



Council 17 December 2013

CABINET MEMBER REPORT TO FULL COUNCIL

Report by Cllr Anne Gower Housing Portfolio

Portfolio includes:

- Haverhill
- Strategic Housing
- Homelessness
- Social Care
- Gypsies and Travellers

1. *Haverhill Town Centre Masterplan*

- 1.1 In the Haverhill Vision 2031 document there is an undertaking to prepare a detailed masterplan for the centre of the town. The Council has asked ONE Haverhill to play a leading role in developing this plan because it is a body which already brings together representatives from all three Local Authorities, faith, business, leisure, housing, education and health groups within the town. Through those representatives we can reach an even larger number of groups and individuals.
- 1.2 The ONE Haverhill Board held a workshop on 14 November 2013 to start identifying the issues which the masterplan will need to address to ensure Haverhill remains a vibrant town with a centre which meets the needs of a growing population. The masterplanning process involves identifying those issues, refining them through consultation and testing out potential options which address the issue. Once these initial issues have been refined there will be engagement with local residents to test out whether the issues identified are the right ones, or whether there are issues missing and also to gather comments.
- 1.3 The Haverhill Area Working Party received a verbal report for noting at its last meeting.

2. Haverhill Youth Skills Manager

- 2.1 To support the Young People aspect of the ONE Haverhill Community Budget, Job Centre Plus funded the post of a Youth Skills Manager. This Manager will pull together all the existing skills and job activities, forge closer links between local businesses and young people by helping them to become work ready, and also generate additional work opportunities. A target of creating 10 additional apprenticeships in year one was identified and the ONE Haverhill Youth Steering Group will shortly be reporting progress.

3. Haverhill Area Working Party

- 3.1 At its November meeting the Working Party again considered the removal of the Article 4 Directions. A previous proposal to completely remove the Direction was felt to go too far by removing all protection for original features. A recommendation to revise the Direction by removing some of the restrictions, such as changes to windows and doors, from it but retain the protection for other features such as the roofline and brickwork on the fronts of the house was felt to be more appropriate. The Working Party recommended consulting on this approach as it provides a balance between protecting original features and allowing local people to replace doors and windows without the considerable expense involved in buying bespoke items.

4. Haverhill Free Weekend Parking

- 4.1 This Christmas sees the first year we have offered free parking in car parks on the two Saturdays before Christmas.
- 4.2 Free after 3 on Fridays will be supplemented by free parking on Saturday 14 December 2013 and Saturday 21 December 2013. As there is no charge for parking in Haverhill on Sundays, this will make the whole weekend free as follows:
- from 3pm on Friday 13 December 2013 to 8am on Monday 16 December 2013;
 - and from 3pm Friday 20 December 2013 to 8am on Monday 23 December 2013.

5. Housing Strategy and Enabling

- 5.1 On the 11 November 2013, a training session on Short Stay Provision for Gypsies and Travellers took place at West Suffolk House. This was one of a series of meetings across the County to explain why Suffolk needs short stay provision and how we can work together to deliver such provision. The session was well attended by Parish, Borough and County Councillors and the feedback was positive both in terms of the quality of the presentation but also the understanding of the issues we have across the County.
- 5.2 The Chartered Institute of Housing Conference was held during the second week of November. West Suffolk was well represented and Officers from the Council were invited to lead on two Master Classes, The Rural Profiling Project and The West Suffolk Lettings Partnership. Both were well attended and received positive and useful feedback from the audience.
- 5.3 The Rural Profiling Project featured again earlier in the year at the Parish Conference in September. A presentation about the project was given and explained the different approach to assessing needs across rural areas and how

the local community can play an important part in taking projects forward with the support of the Council. This generated a lot of interest from Parish Councils which has resulted in a large number of requests being made for data from the housing team on their village.

6. *The Suffolk Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH)*

- 6.1 West Suffolk is leading on the development of the MASH project on behalf of the housing sector in Suffolk.
- 6.2 The Hub will comprise a multi-disciplinary team for early information sharing and decision making to enable quicker and more focused decisions to be made on safeguarding referrals for both adults and children.
- 6.3 The partner organisations to be approached are:
 - SCC Children & Young Person's Social Care
 - SCC Adult & Community Services Social Care
 - SCC Youth Offending Service
 - Suffolk Police
 - Suffolk NHS organisations
 - SCC Education Service
 - Housing Service Organisations
 - Probation Service

7. *Empty Homes Review*

- 7.1 In September 2013 the Council commissioned CapacityGrid to carry out a one-off data cleansing review of Council Tax registered long term empty properties. This review is now complete and CapacityGrid have generated an additional Gross New Homes Bonus of £291,194 for the Council over the next six years by identifying 32 properties that were not actually empty. CapacityGrids fee for this service was 35% from the year one funding only which is currently estimated at being a maximum of £16,986. The evidence submitted by CapacityGrid is currently being verified by Anglia Revenues Partnership. We are currently reviewing whether we would wish to repeat the process next year.

8. *Home Link Statistics*

The table overleaf shows that there continues to be a steady increase in the demand for Social Housing across West Suffolk.

Home-Link Statistics	SEBC FHDC		SEBC FHDC		SEBC FHDC		SEBC FHDC		SEBC FHDC		SEBC FHDC		SEBC FHDC			
Date	01-Apr-13		01-May-13		01-Jun-13		01-Jul-13		01-Aug-13		01-Sep-13		01-Oct-13		01-Nov-13	
Band A	172	41	202	65	208	77	202	66	213	64	218	75	221	74	241	85
Band B	242	168	271	215	311	226	347	237	357	254	375	260	372	291	385	299
Band C	300	216	316	249	329	274	356	290	362	306	374	314	379	319	395	324
Band D	284	274	306	273	352	274	364	282	393	297	415	308	442	324	452	337
Band D*			8	5	15	3	19	3	23	3	23	4	23	5	28	7
Total	998	699	1103	807	1215	854	1288	878	1348	924	1405	961	1437	1013	1501	1052
Homeseeker	681	508	756	579	824	615	874	631	910	661	958	690	979	718	1019	746
Transfer	317	202	350	234	389	250	413	257	436	271	447	279	458	296	482	307
1 Bedroom	485	350	536	414	600	449	642	458	662	493	686	517	718	538	763	559
2 Bedroom	359	261	412	288	441	303	456	310	492	311	524	319	526	332	541	352
3 Bedroom	115	76	120	91	130	93	139	96	143	103	144	104	141	113	141	112
4 Bedroom	28	21	27	19	32	19	38	23	37	24	38	26	38	27	42	27
5 Bedroom	9	2	10	1	11	1	12	1	13	1	12	3	13	4	13	3
Single	383	272	434	317	483	352	518	355	534	379	561	397	577	410	613	426
Couple	135	111	149	126	170	107	182	136	198	145	202	153	213	163	229	171
Family with children	455	315	498	354	535	368	565	377	591	384	616	394	618	415	627	429
Other household types	25	12	25	16	27	38	23	20	25	24	26	25	29	26	32	27
Statutory Homeless	68	9	82	16	70	19	60	15	74	8	75	10	71	5	75	8
Homeless Prevention	49	40	41	31	49	27	55	24	50	26	62	27	59	34	52	34
Homeless Other	48	4	15	2	16	3	19	4	24	5	25	3	25	5	32	5
Over 65s	104	84	118	100	145	104	160	104	166	112	169	122	183	123	195	130

9. Homelessness

9.1 The number of homeless households in Bed & Breakfast accommodation peaked in August 2013 at 28.

9.2 This number has now been reduced to less than 15, mainly as a result of improved internal processes in the lead up to and implementation of the new Housing Options Team Structure, which has enabled greater focus on both Homelessness Assessment and Prevention by:

- Better co-ordination of Temporary Accommodation across West Suffolk.
- Streamlining of internal processes to enable speedier discharge of homelessness duty, without the need to provide temporary accommodation.
- Better use of the Councils nomination rights with accommodation providers.

10. Housing Option Team Restructure

10.1 The recent Housing Service re-structure now means Housing Options Advisors and Homeless Officers are allocated geographical areas to cover. The new working arrangements mean that these Officers will spend more time in their allocated locations and will be able to take a more proactive approach in helping residents with their housing choices. Officers will link in with local Housing Providers and other agencies. For example, in Haverhill, the Housing Options Advisor will hold Housing Advice Surgeries on Tuesday and Thursdays whilst the Homelessness Officer will be available for residents by appointment. Similar arrangements are in place for Bury. If you want more information on the officers covering your area please contact the Housing Options Team on 01284 757178.

11. Designated Persons

11.1 An introductory training session for councillors on Designated Persons was held at Mildenhall on the 7th November 2013. Councillors were given a briefing on the new roles and responsibilities. Although we are not expecting to receive many requests, you may be approached by a tenant of one of our Registered Housing Providers and asked to take on this role for them. As already notified, in order to be able to react to any requests promptly the Council decided to set up a small group of identified members including, Councillors Mrs Hind, Houlder, Mrs Wakelam and myself to act in this role. This in no way prevents any of you from taking on this role and being given training when the occasion arises.

12. Gypsy and Traveller

12.1 After a long and difficult 9 months spent evicting travellers from our car parks, Moreton Hall open spaces, and various other council sites, I am pleased to say that we have been successful in our application to the High Court and we have secured pre-emptive injunctions on all of the car parks in Bury St Edmunds and all of our open spaces in Moreton Hall. This means that any Travellers who set up an encampment on these sites will be in Contempt of Court and may be sent to prison, fined or have their assets seized, and they can be immediately removed by the police.

12.2 In the meantime, working with the Suffolk and Norfolk Gypsy and Traveller Liaison Service, and Suffolk County Council and the Police, a temporary tolerated stopping place has been identified for the travelling family who have moved/worked around the borough for over a year. A tolerated encampment is for a temporary period of time and conditions (such as the number of caravans and cleanliness of the site) have been imposed. Only the core members of the family will be accommodated on this site. The Travellers will pay a weekly fee for temporary toilets and waste collection. The site will be monitored regularly by the Gypsy and Traveller Liaison Service of Suffolk County Council.

13. Public Health & Housing

13.1 It has been very much business as usual, particularly in terms of enforcement and grants while we have been progressing towards the re-structure, and forming a single team/business process within Housing.

13.2 We have started to work with the West Suffolk Letting Partnership (WSLP) Lead by David Rutterford, who works in the Partnership Team of Housing Services, to try and ensure that we are using responsible Landlords and properties that are up to standard to accommodate those in housing need.

13.3 The Home Improvement Agency (HIA) contract has not moved forward, since the last report. This is because we are seeking an extension to enable us to tender for the right service/model that best suits our needs, and because we are also grappling with the new arrangements around Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) funding, and the 'Integrated Transformational Fund' (ITF). The Government is radically changing the way that funding is provided for DFG, and is pooling the funding for health, social care and housing to better integrate these areas. An ITF plan will be developed, through the Health & Well Being Boards and County Council, and it will be vital for District and Borough Councils

to be part of developing the plan as this will essentially determine what we will receive for DFG.

- 13.4 You will also be aware of the work we have been doing regarding the private sector and developing the Housing Strategy. The strategy is due to be approved in April/May, following a period of consultation. The team has an interest in a number of the key areas being covered, and we are currently working on the chapter around the private rented sector. Sub policies on Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs), Adaptations and Regulation will also be approved under the main Strategy.

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