

## HOUSING DELIVERY PORTFOLIO REPORT - SEPTEMBER 2016

### **Sheltered Housing Review**

The proposals for the changes to the sheltered housing service were distributed to residents and members in July. We have subsequently held 28 events at schemes across the two Districts, which has given residents an opportunity to speak to staff on a one to one basis about any comments or concerns they have on the proposals. We have also received a number of written responses. The total response rate has been 50%. We are now considering all the feedback we have received and will be making changes to the proposals where necessary. The final proposals will be presented to the administrations in October, Joint Housing Board in November and Strategy and Executive in December.

### **Council Housing Utilisation**

To speed up the disposal process Housing Asset Management Group has asked for a report recommending that authority be delegated to the Assistant Director for Supported Living to dispose of Council houses which have been identified as unviable, up to a value of £250k. The report is expected to be presented to the Joint Housing Board in October and Executive Committee in November. It will also propose that authority is delegated to lease suitable properties to third party landlords (invariably housing associations) for use as shared housing for single people under 35 who can only claim housing benefit for shared accommodation.

### **Council House Building Programme – Barking and Bramford**

The Council's house building programme includes a scheme at Bramford for 2 x 2 bedroom 4 person houses and a scheme in Barking for 2x 2 bedroom 4 person houses and 1 x 2 bedroom 3 person bungalow. These two schemes are due to practically complete on the 14 September 2016. All the units have been advertised on the Gateway to Homechoice and viewings took place the week commencing 5<sup>th</sup> September with a view to renting these out the Monday following practical completion.

### **Neighbourhood Planning Bill - Consultation**

The Neighbourhood Planning Bill was introduced to Parliament on the 7<sup>th</sup> September. The Neighbourhood Planning Bill contains measures relating to planning and compulsory purchase and will contribute to the Government's aim of making sure the housing market works for everyone. All the measures, apart from the planning register measure, were announced in the Queen's Speech 2016. The Bill has two key aims. Firstly, to help identify and free up more land to build homes on to give communities as much certainty as possible about where and when development will take place. Secondly, to speed up the delivery of new homes, in particular by

reducing the time it takes to get from planning permission being granted to building work happening on site and new homes being delivered. A technical consultation has been launched on implementation of neighbourhood planning provisions in the Neighbourhood Planning Bill. This consultation closes on 16<sup>th</sup> October 2016 and officers will work on a response with lead members through the Theme Board.

### **Joint Working-Private Sector Empty Properties**

The Private Sector Housing and Homelessness teams have worked with the Shared Revenues Partnership to bring an empty property back into use and prevent homelessness. The property owner was prompted to apply for a grant for a new central heating system with a view to letting the property out. Private sector housing then referred the landlord to housing options to find a suitable tenant. The tenant qualified for the Rent Deposit Scheme and the property was deemed to be suitable and affordable for them. The landlord was pleased with the outcome and the tenant equally pleased to not be facing homelessness. The ripple effect of this outcome also extends much further, for example the neighbours have expressed their happiness at seeing the home back in use and bringing the property back into use will attract New Homes Bonus.

This is a good example of what can be achieved through joint working and utilising the skills and expertise that are available within the Local Authority.

### **Deposit protection and dispute resolution workshop**

On 4 October Mid Suffolk and Babergh Councils will host the first deposit protection and dispute resolution workshop in conjunction with the Deposit Protection Service (DPS) – one of a handful of companies accredited to hold deposits on behalf of landlords. This is the first time DPS has participated in such an event and it will give landlord the opportunity for any landlords to; get an overview of tenancy deposit protection and their obligations; learn about the requirements of inventory and photographic evidence; and ask questions to a senior adjudicator for the DPS.

**Councillor John Levantis**  
**Housing Delivery Portfolio Holder**