

BABERGH DISTRICT COUNCIL and MID SUFFOLK DISTRICT COUNCIL

TO: Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee	REPORT NUMBER: JOS/21/7
FROM: Councillor Jan Osborne and Councillor Lavinia Hadingham – Cabinet Members for Housing	DATE OF MEETING: 21 SEP 2021
OFFICERS: Justin King, Housing Needs and Standards Manager. Francine Esteves Tarn, Housing Strategy and Policy Officer – Housing Solutions	KEY DECISION REF NO. N/A

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

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils' housing vision is for residents to live in affordable and high-quality homes that enable them to build settled, safe and healthy lives, within sustainable and thriving communities.
- 1.2 The Councils' Joint Homes and Housing Strategy and Homelessness Reduction and Rough Sleeping Strategy were developed to focus on the five-year period from 2019 to 2024 and set out the strategic aims we wish to deliver.
- 1.3 The Joint Homelessness Reduction and Rough Sleeping Strategy links to Strategic Aim 3 of the Homes and Housing Strategy (detailed at paragraph 5.1 (iii)).
- 1.4 The Strategies commit us to being truthful and transparent, providing information on how we are performing against our plans. Therefore, as part of adopting the strategies, a commitment was made to report back to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for annual reviews and updates to Cabinet Members.
- 1.5 In September 2021, the Strategy will reach the midpoint of its proposed five-year lifespan. Since the Strategy started in 2019, new policy priorities have emerged, such as the Councils' decision to acknowledge the climate emergency and commit to supporting efforts to create a zero-carbon Suffolk by 2030. Additionally, the Covid-19 pandemic has also contributed to socio-economic changes and emerging policy considerations with more focus on health and wellbeing.
- 1.6 Particularly in the housing sector, new ways of living have emerged and the meaning of housing has changed significantly, with more people acknowledging the importance of great quality homes designed to be adaptable to meet the changing needs of an ageing population. Therefore, the Strategy will benefit in the future from incorporating greater investment in Sustainable homes and more emphasis on the habitats and biodiversity of estates and communities.

- 1.7 After a series of housing workshops conducted and attended by Senior Leadership and Cabinet Members, major housing issues have been identified and the Councils' Assistant Director for Housing has recognised that such issues should be considered and further explored by those who may be responsible for reviewing the Strategy's nine strategic aims and current action plan.
- 1.8 This paper sets out progress made in delivering the adopted Strategies to enable Members to scrutinise the work undertaken by the Councils.

2. OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 2.1 While alternative options for review and updates to Cabinet Members have been considered, such as twice-yearly reviews, it was identified that annual reviews are the most viable approach.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1 Overview and Scrutiny Committee review the contents of this report including the appendices, provide scrutiny and, where appropriate, provide written and/or verbal recommendations.

3.2 Overview and Scrutiny Committee to support the strategic aims of the Homes and Housing Strategy ensuring the action plan is reflective of the current challenges facing the housing sector, whilst continuing to deliver the aims set out in the Homes and Housing Strategy.

4. REASON FOR DECISION

- 4.1 To inspect closely and thoroughly the progress made towards the delivery of the Joint Homes and Housing Strategy and the Homelessness Reduction and Rough Sleeping Strategy, with the ambition to improve performance in the delivery of the Councils' housing vision and strategic aims.

5. KEY INFORMATION

- 5.1 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 developed to underpin delivery and set out key priorities:
- (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 Councils are 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.

5.2 The successful delivery of the Strategy was initially reliant on 122 actions which were endorsed by both Councils in 2019. In consultation with Cabinet Members, the Assistant Director for Housing has the authority to make minor amendments or updates to the Strategy and action plan as appropriate.

5.3 During 2020, the 122 actions were revised to both merge overlapping actions and frame actions into a SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time-based) format, with the aim to make the action plan more deliverable. While maintaining the same priorities and original objectives of the Strategy, the number of individual actions was reduced to 92.

5.4 The action plan will continually be updated to reflect new emerging areas of work and risks. For example, Climate Change, Everyone In, Social Housing White Paper and the Joint Local Plan (JLP). To achieve this, we work with colleagues across Council Departments to ensure a cohesive approach and delivery of the strategy.

5.5 In April 2021, the Corporate Manager for Housing Solutions presented and formally consulted on these changes with the Cabinet Members for Housing, in agreement with the Assistant Director - Housing to officially agree the changes under the delegated powers of the Assistant Director - Housing and Cabinet Members for Housing.

5.6 A comprehensive update, including a high-level description and visual presentation of work undertaken, work underway and work yet to commence will be presented at the Joint Overview and Scrutiny Meeting.

6. SUMMARY OF PROGRESS

6.1 Despite the Covid-19 pandemic limiting and reprioritising the provision of certain housing services, our officers continued to work hard towards the Councils' housing vision. Between 2020 and 2021, significant progress was achieved within the Housing Delivery Plan. The table below provides a comparable analysis of the progress achieved during the 12-month period.

June 2020	June 2021	Progress
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1 action complete	12 actions complete	+11
52 actions in progress	69 actions in progress	+17
15 actions experiencing delays	0 actions experiencing delays	+15
25 actions to commence	11 actions to commence	+14

- 6.2 It is important to acknowledge that many of our actions are delivered on an ongoing basis and our high level of success relies on the continuing efforts of our workforce. The conversion of the former Angel Court care home in Hadleigh into 21 high quality new social housing units is only one example of the success achieved from the actions in the Housing Delivery Plan.
- 6.3 The action is aimed at publishing a 3-year development pipeline of new council housing on an annual basis, to help our low-income communities to have a home of their own while reducing the risk of homelessness for our residents. This is ongoing work for which our officers continue to search for opportunities to provide high quality social housing to our residents.
- 6.4 Within other achievements, we successfully completed our Active Wellbeing programme which was aimed at enhancing our physical activity offering. This focused on older people and those living in rural areas to encourage them to remain active and connected to their communities. Despite the Covid-19 pandemic, the programme continued last year and this year while following the government's rules and restrictions. The programme was such a success that officers are in discussion with Leisure Operators to identify the possibilities to maintain some parts of the programme.

7. LINKS TO CORPORATE PLAN

- 7.1 Housing is one of the key strategic priorities in the Councils' Corporate Plan. Our housing vision and the strategic aims of the Homes and Housing Strategy seek to support and compliment other strategies in the Corporate Plan such as the Environment, Economy, Wellbeing and Communities Strategies (each underpinned by their own action plans).
- 7.2 All Strategies and continued development of associated action plans are managed through Programme Boards which have now been established around each Strategy.
- 7.3 Over the last few months, Cabinet Members and officers have been working on a 'stocktake exercise' and a series of workshops to contribute to discussions on how the strategies and aims of each are intrinsically linked.

8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 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 Strategies. These will be considered individually as part of any business case but are normally within existing budget provision.

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 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 through the implementation of that task.
- 9.2 It is a statutory requirement to publish a Homelessness Reduction Strategy and to review the Strategy every five years (due in 2024).

10. RISK MANAGEMENT

10.1 Key risks are set out below:

Risk Description	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigation Measures
Delays to the adoption of the Joint Local Plan. Some strategic actions are reliant on the Joint Local Plan (JLP) for implementation. This may delay progression of some specific actions	2 - Unlikely	3 - Bad	Constant engagement with Planning Policy officers and careful programme management of the JLP
Deficient relationship with Registered Providers, Developers and Homes England would reduce or delay completion of affordable housing.	1 – Highly Unlikely	3 - Bad	Strong engagement with partners through engagement activities such as workshops
Lack of supportive external partnerships would prevent delivery of some specific actions.	2 - Unlikely	4 - Disaster	Work collectively with Suffolk Programme Boards, to support the effective delivery of services in relation to Housing
Lack of alignment between the Strategies as part of the Councils' Corporate Plan would prevent delivery.	1 – Highly Unlikely	3 - Bad	Ongoing engagement between officers across the Councils' directorates with the supervision of Senior Leadership members
Lack of resources to give continuity in the delivery of the action plan (staff and financial)	3 - Likely	4 - Disaster	Stimulate buy in from action leads to acknowledge their significant role in the successful delivery of these strategies. Estimate costs of delivering the actions against current budget

			conditions and opportunities
Changes in statutory requirements and unforeseen risks (e.g. the impact of emerging policies and Covid-19 Pandemic) may require changes to existing actions	3 - Likely	4 - Disaster	Estimate challenges. Constant research to provide updates on emerging policy changes and evaluate impact
Major changes in state of UK property and development markets may slow delivery of affordable housing	3 - Likely	4 - Disaster	Impact evaluation and ongoing market research to estimate the likelihood of changes impacting local housing delivery. Develop alternative plans to deal with potential housing delivery and viability issues

11. CONSULTATIONS

- 11.1 The first consultation occurred through stakeholder engagement during the development of the Joint Homes and Housing Strategy 2019-24. This included Cabinet Members for Housing, the Councils' Leaders, developers, land agents, estate agents and key local people involved in housing delivery.
- 11.2 In addition, officers and members have most recently actively been working on a 'stocktake exercise' as well as a series of workshops to investigate and estimate issues affecting our services, to identify areas of work requiring enhanced focus, and to explore what the Councils' audacious goals are in the long term. As such, there have been further discussions which will potentially lead to changes in the Strategy.

12. EQUALITY ANALYSIS

- 12.1 An EQIA was developed as part of the creation of the Strategies and was considered by both Councils prior to adoption.
- 12.2 Any new initiatives being brought forward may be subject to separate EQIA's.
- 12.3 There is no requirement to complete a new EQIA for the purpose of this report.

13. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

- 13.1 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.

14. APPENDICES

Title	Location
I. Joint Homes and Housing Strategy	Weblink: https://www.babergh.gov.uk/assets/Housing-and-Homelessness/Housing-Strategy/Home-Housing-Strategy-Final-21032019-.pdf
II. 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
III. Housing Delivery Plan (Action plan revised and updated)	 Housing Delivery Plan June-July 2021.p
IV. Detailed Analysis Report June-July 2021	 JuneJuly 2021 - Detailed Analysis H&I