

BABERGH DISTRICT COUNCIL and MID SUFFOLK DISTRICT COUNCIL

TO:	Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee	REPORT NUMBER: JOS/23/21
FROM:	Cllr. Jessie Carter - Cabinet Member for Housing and Cllr. Richard Winch – Cabinet Member for Housing and Property	DATE OF MEETING: 23 Oct 2023
OFFICER:	Rebecca Ward, Housing Strategy and Policy Officer and David White, Housing Transformation Manager	KEY DECISION REF NO. <u>Item No.</u>

ANNUAL REVIEW UPDATE OF THE JOINT HOMES AND HOUSING STRATEGY

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 was originally developed to focus on the five-year period from 2019 to 2024 and set out the strategic aims we wished to deliver.
- 1.3 A refresh and refocus exercise was undertaken in 2022 to ensure that the Strategy and Delivery Plan included all the new policy priorities that had emerged since 2019; 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 had contributed to socio-economic changes and emerging policy considerations with more focus on health and wellbeing.
- 1.4 The Strategy commits us to being truthful and transparent, providing information on how we are performing against our Delivery Plan. Therefore, as part of adopting the strategy, a commitment was made to report back to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for annual reviews and updates to Cabinet Members.
- 1.5 In previous years the annual review of the Joint Homes and Housing Strategy has included a review of the Joint Homelessness Reduction and Rough Sleeping Strategy. However, the Joint Homelessness Reduction and Rough Sleeping Strategy is a Statutory document and a new version is currently being developed and this is taking a different journey to adoption and publication in 2023/24. Therefore, this will not be included in this year's review of the Joint Homes and Housing Strategy
- 1.6 This paper sets out progress made in delivering the Joint Homes and Housing Strategy 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 That Overview and Scrutiny Committee review the contents of this report including the appendices, provide scrutiny and, where appropriate, provide comment.
- 3.2 That Overview and Scrutiny Committee support the strategic aims of the Homes and Housing Strategy ensuring the 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.

REASON FOR DECISION

To inspect closely and thoroughly the progress made towards the delivery of the Joint Homes and Housing Strategy with the ambition to improve performance in the delivery of the Councils' housing vision and strategic aims and to ensure that the Joint Homes and Housing Strategy continues to strive towards the strategic aims and vision whilst operating in a changing policy and legislative landscape.

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 developed to underpin delivery and set out key priorities:
- *The housing market functions effectively, providing homes which are as affordable as possible; to meet the needs of residents and support the local economy.*
 - *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.*
 - *Homelessness is prevented and our services provide positive and planned interventions.*
 - *Babergh and Mid Suffolk Councils are an effective social landlord known for delivering quality services.*
 - *Homes are in high quality sustainable environments, served by jobs and community facilities, appropriate green space, effective transport links and other necessary infrastructure.*
 - *Best use is made of private sector land and private accommodation across the districts.*
 - *People live in vibrant and well-connected communities; and homes and communities continue to meet the changing needs of residents.*

- *Everyone has a suitable home, and residents are able to live as healthily, safely, independently as possible within sustainable communities.*
- *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 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 Director for Housing has the authority to make minor amendments or updates to the Strategy and action plan as appropriate.
- 4.3 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 93.
- 4.4 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 Director for Housing to officially agree the changes under the delegated powers of the Director for Housing and Cabinet Members for Housing.
- 4.5 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 the Housing Vision set out in the original strategy would remain to aid consistency and the Delivery plan would be streamlined to focus on the activities which contribute to more measurable outcomes from the nine strategic aims.
- 4.6 Following direction from SLT the Joint Homes and Housing Strategy document was refreshed in 2022. The original vision and strategic aims remained relevant and still reflected the ambition of the Councils and so these were not changed. The time frame (2019-2024) was removed and replaced with a date published. This was to better reflect that the strategy is an evolving document rather than with a fixed start and end point.
- 4.7 All references and supporting documents referenced within the Strategy were updated in 2022 to ensure that only the most current supplementary information was referenced. All data quoted was updated (where more recent data was available), to ensure that the strategy was underpinned by the most relevant and current supporting data.
- 4.8 The Joint Homes and Housing Strategy Delivery Plan was refocused in 2022 to capture new and emerging themes that were not part of the policy and legislative landscape when the original delivery plan was authored in 2019.
- 4.9 The refocusing of the Delivery Plan in 2022 resulted in reducing the number of overall actions from 93 to 62. 52 actions were completed or had become 'business as usual.'

4.10 SUMMARY OF PROGRESS: 2020 – 2022

Original Delivery Plan	June 2020	June 2021	September 2022	REFOCUS 2022
Actions Archived	1	12	52	
Actions In Progress	52	69	35	Moved to new Delivery Plan
Actions In Progress with minor delays/ Yet to Commence	40	12	6	Moved to new Delivery Plan
TOTAL ACTIONS	93	93	93	

4.11 In July 2023 a comprehensive review of the Delivery Plan was undertaken by Officers. The Director for Housing, Housing Corporate Managers and Action Owners collaboratively reviewed the document to ensure that business as usual actions were archived and actions added to reflect current projects and ambitions more accurately.

4.12 SUMMARY OF PROGRESS – 2022-2023

	October 2022 Refocused Delivery Plan	January 2023	April 2023	July 2023: Review & Refocus Exercise	October 2023 Refocused Delivery Plan
Actions Archived	0	7	9	30*	0
Actions in Progress	37	46	48	29	32
Actions in Progress with minor delays/ Yet to Commence	4	9	5	3	0
New Actions	21	0	0	0	9

TOTAL ACTIONS:	62	62	62	62	41
----------------	----	----	----	----	----

*Not transferred to the October 2023 Version of the Delivery Plan.

- 4.13 Following the comprehensive review of the Delivery Plan a total of 30 actions have been archived in the past year from the original total of 62. The reasons for archiving are as follows:

<u>Reason for Archiving:</u>	
Action Completed	8
Action Superseded	5
Action has become Business as Usual	15
Action Amalgamated with another action	2
TOTAL:	30

- 4.14 The comprehensive review of the Delivery Plan also included the insertion of new actions to better reflect current projects and ambitions. A total of 9 new actions have been added to the Delivery Plan. (These are marked in yellow in Appendix B: The Joint Homes and Housing Strategy Delivery Plan).
- 4.15 An engagement exercise with members is to be planned for the coming year so that their views can be fed into the 2024 refocusing of the Joint Homes and Housing Strategy Delivery Plan ahead of the annual review by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in October 2024. The form that this engagement will take will be led by Cabinet Members for Housing and any feedback from the Overview & Scrutiny Committee as to their views on how we should proceed with this exercise will also be taken into consideration.
- 4.16 A comprehensive update, including a high-level description and visual presentation of actions completed, actions in progress, actions in progress with minor delays, actions yet to commence and new actions added will be presented at the Joint Overview and Scrutiny meeting.

5. LINKS TO CORPORATE PLAN

- 5.1 Housing is one of the key strategic priorities in the Council's 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/delivery plans).
- 5.2 All strategies and continued development of associated action/delivery plans are managed through Programme Boards which have now been established around each Strategy.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications arising from the scrutiny of the Homes and Housing Strategy, other than ongoing nominal costs arising from the delivery of the Strategy. This is considered individually as part of any business case but is 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 through implementation of that task.

8. RISK MANAGEMENT

- 8.1 Key risks are set out below:

Key Risk Description	Likelihood 1-4	Impact 1-4	Key Mitigation Measures	Risk Register and Reference*
Poor stakeholder relationships caused by lack of communication and transparent stakeholder engagement.	1 – Highly Unlikely	3 - Bad	Strong engagement with partners through engagement activities such as workshops.	Affordable Housing Delivery Programme Risk Register Number 09.
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.	Housing Transformation, Systems and Support Risk Register 025.
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	Affordable Housing Delivery Programme Risk Register Number 010

			delivery and viability issues.	
Not having up to date policies in the Development plan resulting in unplanned/ inappropriate development and not meeting objectively identified needs.	3 - Likely	3 - Bad	Adopt a Joint Local Plan to provide clear up-to date policies and direction to all involved with development, to meet objectively assessed needs.	Strategic Planning Risk Register Number 02.
Not having an up-to-date Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document to detail the circumstances in which the Councils would take 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.	Strategic Planning Risk Register Number 07.

**Name of risk register where risk is currently documented and being actively managed and it's reference number*

9. CONSULTATIONS

- 9.1 The first consultation occurred through stakeholder engagement during the development of the Joint Homes and Housing Strategy 2019-2024. This included Cabinet Members for Housing, the Councils' Leaders, developers, land agents, estate agents and key local people involved in housing delivery.
- 9.2 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 council's goals were in the long term. The outcome of this exercise fed into the refocus of the Delivery Plan in October 2022.
- 9.3 In July 2023 a comprehensive review of the Delivery Plan was undertaken by Officers. The Director for Housing, Housing Corporate Managers and Action Owners collaboratively reviewed the document to ensure that business as usual actions were archived and new actions were added to reflect current projects and ambitions more accurately.

9.4 Further engagement with members is planned for 2024 to feed into the 2024 refocusing of the Delivery Plan. (See 4.15)

10. EQUALITY ANALYSIS

10.1 AN EIA was developed as part of the creation of the Joint Homes and Housing Strategy and was considered by both councils prior to adoption.

10.2 There is no requirement to complete a new EIA for the purpose of this report.

10.3 Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) not required.

11. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

11.1 There are no environmental implications from carrying out the review of the Joint Homes and Housing Strategy,

11.2 Within the Joint Homes and Housing Strategy Delivery Plan there are 8 actions that will have a positive impact on the environment. They are:

4.5.	Determine the feasibility and cost of a range of retrofit energy efficiency measures in line with PAS2035, to improve environmental performance, reduce operating costs and/or enhance the customer experience and support vulnerable tenants.
4.6.	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.
5.2.	Establish a collaborative plan, that considers viability, capacity and expertise, to investigate installing electric vehicle charging points to serve existing council houses
5.3.	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.
5.4.	Utilise the Housing Revenue Account's capital environmental improvement budget and other associated funding, through the Greater Places, Better Spaces initiative. Prioritising measures which support the health and wellbeing of our residents, encourage social interaction, empower tenants, residents and communities and other partners, and positively impact on reducing carbon emissions.
6.3	Review the current system of Grants to Private Landlords to maximise opportunities to improve the health and wellbeing of residents and the energy efficiency of homes.
8.1.	Implement a programme of upgrades to heating systems in council stock, replacing oil systems wherever possible and prioritising heat pumps where appropriate.

8.3.	Take forward measures to improve the environmental performance of our housing stock, 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.
------	---

12. APPENDICES

Title	Location
(a) Joint Homes and Housing Strategy (Version – October 2022)	Attached
(b) Joint Homes and Housing Strategy Delivery Plan (Version – October 2023)	Attached

13. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

13.1 None

14. REPORT AUTHORS

Rebecca Ward, Housing Strategy and Policy Officer

rebecca.ward@baberghmidsuffolk.gov.uk

01473 724775