



Council 25 February 2014

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 Community Development*

- 1.1 Lizzi Cocker, the Haverhill locality officer is working with Community Action Suffolk and Haverhill Town Council to progress the development of 'Haverhill Community Ambassadors' a volunteer team to help improve the street environment by reporting problems and, where applicable, carry out minor repairs and improvements themselves. This is an outcome of the Haverhill Community budgeting process.
- 1.2 Via the ONE Haverhill Youth Steering group St Edmundsbury continues to be involved in the other theme of the community budget – youth skills employment and activities. While the Town Council are working to secure the Old Magistrates Court as a youth venue for the town the Youth Steering group are working to develop a business plan for the kind of activities which could be delivered from such a venue. In the meantime the Youth skills Co-ordinator for Haverhill, a post funded by Job Centre+, continues to work with local businesses to create more apprenticeships and traineeships to improve the employment opportunities for young people in the town.

2. *Affordable Homes Programme*

- 2.1 Following the launch of the 2015/18 affordable homes programme, the Homes and Communities Agency is inviting bids from Registered Providers and others for a share of the £1.7bn which is available nationally (excluding London). The new programme is largely modelled on the current one with the following key messages:
- (a) Increase the supply of new affordable housing – for Affordable Rent and affordable home ownership (shared ownership);

- (b) maximise the number of new affordable homes delivered with the available grant funding, supplemented by bidders' own contributions;
- (c) build homes that address the demographic challenges facing social housing, including the need for more one and two bedroom homes that match the needs of smaller households;
- (d) maximise delivery within the programme period and deliver new affordable homes by March 2018; and
- (e) encourage providers with capacities who do not currently develop, or who could do more, to bring that capacity into use, utilising the skills and expertise of existing delivery partners as appropriate. In addition to accessing capacity, our aim is to drive good value for money through the competitive process.

2.2 We will work with registered providers and the HCA to ensure that schemes are prioritised within the borough and maximise the delivery of new affordable homes.

2.3 We currently have a number of schemes that will be completed by March 2014 and project delivery of 63 new affordable homes in the borough in 2013/2014 of which 15 are in Bury St Edmunds, 38 Haverhill and 10 rural.

3. *West Suffolk Housing Strategy*

3.1 The West Suffolk Housing Strategy Members Group chaired by myself and Rona Burt is now well established and the draft Strategy for consultation is on track to be presented to both Cabinets in May 2014. Consultation on the Strategy will run from the end of May until the 9 July 2014 with the final document coming to full Council in September 2014.

4. *Gypsy and Traveller Short Stay Provision*

4.1 Members may recall the training events that took place last November regarding the topic of Gypsy and Traveller transit provision across Suffolk. Evidence has been gathered over the last 5 years to plot where and when Gypsies and Travellers were passing through the County and how long they have been staying. In addition to this, the costs of moving families on from unauthorised encampments has been evaluated in terms of officer time, court costs and where they move to. At their meeting in January, Suffolk Public Sector Leaders considered this issue and have agreed on the following actions:

- (a) note the need to provide three (eight pitch) short stay stopping sites across Suffolk based on historical and geographical evidence;
- (b) agree that the delivery of the sites is undertaken in a collective way, with all local authorities playing their part; and
- (c) agree in principle, that if central government funding is not secured then local authorities work together to identify alternative funding for this countywide initiative.

4.2 Work will now continue on this project and Councillor Rona Burt and I will be representing West Suffolk on the forum.

5. Home Link Statistics

5.1 The overall demand for Social Housing continues to increase as indicated in the table below. The significant drop in the number of Statutory Homeless cases is as a result not of less homelessness, but of improvements to processes so these households are housed quicker.

Home-Link Statistics	SEBC	FHDC	SEBC	FHDC	SEBC	FHDC	SEBC	FHDC	SEBC	FHDC	SEBC	FHDC
Date	01-Sep-13		01-Oct-13		01-Nov-13		01-Dec-13		01-Jan-14		01-Feb-14	
Band A	218	75	221	74	241	85	210	67	211	57	202	57
Band B	375	260	372	291	385	299	393	294	391	303	397	302
Band C	374	314	379	319	395	324	409	333	406	350	414	349
Band D	415	308	442	324	452	337	464	344	475	343	498	357
Band D*	23	4	23	5	28	7	29	8	29	8	28	10
Total	1405	961	1437	1013	1501	1052	1505	1046	1512	1061	1539	1075
Homeseeker	958	690	979	718	1019	746	1011	743	1021	751	1044	755
Transfer	447	279	458	296	482	307	492	304	489	311	493	320
1 Bedroom	686	517	718	538	763	559	775	557	771	574	787	581
2 Bedroom	524	319	526	332	541	352	534	353	542	355	551	359
3 Bedroom	144	104	141	113	141	112	143	109	138	106	146	106
4 Bedroom	38	26	38	27	42	27	41	25	48	24	41	26
5 Bedroom	12	3	13	4	13	3	9	3	11	3	12	3
Single	561	397	577	410	613	426	625	423	623	437	639	443
Couple	202	153	213	163	229	171	225	174	223	176	230	176
Family with children	616	394	618	415	627	429	622	425	631	423	637	426
Other household types	26	25	29	26	32	27	33	25	35	26	33	30
Statutory Homeless	75	10	71	5	75	8	53	10	55	6	49	7
Homeless Prevention	62	27	59	34	52	34	55	27	53	31	48	31
Homeless Other	25	3	25	5	32	5	33	5	35	5	36	6
Over 65s	169	122	183	123	195	130	200	133	199	138	203	145

6. Homelessness

6.1 The number of Homeless Households that the Council is accommodating in Bed and Breakfast has fallen significantly from a peak of 28 in August 2013 to 10 now. However, it is anticipated that even with continued efficiency improvements to the Housing Options Service, there will be between 8 and 12 households in B&B at any one time for the foreseeable future until there is an increase other forms of temporary accommodation and the Council is able to discharge homelessness duties in to the Private Rented Sector. The difficulty in sourcing temporary accommodation has increased since the Days Inn in Haverhill no longer takes Homeless referrals giving the Housing Options Service less scope to house homeless households in Haverhill.

6.2 A full Business case is being developed to provide additional Temporary Accommodation across West Suffolk which will be presented in May 2014 to Cabinet. (NB: Will have gone to Cabinet Planning on 11 February 2014)

- 6.3 The policy to allow the Council to house Homeless households in Private Rented accommodation will be implemented with effect from 1 April 2014. (NB: Assuming Council agree it on 25 February 2014)

7. *Transition of Housing Work to Customer Services*

- 7.1 Customer Services have now taken over handling initial housing enquiries at the front desk at West Suffolk House, Haverhill House as well as telephone and email enquiries. Where possible the Customer Services Agent will deal with the enquiry but will pass on to the Housing Team should the enquiry prove to be complex and require the expertise and ongoing involvement of a Housing Officer.

8. *Housing and Economic Growth Summit*

- 8.1 West Suffolk Councils co-hosted with the National Housing Federation, New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership and the Greater Cambridge and Greater Peterborough Local Enterprise Partnership a very successful summit on the 31 January 2014 at The Apex. Over 100 delegates drawn from housing providers and economic development practitioners discussed the vital role that housing development will play in helping to stimulate economic growth across the region. We heard that each new house built added £37,500 to the local economy and for every £1m spent on new housing 12 additional local jobs were generated, 7 directly in construction and 5 indirectly per year. For every £1 invested in the construction industry in Suffolk, £2.60 is generated elsewhere in the economy.

9. *Private Sector Housing Standards*

- 9.1 The Public Health & Housing Team, responsible for improving housing standards in both the private rented and owner occupied sectors, has been going through a re-structure process. The structure should be confirmed and in place by 1 March 2014, having been through the normal corporate process. The team will operate within an integrated Housing Services, and action key priorities coming from the new Housing Strategy.