

BABERGH DISTRICT COUNCIL and MIDSUFFOLK DISTRICT COUNCIL

From: Mike Hammond, Interim Executive Director	Report Number: P20
To: Strategy Committee Executive Committee	Date of meeting: 12 June 2014 16 June 2014

STRATEGIC PLAN 2014-2019

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To seek Committee approval to the adoption by full Council of the Babergh and Mid Suffolk Councils Strategic Plan 2014-2019. The purpose of the Plan and the Direction set by the Plan have been considered and supported by Joint Member Integration Board (JMIB).

2. Recommendations to Council (2.1) and Committee (2.2)

- 2.1 That the “The Babergh and Mid Suffolk Councils Strategic Plan 2014-2019” (Appendix A to the report) be approved.
- 2.2 That the Interim Executive Director be authorised to make any typographical and other minor changes to the document.

The Committee is able to resolve 2.2 above, and is asked to recommend 2.1 to Council.

3. Financial Implications

- 3.1 The Strategic Plan will shape the financial and resource allocations made in the Medium Term Financial Plan for both councils. This Medium Term Financial Plan will be reported to Committee at a later date, following approval of the Strategic Plan, and following the completion over the summer of the Priority Based Resourcing (PBR) programme which both councils are currently undertaking.
- 3.2 The final chapter of the attached Strategic Plan sets out in broad terms how The Plan will be delivered and resourced.

4. Risk Management

- 4.1 The Key risk is set out below:

Risk Description	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigation Measures
Lack of funding and resources to deliver the outcomes set out in The Plan.	Often	Bad	A Medium Term Financial Plan that prioritises the allocation of funding and a Delivery Programme that sets out the actions to be taken to deliver the required outcomes.

5. Consultations

- 5.1 Major community consultation was undertaken by Members and officers at the commencement of the preparation of the Strategic Plan. This consultation exercise informed the Vision and Priorities for each council, which in turn are the foundations of the Strategic Plan.
- 5.2 Following the creation of the Vision and Priorities the Member-led TEGs then engaged with our various communities, engaged with partners, and looked at best practice from elsewhere in order to inform the shape of the attached Strategic Plan.

6. Equality Analysis

- 6.1 The attached Plan is based upon engagement with our communities and sets out how we aim to deliver positive changes for the many and diverse communities we serve.
- 6.2 Where appropriate specific projects and programmes arising from the Strategic Plan will be the subject of an Equality Impact Analysis.

7. Shared Service / Partnership Implications

- 7.1 The Plan positions our two sovereign councils – now served by one smaller workforce – ahead of the major financial and social changes that our communities face. It places the “shared service agenda” and “partnership working” at the heart of what we do.

8. Key Information

8.1 PURPOSE OF THE STRATEGIC PLAN

- 8.1.1 The purpose of the Plan is to be a vehicle to inform and engage with our communities, partners and staff on:-
 - What outcomes we wish to achieve and why
 - How we will work with others to achieve those desired outcomes
 - What success will look like

8.2 THE DIRECTION SET BY THE PLAN

- 8.2.1 The Plan sets out a sense of shared direction, pace and common purpose against which we can work with our communities to deliver the outcomes we jointly wish to achieve.
- 8.2.2 The Plan is a reflection of two major influences:-
 - The realities we all face, and must adapt to, in terms of reducing resources, competing priorities and rising expectations.
 - The aspirations we are setting ourselves as councillors and staff to be the type of flexible, quick moving and responsive organisations that our communities wish us to be.

8.2.3 The Plan sets out the three main priority areas that both councils have identified as having the most positive impact in the future:-

- Economy and Environment
- Housing
- Strong and Healthy Communities

8.2.4 In summary the Plan sets out that over the next 5 years we will need to be:-

- **Smaller** : We will have fewer staff and less guaranteed funding and so we will target what we do more effectively on the priority outcomes above. This will mean that we will have to stop doing some things – although we will always be open to look at ways of providing these services through others in our communities.
- **Smarter** : We will make better use of the smaller level of resource available to us by reducing bureaucracy, improving communication, seeking out how sustainable sources of income and strengthening our relationships with our communities and partners in order they are based on trust and mutual understanding.
- **Swifter** : We will be flexible and quick and so better able and prepared to grasp new opportunities and funding sources as they arise.

8.3 THE ROLE OF MEMBERS IN DEVELOPING, DELIVERING AND SCRUTINISING THE DELIVERY OF THE STRATEGIC PLAN

8.3.1 As stated above, the Plan is a vehicle for informing and engaging. It is not a detailed Work Programme. These details will be set out in the established Corporate Works Programme and Committee Work Plans, with a Programme Delivery Plan sitting below these documents. An update on the Programme Delivery Plan and Members proposed role in that plan will be considered at the next meeting of JMIB.

8.3.2 Key to delivering the outcomes in the Plan will be our relationship with our communities. The achievement of Member priorities in the areas of Jobs, Homes and the Environment, and our overall approach to serving our residents, will require our work with communities to be embedded in all those areas.

9. Appendices

Title	Location
A. Strategic Plan 2014-2019	Attached

10. Background Documents

None

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**BABERGH DISTRICT COUNCIL
AND
MID SUFFOLK DISTRICT COUNCIL**

**JOINT STRATEGIC PLAN
2014 – 2019**

Introduction from the Leaders of Babergh & Mid Suffolk District Councils

This Strategic Plan sets out how we aim to deliver enduring and positive changes for our many and diverse communities over the next three years. It seeks to position our two, sovereign councils – now served by one smaller and more dynamic workforce – ahead of the major financial, demographic and social challenges that our communities face and turn these into opportunities to do things differently and better.

The Plan also seeks to enthuse our councillors and staff – now working in totally new and more flexible ways – to build on their track records of innovation and success to focus even more of their energies on delivering our key outcomes.

To do this we need to continue to reshape our roles away from being defined by the services we have historically always delivered, or have never delivered, to one which is a more mixed approach. We should look to combining some direct delivery and a great deal more empowering of our communities to take on further responsibilities themselves and develop solutions with others.

This will inevitably mean a change as to how we work. We have summarised what this means for us and our communities by the phrase: *Smaller, Smarter, Swifter*.

We will certainly have to stop doing some things which our councils have previously been involved in providing. This won't always be an easy process but our councils will strive to find alternative providers of these services – including those in the communities themselves.

The key to this is for the Councils and the communities we serve to engage with each other more consistently and work through problems and solutions together rather than in opposition to each other.

We hope the Plan acts as an inspiration for our communities, local businesses and other partners to work with us to deliver the best ways of achieving the Plan's outcomes. You will see that each Council retains its own, similar but slightly differently worded vision and priorities, but underneath these there are common outcomes.

We commend this Plan to you.

Cllr. Jennie Jenkins
Leader
Babergh District Council

Cllr. Derrick Haley
Leader
Mid Suffolk District Council

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(TBC)

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Changing how we work – Smaller, Smarter, Swifter

Executive summary

Babergh District Council and Mid Suffolk District Council's Strategic Plan sets out how we – and the communities we serve – can shape the future, for the better.

The precise future for councils, and the communities they serve, might sometimes look unclear – not least due to the huge changes taking place in terms of how we're funded, what we do and how we do it.

The idea behind this Strategic Plan is to provide a sense of shared direction, pace and common purpose against which we can work with our communities to deliver the kinds of outcomes we jointly wish to see.

This Plan is, therefore, a reflection of:

- What our communities said was most important to them
- The realities we all face, and must adapt to, in terms of reducing resources, competing priorities and rising expectations
- The aspirations we are setting ourselves as councillors and staff to be the type of flexible, quick-moving and responsive organisations our communities want us to be

It outlines the context in which we are operating at the moment and the challenges and opportunities of the future that will influence how well we do.

It articulates the three main priority areas that your district councillors have identified that will have the most positive impact on that future:

- Economy and Environment
- Housing
- Strong and Healthy Communities

Our main focus within these three areas will be promoting homes and jobs for our communities.

It is informed by the financial reality that core funding for all councils is being speedily reduced – to be replaced by a series of performance-related grants – and by our fundamental belief that communities and councils can more effectively deliver outcomes associated with these priorities by sharing their expertise, skills and energies in new and exciting ways.

The Plan can only be truly a success if both Councils fundamentally further change how we work. That is why there are many references in this Plan to our philosophy of both Councils being *Smaller, Smarter, Swifter*

Where we are now

The districts of Babergh and Mid Suffolk form the heart of Suffolk and cover an area of over 1400km². Both of our districts are predominantly rural in nature, with a number of market towns and both feature in the top 50 rural areas to live across the UK in the 2014 Halifax Rural Areas Quality of Life Survey.

We also believe that the heart of Suffolk is a very special place to live and work with **more than 6000 listed buildings, more than 35 Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) and two Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).**

But we also face challenges, both now and in the future, to ensure that this prosperity and quality of life is available to all, not least given that the total populations of both are projected to grow considerably between now and 2035. **Babergh's population will grow by 10% to 96,400 and that of Mid Suffolk by 20% to 116,700.**

These challenges – which fall into three broad categories of economy & environment, housing and health & wellbeing – provide the focus for this Strategic Plan and the outcomes which we hope to achieve against each will drive how we use our available resources and efforts.

Economy & Environment

The local economy is characterised by having many smaller businesses: **7500 have nine employees or less and 13% of the population is classified as being self-employed.** in both our main market towns and our villages in a diverse range of market sectors.

Our role is to support the needs of all businesses, but especially those smaller and start-up concerns, which face particular issues in terms of access to capital, dealing with legislation and sharing ideas and best practice as they strive to grow.

The skills base of the two districts is reasonable with lower levels of young people not in education, employment or training than the Suffolk average: **Babergh 4.9%, Mid Suffolk 4.2% against the Suffolk average of 5.9%.** However, we are not complacent and recognise that the two councils have a role in encouraging an ever improving level of employable skills for workers of all ages and backgrounds.

Housing

Both Babergh and Mid Suffolk are relatively expensive places to live, partly because of people's wishes to live here and partly because the supply of new homes, of all types, has not kept pace with that demand over recent years.

In **Babergh the average price to average annual salary ratio is 8:1. In Mid Suffolk it is 7:1.** For many residents, including young families, this makes owning their own property difficult in the short-to-medium term.

Yet the number of new affordable homes built in 2012/13 -**81 in Babergh and 104 in Mid Suffolk** - has only been able to solve the housing needs of a minority of these residents.

At the same, both districts are projected to have an aging population. By 2030, **the percentage of our residents who are aged 65 or over will rise in Babergh from 23% to 32% and in Mid Suffolk from 22% to 31%.**

An older population will have different housing needs to a younger one and preparations need to be made now to meet this expected demand.

Strong & Healthy Communities

Overall, Babergh and Mid Suffolk are marked out by being safe and healthy places to live.

Indeed, according to a recent survey, **82.42% of Babergh residents and 83.19% of those in Mid Suffolk considered themselves to currently be in good or very good health.**

The number of **reported crimes in both district is about 3,000 per year, compared to over 42,000 across Suffolk as a whole.** That said, the perception of crime, especially among certain communities, is considerably higher than it might need to be.

Yet, even aside from the challenges sometimes associated with an aging population, there are health issues among some of our communities which impact negatively on their quality of life.

For example, about the same percentage – **24% of both districts are classified as obese. Just under 20% smoke and between 15% and 17% binge drink.**

The Councils have a role in working with others to encourage healthier lifestyles and directly by promoting use of their leisure, open space and activity-based facilities.

In short, people are living longer, the economy is picking up and developing, the need for homes has grown and technology continues to move on. The Councils acknowledge these things, is listening to communities and adapting. In the midst of change we still need to deliver services that have a positive impact on our stated priorities but do this with fewer resources.

There is more to be done and we intend to develop effective engagement and gather the information necessary to focus on ensuring our activities meet the needs of the communities we serve, including the most vulnerable.

We will need to maximise the income we can generate locally by getting more houses built and helping the economy grow. The resources we have must be targeted better towards our priorities. In doing this, existing partnerships will be strengthened and new ones forged.

Changing how we work: Smaller, Smarter, Swifter

If we are to realise our ambitions to our communities, our Councils need to remain viable and sustainable. Only by doing that will we have the resources and capacity to serve our citizens and communities and play our part in achieving the outcomes set out in this plan..

We have already made changes. Staff and councillors are already working in new ways and the workforce has been restructured into a single delivery organisation across the two local authorities saving circa £1.8m by creating a joint management team in the process. The management team has reduced by nearly 40% and our workforce has seen a 10% reduction in the last 3 years.

Councillors and staff are working in new ways. We are seen by others in local government as innovative and transforming the way we work. We have received recognition from within the sector and from government (including an award of transformation funding – one of only 18 councils to do so in the first round of this new funding pot) – so we have a good base to build on.

We have made some improvements to some service areas during this time of sustained organisational change – but there is much more to do. We don't believe we are as efficient as we could or should be, we are not always effective and don't always get our service right first time and the citizen, business or community we are serving does not always have a positive experience.

We are working more and more closely with our partners; other public services, the community and voluntary sector, local businesses and their representatives, and communities but there is more we could do to integrate our services and achieve even better outcomes together.

We recognise that way we function as an organisation will either enable or hinder the achievement of the outcomes set out in this plan. That is why we have a fourth priority – to be *Smaller, Smarter, Swifter* – to not just survive the challenges facing local government but to thrive.

Our priorities for the future

Our visions and priorities for the Babergh and Mid Suffolk districts

Councillors and staff at both Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils are fully committed to working together – and with others – to achieve the visions and priorities of the two councils:

Babergh’s vision: “To create an environment where individuals, families, communities and businesses can thrive and flourish.”

Mid Suffolk’s vision: “We will work to ensure the economy, environment and communities in Mid Suffolk continue to thrive and achieve their full potential.”

This means that we will continue to focus our efforts and use all our resources to deliver the three key priorities to make each council’s vision a reality.

Priority 1: Economy & Environment

Babergh: Shape, influence and provide the leadership to enable growth while protecting and enhancing our environment

Mid Suffolk: Lead and shape the local economy by promoting and helping to deliver sustainable economic growth which is balanced with respect for wildlife, heritage and the natural and built environment

Priority 2: Housing

Babergh: Shape, influence and provide the leadership to achieve the right mix and supply of housing

Mid Suffolk: Ensure there are enough good quality, environmentally efficient and cost-effective homes with the appropriate tenures and in the right locations

Priority 3: Strong & Healthy Communities

Babergh: Shape, influence and provide the leadership to support and facilitate active, healthy and safe communities

Mid Suffolk: Encourage and support individuals and communities to be self sufficient, strong, healthy and safe

Changing how we work: *Smaller, Smarter, Swifter*

To become an organisation that is *Smaller, Smarter, Swifter* yet capable of contributing fully to achieving the priority outcomes set out in this strategic plan and surviving and thriving notwithstanding the financial challenges facing both Councils in the medium term

The rest of this Strategic Plan outlines what we will do, why and what we will achieve for both Babergh and Mid Suffolk's communities by focusing on these priorities and how we will change in order to maximise our positive contribution to their realisation.

Our priorities for the future

Priority 1: Economy & Environment

Why is this a priority?

Ensuring that our two districts are ideal locations for sustained and sustainable economic growth is the key priority within this Strategic Plan.

Although both districts have a very diversified economic base and historically low levels of recorded unemployment, there are concerns about our lower-than-average wage and skills levels.

Our role as Councils is to ensure that we are as business friendly as possible in encouraging and facilitating new employment opportunities that contribute to our already diverse economic base.

This will involve us being more active and flexible in how we engage with businesses through everything we do and in helping our businesses access all the support available.

But we know that economic growth needs to be carefully handled – so that it contributes to our communities' quality of life, the environment in which we live and our wonderful heritage of wool towns and historic villages .

That is why it is important both to ensure that our districts' workforce have the right skills and aptitudes to help businesses succeed and that our precious environment and historic buildings are protected and enhanced, both in their own right and because of their value to the local economy.

We also recognise that we have a key role in improving the environmental sustainability of how we work and the buildings for which we are responsible.

We will also continue to encourage even further improved recycling rates since this will reduce the costs incurred by the Councils and our taxpayers, so freeing up more resources to support local businesses.

What we are and will we be doing to achieve these outcomes?

Growth in new homes, jobs and businesses

- Development of the planning policy framework is underway to prioritise and speed up sustainable growth
- We have already identified the key sites in our core strategies and are working hard with others to get them developed. Some of these sites are already being progressed through the planning system to delivery
- We will adopt the Community Infrastructure Levy (whereby developers contribute to new facilities with some of the monies retained by town and parish councils) and work with communities to ensure that local infrastructure is invested in to support new developments

- Community-led planning will be supported and we are already making good progress where communities are prepared to lead sustainable growth in their areas

Support for local businesses to thrive and grow

- Understanding our businesses and building relationships will help us to target our resources to deliver services directly to them or connect them quickly to the support available.
- Working with the New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership (a voluntary partnership between councils and businesses to help determine local economic priorities and lead economic growth and job creation) we will connect our businesses to the 'Growth Hub' services which went live from April
- Coordinate our approach to regulation with Suffolk County Council to minimise the burdens on local business.

Ensuring the right skills for business and enterprise

- We are working with colleagues across Suffolk to establish an online platform to help young people to easily access information about local careers and pathways to employment
- We are working with schools in the two districts to help them to link up with local business more effectively
- We are leading by example and have joined the Suffolk County Council programme to deliver intern placements (five so far), Modern Apprenticeships (10 underway this year), work experience placements and are developing a work experience toolkit for smaller employers
- Working through the Greater Ipswich City Deal (including the whole of Babergh and Mid Suffolk) to invest in new skills and training opportunities for our workforces

A thriving tourism sector and vibrant market towns

- We are supporting each of the key market towns to develop their vision for the future, based on sustainable growth. We are also using public sector assets and resources to help achieve these visions
- In order to promote our market towns and their heritage assets more effectively we will be putting an application forward to DEFRA for "Leader" European Funding
- We will work with clubs and community safety partners to dispel misconceptions about the night-time economy and make it more productive.
- We will make tourism information easier to access online to increase the access and develop options for the future delivery of the Tourist Information Centres and the local tourism offer

Well managed open spaces and environmental assets

- Identify our assets that could be managed differently through an audit of managed open space, community capacity and the redesign of our services using the powers under the Localism Act
- Change how we manage our open spaces to reduce costs and maximise income.

Waste reduced and recycling increased

- Help our communities understand why it makes sense to recycle and how much it saves if they do through a publicity campaign in partnership with Suffolk Waste Partnership
- Work with colleagues across Suffolk to look at the whole waste system and identify opportunities to create better value from a new approach

Being sustainable in all that the Councils do

- Secure investment for green initiatives that will benefit the Councils, businesses and our residents
- Make the most of our own assets by generating income and reducing carbon emissions through a planned programme of solar panel and other renewable energy installations
- Guide and alert businesses and residents to local programmes that support the use of renewable energy and alleviate fuel poverty
- Ensure new housing development is sustainable
- Ensure that there is a targeted programme of energy investment in the existing public and private sector stock

What will success look like?

'Both Babergh and Mid Suffolk are districts characterised by a diverse, dynamic and growing local economy – but one which is sustainable and does not undermine our wonderful natural and built environment

'The Councils themselves are very much 'open for business'. The Councils' staff and councillors understand the needs of businesses. They are constantly building good relationships with current and prospective employers to work with them to seize good job creation opportunities, to remove unreasonable blockages to growth and to advise and guide all interested parties about new opportunities and ideas.

The Councils are also at the forefront in supporting initiatives that increase the range and improve the quality of skills base of the local workforce'.

Case study 1: Helping Sudbury enhance its tourism ‘offer’

Gainsborough Chambers consists of a car park, an old labour exchange and three garages and is adjacent to the world famous Gainsborough House.

Babergh stepped in to purchase the property in order to provide crucial additional time for Gainsborough House to fundraise for its acquisition.

For Babergh to take this bold action it was made very clear at the outset it had to be on the firm basis that it didn't incur costs to the taxpayer. Gainsborough House now rents the Chamber building and ancillary space from Babergh during this interim period, which ensures full costs are covered, and immediately provides additional space for Gainsborough House to use and the car parking will be a welcome addition to the town by providing some further disabled parking spaces.

In buying the property, Babergh has given Gainsborough House the opportunity to achieve its potential as a nationally significant gallery and leading tourist attraction in East Anglia. Plans to create space for future exhibits, a café and visitor centre have already been drawn up and can be begin as soon as the funds have been raised.

Case study 2: Councils set to install PV panels on council housing

The Councils identified an opportunity to install solar photovoltaic panels on some of the our 7000+ housing stock. A team quickly earmarked the potential benefits that such a large scale project could have. Working with both Councils' housing stock, an initial survey identified approximately 2,150 properties that were potentially suitable. While the project was initially considered as a long-term income stream for the Councils, it also would make a significant contribution to the Councils' stated objectives of alleviating fuel poverty, while also making an important contribution to protecting the environment by delivering genuine carbon reductions.

The project, which has now been approved by both Councils, represents a significant capital commitment, will deliver a guaranteed income stream for the next 20 years, provide tenants with free use of the electricity generated by the solar panels on their roofs and secure in excess of 39,000 tonnes of Carbon Dioxide reduction.

Our priorities for the future

Priority 2: Housing

Why is this a priority?

Good quality and appropriate housing for all needs is a basic human right and an essential component in ensuring successful, diverse and dynamic communities, both in themselves and in order to support a successful and growing local economy.

We know that many of our residents are struggling to realise the housing outcomes that are right for them. Either because of housing cost, living in homes that are no longer appropriate for them or not convenient enough for the types of facilities and services they wish to use.

Babergh and Mid Suffolk District councils have a number of roles to play in helping residents to achieve the best housing solutions for their needs.

Obviously, we have a landlord role being jointly responsible for about 7,000 council properties. We see our responsibilities extending beyond just collecting rents and basic maintenance. For example, we know that many of our tenants are facing hardships caused by the rising costs of basic goods and services and especially rising energy bills and, as a result, are launching initiatives to help tenants better keep on top of them

We also have some excellent working relationships with a wide range of social landlords, who are key and valued partners in many of our current and future housing projects

In addition, we are expanding our 'market making' role in terms of creating the right conditions for private landlords and developers to work with communities to deliver local housing needs.

What we are and will we be doing to achieve these outcomes?

More homes to meet local housing need:

- Using good quality information we will work with developers on sites coming forward for development to influence what type of homes are delivered.
- Deliver new homes using our own resources by commissioning development partners to help us to deliver, identifying suitable land and agreeing a development programme.
- Working with the New Anglia LEP to develop an investment model for developing the private rented sector to more adequately meet local need
- Exploring innovative approaches to housing delivery such as Self Build, Co-Housing, Community Land trusts, Equity share, Custom build to meet local need and demand

Support the needs of our ageing population:

- Joining up our work on housing with health and social care colleagues to make sure we design and deliver services together around the needs of individuals and communities
- Review our own sheltered housing stock to understand how current provision needs to change to meet future needs.

Improve the quality and use of existing private sector housing:

- Bring back into use as many of our long-term empty properties (greater than six months) as possible

Maximise the use of our housing resources:

- Work with tenants to agree the best way to deliver property services across our own housing to make sure we are as efficient and cost effective in our delivery and commercial in our approach.
- Ensure the ways we manage the Councils' assets helps to free up finances to reinvest in new affordable homes

What will success look like?

'There will be more choice in the local housing market, reflecting the different needs and income levels of our communities. The overall quality of housing will be higher and more energy efficient than ever before.

'The Councils themselves are active in using their internal housing expertise and the positive, collaborative relationships they have brokered with all manner of interested parties – including our communities – to anticipate and activate imaginative opportunities to shape the housing market across the two districts.

'There will be no 'one-size-fits-all' approach, rather our councillors and staff will be adept at working through bespoke housing solutions that really do reflect local needs and wishes'.

Case Study 3: Better understanding and use of our housing stock

Asset management is about the understanding, long-term planning, provision and sustainability of Babergh and Mid Suffolk's housing assets. An aligned Housing Asset Management Strategy for the two Councils has been adopted, enabling them to improve the quality and condition of the housing stock to our locally agreed Homes Standard and develop new homes. The Housing Asset Management Group, which, incorporates Councillors and officers across a range of disciplines, has developed a viability model to identify high cost and low demand property. The model has already enabled the Group to recommend disposals worth more than £1million for re-investment in our affordable housing investment programme.

Case Study 4: Tackling empty properties

There are 1,100 properties across Babergh and Mid Suffolk which have been empty for six months or more. We are now writing to all these owners with a short questionnaire to ascertain why the property is empty and to find out if there is any help we can offer and what is the likelihood of the property being returned to use in the near future.

We are ensuring the data is up to date and are co-ordinating visiting officers to ensure we do not visit the same properties. Sharing resources across the councils is helping us carry out this work in a smarter and swifter way.

Our priorities for the future

Priority 3: Strong and Healthy Communities

Why is this a priority?

We want our communities and the individuals who comprise them to be as healthy and active as possible, both physically and mentally. This is both good in itself as it leads to a higher quality of life for all, but it also reduces the costs of health care and support needed over the longer term.

Both Babergh and Mid Suffolk have an ageing population and we all need to be working together to ensure that our older citizens are given the opportunities to live as full and as rewarding lives as possible, lived in ways which are to their benefit and the benefit of the wider community.

We also recognise that there are specific health and wellbeing challenges among other sections of our communities and we are determined to play an expanded role in encouraging healthier lifestyles both in promoting our own leisure and cultural activities and supporting those of partner organisations.

Historically, the two districts are pretty safe places to live. However, we do know that there are certain anti-social behaviour and crime 'hotspots which detract from some residents' sense of wellbeing and safety and we will work with other partners to address both the symptoms and the effects of these.

We believe that a key success factor in addressing these challenges and opportunities is to better understand what communities want and to help these communities have the right skills, assets and contacts to deliver their ambitions.

What we are and will we be doing to achieve these outcomes?

Self sufficient, safe and active communities:

- Establish and publicise a single point of contact for each of our communities
- Help the voluntary and community sector which helps them to build the skills, capacity and resources to take on more responsibility for assets and services currently managed by the Councils
- Identify and work with communities who wish to take up their rights (Community right to build, Community right to buy, Community right to challenge, Community right to bid, Neighbourhood planning)
- Our community grants funding will be used to kick start self-sustaining projects and the two Councils discretionary grant schemes will support communities in the delivery of our new priorities in their areas
- We will set up a network of successful grant recipients to work with and mentor other grant applicants
- Work with the Police and Crime Commissioner and other partners to support the delivery of community led projects which prevent and reduce antisocial behaviour and enhance the confidence that communities already have in the safety of their locality

- Collaborate with relevant communities to develop and implement emergency resilience plans
- Compile a live index of sport and activity opportunities in both districts and publish it on our websites
- Ensure our open spaces are available for health activity

Support for those in greatest need:

- Work with Suffolk Leisure Management, South Suffolk Leisure and communities to target the Councils leisure funding towards improving health outcomes for the people who need it most
- Financial inclusion project underway with tenants to make sure they can manage their finances and sustain their tenancies
- To help to manage the impact of welfare reform a new rent arrears management approach will be developed
- We will work directly with tenants to help them access training and employment opportunities
- Join up with other agencies to support our families who require specialist support through the Suffolk Family Focus programme

What will success look like?

Both districts benefit from active and energetic communities which seek innovative ways of delivering sustainable locally-agreed outcomes.

Across the two, there is the widest possible range of things to do to keep the mind and body active. Across Babergh and Mid Suffolk, there are numerous locally organised events which encourage communities to try out new activities and learn new skills and pastimes. The Councils themselves are incredibly busy in promoting their own leisure and cultural offerings.

The districts are not only among the safest places to live in the country, but the perception of crime is proportionate to local issues and not influenced by stories from elsewhere in the country.

Case Study 5: Helping a community retain a community resource

A strong and healthy community needs a focal point. The Case is Altered is the last remaining pub in the village of Bentley. It had been going through a period marked by a succession of different tenants and managers and was put up for sale in 2011. After a short period under a temporary manager it was closed again in 2013.

A group of residents came together hoping to run the pub for the benefit of the community. They worked with Babergh District Council to nominate the pub as an Asset of Community Value (ACV) under the Localism Act. This gave a six-month period during which the pub could only be sold to a community interest group.

In that time, the group was able to create a not-for-profit Industrial and Provident Society (IPS) and they were inspirational in subsequently raising the funding and

purchasing the pub, which is now open again thanks to the hard work and dedication of members of the local community.

Case study 6: Helping launch a vital new arts venue

The John Peel Centre in Stowmarket started as a Community Safety initiative by Mid Suffolk District Council to renovate a redundant building in the town centre.

A steering group was created, which was quickly expanded to enable members of the community to be part of planning and development. This was a turning point for the project with representatives from the local community providing vital energy and enthusiasm, and encouraging the formation of the Management Board. Creating a Community Interest Company (CIC) was the natural next step in this evolutionary process and was vital in the handover from a council-based initiative to a truly community-owned project.

Once the CIC was formed the community took control and the fundraising and design work really commenced. Stowmarket Town Council showed their support by providing a long-term lease. Almost £1 million was raised from a variety of sources, including the Council, and the former Corn Exchange in Stowmarket was transformed into a world-class centre for the creative arts.

Changing how we work: *Smaller, Smarter, Swifter*

Why is this important?

In order to deliver the other three priorities for and with our communities, we need to change how we work.

How will we change?

We are committed to becoming:

- *Smaller*: we will have fewer staff and less guaranteed funding and so we will target what we do have more effectively on the priority outcomes above. This will mean that we will have to stop doing some other things – although we will always look at other ways of providing services with our communities and partners, if possible and look for new and innovative ways of doing so
- *Smarter*: we will make better use of the smaller level of resources that are available to us by cutting down on bureaucracy, improving how we communicate, seeking out viable new sources of income and building proper working relationships with our communities and partners based on trust and mutual understanding
- *Swifter*: we will be flexible and quick-moving and so better ready and prepared to grasp new opportunities and funding sources as they arise. We will have the right staff, with the right attitudes and abilities to recognise and deliver opportunities that help communities and partners deliver our priority outcomes. We will have a strong reputation that helps us secure our future

What will success look like?

In order to survive and thrive we need to be flexible, agile and adaptable so it is not possible to fully define now exactly how we will be different in future – that will continue to be work in progress as we adapt and respond to the things happening around us whilst staying focused on achieving our outcomes. However, there are some clear characteristics that will make us different in future:

Community focus – to ensure that all our activities are cognisant of the needs and aspirations of our communities, that our communities are supported to be self reliant, sustainable and strong and have access to effective and efficient local public services.

Citizen and community experience - to develop an efficient, effective, seamless, 'no wrong door' service to everyone accessing our services and information; to deliver the right solution first time and to help our citizens and communities to access and use our services to best effect.

Insight led - to have access to accurate, up-to-date and easy-to-interrogate insights?, evidence and intelligence. To use this to continuously review and shape our priorities and outcomes – to make sure that we are doing those things which are most needed in our communities and are able to measure the impact of what we do.

Engagement and involvement - to develop relationships that enable us to have effective, meaningful two-way engagement and involvement with communities. To allow us to reach out to the most vulnerable in our communities, understand and strive to meet their needs.

Our new financial and business model – to reduce our reliance on core government funding and maximise the money we can raise locally.

Collaborative working - to strengthen valuable working partnerships with the voluntary sector, social landlords, business, communities, town, parish, other districts and the county council and all providers of public or community services in the two districts e.g. police, health services in order to achieve our outcomes.

Values attitudes and behaviours – to develop and reflect our organisational values in everything we do and to develop an organisation and workforce that demonstrates through actions and behaviours that we are focused on peoples' needs, outcome orientated and business-like.

Skills development - to develop or access the skills necessary to achieve our priorities and outcomes. These will include core management skills, community leadership, engagement skills and greater commercial skills – especially commissioning and procurement.

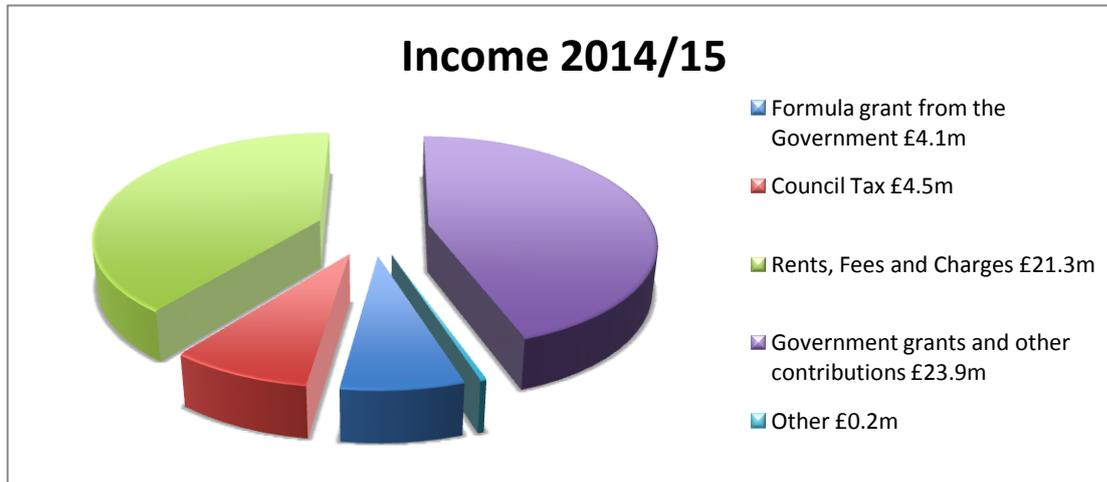
Maximising the opportunities presented by technology - to develop our use of technology to enable us to be efficient and effective in everything we do and to develop and implement the countywide Digital Suffolk initiative, to improve access to information and the ability to make transactions digitally. *Achieving together* - Officers and councillors working together effectively with citizens and communities, respecting each others different roles but supporting one another to fulfil their functions effectively; drawing on all their combined knowledge, skills and experience

We believe that this Strategic Plan provides a clear guide to how Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils aim to work with our communities and partners over the next five years.

Our new financial and business model

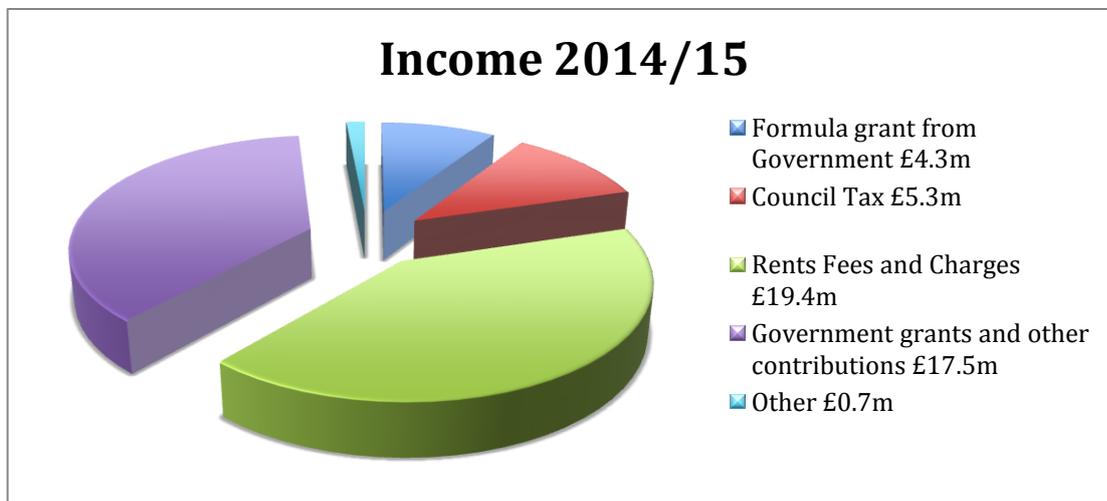
Both our Councils' funding is derived from a range of sources. The diagrams below show the breakdown of the two councils' funding sources for 2014/15.

Babergh District Council



Formula grant includes £2.2m Revenue Support Grant and £1.9m retained Business Rates income (excluding estimated growth of £0.15m). Government grants includes £1.2m New Homes Bonus.

Mid Suffolk District Council



Formula grant includes £2.3m Revenue Support Grant and £2m retained Business Rates income. Government grants includes £1.7m New Homes Bonus.

The landscape of local authority funding has changed in the last 18 months, with the Government reducing core funding and introducing new sources of funding that are linked to policy objectives. The new sources of funding are incentivising councils to promote housing and economic growth and to integrate and transform service provision.

The Councils' core funding from the Government has reduced dramatically over recent years and will continue to do so over the next three years. For Babergh, it is

anticipated that it will fall from £4.1m in 2014/15 to £2.4m in 2017/18 and for Mid Suffolk the reduction will be from £4.4m to £2.6m.

In order for the Councils' to be able to continue to provide key services to the public and to be financially sustainable in the future, we need to change our business and financial model. We need to increase our income from the incentivised funding sources to replace the reduction in core funding and where possible charge basic costs against specific project funding.

The way that we will do this will be guided by our *Smaller, Smarter, Swifter* philosophy and in detail it will involve us:

Growing the local economy, jobs and homes – to maximise our income from New Homes Bonus, business rates, rents and council tax revenue through encouraging local sustainable economic and housing growth and being “open for business”

Investing to save and grow – to refocus our expenditure and investment and to deploy our human resources to generate savings or grow our income – to use a project costing and benefit capture methodology to enable us to monitor our performance in this area

Priority-based resourcing – to ensure that all our financial and human resources are targeted on our priorities and outcomes and are used efficiently and effectively to ensure maximum impact

Sharing and collaborating - to look for and develop opportunities to increase income or derive savings through working with others

Transformation and innovation – to transform the way that we work in order to reduce our costs or achieve more with our available resources by doing things in new and different ways

Strategic commissioning - to commission services strategically so that where we are not delivering services or undertaking our activities within the councils our partners and contractors are focused on and rewarded for achieving our strategic priorities and outcomes as well as providing value for money

A business like and commercial approach - to be more business-like and to investigate commercial ways of working to maximise social, economic, environmental or financial return on our investment

Demand management – to understand the cause of costs or income associated with the demands that our organisations face and to work with others to reduce these costs or increase income