

BABERGH DISTRICT COUNCIL and MID SUFFOLK DISTRICT COUNCIL

TO:	Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee	REPORT NUMBER: JOS/22/17
FROM:	Cllr. Jan Osbourne and Cllr. Lavinia Hadingham – Cabinet Members for Housing	DATE OF MEETING: 24th October 2022
OFFICER:	Rebecca Ward, Housing Strategy and Policy Officer and David White, Housing Transformation Manager	KEY DECISION REF NO.

ANNUAL REVIEW UPDATE OF THE JOINT HOMES AND HOUSING STRATEGY AND THE 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 (4)).
- 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 reached 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 In August 2021 Cabinet Members and Housing Staff were briefed on the proposal to relaunch the Joint Homes and Housing Strategy in 2022. Work has since been undertaken and completed to refresh the Strategy document and to refocus the associated Delivery Plan.
- 1.7 This paper sets out the changes that have been made to the Strategy and the Delivery Plan and the rationale behind this work. This paper also 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 the strategy 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 comment.
3.2 Overview and Scrutiny Committee to support the strategic aims of the Homes and Housing Strategy ensuring the newly refocused delivery 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.
4.2. To be aware of the refocused Delivery Plan and refreshed Strategy document to ensure that the Joint Homes and Housing Strategy and the Joint Homelessness Reduction Strategy continue to strive towards the strategic aims and vision whilst operating in a changing policy and legislative landscape.

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:
- (1) The housing market functions effectively, providing homes which are as affordable as possible; to meet the needs of residents and support the local economy.
 - (2) 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.
 - (3) Homelessness is prevented and our services provide positive and planned interventions.
 - (4) Babergh and Mid Suffolk Councils are an effective social landlord known for delivering quality services.
 - (5) Homes are in high quality sustainable environments, served by jobs and community facilities, appropriate green space, effective transport links and other necessary infrastructure.
 - (6) Best use is made of private sector land and private accommodation across the districts.

- (7) People live in vibrant and well-connected communities; and homes and communities continue to meet the changing needs of residents.
 - (8) Everyone has a suitable home, and residents are able to live as healthily, safely, independently as possible within sustainable communities.
 - (9) 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 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.
- 5.5 In August 2021 Cabinet Members and Housing Staff were briefed on the proposal to relaunch the Joint Homes and Housing Strategy in 2022. It was proposed that:
- (1) The Housing Vision set out in the original strategy would remain to aid consistency.
 - (2) The nine strategic aims would be reviewed, to reflect the changes in the world and the Councils' policy objectives since 2019.
 - (3) The Delivery plan would be streamlined to focus on the activities which contribute to more measurable outcomes from the nine strategic aims.
 - (4) The refreshed Joint Homes and Housing Strategy and the refocused Delivery Plan would be relaunched in 2022.
- 5.6 Following direction from SLT the Joint Homes and Housing Strategy document has been refreshed:
- (1) As above, the vision remains relevant and reflects the ambition of the Councils and so this has not been changed.
 - (2) The nine Strategic Aims remain relevant and still reflect the ambition of the Councils, so these have not been changed.
 - (3) The time frame (2019-2024) has been removed and will be replaced with a date published. To better reflect that the strategy is an evolving document rather than with a fixed start and end point.

- (4) All references and supporting documents referenced within the Strategy have been updated to ensure that only the most current supplementary information is referenced.
- (5) All data quoted has been updated (where more recent data is available), to ensure that the strategy is underpinned by the most relevant and current supporting data.
- (6) A section has been added to each Strategic Aim chapter to capture what has already been achieved in the lifetime of the strategy, since 2019 and to set out what work is in progress and what work will be targeted soon.

5.7 Following direction from SLT, the Joint Homes and Housing Strategy Delivery Plan has been refocused:

- (1) To include new actions resulting from the new and emerging themes not part of the policy and legislative landscape when the original delivery plan was authored in 2019.
- (2) The timescales and target dates have been tightened to be less vague and more specific.
- (3) Each action now includes criteria for how we will measure that an action has been achieved or completed.
- (4) Each action has been mapped against the Outcomes Framework to ensure that the Homes and Housing Strategy is contributing towards the wider ambitions of the Councils.

5.8 A comprehensive update, including a high-level description and visual presentation of actions completed and new actions added will be presented at the Joint Overview and Scrutiny Meeting.

6. SUMMARY OF PROGRESS

ORIGINAL DELIVERY PLAN	JUNE 2020	JUNE 2021	SEPTEMBER 2022
ACTIONS COMPLETED	1	12	52
ACTIONS IN PROGRESS	52	69	35
ACTIONS IN PROGRESS WITH MINOR DELAYS	15	0	2
ACTIONS YET TO COMMENCE	25	12	4
TOTAL ACTIONS	93	93	93

6.1 52 actions have been completed; this includes 20 actions that have become 'business as usual' and fully embedded in the work of the various teams.

- 6.2 The remaining 41 actions that are yet to be completed have been transferred to the newly refocused Delivery Plan and a further 21 new actions have been added. In total there are 62 actions in the newly refocused Joint Homes and Housing Strategy Delivery Plan. (Appendix B, new actions added are marked in yellow).
- 6.3 All 62 actions on the refocused Delivery Plan include details of ‘what success looks like’, so that it is clearer when an action has been achieved. This success criteria will be used in future annual reviews of the Joint Homes and Housing Strategy and the Homelessness Reduction and Rough Sleeping Strategy to enable us to tell the story of what has been achieved and what difference those achievements have made towards the vision and strategic aims of the Strategies.

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.

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 The risks and mitigations associated with the strategy and its delivery plan are being managed through various operational risk registers depending on where the specific risk currently sits:

Risk Description	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigation Measures
Deficient relationship with Registered Providers, Developers and Homes	1 – Highly unlikely	3 - Bad	Strong engagement with partners through

England would reduce or delay completion of affordable housing.			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
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
Not having up-to-date policies in the Development Plan resulting in unplanned / inappropriate development and not meeting identified objectively assessed needs.	2 - Unlikely	3 - Bad	Adopt a Joint Local Plan to provide clear up-to-date policies and direction to all involved with development, to meet identified objectively assessed needs.
Not having an up-to-date Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document to detail the circumstances in which the Councils would take a flexible approach to tenure mix to maximise delivery.	2 - Unlikely	3 - Bad	Adopt a Joint Local Plan and be clear on the purpose and content of the Affordable Housing SPD prior to consultation and subsequent adoption.

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, in 2021, officers and members worked on a 'stocktake exercise' and attended 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. The outcomes of this exercise have fed into the refocus of the Delivery Plan.

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 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.
- 13.2 Within the Homes and Housing Strategy Delivery Plan there are 9 actions that will have a positive impact on the environment. They are:

4.i.	Determine the feasibility and cost of a range of 'Smart Home' measures, to improve environmental performance, support vulnerable tenants, reduce operating costs and/or enhance the customer experience.
4.k.	Babergh Mid Suffolk Building Services to undergo a full diagnostic assessment leading to transformation of the service, to ensure that Building Services is in an optimised position to meet the requirements of the Building Safety Act and to contribute to meeting Climate Emergency objectives.
5.c.	As part of the other projects, investigate the viability of installing electric vehicle charging points to serve existing council houses, with timescales TBC through the Climate Emergency Strategy.
5.f.	Prepare for 'Biodiversity offsetting' when Biodiversity net gain becomes compulsory in 2023; by identifying sites and pursuing opportunities for securing net gains, in areas that maximise the benefits provided.
6.b.	Increase the number of grants awarded to private landlords to install modern and efficient heating and insulation systems, to improve the health and wellbeing of residents and the energy efficiency of the homes.
6.d.	In partnership with the Suffolk-wide Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards (MEES) consortium, promote and support energy efficiency in homes by targeting all F & G energy performance rated properties in the private rented sector.
8.a.	Identify resources to bring forward environmental improvements to the council's estate, prioritising measures which support the health and

	wellbeing of our residents and encourage social interaction, and working with local people, communities and other partners.
8.b.	Implement a programme of upgrades to heating systems in council stock, replacing oil systems wherever possible and prioritising heat pumps where appropriate.
8.g.	Take forward measures to improve the environmental performance of our housing stock, as identified in the Housing Revenue Account Business Plan, in order to reduce carbon emissions, meet national targets for all social homes to be EPC rating of C or above by 2030 and to contribute to corporate and countywide climate emergency objectives.

14. APPENDICES

Title	Location
(a) Refreshed Joint Homes and Housing Strategy. (Version – October 2022).	
(b) Refocused Joint Homes and Housing Strategy Delivery Plan (Version – October 2022)	

15. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

15.1 None.

16. **REPORT AUTHORS** (*Name and title of report authors, such as CM and Professional Leads, who has undertaken work on the report*)

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