the GP referral scheme at either Mid Suffolk Leisure Centre or Stradbroke Swim and Fitness Centre for a 3-month period, which will give them access to the gym, groups exercise classes and the swimming pool during public sessions. The clients would also receive support from a specially qualified GP referral instructor during this time to help them to establish a pattern of exercise
- Liaising with 5 primary schools to roll out a 1 year “The Archie” project aiming to start in Spring 2023, with school children developing understanding, tolerance and kindness in reference to older people and dementia, and building relationships between the school, communities and care homes.

# Mid Suffolk Housing Headline Performance Indicators



 **34**

Households placed into temporary accommodation

Page 52

*Demand for Temporary Accommodation has increased since Q1.*

**27**

  
New Affordable Homes Built or Acquired

*There continue to be issues with the availability of materials and labour which is delaying handover of properties*



**56**

cases where homelessness has successfully been prevented or relieved

*We have supported more in Q2, and performance has remained steady*

**51**



Properties relet (not temporary accommodation)

*51 households have moved to accommodation to better meet their needs*

**44**



average number of days for standard VOID re-lets

*VOID times are being reviewed and closely monitored.*

# Housing

**Objective 1:** Enabling delivery and provision of homes within the Districts.

## **Progress:**

- Needham Project: four studio flats in Needham Market, a two-bed property in Stowmarket. Further seven properties in Needham Market and a House of Multiple Occupation in Needham Market – units available to homeless clients from end of April.
- Completion of the new five bed rough sleeper unit at Eric Jones House.
- There were 41 housing specific planning applications granted, which will deliver 93 homes.
- Completion of 27 new affordable homes for the Council including two buy backs of Right to Buy properties.
- Consultants completed RIBA 2 report for new exemplar market and affordable development scheme.
- Shared Ownership officer starting in post, and new contract in place for the sale and marketing of new shared ownership homes
- Stowmarket eco-futures group added some 'eco art' to the hoarding at the Stowmarket Middle School site.

# Housing

**Objective 1:** Enabling delivery and provision of homes within the Districts.

## **What we plan to do next quarter:**

- Phase 2 demolition works on a Council owned site at Paddock House, Eye to enable the delivery of 16 new affordable homes
- Continue demolition of Needham Market, Phase 2 site and MSDC Growth will appoint a contractor for the construction
- Elmswell Exemplar scheme is due to go to cabinet 7th November to enable the scheme to progress
- Develop the design of the Elmswell Exemplar scheme ahead of public engagement
- Marketing of 20 new shared ownership homes in the District
- End of Defects Liability Period on 1 new development that completed last year. Contact with residents and visits to residents to resolve any outstanding issues/defects.

# Housing

## Objective 2: Digital transformation to improve services to our residents

### Progress:

- Built a Compliance Dashboard so Building Services staff can track health and safety compliancy measures including gas safety checks.
  - We continue to stay on track with data migration from our Open Housing System to Capita One.
  - We have relaunched our Remote Assist tool; enabling tenants and staff to video call where needed.
- A new electronic process for Disposals has been developed resulting in staff efficiency.
- Appointed Acuity Research and Practice Ltd to be carry out a range tenant satisfaction surveys – including the collection of the Regulator's new Tenant Satisfaction Measures. Surveys will be conducted via the telephone and online.
- Tenant Engagement Strategy - work has been undertaken with various teams within the councils to ensure that we are linking in with the wider Resident Engagement Strategy of the councils.
  - Promotional videos for all our Sheltered Schemes have now been finished and will be uploaded to our website so residents can see more details about our schemes before bidding for a flat/unit.

# Housing

## Objective 2: Digital transformation to improve services to our residents

### What we plan to do next quarter:

- Roll out the new VOIDS software and reports on the 1st November, which will bring all our voids data and processes into the Open Housing system.
- Continue work on Capita One migration.
- Support the finance project with the moving to a new finance system.
- Start a new project on Dashboard reports, ensuring all teams have access to reports they need and can run reports via OH Insight Dashboard to monitor performance and compliancy.
- Tenant Engagement Strategy is due to go to cabinet for adoption on 7th November.



# Mid Suffolk Health of the Organisation

## Headline Performance Indicators

*Combined data for both Councils if not specified*



**1.80**

average no. of days  
sickness per FTE

*Previous quarter 1.64*



**974**

Total number of days  
lost to sickness

*Previous quarter 1219.*

*Top 2 reasons for absence: Coronavirus and  
Mental Health*



**48K**

Mid Suffolk Twitter  
impressions

*'impressions' are the number of times a  
Twitter user sees our Tweets*



**116,825**

Mid Suffolk Reach  
for Facebook

*'reach' is the number of unique users who had any content  
from our Facebook page or about the page enter their screen*

# Health of the Organisation

**Objective 1:** Develop and implement a comprehensive 'People' Strategy that ensures we are a great organisation to work for, that our people are supported to learn and grow, energised and enabled to deliver our ambitions

## **Progress:**

- Scoped our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion programme and commenced workshops
- Continued with the transition of data and key user testing and training for the new HR Information System due for go live in October
- Commenced the change readiness programme across the Councils which will continue in November and December and finalised content of the line manager support training
- Continued the work on our overall reward proposition
- Continued the work on our HR policy and process review

Page 58

## **What we plan to do next quarter:**

- Deliver all modules in the change readiness programme
- Continue the work on our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Programme
- Review People Plan to ensure all organisational development and change requirements are captured
- Complete work on our new induction programme
- Go live with the new HR Information system and commence work on Line Manager reporting functionality

# Health of the Organisation

**Objective 2:** Provide robust effective management of the Councils finances, including our capital projects and contracts. We will use our resources in a sustainable way and prioritise based upon our Corporate Plan.

## **Progress:**

- 2021/22 General Fund and HRA Outturn to be presented to Cabinet
- 2023/23 General Fund and HRA Q1 Financial Monitoring report presented to Cabinet
- 2021/22 Treasury Management Outturn presented to Joint Audit & Standards Committee
- Onboarding with supplier of replacement Financial Management System.

## **What we plan to do next quarter:**

- Publish the 2021/22 Draft Statement of Accounts (2020/21 audit to resume)
- 2022/23 General Fund and HRA Q2 Financial Monitoring report to be presented to Cabinet
- 2021/22 Treasury Management Outturn to be presented to Council

# Health of the Organisation

**Objectives 3:** Effective and efficient management of our property portfolio to make the best use of our assets.

## **Progress:**

- Contract to reconfigure the Gold floorplate at Endeavour House is in place with decant into Lime floorplate October 2022 planned
- Project Teams to review Depot and touchdown requirements are in place.
- Council Owned Companies completed business plan process for approval
- Commencement of Infrastructure works at Gateway 14
- Reserved Matters planning application for the Range building at G14 submitted
- CIFCO continued to make full debt repayments to the Council and its rent collection continue to exceed KPI.

Page 60

## **What we plan to do next quarter:**

- Work at Endeavour House commence 1st November with completion January 2023 and move back to Gold February 2023.
- Develop options for the Depot and Touchdown Projects
- Continue programme of assets reviews, including energy audits, a compliance review and compiling an asset inventory for general fund held land and property
- Business Case for a new Land and Property database to be brought forward
- Determination of Planning Application and Tenders the contracts for the Range building at G14
- Commence demolition of Phase 2 Former Needham Market HQ Site and appoint a main contractor
- Continue design work for the Elmswell Exemplar scheme following cabinet in November

# Agenda Item 11

## MID SUFFOLK DISTRICT COUNCIL

<b>TO:</b> Cabinet	<b>REPORT NUMBER:</b> MCA/22/32
<b>FROM:</b> Cllr Julie Flatman Cabinet Member for Communities, Health and Wellbeing	<b>DATE OF MEETING:</b> 05/12/22
<b>OFFICER:</b> Di Robinson – Interim Director for Communities	<b>KEY DECISION REF NO.</b> Item No.CAB392

### **Cost of Living Crisis: 5 Point Action Plan Progress Report (Phase 1) and Phase 2 Action Plan**

#### **1. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

The Report aims to provide the following:

- Context and background as to the changing landscape of the cost of living crisis
- A summary of the work undertaken over the last 6 months against the 5 Point Action Plan (Phase 1) which was agreed by both Babergh and Mid Suffolk Cabinets in June 2022.
- Note the Phase 2 Action Plan for the next 6 months through the Winter into the Spring, recognising the need for Winter preparedness and the required flexibility to enable the Councils to respond to emerging needs in this fast-moving environment. As agreed in the recommendation 3.2 from the 8/6/21 Cabinet recommendations.

#### **2. OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

- 2.1 To consider ending our co-ordinated approach to the Cost of Living crisis and to rely only on co-ordinating and promoting any national government support forthcoming over the next 6 months.
- 2.2 To develop a Phase 2 Action Plan, which incorporates the learning from the past 6 months, continuing and developing the growing partnerships across the system which support this work, and improve access to support for our communities, both via internal colleagues and through external partners.

#### **3. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 3.1 To review and note the content of the Phase 1 Cost of Living 5 Point Action Plan Dashboard Report at Appendix 1.
- 3.2 To note the focus of the Phase 2 Cost of Living Action Plan at Appendix 2

#### **REASON FOR DECISION**

Both papers are for noting. No decision required.

## 4. KEY INFORMATION

- 4.1 The Cost of Living Crisis has been building over the past few months and continues to impact on our communities in the District, particularly those who have already been experiencing inequalities pre and post the Covid 19 pandemic. It is also important to note that this impact is also being seen in groups who have previously not been on our radar, who had been managing despite some level of difficulty to maintain their resilience and independence, but who are now needing to come forward for support.
- 4.2 The predictions of impact discussed in the previous Cabinet Report of 8/6/22 have been realised, with warnings of 10% inflation and the associated Cost of Living increases now in effect. The drivers for addressing the Cost of Living crisis were well articulated in the Cabinet Report of June 2022. Details of how these issues are developing are included in the Dashboard Report. Covering the past 6 months at Appendix 1. There has been a wide range of national information and thinking to influence how we go about supporting people through this crisis, both as residents of our areas and also for our own staff who are also experiencing some of the same issues and indeed, some of our small businesses which are also experiencing these effects. Local demands are rising as evidenced by our colleagues and partners in the Voluntary & Community Sector across the board, including the changes seen and responded to by Sudbury and District & Mid Suffolk Citizens Advice, who have seen exponential increases in the demands for their debt advice services.
- 4.3 The attached 6 month Dashboard Report provides detail of the impacts and issues arising, the work we have undertaken to date to address these issues and some detail on how this has been progressed and delivered.
- 4.4 There has been a great deal of learning and development from the initial plan, and it important to note how quickly different issues have arisen and needed a different or amended response. The approach adopted in June 22 to create a clear action plan to support both our internal coordination and our relationships and joint working with external partners has been very beneficial. It has enabled the Councils to better understand the impacts across our services and customers of these changes and enabled us to focus our resource in the areas we believe will deliver the most impact. It has also supported conversations with partners and inform our priorities.
- 4.5 The appointment of the Cost of Living Coordinator in October has immediately made a significant difference to our ability to respond to changes, build more conversations with partners and to support our reporting.
- 4.6 As a result of this, the Phase 2 Action Plan has a level of embedded flexibility which allows the team delivering the opportunity to react quickly to changing circumstances, such as new national government support funding/guidance or specific local issues.
- 4.7 We have incorporated the national and regional thinking in our responses over the last 6 months and into the shaping of the Phase 2 Action Plan. We have changed the headings for the Phase 2 Action Plan to reflect this national thinking. These are now:
- Maximising Income
  - Accessing Advice

- Food insecurity and Poverty
- Fuel Poverty
- Health & Wellbeing

4.8 The Phase 2 Action Plan is also shaped to demonstrate where actions are responsive to the existing and emerging crisis issues, and also looking to the medium and longer terms to create opportunities to address the issue of resilience and supporting people beyond their immediate crisis to build their capacity beyond emergency measures, once those key issues have been managed or met. This latter part of the work is informing our thinking about a wide range of our work, seeking to build in resilience for our residents most at risk.

## 5. LINKS TO CORPORATE PLAN

5.1 This work aligns to the Corporate Plan Vision to have:

- “Great communities with bright and healthy futures that everyone is proud to call home”.

5.2 This work aligns to all the corporate plan strategic priorities.

## 6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The Phase 2 Action Plan does not require additional funding from the Council over and above existing budgets. The team has been maximising the opportunities of external funding, through the Collaborative Communities Board, national government programmes. The team has also been working to use our internal grants process to focus on what is most needed, such as through the Winter Warmth Grants and Community Development Grant funding, where the focus has been on supporting the VCSE to continue providing services and activities which are essential of our communities, particularly those most at risk of the impacts of the Cost of Living Crisis

## 7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

7.1 There are no legal implications associated with this report.

## 8. RISK MANAGEMENT

8.1 Key risks are set out below:

8.2

Risk Description	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigation Measures
Those most at risk from the cumulative impacts of the cost of living crisis do	Medium	High	Coordinating and promoting Government financial support to ensure we are

not receive the support they need			targeting those who most need it  Using our knowledge of local circumstances and communities to target our financial support into the VCSE who offer the most support to those at risk
Support provided to our communities and those in most need is not sufficient, aligned or coordinated	Medium	High	Maximise our system wide partnership working, internally and externally of the District Council. Aiming to provide targeted support in our localities where we have identified trends and needs.  Appointment of Cost Of Living Coordinator to support our coordination and partnership working
The impacts of the Cost of Living crisis undermines the wellbeing and resilience of our communities	Medium	High	Bringing together our existing delivery to support communities and their wellbeing, and focus this effort where we can have the greatest impacts .

## 9. CONSULTATIONS

- 9.1 Portfolio Cabinet Members have been consulted about this work and kept informed as it has been developing and wider Cabinet have been consulted.
- 9.2 Our internal stakeholder group which operates across Housing, Customer Operations, Shared Revenue Partnership, Communications and Communities and Wellbeing



9.3 Our external stakeholder panel includes our colleagues in Sudbury & District & Mid Suffolk Citizens Advice and local Health Partners and we have discussed Cost of Living work and priorities with this group and with colleagues on the Collaborative Communities Board.

9.4 The sixth month Cost of Living dashboard report has been shared with Overview and Scrutiny, from that the following recommendations were made:

- That the Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee notes the contents of the report and commends the work being undertaken in response to the Cost of Living crisis.
- That the Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee supports the 30% uplift to Local Citizens Advice and the work being conducted as a result and recommends that this support continues for a further 2 years.
- That the Councils facilitate a more collaborative approach between organisations by encouraging the promotion of joint working.
- That officers work with relevant agencies to understand the situation for young people under 25, specifically men, to build a proactive response to support them as an at-risk group.
- That Cabinet and Officers explore how we can embed the cost of living into the culture of the organisation for all staff when working with residents across all departments as part of a more integrated system of support.
- That a Joint All Member Briefing be arranged for all Councillors on the Cost of Living crisis with input from Local Citizens Advice

## 10. EQUALITY ANALYSIS

There is no requirement to complete an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) at this time. The core content of the work is intended to tackle and prevent inequalities and make sure there is no discrimination against the 9 protected characteristics as defined by the Equality Act 2010. The impact of the plan in terms of key groups in our communities will be further developed as part of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Phase.

## 11. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no direct environmental implications of this work. There is however some added environmental benefits where retrofitting of some housing stock and some county wide work to support residents to maximise home energy efficiency.

## 12. APPENDICES

Title	Location
(a) Cost of Living Phase 1 Action Plan: Dashboard Report	Attached
(b) Phase 2 Cost of Living Action Plan	Attached

### **13. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS**

- 13.1 Cost of Living Crisis: 5 Point Action Plan Dashboard Report, highlighting the work undertaken over the past 6 months since the previous Cabinet decisions 8/6/22.
- 13.2 Cost of Living Crisis: Phase 2 Action Plan.

### **14. REPORT AUTHORS**

**Di Robinson, Director for Communities and Wellbeing**

**Vicky Moseley, Corporate Manager for Communities**

**Samantha Lake, Corporate Manager for Customer Operations**

**Elysa Dale, Cost of Living Co-ordinator**



## **COST OF LIVING CRISIS**

### **A WHOLE SYSTEM APPROACH – PROGRESS REPORT NOVEMBER 2022**

#### **WHAT ARE WE SEEING?**

From the drastic increases in utility and fuel costs, to higher food prices and the ever decreasing number of affordable properties, all across the district we are aware that our residents are feeling the impact of the cost of living crisis, and are finding it more difficult to satisfy their basic needs.

Additionally, as a district with a significant rural population, many of our households will experience additional pressures not seen to the same extent as those households living in more urban areas. Below is a snapshot of the issues being faced by our residents, compiled from a range of sources. For references, please see the final page of this report.

## Fuel Poverty and Transport

---

As of 2020 there were an estimated 13.2% of households in Babergh who are in fuel poverty and 13.1% across Mid Suffolk, this is slightly below the national average of 13.4% [1].

While we do not yet have fuel poverty data for 2022, with the average price of oil more than doubling between June 2021 and June 2022 [5], the average household bill set to increase up to 64% [1], and rural properties being more likely to have an EPC rating of D or below [2], it is very likely that the number of households across the district who are experiencing fuel poverty is set to increase considerably.

Additionally, households who are not connected to a mains gas supply are shown to have a relative increased risk of fuel poverty of 7.1% [2]. In 2020 the percentage of households within Babergh who did not have access to mains gas was 36%, while in Mid Suffolk this was 52%. [4]

while rates of fuel poverty are similar across rural and urban populations, those living in rural areas are more likely to experience deeper levels of fuel poverty and have a larger fuel poverty gap. The average household in a rural area experiencing fuel poverty would require an additional £501 per year to pull them out of fuel poverty, while in urban areas this figure is £223 [2].

A considerable proportion of households in fuel poverty will have a pre-payment meter installed, 30.6% compared to 10.7% for households not in fuel poverty. [3] [6]

Citizens Advice have reported a national increase in the amounts of clients who are presenting with energy debt, as well as a year on year increase in the number of pre-payment meters being installed as a result of customer debt. There are currently 24,713 households within Suffolk on a pre-payment meter. [1]

In addition to the increase in the cost of heating their homes, households are seeing an increase in the cost of the fuel and transportation. The cost of filling up a vehicle has increased considerably over the last twelve months, with July seeing petrol and diesel prices 46.8% higher than the same month in the previous year. [17] While prices have declined somewhat in the last few months, this is anticipated to increase again as we move into winter following the decision by Opec to cut oil production.

This anticipated increase in car fuel costs will pose an additional strain for resident's budgets at a time when most essential costs are going up, particularly for those who need to travel in order to access essential services, employment and education, and those living in more rural areas of the district.

Households living in more rural areas already spend more on their transportation costs than their urban counterparts, with the average household in a rural village spending up to £55 more per week [2]. Those on a low income, who tend to own less efficient vehicles and already pay more car tax, are particularly vulnerable to these price increases. [19]

For those not able to drive, or without access to a car, public transport is a necessity; however the reduction in passengers since the pandemic in 2020 has led to reduced bus services, particularly across the East of England [18]. This risks creating barriers to opportunities in employment and education for our residents, as well as issues accessing cultural and social activities, and healthcare. [20]

Those on a low income, lone parent families and people with disability are less likely to be able to drive and have access to a vehicle, and therefore are more likely to be reliant on the provision of adequate public transport. [21]

## Housing

---

Nationally and across the district the availability and affordability of housing has decreased. Since the pandemic there has been a sharp decrease in the number of available homes to rent, caused in large part by the increase in the number of second homes and holiday lets in rural areas across the country. In March 2022 53% of buy-to-let properties that were sold left the private rented sector. [11] Currently across Babergh and Mid Suffolk only 11.9% of households are in privately rented properties [12].

This drop in availability has led to higher demand for the privately rented properties that remain on the market, causing an 11% increase in asking rents in rural areas. [2] Property Mark reported in July 2022 that 82% of member agents saw a month on month increase in rents. [10]

The gap between the Local Housing Allowance for benefits and the current market rent makes it increasingly difficult for households in receipt of benefits to afford their rent [22], of 160 properties advertised in Ipswich across the month of July, not a single one was affordable for a household on benefits. [7] Across Babergh and Mid Suffolk the gap between Housing Benefit/ Housing Element rates and market rents is over £100 per week for larger properties and just under £50 per week for smaller properties.[9]

Across Babergh and Mid Suffolk 34.1% of households own their properties with a mortgage [12]. The recent increase in interest rates will make it more challenging for owner occupiers to afford their housing costs. Owner occupiers are not eligible for traditional benefits to assist with their housing costs such as Universal Credit Housing Element, Housing Benefit, Discretionary Housing Payments, or the Household Support Grant, leaving them with limited access to support.

## Food Security

---

Nationally, food and non-alcoholic beverage prices rose by 13.1% in the 12 months to August 2022 [14].

Sudbury Citizens Advice have reported that they are receiving more calls from clients in need of welfare assistance such as food parcels, and Storehouse, the primary foodbank for the Sudbury area, has reported a 42% increase in demand compared to July/ August, with children making up 50% of recipients on average.

Stowmarket food bank supplied 124 food parcels during September, an increase of 20% compared to August/ July, and have provided 665 food parcels since the start of the financial year.

Living in rural areas without access to a car or good public transport may reduce a household's access to affordable food, with more households opting to use local shops where food prices may be higher, [2] [15].

With a higher proportion of residents above pension age across Babergh and Mid Suffolk (25.6% vs the national average of 18.2% [14]), these residents are more likely to be digitally excluded [16] and unable to complete food shopping online, which could again lead to a higher use of local shops at an increased cost for those in rural areas across the district.

## Health and Wellbeing

---

As we enter the winter months, those households facing fuel poverty may choose not to heat their homes due to the financial implications. We know that cold homes can cause and aggravate many health conditions including; respiratory conditions, cardiovascular diseases, poor mental health, dementia, injuries, hypothermia, and problems with childhood development. [1]

Children living in cold homes are more prone to exposure of damp and mould, both of which contribute to developing asthma and acute asthma attacks. Damp and mould may contribute to approximately 10–15 per cent of new cases of childhood asthma across Europe. [1]

Suffolk Health and Wellbeing Board recently reported that in Suffolk the median number of excess winter deaths per year is 110, of which it is estimated that 11 are as a result of fuel poverty and 24 due to cold homes. [1]

Areas with high levels of deprivation have significantly higher rates of adult and child obesity, with many cheap foods having high levels of sugar, salt and fat. [24],

Poverty and deprivation can also have a large impact on mental health, as well as being an underlying cause [25]. Areas with increased poverty rates experience higher levels of mortality from suicide and alcohol and drug related causes, with a higher proportion of young people in poverty found to be experiencing mental health symptoms, compared to those from higher income households. [1]

Financial difficulty increases the risk of domestic abuse, with women living in low-income households being 3.5 times more at risk of suffering domestic violence than those in higher income households.

Suffolk Mind have advised that average emotional wellbeing levels across the county have now dropped to below pandemic levels. This drivers of this have been recorded primarily as a lack of security and control.

## The Impact on our VCSE's

---

Organisations across the VCSE sector have, on the whole, reported an increase in customers who require higher levels of support, in conjunction with increased core running costs and a general reduction in volunteers.

Sudbury Citizens Advice have reported a 558% increase in debt issues since April 2021, and a 70% increase in requests for charitable support due to increased costs which are not covered by current benefit rates. Of the clients they are advising, they are seeing a 38% increase in case complexity, and specialised volunteer tools have been developed to assist volunteers on complicated areas of advice such as energy support.

Citizens Advice in Mid Suffolk are reporting consistently higher client numbers compared to previous years and have seen a sharp increase in the number of clients contacting them for energy advice, which did not decline over the summer as with previous years. They have also reported an increased number of clients with negative budgets, households whose basic outgoings cannot be brought in line with their income despite support.

Homestart have advised that, due to the current cost of fuel, they are experiencing an increased number of volunteers claiming for expenses, and that they have lost several volunteers who have had to find paid employment as a result of the cost of living crisis. Several members of staff have also taken on additional part time employment to top up their income.

The increase in the price of fuel is also greatly impacting the core costs of organisations who require transport as part of their operating model, such as the Rural Coffee Caravan.

## HOW DOES THIS ALIGN WITH OUR FIVE POINT PLAN?

With the above themes emerging as challenges for our residents across the district, we are looking at how we can incorporate support for these issues into the Cost of Living framework laid out in our Five Point Plan.

	Coordinating Government Support	Using Our Discretion	Partnership Working	Maintaining Good Health	Access to Food and Nutrition
Fuel poverty and Transportation	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Housing	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Food Security					✓
Health & Wellbeing			✓	✓	

## OUR RESPONSE

### COORDINATING GOVERNMENT SUPPORT

Co-ordination of government support to ensure it reaches those people who need it.

#### Council Tax Energy Rebate of £150 – COMPLETE (one off commitment)

We have now concluded the Council Tax Energy Rebate Scheme, residents within Babergh and Mid Suffolk who have a Council Tax band of A -D have now received their energy rebate.

Babergh		Mid Suffolk	
Number of households	31,998	Number of households	34,773
Funds distributed	£4,799,700	Funds distributed	£5,215,950

#### Energy Rebate Discretionary fund – IN PROGRESS

Phases 1 & 2 of the Energy Rebate Discretionary Fund have now concluded, phase 3 is now being implemented to pay an energy rebate to those in receipt of Council tax Reduction.

The following funds have been awarded from the fund to assist households who are not otherwise eligible for the Council Tax Energy Rebate.

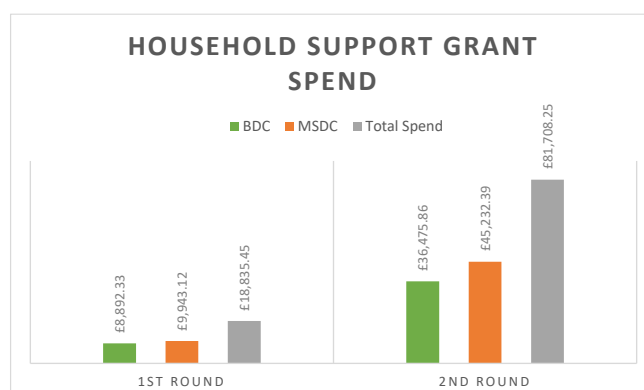
Babergh		Mid Suffolk	
Number of households	198	Number of households	247
Funds distributed	£29,700 29%	Funds distributed	£37,050 23%

#### Household Support Grant – IN PROGRESS (two rounds complete)

A total of £102,543.70 has been distributed across Babergh and Mid Suffolk to support vulnerable households who are struggling with their housing costs.

A total of 41 households in Babergh and 43 in Mid Suffolk have been supported through the fund.

We have now opened applications for the third allocation of the housing portion of the household support fund, where we will be looking primarily to support vulnerable households in the private rented sector.





## EXERCISING DISCRETION

**Exercise Discretion when proving welfare support and advice to support those people who could potentially fall on hard times.**

### Discretionary Housing Payments – IN PROGRESS

We continue to work closely with Shared Revenues Partnership to deliver discretionary payments to vulnerable households who are struggling with their housing costs.

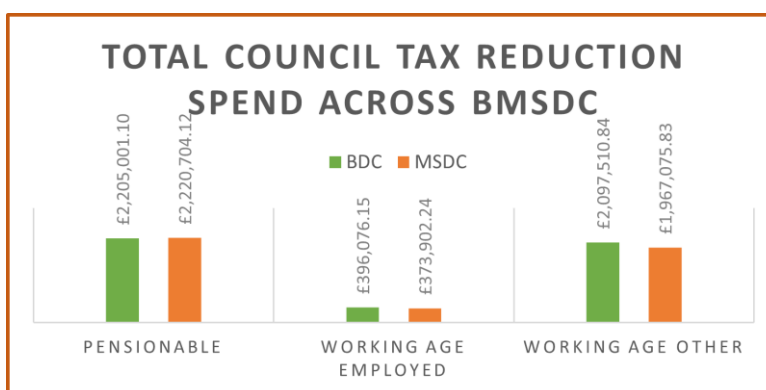
These funds help reduce the accrual of rent arrears and as well as other debts, and help to reduce the risk of homelessness to households across our district.

Babergh		Mid Suffolk	
Number of households	41	Number of households	31
Funds distributed	£37,244	Funds distributed	£39,328

### Council Tax Reduction – IN PROGRESS

There are currently a total of 8,791 households in receipt of Council Tax Reduction across Babergh and Mid Suffolk District.

	Babergh (households)	Mid Suffolk (households)
Working Age	2,453	2,288
Pension Age	2,019	2,031



An alternative proposed Council Tax Reduction Scheme has now been agreed by Cabinet which would see full reductions for eligible households in receipt of Universal Credit and legacy benefits. The public consultation for these proposals will run until the 24<sup>th</sup> November.

## EXERCISING DISCRETION (continued)

### Support for our tenants – IN PROGRESS

Our Income Officers continue to adopt a person centred approach to any tenant who is struggling to afford their rent, this has become all the more crucial in recent months as households struggle with increased costs. Officers are reporting an increase in households with complex issues, which require more intensive support to resolve.

Officers refer tenants in need of support to our Tenant Support Team for assistance with debt and income maximisation, this is in addition to referrals to external agencies such as Citizens Advice.

Our Tenant Support Team also work pro-actively with tenants in Housing Association and privately rented accommodation to assist them to sustain their tenancies.

The tenant support team currently have 121 active cases across Babergh and Mid Suffolk, and have received 240 referrals since April 2022, of these there have been 196 positive outcomes so far.

Since the start of the financial year officers have assisted residents within Babergh to claim £30,604.15 in benefit income, and £17,304.25 in Mid Suffolk.

	Babergh	Mid Suffolk	Total
<b>BMSDC tenants</b>	86	79	165
<b>Housing association/ private tenants</b>	41	34	75

### Feedback from our tenants:

*"I just would like to thank you so very much for all of your support and understanding over the last few years. I was left in a bad situation with arrears on the rent account a few years ago and my housing officer has greatly supported me through this and has shown huge amounts of compassion, support and empathy. My housing officer has been so understanding towards me during this difficult time and has helped me to sometimes re-adjust payments to keep to the agreed payment plan when I had other outgoing expenses like hospital appointments which I had to go to. My housing officer has also arranged food parcels for me and to be completely honest I really couldn't have gone through this time without her continued support, empathy and understanding."*

## PARTNERSHIP WORKING

**Maximise partnership working and established systems to provide targeted support in localities where there is a particular trend and need, implementing a targeted family-first approach.**

---

### **Working with partners to create a single view database and production of legally compliant data sharing agreements - IN PROGRESS**

We have been working collaboratively with Suffolk Office of Data and Analytics to create a dashboard to help us identify those who are at risk of crisis.

This work requires significant collaboration to ensure we have data sharing agreements in order to share and use data from a wide variety of partners and sources.

### **Appointment of Cost of Living Coordinator --COMPLETE**

We have successfully recruited to the Cost of Living Coordinator post; Elysa Dale started in the role on the 3<sup>rd</sup> October and will be working to bring together key departments and agencies in order to deliver the Cost of Living Action Plan.

### **Funding of Sudbury & District Citizens Advice and Mid Suffolk Citizens Advice – COMPLETE**

We are funding Sudbury Citizens Advice and Mid Suffolk Citizens Advice. A one off uplift of 30% has been paid to Sudbury Citizens Advice and Mid Suffolk Citizens Advice in recognition of the increased demand for their services over the coming year. This will be reviewed annually.

### **Working with our voluntary sector partners – IN PROGRESS**

We have set up monthly meetings with external partners and advice agencies from across the district who are directly supporting residents with the Cost of Living crisis. We can share information on the issues affecting our residents, the initiatives being delivered across the district to support people with these issues and identifying possible barriers to success. We will be looking to widen the reach of these meetings moving forward.

## PARTNERSHIP WORKING (continued)

### **System wide investment in Suffolk Warm Handover and Suffolk Infolink – IN PROGRESS**

We are actively participating in the Community Support Systems Subgroup of the Collaborative Communities Board to assess how the current platforms, Suffolk Warm Handover and Suffolk Infolink, can be developed, or replaced in order to create a single directory of services that would facilitate referrals between relevant organisations, anonymous data reporting, and a payment by use system that will enable effective social prescribing and feedback of user experiences and outcomes.

### **Referrals of vulnerable households who require additional discretionary support – IN PROGRESS**

We continue to promote the Suffolk Information Partnership's 'Warm Handover' referral internally across our customer service and housing teams. We are working closely with Suffolk County Council as part of the Collaborative Communities Board Community Support System Subgroup to look at ways of driving increased use of the Warm Handover referral and improving the user experience of the platform.

### **Working with communications colleagues to drive campaigns in line with cost of living objectives – IN PROGRESS**

Following the appointment of the Cost of Living Coordinator, we are working with the BMSDC communications team to develop a clear communications campaign that will ensure that residents are easily able to access information regarding the cost of living.

In addition to this we are working with the Independent Food Aid Network (UK) to raise awareness of the various support agencies within the district that residents can approach for assistance with the cost of living. This will be via digital signposting form, accessed via the BMSDC website, and using bespoke diagnostic leaflets which aid users in identifying relevant support available to them.

### **Provision of support and confidential advice for Babergh and Mid Suffolk staff and key partners- SCOPING**

We have had initial discussions with Organisational Development on the best approach to embed this wellbeing support into our service. We will be developing this in phase two of the programme.

## Maintain Good Health

Whether that be referrals for mental Health support, discounts at our gyms and swimming pools, engaging in community led 'wellbeing' initiatives, volunteering and socialising via local initiatives

---

### **Calendar of family friendly events - IN PROGRESS (one round completed)**

Two Family Fun days have been delivered by the Communities Team during August in Sudbury & Stowmarket.

Both Family Fun Days were well attended and gained positive feedback, with all those attending asking that the event is continued. There were many local services used, including information on health and wellbeing, as well as support with the cost of living. 179 activity spaces were pre-booked by HAF children, with many more joining in on the day. Family picnics were also available for HAF eligible children which was well received.

### **Understanding the impact of the cost of living crisis on our VCSE organisations IN PROGRESS**

During September, a number of workshops were delivered with officers, health professionals and the VCSE via the Connect for Health platform to explore concerns and agree key activities to be further explored via the INTs, especially using data to target communication of support available to known areas of deprivation.

### **Working with partners to ensure vulnerable households have access to fuel and travel vouchers via the LWAS scheme - IN PROGRESS**

We are holding monthly internal meetings with members from departments across the council, as well as operational meetings with our VCSE stakeholders, to discuss the support available to vulnerable households via the Local Welfare Assistance Scheme.

Between April – September 2022 there were 40 fuel vouchers awarded to residents in Babergh with a total value of £1960, and 50 vouchers awarded to residents in Mid Suffolk totalling £2450.

## Maintain Good Health (continued)

### **Community- led projects to support with mental health and wellbeing**

We continue to work closely with our health partners to deliver projects which seek to build community resilience and improve the wellbeing of our residents, including, but not limited to the following;

ICOPE- Undertaking assessments with participants aged 75+ living at home in the South Rural INT area (Babergh) to understand their health and wellbeing needs, and provide preventative care through community interventions.

Ageing well Programme – Working with SPOT Wellbeing to deliver outreach wellbeing programme for across four locations in the Mid Suffolk area

Active Schools – Working with Active Suffolk to deliver active schools programme with 7 schools currently engaged, aiming to reduce childhood obesity and improve physical and mental wellbeing.

### **Working with leisure providers to expand existing social prescribing - scheme - IN PROGRESS**

GPs are now universally able to refer participants across all four council owned facilities.

Both providers are looking at expanding their offers, with Abbeycroft accepting referrals from Home Start and offering free access to facilities, while Everyone Active are offering free access to young people in care.

We are also building on the success of this scheme by looking to provide residents with mental health issues who are clients with The Greenlight Trust and The Blossom Charity, access to free membership through the GP referral scheme.

## ACCESS TO FOOD AND NUTRITION

**Whether that be participating in healthy eating exercises/initiatives, organising a community garden to grow produce, setting up of a Community Larder or providing extra support to local food banks to meet any unmet need.**

---

### **Expansion of Holiday Activities and Food Programme – IN PROGRESS**

BMSDC is working with local providers to coordinate a programme of free activities and healthy meals during the school holidays for children and young people.

The programme is funded to cover the Easter, Summer and Christmas holidays but BMSDC are also ensuring that there is a good offer during the half term holidays. The children who take part will enjoy fun and enriching activities in a safe and sociable environment and have the opportunity to develop new skills or knowledge and try out new experiences.

At least one meal per day will be included and the children will improve their knowledge and awareness of healthy eating.

The scheme aims to help families develop their understanding of nutrition and food budgeting.

### **Understanding the root issues which drive foodbank use - IN PROGRESS**

Since the inception of the Five Point Plan we have reviewed this heading; whilst we continue to work closely with our partners at Suffolk County Council to better understand the issue of foodbank use, we have also explored the implementation of community supermarkets.

Community supermarkets can bridge the gap between Food Banks and Affordable Supermarkets like Aldi and Lidl. The concept of the Community Supermarket is early intervention, enabling individuals and families to build financial resilience and to retain control of their own finances even in areas of food or nutritional poverty.

If the Councils Investment Plan for the allocation of UK Shared Prosperity funding is successful, it is intended to progress with the creation of a community supermarket in each district to encourage a sustainable alternative to food banks

### **Mapping potential sites for growing community produce - IN PROGRESS**

Through the mapping work completed by Public Realm, a list of allotments has been collated with spaces for additional plots identified. We are now reviewing how best to progress with this initiative.

## LOOKING AHEAD

The current plan includes many commitments which we will continue to deliver as we enter phase two, from using our discretion to alleviate financial hardship, building on our partnership working to identify vulnerable households and provide support, and ensuring clear communication surrounding the local and government support available for households in our district.

We have utilised the headings provided under the current Five Point Plan to form our approach to supporting our residents, and this has been helpful in part. As the circumstances evolve our intention is to review these headings to ensure our approach remains responsive to the ever changing needs of our residents.

The plan should be iterative and flexible to ensure that we can both continue the work in progress, respond to changes quickly and efficiently, appreciating that we don't have all the answers and we need to work at a hyper local level with our VCSE partners to develop community resilience moving forwards and learn lessons from our response to COVID-19.

As we move into the next phase of our plan, there are several key priorities that need to be considered. Initially, how we respond to the crisis, in the short term, as well as looking ahead to develop a sustainable plan and enhance community resilience.

### Short term crisis

---

We recognise, that winter will bring several pressures, particularly supporting residents with access to warm and welcoming spaces. We are already working with our VCSE partners, such as the rural coffee caravan to map our warm spaces. Additionally, we are providing access to grant funding to increase our warm space offer.

There are several pop-up foodbanks starting across the districts, therefore mapping work is required to ensure that we are able to support those in short term food crisis.

A tailored communications plan needs to be developed to ensure that we are providing bespoke support to those in need, this will be through both the production of self-service signposting/information forms, as well as working with partners and front-line teams to encourage take up of existing and new schemes.

The 3<sup>rd</sup> round of household support fund is included within our short-term crisis support, as well as other existing funding opportunities. We will continue to work closely with Suffolk County Council to help our residents access the Local Welfare Assistance Scheme, and will explore the feasibility of accessing this data in line with our data sharing agreements to identify vulnerable groups.



## Longer term/ community resilience building

---

A key part of the future focused plan is to widen our network of VCSE partners, to gain insight at a hyper local level to help shape shared initiatives and outcomes. We recognise that we have already started this work but growing the membership will have a wider and greater impact.

Prevention is a key area of focus, to reduce those falling into crisis. Early intervention will be critical, such as greater use of our warm handover provision. We also need to ensure our front-line teams are equipped with the knowledge and skills to recognise early support needs and know the best way to support our residents.

We also want to develop community resilience; in part this will require scoping for financial capability sessions with key partners.

Targeted communications campaigns will ensure that residents are aware of the assistance available to them to help them through the cost of living crisis, and how to access the organisations best placed to support them.

Alongside this we will also be exploring community supermarkets, as part of our UK shared prosperity funding investment plan, to support those suffering food poverty to bridge the gap between the crisis support of food banks and affordable supermarkets.

Lastly, ensuring that where customers wish to gain digital skills, they have wider opportunities to do so. Therefore, we will extend our digital inclusion provision to include small groups or one to one support in four libraries to support people increase digital confidence and support with social isolation. Alongside the extension of our free tablet loaning scheme to help residents stay connected and gain access to information, advice, and guidance.

## References

1. *The potential impact of the cost of living crisis in Suffolk* ; Suffolk Health Wellbeing Board, September 22
2. *Rural cost of living*, Rural Services Network, July 2022
3. *Annual Fuel Poverty Statistics in England, 2022 (2020 data)*, Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, February 2022.
4. *Sub-national estimates of properties not connected to the gas network* , Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, December 2021
5. *RPI: Ave price - Heating oil, per 1000 litres*, Office for National Statistics, data and analysis from Census 2021.
6. *Fuel Crisis Report 2022*, Fuel Bank Foundation,
7. *The Housing Crisis, Lack of Affordable Lets*, The Bureau of Investigative Journalism, 07.10.2022
8. *Private rental market summary statistics in England, June 2022*, Office for National Statistics
9. *Local Housing Allowance rates by postcode or local authority*, Direct Gov
10. *Private Rented Sector Report July 2022*, Property Mark
11. *A Shrinking Private Sector? June 2022*, Property Mark
12. *Suffolk Observatory, Ownership and tenancy| Babergh & Mid Suffolk* , October 2022
13. *Consumer price inflation, UK: August 2022*, Office of National Statistics
14. *Population - SHA - Babergh & Mid Suffolk* - Suffolk Observatory
15. *United Kingdom Food Security Report 2021: Theme 4: Food Security at Household Level*, Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs
16. *Adults' Media Literacy Tracker 2021*, CATI Omnibus Survey (2021)
17. *RPI: Percentage change over 12 months - Petrol and Oil incl Fuel Oil*, Office of National Statistics
18. *Funding local bus services in England*, Campaign for Better Transport, June 2022
19. *The Low Income Penalty Report*, By Miles, August 2021
20. *Transport deserts*, Campaign for Better Transport, February 2020
21. *Inequalities in Mobility and Access in the UK Transport System*, Government Office for Science, March 2019
22. *Improving the Energy Performance of Privately Rented Homes in England and Wales*, Citizens Advice response to BEIS consultation January 2021
23. *BDC LHA Rate Comparison and Key Market Factors*, Housing Solutions, September 2022
24. *Health inequalities and obesity*, RCP, October 2020
25. *Poverty impedes cognitive function*, PMID: 23990553, 2013
26. *The Female Face of Poverty*, WBG, 2018

## Refreshed cost of living action plan

The following principles will apply to the cost of living action plan:

- **We will work in partnership:** we cannot support our residents alone, therefore we need to work across the system, with both our internal colleagues and our external partners, to ensure we are joining up to provide essential support during this time. Using this cross discipline approach, we recognise that we have a collective responsibility to deliver the actions identified to support our residents.
- **We will not leave anyone behind:** we know there are populations who will be disproportionately impacted by the cost of living crisis; such as low income households with children, those with long term health conditions and disabilities, households living in more deprived areas, people from minority ethnic communities, older adults, and those who were already just about managing. We will ensure that support is readily accessible for everyone, using behavioural insights and shared learning from our partnership working to guide our approach, and as part of this will ensure that our support does not discriminate against the 9 protected characteristics as defined by the Equality Act 2010.
- **We will share priorities and outcomes:** we will listen to those VCSE's at a hyper local level to ensure we are sharing priorities and outcomes and coming together to develop both short-term support, as well as longer term community resilience.
- **We will take an iterative approach:** The challenges of the cost of living crisis are constantly changing, we must therefore be flexible to in order to be as responsive as possible to the needs of our residents, adapting our approach as the crisis evolves and we learn more. .
- **We will use data and insight to determine trends and measure impact:** we will make best use of data obtained through our customer engagements and digital platforms, as well as the valuable insight available to us through our VCSE spaces and health partners, to identify trends and unmet support needs across the district. This can then be used to shape future initiatives and build a monitoring framework to accurately measure the impact of interventions.



## Areas of Focus

Having reviewed the pressures our residents are experiencing as a result of the increases to the cost of living, we have developed the following areas of focus to support our residents.

As part of each heading we have considered the short term support needed to alleviate crisis, as well as interventions which will build community resilience in the longer term.

### **Maximising Income**

With increases to living costs seen across the board it is important that households have the tools they need make their money go further. This can mean accessing emergency financial assistance to alleviate crisis, as well as opportunities to grow household income over the longer term.

### **Accessing Advice**

The cost of living crisis constantly evolving, it is crucial that households are able to access specialised advice to navigate the assistance available and identify solutions to prevent and alleviate crisis. We will be working to embed ownership of the cost of living across all teams, stakeholders and partners, enabling front line staff to identify households at risk and refer for appropriate support.

### **Food Insecurity and Poverty**

High levels of inflation have impacted the cost of food and non-alcoholic beverages over the last 12 months. It is critical that emergency food provision remains accessible to those experiencing crisis, while longer term interventions are explored which would reduce dependency on foodbanks.

### **Fuel Poverty**

Drastic increases in the cost of fuel mean many households in fuel poverty will choose not to heat their homes this winter, leaving them at an increased risk of health complications. Those unable to heat their homes must have access to emergency fuel support and warm community spaces, while longer term support is provided to improve energy efficiency.

### **Health and Wellbeing**

We know that deprivation can negatively impact our physical and emotional wellbeing in numerous ways. With an increased number of households now at risk of hardship due to the cost of living, we must ensure that an array of measures are adopted to safeguard the wellbeing of those at risk.

## Maximising Income for Households at Risk

	Action		Impact
<b>Immediate Crisis Support</b>	1.1	Distribution of the Household Support Fund (HSF)	Households in financial hardship will receive adequate advice and support to meet their costs.
	1.2	Maximise use of Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP) and in cases of exceptional hardship Discretionary Financial Assistance (DFA)	
	1.3	Citizens Advice are funded by Public Health through Suffolk County Council, to support households in accessing the Local Welfare Assistance Scheme.	
	1.4	Citizens Advice are funded to provide debt and benefit advice in order to support households at risk of hardship.	
	1.5	Providing the remaining funding for the discretionary scheme to those claiming Council Tax reduction.	
	1.6	Retaining capacity to respond to emerging needs and advice provision, and to additional government initiatives for financial support.	Advice and support will be responsive to the changing needs of our residents.

## Maximising Income for Households at Risk (continued)

		Action	Impact
<b>Building longer term community resilience</b>	1.7	Consulting on our current Council Tax Reduction scheme for 23/24.	If approved households on low incomes would receive a 100% reduction in their council tax.
	1.8	Supporting individuals who are not economically active to access employment and training opportunities through targeted events and promotion.	People out of work are given opportunities and advice to help them access paid employment and higher paid employment in order to boost their household income.
	1.9	Data and insight; exploring efficient use of data both internally and with Suffolk Office of Data and Analytics (SODA) to better identify trends and households at risk of hardship.	Data and insight obtained will enable the council to identify households and groups at risk, and provide early intervention and prevent crisis, as well as monitor the impact of interventions.
	1.10	Creation of a wider VCSE forum to share insights and experiences.	
	1.11	Explore the possibility of working with water providers to refer households in receipt of Council tax Reduction for reduced tariffs.	An increased number of households in receipt of council tax reduction will receive support with their water bill to boost their households income.
	1.12	Explore the use of targeted communications to raise awareness of support to renovate and let out empty properties in the district.	Landlords will be more aware of the assistance available, which may lead to an increase of affordable privately rented properties being let through our Central Suffolk Lettings Team.

Accessing Advice			
	Action	Impact	
<b>Immediate Crisis Support</b>	2.1	Communications campaigns and tools will promote the assistance and advice agencies available to support people.	Residents are more aware of the various types of support available to cope with the cost of living crisis, and as well as how to access it and who to turn to for further support.
	2.2	Webpages are refreshed to provide a hub of information related to the cost of living, and include a digital signposting form to connect people to appropriate advice agencies.	
	2.3	Front line customer service and housing staff are upskilled to identify customers at risk and refer for further support.	Staff identify households at risk and complete a referral using Suffolk Warm Handover to help the customer engage with support.
	2.4	Housing Solutions team will provide advice and assistance to households at risk of homelessness, and in exceptional cases financial assistance.	Households are supported to afford their homes, and referred for further advice where appropriate.
	2.5	Tenant Support Officers will continue to support tenants who are experiencing increasingly complex issues and are at risk of hardship, to maximise their income, budget their money and refer to agencies for specialised advice.	Tenants will be financially better off following support to budget their money, engage with specialist advice services, and access additional benefits, grant funding, and charitable aid.
	2.6	Locality teams will use events and activities such as Holiday Activity and Food Programme (HAF) to promote and signpost to support and advice services regarding the cost of living.	Children on free school meals and their families will have additional awareness of the support available, and how to access this.

## Accessing Advice (continued)

	Action		Impact
	2.7	Advice and information is available for staff struggling with the cost of living crisis.	Staff have greater awareness of the support available to them to help them navigate the cost of living crisis.
	2.8	Exploring potential interventions to support small businesses through the cost of living crisis, and signposting to further support.	Businesses are better able to access advice and information they need.
	2.9	Retaining capacity to respond to emerging needs and advice provision.	Advice and support will be responsive to the changing needs of our residents and organisations.
<b>Building longer term community resilience</b>	2.10	Scope financial capability sessions to support residents who wish to gain access to advice on financial resilience.	Households will feel more in control of their finances and will have increased awareness of support services.
	2.11	Small group and one to one digital inclusion sessions will be delivered in libraries, and through our sheltered schemes. As well as promoting access to our free iPad loaning	Participants will have a greater degree of digital literacy and will be better able to access support and services to reduce the risk of deprivation
	2.12	VCSE organisations who apply for grant funding will be directed to relevant further advice and guidance from other organisations.	VCSE organisations have a greater awareness of the advice and support available to them to navigate the cost of living crisis.



## Food Insecurity and Poverty

	Action	Impact
<b>Immediate Crisis Support</b>	3.1 Working with the Independent Food Aid Network to produce collateral which will reduce dependence on emergency foodbank provision.	Collateral will be produced, in addition to a digital signposting form, which connects people in crisis to financial support with the aim of reducing dependence on foodbanks.
	3.2 Working with Suffolk County Council to grow knowledge around where foodbanks are, who they are serving and what they need.	An up to date snapshot of crisis food provision will be collated, households and advice agencies will be better aware of the support available in times of crisis.
	3.3 Mapping our pop up and top up foodbank provision through locality officers to ensure crisis support is readily accessible	
	3.4 HAF programme will provide healthy food for households at risk, alongside activities which improve cooking skills and offer information on nutrition.	
	3.5 Retaining capacity to respond to emerging needs and advice provision.	Advice and support will be responsive to the changing needs of our residents and organisations.
<b>Building longer term community resilience</b>	3.6 Explore the implementation of community supermarkets.	Two community supermarkets will be set up, one in each district, which will bridge the gap between foodbanks and low-cost supermarkets. Subject to UK Shared prosperity funding.

Fuel Poverty			
	Action	Impact	
<b>Immediate Crisis Support</b>	4.1	Work with VCSE partners to ensure warm and welcoming spaces have been mapped and we are promoting the use of grant funding bids to the winter warmth grants.	Grant funding has been awarded to VCSE's to support the implementation of warm spaces across the district. These spaces will limited the exposure to cold homes for those unable to afford heating costs, while creating opportunity for community strengthening and reduced isolation.
	4.2	Scoping the development of an internal Fuel Poverty Toolkit which would provide an overview of the support available to households for their energy costs.	Staff are able to identify the support available to households and refer to appropriate advice agencies.
	4.3	Working with Community Action Suffolk to promote their community oil buying scheme, which helps to reduce the cost of heating oil through bulk purchasing. Residents using oil will also be supported if needed via LWAS.	Residents will be better able to afford to purchase heating oil, and heat their homes.
	4.4	Working alongside county wide initiatives to fund projects through the CCB which improve energy efficiency for residents' homes.	Households see a reduction in energy bills, are better able afford to heat their homes, and experience improvements to their health and wellbeing.
	4.5	Retaining capacity to respond to emerging needs and advice provision.	Advice and support will be responsive to the changing needs of our residents and organisations.
<b>Building longer term community resilience</b>	4.6	Developing a 12 month retrofitting programme alongside a longer term strategy, which will support social housing tenants with low EPC ratings to improve their energy efficiency ratings.	Once developed, eligible households will receive support to improve the energy efficiency of their properties, building financial resilience to future fluctuations to energy prices.

Health and Wellbeing			
	Action	Impact	
<b>Immediate Crisis Support</b>	5.1	Supporting organisations through Winter Warmth funding, to enable them to stay open and continue services for residents in their localities.	Organisations are able to continue services for communities, including supporting those households most at risk of the cost of living crisis.
	5.1	Working with WSCSP partners to identify those at risk of scams and fraud, raising awareness of the risks and supporting agencies available to assist.	Residents have increased awareness of the risk of scams and fraud, and are able to easily access support should they need it.
	5.2	Supporting those at risk of domestic abuse via referrals to our in house domestic abuse link worker, alongside continued staff training to raise awareness, and partnership working to drive forward change.	Customers identified as being at risk of domestic abuse have access to appropriate support.
	5.3	Working with leisure providers to make warm spaces available that will permit visitors to use their facilities.	Residents will benefit from enhancements to existing provisions that will provide community spaces with wide access to a broad range of facilities.
	5.4	Working with our Organisational Development colleagues to raise awareness of the health and wellbeing support available to staff.	Employees will have a greater awareness of the wellbeing advice and assistance available to them to help them through the cost of living crisis.
	5.5	Retaining capacity to respond to emerging needs and advice provision.	Advice and support will be responsive to the changing needs of our residents and organisations.

**Health and Wellbeing (continued)**

	<b>Action</b>		<b>Impact</b>
<b>Building longer term community resilience</b>	5.6	Providing opportunities for community activities to keep residents well.	Family fun days in conjunction with the extension of the HAF provision will deliver targeted support to lower income households, providing advice and guidance to help families navigate challenges surrounding the cost of living.
	5.7	Scoping the feasibility and benefit to residents of utilising additional allotment space as an opportunity to grow fresh produce for communities.	Potential impact of community produce growing would be scoped and, if beneficial to residents, methods of delivery and implementation would be explored.
	5.8	Extension of social prescribing referrals into health and leisure providers.	Mental health partners will be able to refer eligible participants to health and leisure providers. Participants will be able to take part in classes and activities to boost their physical and mental health.
	5.9	Working with health partners to explore interventions to support increasing mental health support for those people at risk.	Aligning resources and activity to focus on current need, shaping services to meet the need.
	5.10	Provision of grants and financial assistance to home owners and private sector landlords, which enable essential repairs to be carried out to improve the condition of properties within the district, including energy efficiency improvements and adaptations.	Eligible homeowners and private sector tenants will experience improved living conditions, which will impact positively on their physical and mental health.