

BABERGH DISTRICT COUNCIL and MID SUFFOLK DISTRICT COUNCIL

TO: Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee	REPORT NUMBER: XXXX
FROM: Councillors Jan Osborne and Julie Flatman - Cabinet Members For Housing	DATE OF MEETING: 21 SEP 2020
OFFICER: Heather Tucker, Corporate Manager – Housing Solutions	KEY DECISION REF NO. Item No.

ANNUAL REVIEW OF THE JOINT HOMES AND HOUSING STRATEGY AND HOMELESSNESS REDUCTION AND ROUGH SLEEPING REDUCTION STRATEGY, 2019-2024

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 In March 2019, both councils unanimously adopted a Joint Homes and Housing Strategy, setting out the councils' vision 'for residents to live in affordable and high-quality homes that enable them to build settled, safe and healthy lives, within sustainable and thriving communities.' At the same time, alongside and as part of the Homes and Housing Strategy, the councils also adopted a Homelessness Reduction and Rough Sleeping Strategy.
- 1.2 Both strategies cover the period 2019-2024.
- 1.3 These strategies commit us to be open and transparent, providing information on how we are performing against plans. So as part of adoption, a commitment was made to report back to Overview and Scrutiny Committee for an annual review and update to members.
- 1.4 The review planned for April was postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic response and deferred to this meeting. This paper sets out progress made in delivering the adopted strategy to enable members to scrutinise the work undertaken by the councils.

2. OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 2.1 Given that members established an approach to review in 2019, no alternative options have been considered.

<p>3. RECOMMENDATIONS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">3.1 That members review and note the contents of this report and appendices, along with verbal contributions.3.2 On the basis of this report, members are requested to make further recommendations and observations as appropriate, linked to the ongoing
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implementation of the Homes and Housing and Homelessness Reduction and Rough Sleeping Strategies.

REASON FOR DECISION

To scrutinise the progress made towards delivering the objectives of the Joint Homes and Housing Strategy and the Homelessness Reduction and Rough Sleeping Strategy, with the objective of improving performance in delivering housing objectives.

4. KEY INFORMATION

4.1 The Joint Homes and Housing Strategy sets out a vision for Babergh and Mid Suffolk, (stated above at 1.1). To achieve this Vision, nine strategic aims were agreed to underpin delivery and set out key priorities. The Action Plan is organised to deliver these nine strategic aims:

- (i) The housing market functions effectively, providing homes which are as affordable as possible; to meet the needs of residents and support the local economy.
- (ii) There is a wide and varied choice of good quality, sustainable homes of different sizes, types and tenures, to meet the needs of a wide range of different households.
- (iii) Homelessness is prevented and our services provide positive and planned interventions.
- (iv) Babergh and Mid Suffolk is an effective social landlord known for delivering quality services
- (v) Homes are in high quality sustainable environments, served by jobs and community facilities, appropriate green space, effective transport links and other necessary infrastructure.
- (vi) Best use is made of private sector land and private accommodation across the Districts
- (vii) People live in vibrant and well-connected communities; and homes and communities continue to meet the changing needs of residents.
- (viii) Everyone has a suitable home, and residents are able to live as healthily, safely, independently as possible within sustainable communities.
- (ix) Both Councils have a strong relationship with residents, developers and other partners that enable us to deliver housing, infrastructure and services effectively, and to innovate where appropriate.

4.2 The Action Plan endorsed by members in 2019 included 112 actions. A comprehensive update, including a high-level summary of work undertaken, work underway and work yet to commence will be presented at the Joint Overview and Scrutiny Meeting.

- 4.3 A Project Board has been developed to oversee the delivery of the strategies, and ensure progress continues to be made. Its membership includes managers and senior officers from different teams across the Councils, who have a key role to play in successfully implementing the strategies, which is chaired by the Corporate Manager for Housing Solutions.
- 4.4 The Project Board has made a series of changes to the Action Plan, considering changing circumstances and priorities. These changes have been implemented under the delegated powers of the Assistant Director, Housing and the Cabinet Members for Housing. The number of actions has been reduced to 93 by amalgamating some actions where there were synergies or duplication, whilst maintaining the priorities established by members. In order to aid delivery, actions have been reordered and framed according to 'SMART' principles.

5. LINKS TO CORPORATE PLAN

- 5.1 Housing is a strategic priority in the Corporate Plan. Clearly, these housing and homelessness strategies are a key means of prioritising our housing activity under the Corporate Plan.
- 5.2 Furthermore, the vision and objectives of the Homes and Housing Strategy seek to support other economic, social and environmental outcomes.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 There are no financial implications arising from the scrutiny of the Homes and Housing Strategy and Homelessness Reduction and Rough Sleeping Strategy, other than ongoing nominal costs arising from the delivery of the strategy. These will be considered individually as part of a business case but are normally within existing budget provision.

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 It is not a statutory requirement to publish a Housing Strategy and there are no legal implications of producing and implementing the Homes and Housing Strategy, although some actions carried out under the strategy relate to statutory duties of the councils. In these instances, statutory outcomes are considered though the implementation of that task.
- 7.2 It is a statutory requirement to publish a Homelessness Reduction Strategy and to review the strategy every five years (due in 2024).

8. RISK MANAGEMENT

- 8.1 Key risks are set out below:

Risk Description	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigation Measures
Delays to the adoption of the Joint Local Plan. Several Housing Strategy actions and objectives are dependent on the JLP for implementation	2	3	Careful programme management of the JLP

Major change in state of UK property and development markets. Fluctuations in the housing / land markets are envisaged to impact on housing delivery and viability; also on our ability to make decisions if evidence base is shifting.	3	4	Limited opportunity to manage. Need to be flexible and responsive to changing circumstances.
Poor relationships with RPs / Homes England. Several actions are dependent on co-operation of these key partners.	1	3	Regular engagement (as per strategy actions)
Lack of resources to implement strategy (staff and financial) Many actions are in addition to 'the day job' and resources have not yet been identified for implementation	3	4	Everyone involved needs to take responsibility for the successful delivery of these strategies. They will be included in individual Service Plans and Team / Officers Objectives.
Lack of alignment between corporate strategies / implementation plans	2	3	Extensive engagement between teams and supervision by SLT
Lack of outside support from partners, e.g. Suffolk County Council	3	3	High level engagement via Suffolk Housing Board
Unforeseen outside pressures / changes in statutory requirements. E.g. COVID, which is already creating challenges and opportunities	3	4	Limited opportunity to manage. Likely need for flexibility.

9. CONSULTATIONS

9.1 Consultation occurred through stakeholder engagement during the development of the Joint Homes and Housing Strategy 2019-24; this included Cabinet Leads for Housing and the Council Leaders together with developers, land agents, estate agents and key local people involved in housing delivery. In addition, the Councils appointed a local Consultant skilled in housing delivery to provide key information in relation to housing market intelligence together using local data from the Councils' database.

10. EQUALITY ANALYSIS

10.1 An EQIA was developed as part of the creation of the Strategies and was considered by both Councils prior to adoption.

10.2 Any new initiatives being brought forward may be subject to separate EQIA's.

10.3 There is no requirement to complete a new EQIA for the purpose of this report.

11. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

11.1 There are no Environmental Implications from carrying out the review of the Strategies. Any actions within the strategies, which have environmental implications will be considered separately.

12. APPENDICES

Title	Location
(a) Joint Homes and Housing Strategy	Weblink: https://www.babergh.gov.uk/assets/Housing-and-Homelessness/Housing-Strategy/Home-Housing-Strategy-Final-21032019-.pdf
(b) Action Plan (as adopted)	Weblink: https://www.babergh.gov.uk/assets/Housing-and-Homelessness/Housing-Strategy/Homes-and-HRSS-2019-2024-Action-Plan-FINAL.xlsx
(c) Homelessness Reduction and Rough Sleeping Strategy	Weblink: https://www.babergh.gov.uk/assets/Housing-and-Homelessness/Housing-Strategy/HRRSS-2019-2024-Final.pdf