

Housing Delivery Portfolio Holder Report

1. Oakey Field, Thurston

Mid Suffolk completed its first new council house in nearly 30 years in April. This landmark was celebrated with a ribbon cutting event on the 26 April. Derrick Haley, Ward Member and former Leader of Mid Suffolk did the honours. The property is a specially adapted bungalow for a disabled child and their family. In an emotional speech, the mother of the family said that the bungalow would change their lives.

2. Housing and Planning Act 2016

The Housing and Planning Act received Royal Assent on 12 May 2016. Much of the detail, including the sale of high value council houses, will be determined by Regulation still to be announced. However, DCLG officials have set out the timetable for the introduction of the 'pay to stay' scheme for council tenants with household incomes of over £31,000 (£40,000 in London). The aim is to introduce the scheme from April 2017, a very short timescale.

The Act also includes a requirement to phase out 'life-time tenancies', to be replaced with fixed term tenancies of up to 10 years, potentially longer for families with children. Existing tenants will be unaffected unless they choose to move to alternative accommodation.

There will be protection for existing tenants who are forced to move, eg decanted due to a regeneration scheme, and discretion to offer lifetime tenancies for certain categories of applicant.

Further information is available on request from Gavin Fisk (Corporate Manager, HRA Income and Business Performance).

3. Review of Older Persons Housing - Sheltered Housing Review

The review considers the service currently provided and the needs of current and future residents. It also appraises the effectiveness of all schemes as sheltered housing in the long term. Consultation events for residents will be held throughout August and local Members will be notified, should they wish to attend.

4. HRA Income Performance

Current outstanding rent reduced by £56K from April 2015 to April 2016, and former tenant debt by £94K, putting Mid Suffolk into upper quartile performance nationally.

5. Suffolk Poverty Strategy

The Health and Wellbeing Board and Suffolk Chief Executives Group have agreed to sponsor the development of: 'A Strategy to Address Poverty in Suffolk'. The strategy is complete and work has begun to embed the five key themes within the work of both Councils.

1. Extend financial inclusion and improve people's financial skills
2. Reduce levels of food and fuel poverty
3. Reduce levels of child poverty
4. Improve people's skills and employment prospects
5. Reduce health inequalities

6. Supported Living management team

Following the Focused Management Review the Supported Living Management Team has restructured roles and responsibilities. The current arrangements are as follows:

- Heather Worton – Private Sector Housing, Tenant Services and Capital Projects
- Heather Sparrow - Supported Housing
- Sue Lister – Allocations, Assessments and Homelessness, Voids
- Gavin Fisk – HRA Income, Financial Inclusion, Home Ownership, Resident Involvement, Business Improvement and Responsive Repairs
- Calvin Fisher – Interim Project Manager, Responsive Repairs

Tricia Anderson, who currently works in the Finance Team, has been appointed to the post of Lead Professional, HRA Accountant. She will be joining the Supported Living team on 4 July, tasked with refreshing the HRA Business Plans and working with colleagues in a variety of teams to ensure that we are making the best possible use of the HRA's funds in delivering our strategic priorities.

Recruitment will begin for a permanent Corporate Manager, Responsive Repairs in the near future.

7. Home Ownership Project Officer – Transformation Fund

Transformation Fund money will be used to employ a Project Officer to implement the recommendations of a recent report into our Right to Buy, Leasehold and Service Charge services. The project will contribute to a number of the Councils strategic priorities, including: managing our housing assets effectively and financial sustainability.

Councillor John Levantis