

# Cabinet

<b>Title</b>	<b>Agenda</b>																								
<b>Date</b>	<b>Tuesday 5 December 2023</b>																								
<b>Time</b>	<b>6.00 pm</b>																								
<b>Venue</b>	<b>Conference Chamber West Suffolk House</b> Western Way Bury St Edmunds																								
<b>Membership</b>	<table> <tr> <td><b>Leader</b></td> <td>Cliff Waterman</td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>Deputy Leader</b></td> <td>Victor Lukaniuk</td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>Councillor</b></td> <td><b>Portfolio</b></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Donna Higgins</td> <td>Families and Communities</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Diane Hind</td> <td>Resources</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Gerald Kelly</td> <td>Governance and Regulatory</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Richard O'Driscoll</td> <td>Housing</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Ian Shipp</td> <td>Leisure</td> </tr> <tr> <td>David Taylor</td> <td>Operations</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Jim Thorndyke</td> <td>Planning</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Cliff Waterman</td> <td>Leader</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Indy Wijenayaka</td> <td>Growth</td> </tr> </table>	<b>Leader</b>	Cliff Waterman	<b>Deputy Leader</b>	Victor Lukaniuk	<b>Councillor</b>	<b>Portfolio</b>	Donna Higgins	Families and Communities	Diane Hind	Resources	Gerald Kelly	Governance and Regulatory	Richard O'Driscoll	Housing	Ian Shipp	Leisure	David Taylor	Operations	Jim Thorndyke	Planning	Cliff Waterman	Leader	Indy Wijenayaka	Growth
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<b>Interests – declaration and restriction on participation</b>	Members are reminded of their responsibility to declare any disclosable pecuniary interest, other registerable or non-registerable interest which they have in any item of business on the agenda, <b>no later than when that item is reached</b> and, when appropriate, to leave the meeting prior to discussion and voting on the item.																								
<b>Quorum</b>	Four Members																								
<b>Committee administrator</b>	<b>Claire Skoyles</b> Democratic Services Officer <b>Telephone</b> 01284 757176 <b>Email</b> <a href="mailto:democratic.services@westsuffolk.gov.uk">democratic.services@westsuffolk.gov.uk</a>																								

## Public information



<b>Venue</b>	Conference Chamber, West Suffolk House, Western Way, Bury St Edmunds IP33 3YU
<b>Contact information</b>	Telephone: 01284 757176 Email: <a href="mailto:democratic.services@westsuffolk.gov.uk">democratic.services@westsuffolk.gov.uk</a> Website: <a href="http://www.westsuffolk.gov.uk">www.westsuffolk.gov.uk</a>
<b>Access to agenda and reports before the meeting</b>	The agenda and reports will be available to view at least five clear days before the meeting on our website.
<b>Attendance at meetings</b>	<p>This meeting is being held in person in order to comply with the Local Government Act 1972. We may be required to restrict the number of members of the public able to attend in accordance with the room capacity. If you consider it is necessary for you to attend, please inform Democratic Services in advance of the meeting.</p> <p>As a local authority, we have a corporate and social responsibility for the safety of our staff, our councillors and visiting members of the public. We, therefore, request that you exercise personal responsibility and do not attend the meeting if you feel at all unwell.</p> <p>West Suffolk Council continues to promote good hygiene practices with hand sanitiser and wipes being available in the meeting room. Attendees are also able to wear face coverings, should they wish to</p>
<b>Public participation</b>	<p>Members of the public who live or work in the district are invited to put one question or statement of not more than three minutes duration relating to items to be discussed in Part 1 of the agenda only. If a question is asked and answered within three minutes, the person who asked the question may ask a supplementary question that arises from the reply.</p> <p>The Constitution allows that a person who wishes to speak must register at least 15 minutes before the time the meeting is scheduled to start. <b>We urge anyone who wishes to register to speak to notify Democratic Services by 9am on the day of the meeting so that advice can be given on the arrangements in place.</b></p> <p>There is an overall time limit of 15 minutes for public speaking, which may be extended at the Chair's discretion.</p>

<b>Accessibility</b>	If you have any difficulties in accessing the meeting, the agenda and accompanying reports, including for reasons of a disability or a protected characteristic, please contact Democratic Services at the earliest opportunity using the contact details provided above in order that we may assist you.
<b>Recording of meetings</b>	<p>The Council may record this meeting and permits members of the public and media to record or broadcast it as well (when the media and public are not lawfully excluded).</p> <p>Any member of the public who attends a meeting and objects to being filmed should advise the Committee Administrator who will instruct that they are not included in the filming.</p>
<b>Personal information</b>	<p>Any personal information processed by West Suffolk Council arising from a request to speak at a public meeting under the Localism Act 2011, will be protected in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018. For more information on how we do this and your rights in regards to your personal information and how to access it, visit our website: <a href="https://www.westsuffolk.gov.uk/Council/Data_and_information/howweuseinformation.cfm">https://www.westsuffolk.gov.uk/Council/Data_and_information/howweuseinformation.cfm</a> or call Customer Services: 01284 763233 and ask to speak to the Information Governance Officer.</p>

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# Agenda

## Procedural matters

**1. Apologies for absence**

**2. Minutes**

**1 - 4**

To confirm the minutes of the meeting held on 14 November 2023 (copy attached).

**3. Declarations of interest**

Members are reminded of their responsibility to declare any disclosable pecuniary interest, other registerable or non-registerable interest which they have in any item of business on the agenda, **no later than when that item is reached** and, when appropriate, to leave the meeting prior to discussion and voting on the item.

## Part 1 - public

**4. Open forum**

At each Cabinet meeting, up to 15 minutes shall be allocated for questions or statements from and discussion with, non-Cabinet members. Members wishing to speak during this session are encouraged to give notice in advance. Who speaks and for how long will be at the complete discretion of the person presiding.

**5. Public participation**

Members of the public who live or work in the district are invited to put one question or statement of not more than three minutes duration relating to items to be discussed in Part 1 of the agenda only. If a question is asked and answered within three minutes, the person who asked the question may ask a supplementary question that arises from the reply.

A person who wishes to speak must register at least 15 minutes before the time the meeting is scheduled to start. This can be done online by sending the request to [democratic.services@westsuffolk.gov.uk](mailto:democratic.services@westsuffolk.gov.uk) or telephoning 01284 757176 or in person by telling the Committee Administrator present at the meeting. **We would urge anyone who wishes to register to speak to notify Democratic Services by 9am on the day of the meeting so that advice can be given on the arrangements in place.**

There is an overall time limit of 15 minutes for public speaking, which may be extended at the Chair's discretion.

	<b>Pages</b>
<p><b>6. Report of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee: 9 November 2023</b></p> <p>Report number: <b>CAB/WS/23/052</b>            Chair of the Committee: Councillor Sarah Broughton            Lead officer: Christine Brain</p>	<b>5 - 10</b>
<p><b>7. Report of the Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee: 23 November 2023</b></p> <p>Report number: <b>CAB/WS/23/053</b>            Chair of the Committee: Councillor Peter Armitage            Portfolio holder: Councillor Diane Hind            Lead officer: Christine Brain</p>	<b>11 - 16</b>
<b>Non key decisions</b>	
<p><b>8. Recommendations of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee: 9 November 2023 - Abbeycroft Leisure Strategic Partnership</b></p> <p>Report number: <b>CAB/WS/23/054</b>            Portfolio holder: Councillor Ian Shipp            Chair of the Committee: Councillor Sarah Broughton            Lead officer: Jill Korwin</p>	<b>17 - 24</b>
<p><b>9. Recommendations from the Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee: 23 November 2023 - Treasury Management Report (September 2023)</b></p> <p>Report number: <b>CAB/WS/23/055</b>            Portfolio holder: Councillor Diane Hind            Chair of the Committee: Councillor Peter Armitage            Lead officer: Rachael Mann</p>	<b>25 - 28</b>
<p><b>10. West Suffolk Local Plan Publication (Regulation 19) Consultation and Submission</b></p> <p>Report number: <b>CAB/WS/23/056</b>            Portfolio holder: Councillor Jim Thorndyke            Lead officers: Julie Baird and Marie Smith</p> <p><i>(See separate supplement pack for Appendix A which contains the proposed West Suffolk Local Plan Submission 2024 document itself – available to view electronically on the Council’s website <a href="#">here</a>. Paper copies available upon request.)</i></p>	<b>29 - 36</b>
<p><b>11. West Suffolk Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme (LCTRS) 2024 to 2025</b></p> <p>Report number: <b>CAB/WS/23/057</b>            Portfolio holder: Councillor Diane Hind            Lead officer: Rachael Mann</p>	<b>37 - 56</b>

*(See separate supplement pack for Appendix C – available to view electronically on the Council’s website [here](#).)*

- |            |  |                  |
|------------|--|------------------|
| <b>12.</b> | <b>Council tax base for tax setting purposes 2024 to 2025</b>  | <b>57 - 68</b>   |
|            | Report number: <b>CAB/WS/23/058</b><br>Portfolio holder: Councillor Diane Hind<br>Lead officer: Rachael Mann   |                  |
| <b>13.</b> | <b>Barley Homes Business Plan 2023</b>   | <b>69 - 102</b>  |
|            | Report number: <b>CAB/WS/23/059</b><br>Portfolio holder: Councillor Richard O’Driscoll<br>Lead officer: Julie Baird  |                  |
| <b>14.</b> | <b>Revenues collection performance and write offs</b>  | <b>103 - 106</b> |
|            | Report number: <b>CAB/WS/23/060</b><br>Portfolio holder: Councillor Diane Hind<br>Lead officer: Rachael Mann   |                  |
| <b>15.</b> | <b>Decisions Plan: 1 December 2023 to 31 May 2024</b>  | <b>107 - 126</b> |
|            | To consider the most recently published version of the Cabinet’s Decisions Plan<br><br>Report number: <b>CAB/WS/23/061</b><br>Leader of the Council: Councillor Cliff Waterman<br>Lead officer: Ian Gallin |                  |

## **Key decisions**

- |            |  |                  |
|------------|--|------------------|
| <b>16.</b> | <b>Investing in our asset portfolio - Provincial House</b>   | <b>127 - 132</b> |
|            | Report number: <b>CAB/WS/23/062</b><br>Portfolio holder: Councillor Diane Hind<br>Lead officer: Rachael Mann   |                  |
| <b>17.</b> | <b>Exclusion of press and public</b>   |                  |
|            | To consider whether the press and public should be excluded during the consideration of the following items because it is likely, in view of the nature of the business to be transacted or the nature of the proceedings, that if members of the public were present during the items, there would be disclosure to them of exempt categories of information as prescribed in Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, and indicated against each item and, in all circumstances of the case, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information. |                  |

## Part 2 - exempt

**18. Exempt Appendices: Investing in our asset portfolio - Provincial House (paragraph 3) 133 - 158**

Exempt Appendices A, B and C to Report number:

**CAB/WS/23/062**

Portfolio holder: Councillor Diane Hind

Lead officer: Rachael Mann

(These appendices are to be considered in private under paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, as they contain information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information))

(No representations have been received from members of the public regarding this item being held in private.)

**19. Exempt Appendices: Revenues collection performance and write-offs (paragraphs 1 and 2) 159 - 162**

Exempt Appendices 1 and 2 to Report number:

**CAB/WS/23/060**

Portfolio holder: Councillor Diane Hind

Lead officer: Rachael Mann

(These exempt appendices are to be considered in private under paragraphs 1 and 2 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, as they contain information relating to an individual and information which is likely to reveal the identity of an individual)

(No representations have been received from members of the public regarding this item being held in private.)

**20. Exempt Appendix: Recommendations of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee: 9 November 2023 - Abbeycroft Leisure Strategic Partnership (paragraph 3) 163 - 200**

Exempt Appendix A to Report number: **CAB/WS/23/054**

Portfolio holder: Councillor Ian Shipp

Chair of the Committee: Councillor Sarah Broughton

Lead officer: Jill Korwin

(This appendix is to be considered in private under paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, as it contains information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information))

(No representations have been received from members of the public regarding this item being held in private.)

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# Cabinet

**Minutes** of a meeting of the **Cabinet** held on **Tuesday 14 November 2023** at **6.00 pm** in the **Conference Room, Mildenhall Hub**, Sheldrick Way, Mildenhall, IP28 7JX

Present

**Councillors**

**Chair** Cliff Waterman (Leader of the Council)

**Vice Chair** Victor Lukaniuk (Deputy Leader of the Council)

Donna Higgins  
Diane Hind  
Gerald Kelly  
Richard O'Driscoll

Ian Shipp  
David Taylor  
Jim Thorndyke  
Indy Wijenayaka

**By invitation**

Marion Rushbrook

(Vice Chair of the Overview and  
Scrutiny Committee)

Phil Wittam

(Member of the Performance and  
Audit Scrutiny Committee)

**Observers**

Roger Dicker  
Andy Neal

510. **Apologies for absence**

No apologies for absence were received.

511. **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 19 September 2023 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

512. **Declarations of interest**

Members' declarations of interest are recorded under the item to which the declaration relates.

513. **Open forum**

No non-Cabinet members in attendance wished to speak under this item.

514. **Public participation**

There were no members of the public in attendance on this occasion.

**515. Report of the Anglia Revenues and Benefits Partnership Joint Committee: 12 September 2023 (Report number CAB/WS/23/047)**

The Cabinet received and noted this report, which informed Members of the following substantive items considered by the Anglia Revenues and Benefits Partnership Joint Committee on 12 September 2023:

1. Performance report
2. Welfare reform update
3. ARP financial performance
4. Fraud and compliance team target review
5. Forthcoming issues

Councillor Diane Hind, Portfolio Holder for Resources, presented this report and drew relevant issues to the attention of Cabinet. Councillor Hind also wished to thank the staff working in the Anglia Revenues Partnership who continued to support the residents of West Suffolk.

**516. Report of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee: 21 September 2023 (Report number CAB/WS/23/048)**

The Cabinet received and noted this report, which informed Members of the following substantive items considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 21 September 2023:

1. Western Suffolk Community Safety Partnership Monitoring Report (April 2022 to March 2023)
2. Modern Slavery Update
3. CCTV at West Suffolk Council
4. Suffolk County Council Health Scrutiny Committee: 12 July 2023
5. Suffolk County Council Police and Crime Panel: 14 July 2023
6. Cabinet Decisions Plan: 1 September 2023 to 31 May 2024
7. Work programme update 2023 and Suggestions for Scrutiny

On behalf of Councillor Sarah Broughton, Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, who had been unable to attend the meeting, Councillor Marion Rushbrook, Vice Chair of the Committee, presented this report and drew relevant issues to the attention of Cabinet.

**517. Report of the Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee: 28 September 2023 (Report number CAB/WS/23/049)**

The Cabinet received and noted this report, which informed Members of the following substantive items considered by the Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee on 28 September 2023:

1. Ernst and Young – Auditors Annual Report 2021 to 2022
2. Annual Governance Statement 2022 to 2023
3. Draft Statement of Accounts 2022 to 2023
4. Complaints and Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman: Annual Report 2022 to 2023

5. Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 – Annual Report and Review of the RIPA Guidance
6. Work Programme Update 2023 to 2024

On behalf of Councillor Peter Armitage, Chair of the Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee and the Vice Chair, Councillor Frank Stennett, who had both been unable to attend the meeting, Councillor Phil Wittam, presented this report and drew relevant issues to the attention of Cabinet.

518. **National Heritage Lottery Bid - Abbey of St Edmunds (Report number CAB/WS/23/050)**

*(Councillor Diane Hind wished it noted and recorded that she was the Town Mayor of Bury St Edmunds)*

The Cabinet considered this report which explained that the Abbey Gardens was a green flag award winning park which attracted around 1.3million visits per year. Within the gardens stood the ruins of the former Abbey of St Edmund. The current cathedral building was one of the Abbey's churches. The Abbey ruins were English Heritage's most visited 'free to visit' venue in the country. Given its popularity as a visitor destination it played a significant role in helping boost the local economy.

Notwithstanding the above, there were some significant challenges facing the site which included:

- Paths in the Abbey Gardens and routes around the ruins which were not Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) compliant and were potentially hazardous for visitors to navigate.
- A large proportion of the ruins in the gardens were fenced off because of erosion and English Heritage were financially unable to undertake all of these repairs in a timely fashion.
- Whilst there had been new interpretation panels installed within the Gardens, interpretation of the site as a whole was poor.

The feedback from the NLHF concerning an initial point of entry submission had been positively received. Representatives from the National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) had visited the site to observe what the key components of a bid would include, these being:

- Conservation of the highly vulnerable Abbey ruins.
- Improving and expanding the footpath network around the former Abbey.
- Strengthening connectivity between the Abbey, River Lark, Cathedral and Town.
- Increase biodiversity in the Abbey area.
- Repurposing of an unused cathedral building into a heritage welcome centre.
- Building of a west cloister which would link the centre to the cathedral.
- Providing space for community activities, exhibitions and art installations.

Working in partnership, St Edmundsbury Cathedral, West Suffolk Council, and English Heritage were proposing to submit a joint stage one NLHF bid for funding to address the challenges outlined above. The Cathedral would be the

lead applicant for this submission as the bulk of the capital spend would be on their land.

In order to make the bid, the NLHF would want to see a partnership agreement between the Cathedral, the Council and English Heritage and this agreement had been drafted and was currently being considered by each partner. The Cathedral had appointed and were funding a consultant to draw together the bid. West Suffolk Council were holding around £250,000 of Section 106 funding ringfenced for the Abbey Gardens which the Council could use as its contributory funding towards the bid.

Councillor Ian Shipp, Portfolio Holder for Leisure, drew relevant issues to the attention of the Cabinet. He particularly wished to thank Officers and Members for all of their work in reaching this stage of the process. This work was also commended by the Leader of the Council.

**Resolved:**

That:

1. Having considered the merits of the proposed joint National Heritage Lottery bid, with St Edmundsbury Cathedral and English Heritage, the pursuing of the stage one bid submission, be agreed.
2. The Director (Operations) be authorised to agree the final stage one submission documents, in consultation with the other partners to the bid and based on approval from the S151 Officer and Portfolio Holder for Leisure.
3. £250,000 be allocated, in principle, from the Section 106 funding already earmarked for improvements in the Abbey Gardens to the delivery phase of the project as contributory funding, should the bid be successful at stage one development phase.

**519. Decisions Plan: 1 November 2023 to 31 May 2024 (Report number CAB/WS/23/051)**

The Cabinet considered this report which was the Cabinet Decisions Plan covering the period 1 November 2023 to 31 May 2024.

Members took the opportunity to review the intended forthcoming decisions of the Cabinet. However, no further information or amendments were requested on this occasion.

The meeting concluded at 6.25 pm

**Signed by:**

**Chair**

# Report of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee: 5 December 2023

<b>Report number:</b>	<b>CAB/WS/23/052</b>	
<b>Report to and date:</b>	<b>Cabinet</b>	5 December 2023
<b>Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee:</b>	Councillor Sarah Broughton Chair of Overview and Scrutiny Telephone: 07929 305787 Email: <a href="mailto:sarah.broughton@westsuffolk.gov.uk">sarah.broughton@westsuffolk.gov.uk</a>	
<b>Lead officer:</b>	Christine Brain Democratic Services Officer (Scrutiny) Telephone: 01638 719729 Email: <a href="mailto:christine.brain@westsuffolk.gov.uk">christine.brain@westsuffolk.gov.uk</a>	

**Decisions Plan:** **This item is not required to be included in the Decisions Plan.**

**Wards impacted:** **All wards.**

**Recommendation:** **It is recommended that Report number: CAB/WS/23/052, being the report of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, be noted.**

## 1. Context to this report

1.1 On 9 November 2023, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered the following items:

1. Review of West Suffolk Council Grounds Maintenance Operations
2. Abbeycroft Leisure Strategic Partnership Task and Finish Group – Findings and Recommendations
3. Suffolk County Council Police and Crime Panel: 6 October 2023
4. Suffolk County Council Health Scrutiny Committee: 11 October 2023
5. Cabinet Decisions Plan: 1 November 2023 to 31 May 2024
6. Work programme update 2024.

A separate report is included on the Cabinet agenda for Item 2 above.

## 2. Proposals within this report

### 2.1 **Review of West Suffolk Council Grounds Maintenance Operations (Report number: OAS/WS/23/018)**

2.1.1 The Committee received the above report which asked members to consider and discuss the intended scope (set in paragraph 2 of report number [OAS/WS/23/018](#)) of the Grounds Maintenance Review being carried out by the Cabinet Member for Leisure, and to offer any specific perspective or issues which may help guide the review or should be considered as part of the review.

2.1.2 The Council owns or is responsible for a significant amount of public open space in the district amounting to over five hundred hectares. The responsibility for maintaining the grass within these areas' rests with the Landscape Team within the Green Space and Heritage Service in the Operations Directorate.

2.1.3 The focus of the review and its report was on the cutting of amenity grass throughout the district. However, grass cutting was just one of the seasonal ground's maintenance tasks performed by the in-house Landscape Team, and it was important to also consider grass cutting and any potential changes in a wider context.

2.1.4 The review was also looking at the impact of the cessation of using glyphosate or any other chemicals to treat weeds on land owned by the Council which was instigated from April 2023. This was being considered in conjunction with the approach being carried out by Suffolk County Council for its treatment of weeds on the highway.

2.1.5 The Committee considered the report and the intended scope in detail and asked questions to which responses were provided. In particular,

discussions were held on listening to responses from parish/town councils and improving communication; insurance issues; the possibility of some parish/town councils taking on grass cutting in their areas; working more collaboratively with partners; scheduling grass cutting by level of importance; and looking at whether some form of weed killer should be used.

2.1.6 It was suggested that the Review Group should look into the Suffolk County Council's Community Self Help Scheme and the equivalent of the Chapter 42 Safety Training.

2.1.7 At the conclusion of the discussions the Committee **noted** the scope of the Review Group's work subject to the above comment made at paragraph 2.1.2 above.

2.2 **Suffolk County Council Police and Crime Panel: 6 October 2023 (Report number: OAS/WS/23/020)**

2.2.1 The Committee received and **noted** the above report and Appendix 1.

2.2.2 Appendix 1 to the report was a summary of topics discussed at the Police and Crime Panel meeting held on 6 October 2023, being:

- The Panel ratified the appointment of Simon Furlong as an Independent Co-opted Member.
- The Panel scrutinised the effective exercise of the Police and Crime Commissioner's (PCC's) functions by reviewing actions he had taken under Police and Crime Plan Objectives 1.
- The Panel reviewed and commended the PCC's Annual Report 2022 to 2023.
- The Panel questioned the PCC on the 2013 to 2024 financial position.

2.2.3 The Committee considered the report and did not raise any issues.

2.3 **Suffolk County Council Health Scrutiny Committee: 11 October 2023 (Report number: OAS/WS/23/21)**

2.3.1 The Committee received and **noted** the above report presented by Councillor Andrew Martin, the Council's appointed representative on the Suffolk County Council Health Scrutiny Committee.

Attached at Appendix 1 to the report was a summary of topics discussed at the Health Scrutiny meeting held on 11 October 2023, being:

- Pharmacy provision.

2.3.2 The Committee considered the report in detail and asked questions to which Councillor Martin responded. In particular, discussions were held on whether there were any plans on addressing the pharmacy closures; the impact of prescriptions being delivered to your door; the reduction of pharmacies offering services on Sundays and the national shortage of the pharmacy workforce.

2.3.3 At the conclusion of the discussions, the Committee **noted** Councillor Martin's report.

2.4 **Cabinet Decisions Plan: 1 November 2023 to 31 May 2024 (Report number: OAS/WS/23/022)**

2.4.1 The Committee reviewed the latest version of the Cabinet Decisions Plan, covering the period 1 November 2023 to 31 May 2024.

2.4.2 The Committee considered the Decisions Plan and did not request any further information on items contained in the Plan.

2.5 **Work programme update 2024 (Report number: OAS/WS/23/023)**

2.5.1 The Committee received Report number OAS/WS/23/023, which updated Members on the current status of its rolling work programme of items at attached at Appendix 1.

2.5.2 The Committee considered the rolling work programme and did not raise any issues. However, some members raised concerns about the recent increases in service charges, in particular for Havebury Housing tenants, during the cost-of-living crisis which was putting even more pressure on tenants and suggested inviting them to its January 2024 meeting. Concerns were also raised about the disposal of housing units by Flagship Homes in certain wards.

2.5.3 It was agreed that officers would brief Councillor O'Driscoll, Cabinet Member for Housing, on these concerns so that he or officers could speak to the Registered Social Landlords and update the Committee accordingly. The outcome of these discussions could also be included as an additional update at the Committee's January 2024 meeting when Cllr O'Driscoll he was due to attend to present the West Suffolk Housing Strategy and Homelessness Rough Sleeping Strategy.

2.5.4 It was further suggested inviting Registered Social Landlords to a future meeting of the Committee.

2.5.5 The Committee **noted** the current states of its rolling work programme, and the Chair agreed to submit a work programme suggestion form,



setting out key lines of enquiry to invite Registered Social Landlord's to its meeting in March 2024.

### **3. Alternative options that have been considered**

3.1 Please see background papers.

### **4. Consultation and engagement undertaken**

4.1 Please see background papers.

### **5. Risks associated with the proposals**

5.1 Please see background papers.

### **6. Implications arising from the proposals**

6.1 Financial - Please see background papers.

6.2 Equalities - Please see background papers.

### **7. Appendices referenced in this report**

7.1 Please see background papers.

### **8. Background documents associated with this report**

8.1 Report number: [OAS/WS/23/018](#) to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee: Review of West Suffolk Council Grounds Maintenance Operations

8.2 Report number: [OAS/WS/23/020](#) and [Appendix 1](#) to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee: Suffolk County Council Police and Crime Panel – 6 October 2023

8.3 Report number: [OAS/WS/23/021](#) and [Appendix 1](#) to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee: Suffolk County Council Health Scrutiny Committee – 11 October 2023

8.4 Report number: [OAS/WS/23/022](#) and [Appendix 1](#) to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee: Cabinet Decisions Plan 1 November 2023 to 31 May 2024

8.5 Report number: [OAS/WS/23/023](#) and [Appendix 1](#) to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee: Work Programme Update 2023

# Report of the Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee: 23 November 2023

<b>Report number:</b>	<b>CAB/WS/23/053</b>	
<b>Report to and date:</b>	<b>Cabinet</b>	5 December 2023
<b>Cabinet member:</b>	Councillor Diane Hind Portfolio Holder for Resources Email: <a href="mailto:diane.hind@westsuffolk.gov.uk">diane.hind@westsuffolk.gov.uk</a>	
<b>Chair of the Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee</b>	Councillor Peter Armitage Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee Email: <a href="mailto:peter.armitage@westsuffolk.gov.uk">peter.armitage@westsuffolk.gov.uk</a>	
<b>Lead officer:</b>	Christine Brain Democratic Services Officer (Scrutiny) Telephone: 01638 719729 Email: <a href="mailto:christine.brain@westsuffolk.gov.uk">christine.brain@westsuffolk.gov.uk</a>	

**Decisions Plan:** This item is not required to be included in the Decisions Plan.

**Wards impacted:** All wards.

**Recommendation:** It is recommended that Report number: CAB/WS/23/053, being the report of the Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee, be noted.

## 1. Context to this report

1.1 On 23 November 2023, the Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee considered the following items:

1. Delivering a Sustainable Medium-Term Budget
2. 2023 to 2024 Performance Report (Quarter two)
3. Internal Audit Mid-Year Progress Report (2023 to 2024)
4. Treasury Management Report (September 2023)
5. Work Programme Update

A separate report is included on the Cabinet agenda for Item 4 above.

## 2. Proposals within this report

2.1 **Delivering a Sustainable Medium-Term Budget (Report number: PAS/WS/23/023)**

2.1.1 The Committee received the above report, which informed Members at this stage on the approach and timescales for the 2024 to 2025 budget setting process and the medium-term financial strategy. The report set out the context to the 2024 to 2025 budget process; key budget assumptions; the 2024 to 2028 budget plans and proposed approach and timescales.

2.1.2 At the February 2023 Council meeting, the Budget and Council Tax Setting: 2023 to 2024 and Medium-Term Financial Strategy 2023 to 2027, Report number ([COU/WS/23/003](#)) set out the indicative financial plan to 2027. This indicative plan set a balanced budget for 2023 to 2024 and 2024 to 2025 but included the following initiative budget gaps (which will be reviewed as part of this 2024 to 2025 budget process) in the subsequent years:

	<b>2024 to 2025</b>	<b>2025 to 2026</b>	<b>2026 to 2027</b>
Budget Gap	£0.00m	£2.67m	£3.69m

2.1.3 Further reports including updates on assumptions, proposals to support the 2024 to 2028 Strategic Direction and Priorities and anticipated savings and initiatives needed to deliver a sustainable and balanced budget for 2024 to 2025 will be presented to the Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee at its January 2024 meeting.

2.1.4 The Committee considered the report, the approach and timescales for the 2024 to 2025 budget setting process and the medium-term plans.

2.1.5 Specifically, discussions were held on the lack of detail contained in the report. The Cabinet Member for Resources stated that at this stage the report, which was not dissimilar to previous years reporting, was only

setting out at this stage the process and the approach being taken. The detail was currently being worked through, for example new initiatives; fee structures, government settlement etc. All the supporting evidence and information would be available for the Committee to fully scrutinise in detail at its meeting in January 2024.

2.1.6 There being no decision required at this stage of the budget process, the Committee **noted** the contents of the report.

2.2 **2023 to 2024 Performance Report (Quarter two) (Report number: PAS/WS/23/024)**

2.2.1 The Cabinet Member for Resources presented Report number PAS/WS/23/024, which set out the quarter two performance and the forecast 2023 to 2024 revenue and capital position. The report included updates under the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) on the cost of living; strategic housing; water consumption; fuel usage; waste and footfall monitoring.

2.2.2 The Cabinet Member then highlighted a number of KPIs where there has been a sharp increase or decrease; a change over a number of months; or a change on a previous year, both positive and negative, being:

Car parking	There has been a year-on-year increase, meaning more activity in the town centres, however levels are still below pre-pandemic levels.
NEETs	This is an annual figure, the first since last September. There has been a concerning increase compared to previous years, for example more young people going into poor quality employment.
Amount of debt over 90 days old	This has decreased due to a commercial property payment which is positive news.
Solar installations	The Council is already at 950 kWh capacity compared to last year, being 285 kWh which is positive news in terms of environmental performance.
Abbeycroft memberships	Membership figures are continuing to increase, which again is positive as more people use Abbeycroft’s facilities and become more active.

- 2.2.2 Attached to the Quarter two performance and forecast revenue and capital position for 2023 to 2024 were a number of appendices as follows:
- Appendix A: Key Performance Indicator Dashboards
  - Appendix B: Income and expenditure report
  - Appendix C: Capital programme
  - Appendix D: Earmarked reserves
  - Appendix E: Strategic risk register
  - Exempt Appendix F: Aged debt over 90 days
- 2.2.3 The Cabinet Member for Resources then presented the financial element of the report and explained from a financial perspective the forecast year-end outturn as at quarter two showed a small overall deficit position of £37,000. This deficit includes the release of the planned general fund budget of £0.8 million. The general fund remains at the £5 million policy level and officers are continuing to review the position as the year progresses in order to maintain the general fund at the stated policy level.
- 2.2.4 There are a number of variances to the budget, many of which were report to the Committee at its July 2023 meeting, including the impact of the agreed pay award; improved business rate income expectations; ongoing inflationary pressures, such as utility costs and an improving forecast for car parking and trade waste income.
- 2.2.5 The Committee considered the report in detail and asked a number of questions to which responses were provided. In particular, detailed discussions were held on why footfall was monitored in Newmarket and Bury St Edmunds and not in other towns across West Suffolk. Some members suggested footfall comparisons should be done on what is available in the towns and that caution should be used when making comparisons. It was further suggested including a comparison of town centre footfall to the growth of retail parks.
- 2.2.6 In response to a question raised on the cancellation of the Western Way Development and what the saving was to residents, the Cabinet Member for Resources agreed to provide a written response.
- 2.2.7 In response to a question raised on the KPI on why the use of red diesel had not reduced considering the rules around the eligibility of its usage had changed in December 2021, the Cabinet Member for Resources agreed to provide a written response.
- 2.2.8 In response to a question raised on how much planning appeals are costing the Council, it was agreed this could be included as a new KPI, and the Office of Local Government (Oflog) was also looking into planning appeals.
- 2.2.9 In response to a question raised on the KPI for universal credit the Committee suggested it would be helpful for members to have the

information available for each town. Officers agreed to look into this further as to whether the information could be broken down by town.

2.2.10 In response to a question raised on the KPI for the number of car parking events, the Committee suggested it would be helpful to members to have the information broken down by town. Officers confirmed the information was available and would look to include this in future reporting.

2.2.11 In considering Appendix E, the strategic risk register the Committee felt there were too many red risk/high impact areas and insufficient evidence/suggested actions provided. In response, officers agreed to look at reviewing the risk register.

2.2.12 At the conclusion of the discussions, the Committee **noted** the forecast 2023 to 2024 revenue and capital positions as detailed in Report number PAS/WS/23/024 and attached appendices and KPIs subject to the above comments made.

### 2.3 **Internal Audit Mid-Year Progress Report (Report number: PAS/WS/23/025)**

2.3.1 The Committee received and **noted** report number PAS/WS/23/025, which updated members on progress made against internal audit's 2023 to 2024 work plan approved by the Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee in June 2023 and provided a flavour of the work undertaken in the year to date. Attached at Appendix A to the report was the Mid-year Internal Audit progress report 2023 to 2024.

2.3.2 Based on the work completed to date it is considered that in general the control environment has continued to be robust, with the audit opinions issued within the period being "good" or "reasonable." However, there are areas where further improvements can be made. In particular, the Council was subject to a supplier bank mandate fraud within the period covered in the report at paragraphs 5.14 to 5.19. The Finance Team has confirmed that existing controls have been reinforced in this area as well as additional controls introduced as set out in paragraph 5.19 of the report.

2.3.3 The Committee considered the report and asked questions, to which responses were provided. Specifically, discussions were held on fraud and questioned what the total fraud figure was to the Council to which the Cabinet Member for Resources advised was just under £52,000.

### 2.4 **Work programme update (Report number: PAS/WS/23/026)**

2.4.1 The Committee received and **noted** Report number PAS/WS/23/026, which provided information on the current status of its forward work programme for 2024.

### **3. Alternative options that have been considered**

3.1 Please see background papers.

### **4. Consultation and engagement undertaken**

4.1 Please see background papers.

### **5. Risks associated with the proposals**

5.1 Please see background papers.

### **6. Implications arising from the proposals**

6.1 Financial – Please see background papers.

6.2 Equalities – Please see background papers.

### **7. Appendices referenced in this report**

7.1 Please see background papers.

### **8. Background documents associated with this report**

8.1 Report number: [PAS/WS/23/023](#) and [Appendix A](#) to the Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee: Delivering a Sustainable Medium-Term Budget

8.2 Report number: [PAS/WS/23/024](#) and [Appendix A](#), [Appendix B](#), [Appendix C](#), [Appendix D](#) and [Appendix E](#) to the Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee: 2023 to 2024 Performance Report (Quarter 2)

8.3 Report number: [PAS/WS/23/025](#) and [Appendix A](#) to the Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee: Internal Audit Mid-Year Progress Report (2023 to 2024)

8.4 Report number: [PAS/WS/23/026](#) and [Appendix 1](#) to the Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee: Work Programme Update



# Recommendations of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee: 9 November 2023: Abbeycroft Leisure Strategic Partnership

<b>Report number:</b>	<b>CAB/WS/23/054</b>	
<b>Report to and date:</b>	<b>Cabinet</b>	5 December 2023
<b>Cabinet members:</b>	Councillor Ian Shipp Cabinet Member for Leisure Tel: 07368 134769 Email: <a href="mailto:ian.shipp@westsuffolk.gov.uk">ian.shipp@westsuffolk.gov.uk</a>	
<b>Lead officers:</b>	Jill Korwin Strategic Director Tel: 01284 757252 Email: <a href="mailto:jill.korwin@westsuffolk.gov.uk">jill.korwin@westsuffolk.gov.uk</a>  Darren Dixon Service Manager (Leisure and Facilities) Tel: 01284 757678 Email: <a href="mailto:darren.dixon@westsuffolk.gov.uk">darren.dixon@westsuffolk.gov.uk</a>	

**Decisions Plan:**

**The decisions made as a result of this report will usually be published within 48 hours and cannot be actioned until five clear working days of the publication of the decision have elapsed. This item is included on the Decisions Plan.**

**Wards impacted:** All wards

**Recommendation:** It is recommended that Cabinet approves:

- 1. Officers be instructed to update the Collaboration Agreement between Abbeycroft Leisure and West Suffolk Council noting no fundamental revisions are required on the principles of the current agreement. However, some technical changes may be required and the approach to health funding which is currently dealt with through side letters should be clarified.**
- 2. Cabinet requests Abbeycroft and West Suffolk Council to work collaboratively to promote the activities and programmes delivered at the leisure centres, ensuring residents are aware of what they deliver and provide (which can be reflected in further revisions to the Collaboration Agreement).**
- 3. Cabinet and officers work with providers and partners to secure additional long-term and sustainable external funding streams (particularly on health improvement interventions).**
- 4. Cabinet asks officers to explore further capital investment in the leisure offer and facility mix across the leisure centre sites through business cases where appropriate to provide outcomes and financial benefits through invest to save/earn initiatives with Abbeycroft.**
- 5. Subject to the outcome of the condition surveys of each Leisure Centre, Cabinet to consider the extension of the Council's Net Zero Fund as part of the 2024 to 2025 budget development process to include a programme of improvements (where appropriate and where they meet the outcomes of the fund) to upgrade and improve the facilities to maximise energy efficiency, support Net Zero and carbon reduction targets, and extend the life span of the facilities.**

Continued.....

- 6. As part of the 2024 to 2025 West Suffolk Council budget development, consideration should also be given to whether the extraordinary utility support grant should be continued and phased out in the short-term (linked to market expectations around utility costs).**

## **1. Context to this report**

- 1.1 The Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 20 July 2023, resolved to establish the Abbeycroft Leisure Strategic Partnership Task and Finish Group (the Group) to:
- review the Council’s partnership with Abbeycroft Leisure between 2019 and 2023 against the current Collaboration Agreement between the two organisations; and
  - review the current Collaboration Agreement outcomes.
- 1.2 The Group comprised five councillors, namely Councillors Peter Armitage, Sarah Broughton, Rowena Lindberg, Andy Neal and Marion Rushbrook. The Group met on two occasions. At its first meeting on 20 September 2023 the Group elected Councillor Marion Rushbrook as Chair and discussed and agreed the approach to the review and member leads on key lines of enquiry. The last meeting was held on 24 October 2023 when the Group considered its findings.
- 1.3 Between meetings, members of the Group attended the Abbeycroft Leisure’s launch of its annual report on 28 September 2023 and toured the Bury St Edmunds Leisure Centre; all leisure centres were visited and task group members held various meetings during October with Abbeycroft Leisure’s Chief Executive; senior staff and trustees of the Abbeycroft Board; and the Deputy Director of Integration (West Suffolk Alliance). The meetings explored a range of issues including working in partnership with health and financial performance.

## **2. Members approach to the review**

- 2.1 The Group agreed to focus on six key lines of enquiry in the review:
- a. To review the current Collaboration Agreement between Abbeycroft Leisure and West Suffolk Council and its shared objectives to ensure it optimises delivery, outcomes, efficiency and financial performance.
  - b. To review the performance of Abbeycroft against the envisaged outcomes in the Agreement for the period 2019 to 2023.
  - c. To review the financial performance of Abbeycroft against the agreed management fee reduction plan and examine the impact of the support West Suffolk Council (the Council) provided Abbeycroft during and post-Covid.
  - d. To review the health and community outcomes of Abbeycroft’s work, and alignment to the Council’s objectives and opportunities to develop this further.

- e. To consider the impact of the Council’s Leisure Investment Fund against the approved business cases including its impact on the management fee which the Council paid Abbeycroft (which has now reached zero).
- f. To consider a number of extraordinary factors which have impacted the leisure industry from closures due to Covid, its role in recovery and the energy crisis and inflation and the wide performance of public sector leisure in this time.

### **3. Proposed recommendations to Cabinet**

3.1 The Group was asked to make recommendations to feed into the planned review of the current Collaboration and Funding Agreement between West Suffolk Council and Abbeycroft Leisure which was finalised in 2019 (and covers the period 2017 to 2032 with scope to extend for two further five-year periods). The agreement provides for the delivery of common objectives by reference to service outcomes and operates on an open book basis with quarterly reviews overseen by the Cabinet Member for Leisure.

3.2 The Group felt that from their findings set out in Report number [OAS/WS/23/019](#), Abbeycroft was strongly compliant with the existing Collaboration Agreement and demonstrated they had optimised delivery, outcomes, efficiency and financial performance in challenging conditions. It also noted the strength of the partnership between the Council and Abbeycroft and the way in which they had worked together to address challenges, particularly through Covid and in response to the energy crisis.

#### **Recommendation one**

Officers be instructed to update the Collaboration Agreement noting no fundamental revisions are required on the principles of the current agreement. However, the Group noted some technical changes may be required and the approach to health funding which is currently dealt with through side letters should be clarified.

#### **Recommendation two**

Cabinet request Abbeycroft and West Suffolk Council to work collaboratively to promote the activities and programmes delivered at the leisure centres, ensuring residents are aware of what they deliver and provide (which can be reflected in further revisions to the Collaboration agreement).

#### **Recommendation three**

Cabinet and officers work with providers and partners to secure additional long-term and sustainable external funding streams (particularly on health improvement interventions)

#### **Recommendation four**

Cabinet asks officers to explore further capital investment in the leisure offer and facility mix across the leisure centre sites through business cases where appropriate to provide outcomes and financial benefits through invest to save/earn initiatives with Abbeycroft.

#### **Recommendation five**

Subject to the outcome of the condition surveys of each Leisure Centre, Cabinet to consider the extension of the Councils Net Zero Fund as part the 2024 to 2025 budget development process, to include a programme of improvements (where appropriate and where the meet the outcomes of the fund) to upgrade and improve the facilities to maximise energy efficiency, support Net Zero and carbon reduction targets, and extend the life span of the facilities.

#### **Recommendation six**

As part of the 2024 to 2025 West Suffolk Council budget development, consideration should also be given to whether the extraordinary utility support grant should be continued and phased out in the short term (linked to market expectations around utility costs).

### **4. Overview and Scrutiny Committee: 9 November 2023**

- 4.1 The Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 9 November 2023 scrutinised Report number [OAS/WS/23/019](#) in detail, presented by the Chair of the Task and Finish Group and asked questions to which comprehensive responses were provided. In particular discussions were held on what was specifically available for residents in rural areas and membership recovery following covid.
- 4.2 The Committee then discussed **Exempt Appendix 1** and went into 'private' session to discuss this in more detail.
- 4.3 At the conclusion of the Committee's consideration of the report and vote, the Committee recommended, with no amendments, that Cabinet approves the recommendations as set out in section 3 above, and which are also set out on page two of this report.

### **5. Alternative options that been considered**

- 5.1 The Group was not asked to look at alternative delivery options other than changes to the Collaboration and Funding Agreement.

## **6. Consultation and engagement undertaken**

6.1 The Group sought comments from Councillors and user consultation undertaken by Abbeycroft.

## **7. Risk associated with the proposals**

7.1 No identified risks associated with the proposals.

## **8. Implications arising from the review**

8.1 Financial – No change to existing arrangement; any additional investment would be subject to separate business cases or reports.

8.2 Legal compliance – No legal compliance issues identified.

8.3 Personal data processing – No issues identified.

8.4 Equalities – Opportunities to increase access and additional programmes for SEND children and young people.

8.5 Crime and disorder – No issues identified.

8.6 Safeguarding – No issues identified.

8.7 Environment or sustainability – No issues identified.

8.8 HR or staffing – No issues identified.

8.9 Changes to existing policies – None identified.

8.10 External organisations (such as businesses, community groups) – No issues, only identification of the importance of partnership working.

## **9. Appendices referenced in this report**

9.1 **EXEMPT Appendix 1** – Abbeycroft Overview October 2023 –  
**Confidential**

## **10. Background documents associated with this report**

10.1 [Accounts and annual returns, ABBEYCROFT LEISURE - 1117138, Register of Charities - The Charity Commission](#)

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# Recommendation of the Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee: 23 November 2023: Treasury Management Report (September 2023)

<b>Report number:</b>	<b>CAB/WS/23/055</b>	
<b>Report to and dates</b>	<b>Cabinet</b>	5 December 2023
	<b>Council</b>	19 December 2023
<b>Cabinet member:</b>	Councillor Diane Hind Portfolio Holder for Resources Email: <a href="mailto:diane.hind@westsuffolk.gov.uk">diane.hind@westsuffolk.gov.uk</a>	
<b>Chair of the Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee</b>	Councillor Peter Armitage Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee Email: <a href="mailto:peter.armitage@westsuffolk.gov.uk">peter.armitage@westsuffolk.gov.uk</a>	
<b>Lead officer:</b>	Rachael Mann Director (Resources and Property) Telephone: 01638 719245 Email: <a href="mailto:rachael.mann@westsuffolk.gov.uk">rachael.mann@westsuffolk.gov.uk</a>	

**Decisions Plan:** This item is included in the Decisions Plan.

**Wards impacted:** All wards.

**Recommendation:** That subject to the approval of Council, the Treasury Management Report (September 2023), as contained in Report number: [FRS/WS/23/005](#), be approved.

## **1. Context to this report**

### **1.1 Investment Activity: 1 April 2023 to 30 September 2023**

Following the Financial Resilience Sub-Committee's consideration of report number [FRS/WS/23/005](#) on 13 November 2023 the Committee received a verbal report on the Sub-Committee's consideration of the report.

1.2 The Council held £54,500.000 of investments as of 30 September 2023. Interest receivable in the first half of the financial year amounted to £1,271,924.94 against a budget for the period of £357,500. This has created a budgetary surplus of £914,424.94 due to two main reasons;

- the Council holding higher levels of cash balances than anticipated; and
- the rising Bank of England base rate having a knock-on effect on investment returns.

1.3 External borrowing as of 30 September 2023 was £9,625,000 a reduction of £125,000 from 1 April 2023 which relates to the repayment plan for the recent PWLB £10 million 40-year loan), with the Council's level of internal borrowing increasing slightly to £48,028,084 as of 30 September 2023. The overall borrowing total of both external and internal is expected to increase over the full financial year.

1.4 The Sub-Committee scrutinised the investment activity for 1 April 2023 to 30 September 2023, at its meeting on 13 November 2023 and asked questions to which responses were provided.

1.5 The Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee on 23 November 2023 scrutinised the report. Detailed discussions were held on Arlingclose, the Council's external treasury advisors. The Committee questioned the advice they provided to the Council; specifically, around what the cost of Arlingclose was to the Council; the length of the contract and whether a procurement exercise is carried out to appoint external advisors. In response the Cabinet Member for Resources would provide a written response on the length of the contract and the cost to the Council.

1.6 The Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee has put forward recommendations as set out on page one of this report.

## **2. Alternative options that have been considered**

2.1 Not applicable.

**3. Consultation and engagement undertaken**

3.1 Not applicable.

**4. Risks associated with the proposals**

4.1 Not applicable.

**5. Implications arising from the proposals**

5.1 Financial: See report number: [FRS/WS/23/005](#)

**6. Appendices referenced in this report**

6.1 None

**7. Background documents associated with this report**

7.1 Report number: [FRS/WS/23/005](#)

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# West Suffolk Local Plan Publication (Regulation 19) Consultation and Submission

<b>Report number:</b>	<b>CAB/WS/23/056</b>	
<b>Report to and dates:</b>	<b>Cabinet</b>	5 December 2023
	<b>Council</b>	19 December 2023
<b>Cabinet member:</b>	Jim Thorndyke Portfolio Holder for Planning Tel: 01359 250271 Email: <a href="mailto:jim.thorndyke@westsuffolk.gov.uk">jim.thorndyke@westsuffolk.gov.uk</a>	
<b>Lead officer:</b>	Marie Smith Service Manager (Planning Strategy) Tel: 01638 719260 Email: <a href="mailto:marie.smith@westsuffolk.gov.uk">marie.smith@westsuffolk.gov.uk</a>	

**Decisions Plan:**                    **The decision made as a result of this report will usually be published within 48 hours. This item will be referred to Council for a final decision and is, therefore, not subject to call-in. This item is included on the Decisions Plan.**

**Wards impacted:**                    **All wards**

**Recommendations:**     **It is recommended that subject to the approval of Council:**

- 1.       The West Suffolk Local Plan Proposed Submission (Regulation 19) document (Appendix A to Report number: CAB/WS/23/056)**

**together with supporting documents be approved for public consultation and its subsequent submission to the Secretary of State for the purposes of independent examination.**

- 2.       Delegated authority be given to the Director (Planning and Growth), in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Planning to make any presentational improvements or minor non-material consequential changes to the document as necessary prior to the consultation commencing.**

- 3.       Delegated authority be given to the Director (Planning and Growth), in consultation with the Portfolio Holder the ability to agree and consult upon a set of proposed modifications during the examination process (most likely at the very end of the examination process), if asked by the Inspector to do so.**

## **1. Context to this report**

- 1.1 This report is seeking approval of the Proposed Submission Local Plan and Policies Map, so that the Local Plan can be subject to its final round of consultation (scheduled for 30 January 2024 – 5 March 2024); and seek approval, post consultation, to submit the Local Plan to the Secretary of State for the purpose of independent examination.
- 1.2 The preparation of the new West Suffolk Local Plan has involved two stages of public consultation and continues to make good progress reaching this very important stage – the Regulation 19 Proposed Submission Consultation.
- 1.3 The version of the plan included at Appendix A is the plan that is proposed to be submitted to the Secretary of State for independent examination. Prior to this, the plan must be subject to a public consultation allowing anyone an opportunity to comment on the proposals in the plan. After this consultation all responses received will be sent, alongside the Local Plan and Policies Map and the wider evidence base to the Planning Inspectorate for its examination in public.
- 1.4 Therefore, if Cabinet recommends the attached plan to Council on 19 December 2023 for approval, it is stating that it considers the Local Plan to be both final and sound and that, subject to the outcome of the independent examination, it intends to adopt the Local Plan as presented today.
- 1.5 This final Regulation 19 consultation will be focused on the whether it is a 'legally compliant' and 'sound' document. This is a technical consultation which will ask the public and stakeholders specific questions required by the Planning Inspectorate and requires that representations consider whether the tests of soundness have been met.

## **2. Proposals within this report**

- 2.1 The proposed submission Local Plan has been prepared using the existing suite of adopted Local Plans as a starting point. A significant amount of evidence has been developed to ensure that the policies within the plan form a sound basis for managing development and making decisions in West Suffolk.
- 2.2 This process has been underpinned by all member workshops, informal Cabinet meetings and a robust and ongoing Local Plan Working Group of whom provided officers with a clear vision for what the plan needs to achieve for West Suffolk.

- 2.3 The plan is a direct product of this member engagement which has produced a draft local plan which is legally sound, justified and deliverable.
- 2.4 The two main stages of consultation undertaken in 2020 and 2022 have offered the opportunity for the public, the development industry, and other stakeholders to comment on and help shape the local plan, raising a number of key issues and opportunities that needed to be taken into account.
- 2.5 This is also balanced with the evidence base prepared to inform policy preparation and the legal context which the local plan sits within.
- 2.6 The Plan will ultimately replace the existing suite of local plans and includes new policies in order to respond to our community needs.
- 2.7 This Plan is allocating 5,343 homes and 84 ha of employment land.

Key policies include:

**Climate Change:** At the start of the document, having declared an environment and climate change emergency the Council's draft local plan includes policies requiring sustainable construction with a fabric first approach to achieve carbon reduction through energy efficiency and photovoltaic panels on all roofs where practically possible.

**Health and Well Being:** Land Use planning plays an important role in the health and wellbeing of our communities. A new policy linking the design and delivery of homes to health and wellbeing sets out the council's intention to deliver growth for the benefit of people.

**Housing for our communities:** Increasing the current requirement of 30 percent affordable homes to 40 percent affordable housing on greenfield sites to deliver much needed homes for our communities.

**Environment:** The draft Local Plan is protecting and enhancing the built and natural environment through protection and enhancement policies for biodiversity and landscape.

### **3. Alternative options that have been considered**

- 3.1 The alternative option would be to not progress a new local plan or delay preparation and consultation. This would leave the Council at risk of unplanned, speculative development. As the Government requires West Suffolk to have an up-to-date plan in place, to not progress a local plan in a timely manner would be reputationally damaging and lead to Government intervention to produce a local plan for the district council and remove local decision making. See section 5 below.



- 3.2 The Preferred Options Local Plan document itself considered reasonable alternatives and provided reasons why policy and site options that were consulted on in the previous Issues and Options consultation had not been taken forward. The consultation also included a new 'call for sites' which provided alternative options for the Council to consider.
- 3.3 In assembling the proposed submission local plan, 16 West Suffolk Local Plan Working Group meetings were held. The working group reviewed comments received to the previous consultation, national guidance requirements, emerging evidence outcomes and provided a range of thoughts to prepare policy wording and identify sites for allocation and reasons for omission. These meetings were to ensure that the preparation of the councils document was led by councillors across political groups and a much as possible a balance of geographical representation. These meetings fed into the production of the final consultation document (Appendix A).

#### 4. Consultation and engagement undertaken

- 4.1 The Local Plan has been developed with two prior stages of consultation – the Regulation 18 Issues and Options in October 2020 and the Regulation 18 Preferred Options consultation in July 2022. These consultations were held in accordance with the adopted Statement of Community Involvement and have informed the development of the plan.
- 4.2 This consultation is technical consultation with specific set questions focussing on the whether the plan is a 'legally compliant' and 'sound'. The consultation will ask the public and stakeholders specific questions required by the Planning Inspectorate and requires that representations consider whether the tests of soundness have been met and changes required to the document which would enable the document to be sound.
- 4.3 Details of the Regulation 19 consultation include:
- **Branding** - Branding, tone and style will be consistent with that of previous consultations.
  - **Virtual** - Exhibition, with display boards, an information table, video and feedback console
  - **Materials** - Alongside the virtual exhibition. Information will be available in deposit points. This will include posters and business cards to inform residents the ways in which they can respond with a QR code and weblink to virtual exhibition.

- **Targeted consultation pack** – for members and parish councils to enable proper signposting and ensure signposting and clarity.
- **In person drop-in events** – These will be focussed on signposting and advising on how to submit a representation given the stage of plan preparation.
- **Materials** - Posters available in libraries and sports centres and a range of other suitable organisations.
- **Social media and media** – media adverts running weekly. Videos, Images. Pod Casts etc.

## 5. Risks associated with the proposals

- 5.1 Failure to proceed in a timely manner with the preparation of the new Local Plan through to adoption will leave the authority with a dated local plan, leading to less control over development across the district. West Suffolk would be at high risk of speculative, unsuitable, uncontrolled development. Development and infrastructure needs would be determined on a case-by-case basis rather than a strategically planned approach.
- 5.2 The option not to progress a new local plan would also leave the Council open to reputational damage and likely Government intervention to produce a local plan for the district council. The Council may be left with no control local decision making until the Local Plan is completed.
- 5.3 Lastly, failure to progress a West Suffolk Local Plan would be contrary to the consequential orders signed in April 2019 where a clause of the agreement was for the newly formed West Suffolk to prepare and adopt a Local Plan within five years.

## 6. Implications arising from the proposals

### 6.1 Financial

The Local Plan will be progressed to this point in the process using the existing Local Plan budget.

The budget for evidence preparation has been in line with those projected at the start of the Local Plan process.

However, following a review of recent examinations and insight from other local plan examination costs we are increasing our budget for Inspector fees and legal costs for 2024/2025 by £206,000. This is an

estimate at this time with the actual cost of the examination process confirmed when the local plan is adopted.

The Local Plan itself includes policies that will require additional resource to deliver. These relate to ecology and design and further work will be undertaken to determine the scale of resource and will be included in the future budget processes.

## 6.2 **Legal compliance**

The West Suffolk Local Plan is a statutory development plan. Local Plans are prepared under the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012. The Proposed Submission publication is prepared in accordance with Regulation 19.

## 6.3 **Personal data processing**

Planning Policies consultation system is considered to be General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) compliant.

## 6.4 **Equalities**

An Equalities Impact Assessment has been prepared and the consultation and engagement programme recognise that community engagement with all sectors of society is important if we are to prepare an inclusive and forward-thinking local plan.

## 6.5 **Crime and disorder**

The Suffolk Police Force and the Suffolk Police Architectural Liaison Officer were formally consulted at the Issues and Options and Preferred Options consultation. Following feedback further engagement was undertaken and policy wording has been amended as a result.

## 6.6 **Environment or sustainability**

The Local Plan plays a central role in terms of supporting the West Suffolk Climate and Environment Emergency themes of creating energy efficient new buildings and protecting and enhancing the natural environment. The Local Plan includes such policies with supporting evidence.

A Sustainability Appraisal has been prepared at each stage of the Local Plan process which has informed the preparation of the Proposed Submission Local Plan.

## 6.7 **HR or staffing**

It is a Planning Inspectorate requirement for the applicable planning authority to appoint a 'Programme Officer' to assist the examination process, and such an officer must be independent of the team of officers responsible for preparing the Plan.

The appointed Programme Officer will commence work before the plan is submitted, and costs will be met from the existing Local Plan budget.

## 6.8 **Changes to existing policies**

This is the final consultation in preparing a new local plan for West Suffolk. Once adopted the new plan and its policies will replace those in the existing development plan for West Suffolk.

The newly adopted local plan will form the West Suffolk Council development plan alongside any made neighbourhood plans.

## 6.9 **External organisations (such as businesses, community groups)**

Views and comments were submitted at both the two previous stages of the plan's preparation.

All responses to the preferred options consultation can be viewed on the planning policy online consultation portal. These helped inform the preparation of this submission draft of the plan.

## 7. **Appendices referenced in this report**

- 7.1 Appendix A - West Suffolk Local Plan Proposed Submission (Regulation 19) document. Due to the length of this document is not attached in printed form and is available to view on the Council's website at: [Agenda for Cabinet on Tuesday 5 December 2023, 6.00 pm \(westsuffolk.gov.uk\)](#). Paper copies are available for members upon request.

## 8. **Background documents associated with this report**

- 8.1 Report number: [CAB/WS/20/057](#) West Suffolk Local Plan Draft Issues and Options documents – approval for public consultation
- 8.2 Report number: [COU/WS/22/010](#) West Suffolk Local Plan: Preferred Options consultation

# West Suffolk Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme (LCTRS) 2024 to 2025

<b>Report number:</b>	<b>CAB/WS/23/057</b>	
<b>Report to and dates:</b>	<b>Cabinet</b>	5 December 2023
	<b>Council</b>	19 December 2023
<b>Cabinet member:</b>	Councillor Diane Hind Portfolio Holder for Resources Email: <a href="mailto:diane.hind@westsuffolk.gov.uk">diane.hind@westsuffolk.gov.uk</a>	
<b>Lead officer:</b>	Rachael Mann Director (Resources and Property) Telephone: 01638 719245 Email: <a href="mailto:rachael.mann@westsuffolk.gov.uk">rachael.mann@westsuffolk.gov.uk</a>	
	Adrian Mills Head of Anglia Revenues Partnership Telephone: 07984 255437 Email: <a href="mailto:adrian.mills@angliarevenues.gov.uk">adrian.mills@angliarevenues.gov.uk</a>	

**Decisions Plan:**

**The decision made as a result of this report will usually be published within 48 hours. This item will be referred to Council for a final decision and is, therefore, not subject to call-in. This item is included on the Decisions Plan.**

**Wards impacted: All wards**

**Recommendation: It is recommended that Cabinet:**

- 1. Reviews the Local Council Tax Reduction (LCTRS) Scheme for 2023 to 2024 as outlined in this report.**
- 2. Agrees to recommend to Council to make the changes to the Scheme outlined in section 2 of Report number CAB/WS/23/057 and that the maximum discount change only relates to 2024 to 2025, in line with the recent consultation.**

## 1. Context to this report

- 1.1 Each year the Council is required to review its Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme (LCTRS). This report provides an annual review of the 2023 to 2024 scheme and proposes to make changes to the scheme for 2024 to 2025.
- 1.2 We are now in the eleventh year of LCTRS; a locally set scheme that replaced the previous nationally set Council Tax Benefit (CTB) scheme from April 2013.
- 1.3 In 2013 to 2014 the Council took advantage of a one-off Government grant that compensated in part for the reduction in Government funding for the working age scheme that year. This meant that the maximum LCTRS awarded was the 91.5 per cent.
- 1.4 Since then, the West Suffolk scheme has developed in the following way:

2014 to 2018	Original scheme retained, except that allowances and premiums (the amounts of income from state-administered benefits such as Job Seekers' Allowance) were increased in line with other benefits such as Housing Benefit.
2018 to 2019	The Council consulted on a proposal to harmonise the scheme with Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) welfare reforms introduced for Housing Benefit and LCTRS for pensioners and introduced closer links to Universal Credit data share for claims, thereby removing the requirement to make a separate claim. This was subsequently approved and introduced.
2019 to 2020	2018 to 2019 scheme retained.
2020-21	Introduction of a fluctuating earnings rule to the treatment of Universal Credit (UC). A weekly tolerance level of £15 (£65 monthly) was introduced to reduce the number of monthly reassessments impacting customers every time a revised Universal Credit notification was received.
2021 to 2022	2020 to 2021 scheme retained

2022 to 2023	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Reduction in the threshold for how much capital a customer can own (for example, savings) and still be entitled to a Council Tax reduction</li> <li>2. Establishment of a fixed deduction for Council Tax payers in relation to non-dependent adult friends or family members</li> <li>3. Simplification of the application processes for Universal Credit and for Local Council Tax Reduction</li> <li>4. Amendment of the tolerance level introduced in 2020 to 2021 to £100</li> </ol>
2023 to 2024	The maximum reduction on Council Tax was increased from 91.5 per cent to 100 per cent.

- 1.5 Councils are required to review their LCTRS schemes annually and consider whether any changes need to be made. Where it is determined to retain the existing scheme, this must be decided by 11 March of the preceding financial year.
- 1.6 Where councils decide that they wish to amend their schemes they need to consult preceptors and stakeholders prior to a wider consultation to inform a final scheme design by 28 February of the preceding financial year.
- 1.7 The current West Suffolk Working Age LCTRS scheme provides a maximum benefit of 100 per cent for working age claimants and the scheme also fully protects war pensioners. The aim in designing the scheme was to achieve a balance in charging an amount of Council Tax to encourage customers back into work whilst setting the amount charged at an affordable and recoverable level during the year.
- 1.8 West Suffolk Council proposes to extend the 100 per cent reduction for the LCTRS for 2024 to 2025. This would be for one year only and designed to support low-income working age residents, in light of the current pressures on the cost of living. This proposal are set out in section 2 of this report.
- 1.9 A Portfolio Holder decision was taken on 13 September 2023 to consult on the proposals. The consultation ran from 2 October to 30 October 2023. Major preceptors and stakeholders have responded, and the responses received and the key points raised are covered in section 4.



## 2. Proposals

2.1 It is proposed for the West Suffolk Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme that **the maximum reduction on Council Tax paid of 100 per cent should be extended for a further 12 months.** This should take effect from 1 April 2024 (and last for one year only). This would be a means tested scheme.

2.2 The background to the proposed changes is as follows:

1. This is part of an initiative to help those residents in financial hardship in light of the current cost of living crisis.
2. Many councils across Cambridgeshire, Suffolk and Norfolk implemented 100 per cent schemes last year to help mitigate rising costs living costs for customers. While many councils, including East Suffolk and other ARP partners, have yet to make a decision on whether or not to extend, Norwich City Council and all three SRP councils do offer a maximum 100 per cent CTRS reduction scheme.
3. In Suffolk, the proposals would help support Suffolk County Council's Tackling Poverty Action Plan by maximising residents' financial resilience.
4. The proposal is very well targeted as it will reach those who are already on means tested benefits and has low administrative costs
5. The impact on household budgets must also be considered, we would expect the impact of higher costs to affect individuals' ability to pay into the 2024 to 2025 financial year.
6. The aim is that by providing additional support to customers it could help avoid crisis situations, for example, homelessness and lead to fewer applications for Exceptional Hardship Payments from those in receipt of council tax support.
7. This proposal is a short-term measure, extended for the financial year 2024 to 2025. After this period West Suffolk Council's LCTRS Scheme would revert to the current 8.5 per cent contribution rate as set out in the recent consultation.

2.3 Separate from these proposals, the figures used in the calculation of how much a Council Tax payer needs to live on (known as the applicable amounts) will be automatically increased in 2024 to 2025 in line with Government policy. This will enable a number of new residents to claim Council Tax support for the first time.

## 3. Alternative options that have been considered

3.1 If this extension is not agreed, the maximum Council Tax reduction will revert to 91.5 per cent.

- 3.2 The recommended option has been selected because it maximises the benefit to customers while minimising the administrative resources required to collect small payments.

## 4. Consultation and engagement undertaken

- 4.1 A short consultation exercise took place from 2 October to 30 October 2023.
- 4.2 The consultation took the form of an online survey, asking stakeholders for their views on the proposals and any unforeseen impacts. The link to the survey was sent to all councillors; made available on the council and ARP websites; and sent to stakeholders working with individuals who are likely to be affected by the proposals or who represent residents with a protected characteristic, for example, CAB, debt and money management services and local disability groups. The survey was published on social media and sent to the press. Major preceptors and Town and Parish Councils were consulted on the proposals separately by email.
- 4.3 Responses were received from major preceptors (Suffolk County Council and Suffolk Police), who said they welcomed initiatives to support communities in Suffolk and supported the principles of the Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme proposal. Suffolk County Council confirmed their support for the implementation of the changes however Suffolk Police didn't support the proposal as they raised concerns regarding the financial impact on them as a precepting authority.
- 4.4 One consultation response was received directly from Haverhill Town Council. Although they support the principles of the LCTRS proposal, they believe there is inequity in the proposal because of its impact on those town and parishes that have a higher proportion of LCTRS claimants. Haverhill Town Council would like West Suffolk Council to calculate a 'reasonable support grant' funded by West Suffolk Council to provide to town and parish councils so 'each household pays a very small contribution towards supporting West Suffolk residents, no matter where they live'. The basis for which the tax base is calculated (see separate report on this matter elsewhere on this agenda) includes a number of factors, discounts and exemptions. The number claiming LCTRS is just one of those, single person discount is just one of the other examples. To devise a support grant scheme would be extremely complex if all circumstances (to be equitable to all) that relate to discounts and exemptions on council tax were considered. This proposal is therefore considered undeliverable given the complexities over how the council tax base for council tax setting purposes is calculated and is also considered unaffordable on that basis.
- 4.5 24 responses were received to the online consultation. 11 of these came from organisations (five housing associations, four charities and two community groups).

4.6 The headline findings from the consultation are set out below, with further detail given at Appendix A.

- 22 respondents (90.2 per cent) agreed or strongly agreed with the proposal to extend the maximum discount on Council Tax
- The main points raised by those who disagreed with the proposals highlighted the perception of waste or inefficiency in the council’s proposal to extend.

## 5. Risks associated with the proposals

5.1 The financial risk to the Council is set out below in paragraphs 6.1, 6.2 and 6.3.

## 6. Implications arising from the proposals

### 6.1 Financial

The costs of the changes to the minimum contribution would be as follows (for the council and customers). The cost to the council would be worked through the 2024 to 2025 budget setting process, through calculation of the Council Tax base, if agreed:

<b>Option</b>	<b>Impact on West Suffolk Council</b>	<b>Impact on customers</b>
Revert to previous minimum contribution of 8.5 per cent.	Saving of £47,552.179	4,659 worse off from current scheme position
(Recommended) Decrease minimum contribution to zero per cent.	Cost of £47,552.179	4,659 remain better off

6.2 There would also be cost implications for Suffolk County Council, the police and parishes totalling around £458,000 (split based on their share of the Council Tax bill).

6.3 If the contribution rate is retained at zero for a further year, it is expected that the proposals would continue to lead to fewer complaints and customer contact from customers struggling to pay, as well as time and resource savings from not collecting the 8.5 percent shortfall. The cost of

recovery process for these small amounts can be expensive and often result in write-offs.

**6.4 Legal compliance**

The Council is proceeding in line with the relevant Government requirements for scheme renewal and consultation.

**6.5 Personal data processing**

No changes to how customers' personal data are collected and handled by West Suffolk Council are proposed.

**6.6 Equalities**

Groups representing individuals sharing a protected characteristic were sent the link to the consultation, which included the question: "Is there anything else you would like to tell us about these proposals, including any impacts they might have on particular groups, especially those who share a protected characteristic under the Equalities Act 2010?" An Equalities Impact Assessment is attached at Appendix B, which includes the responses made to this question.

**6.7 Crime and disorder**

The scheme will continue to be operated in line with the Council's and Anglia Revenues Partnership's Anti-Fraud and Anti-Corruption policies.

**6.8 Environment or sustainability**

No impact

**6.9 HR or staffing**

The proposed changes will have minimal impact on Anglia Revenues Partnership staff.

**6.10 Changes to existing policies**

The new scheme will replace the 2023-24 scheme from 1 April 2024.

**6.10 External organisations (such as businesses, community groups)**

We would not expect the proposals to have any new impacts on external organisations. No issues were raised by stakeholder groups during the consultation.

**7. Appendices referenced in this report**

7.1 Appendix A – Summary of consultation responses

7.2 Appendix B – Equalities Impact Assessment

- 7.3 Appendix C – Draft West Suffolk Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme (not attached in printed form – provided as an electronic link only here: [Agenda for Cabinet on Tuesday 5 December 2023, 6.00 pm \(westsuffolk.gov.uk\)](#))

## **8. Background documents associated with this report**

- 8.1 Portfolio Holder decision report: [CAB/WS/23/034](#)

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## **Appendix A: West Suffolk Council Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme (LCTRS) Review: consultation survey summary**

### **Background**

1. Public consultation took place between 2 and 30 October 2023 on the extension of the LCTRS for another 12 months, covering 2024-25.
2. Each year the council is required to consider whether to revise its Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme (LCTRS). This report advises about the conclusion of the 2023 annual review of the scheme and the resultant proposals for consultation for changes to the LCTRS scheme, to take effect from April 2024.
3. Where it is determined that the existing scheme should be retained without any changes, this must be decided by 11 March of the preceding year.
4. Where councils seek to amend their schemes, it will be necessary to consult preceptors and stakeholders prior to a wider consultation to inform a final scheme design by 28 February of the preceding year. Therefore, work on any amendments needs to start in the summer to allow sufficient time to consult, approve and implement changes prior to 28 February 2024.
5. Changes implemented between April 2023 and April 2024 ensured that the maximum discount a working-age resident could receive on their council tax would increase from 91.5 percent to a maximum of 100 per cent. This reduces the amount that many council taxpayers have to pay and could result in some working-age residents paying zero Council Tax.
6. The current, 2023 to 2024 scheme was approved by Cabinet and Council in December 2022. The changes implemented were temporary and unless extended, from April 2024, the maximum discount will automatically revert back to 91.5 per cent.

### **Methodology**

7. During the consultation period, evidence was sought from the public, community groups or organisations across West Suffolk regarding the possible extension of the reduction scheme.
8. An online response form was created, and this was published through media, website, social media, councillors, staff and partner organisations. As well as highlighting through the media and social media for residents and businesses to give their views, the council also undertook direct engagement with key stakeholders across the district, including town and parish councils, police, health partners, housing associations, residents' associations, and local councillors.
9. At the time the consultation closed, 24 online forms had been completed. This report outlines the results from the analysis of quantitative data and themes that can be drawn from the qualitative (free text) data.
10. Please note:

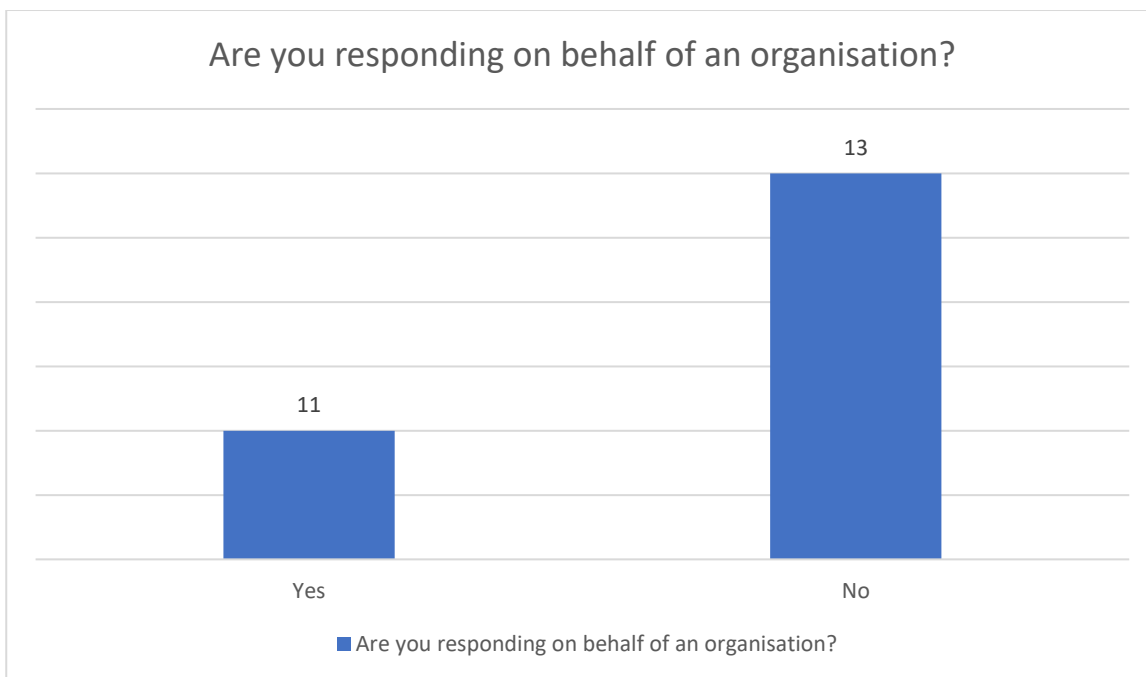
- All questions are listed thematically to highlight the key findings of the consultation – namely whether there was agreement to extend the 100 per cent discount.
- A large part of the survey was made up of free text responses. These have been analysed using standard manual techniques for free text analysis, which while highly effective are unable to fully eliminate any degree of judgement or subjectivity.

**Major preceptors**

11. The major preceptors, which include Suffolk County Council, the Suffolk Constabulary, as well as town and parish councils, were approached separately to provide comment on the proposal to extend the 100 per cent discount. The outcomes of this part of the consultation are contained in the covering report.

**Section 1: About the respondents**

12. Of a total 24 respondents that responded online, the largest group of respondents (13) were not responding on behalf of an organisation, while 11 respondents were representing an organisation.



13. Of the 11 respondents representing an organisation, five were representing housing associations (three from Havebury Housing Partnership), with four representing charities and two community groups.

Group	Frequency
Havebury Housing Partnership	3
Flagship – Samphire Homes	1
Resident association (unspecified)	1



BME Suffolk Support Group (BSSG)	1
YMCA Trinity Group	1
Bury Drop In	1
Citizens Advice West Suffolk	1
Racing welfare	1
Bridge Community Church	1

14. All 24 respondents were asked whether they were in receipt of the LCTRS from West Suffolk. All 24 respondents responded that they were not in receipt of the discount.

### Age and health-disability

15. The age breakdown (see chart below) shows a larger proportion of older people completed the survey; ages 45 to 70+ represents 60.9 per cent of the total. respondents aged between 18 and 44 represent 39.1 per cent. However, there is no representation from those aged under 18.

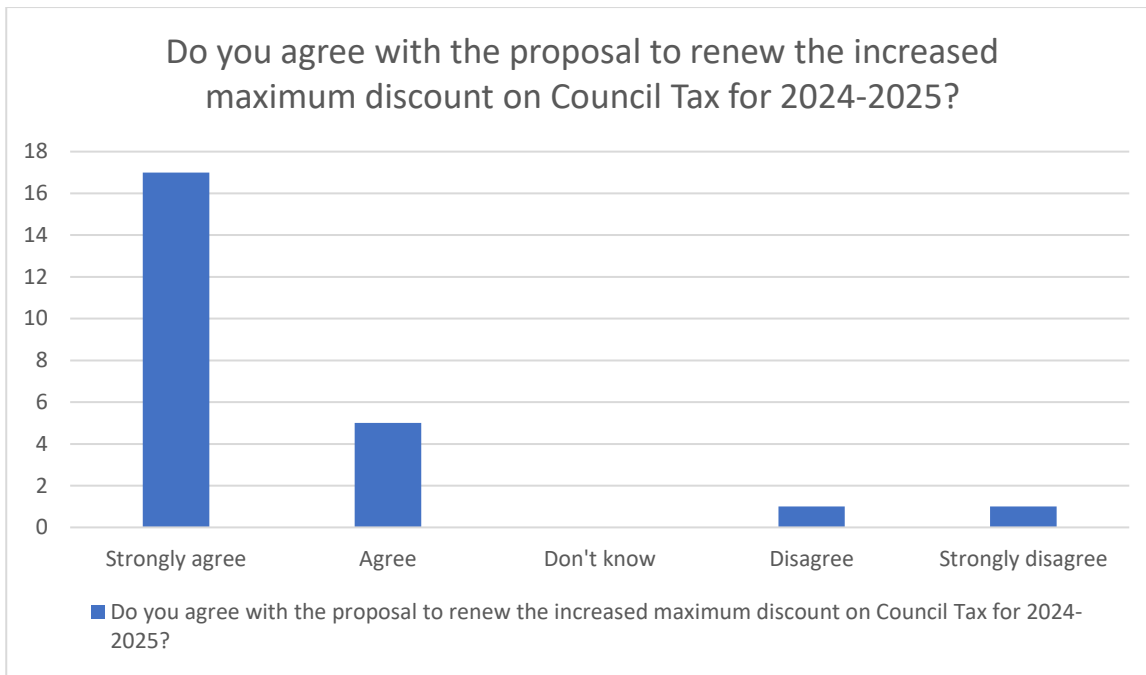
Age breakdown of respondents		
Age categories	% in each category	West Suffolk % (2020)
<b>0-17</b>	0	21.2
<b>18-24</b>	4.4	6.8
<b>25-34</b>	21.8	13.3
<b>35-44</b>	13	12
<b>45-59</b>	43.5	19.4
<b>60-69</b>	8.7	11
<b>70+</b>	8.7	16.4

### Equalities information

16. 23 respondents answered questions on ethnic origin. 20 identified as English, Welsh, Scottish, Northern Irish or British (87 per cent). One identified as Irish (4.4 per cent), and one identified as African (4.4. per cent). One respondent identified as 'Any other white background' (4.4 per cent) but did not explain further.

### Do you agree with the proposal to renew the increased maximum discount on Council Tax for 2024-2025?

17. Of 24 online responses, 17 respondents (70.1 per cent) strongly agreed and five (20.1 per cent) agreed with the proposal to renew the maximum discount on council tax. One respondent strongly disagreed (4.2 per cent) and one disagreed (4.2 per cent).



18. All 11 respondents representing an external organisation either agreed or strongly agreed with the proposal to extend the 100 per cent discount.
19. Respondents that disagreed with the proposal were invited to explain their answer. Both respondents supplied a free text response. One respondent stated that a 100 per cent reduction was too much and a waste of money in light of other government support being available; the other respondent stated that not renewing would mean there is more money available for other services and that this support will need to end at some point.

<b>Response</b>
They've already spent over £3m in one go, a 100 per cent discount is too much. I'm all for me supporting this in hardship, but with extra government support out there already the local council's money could be used more effectively elsewhere, but then I'm not surprised the Council are being frivolous with taxpayers money, Labour run councils are extremely good at financial mismanagement.
There is already a good discount available. There will be more money available for other services across the area. It will have to be stopped at some point and this will always be difficult. It sets a precedent that will become an expectation in the future.

### **Equalities**

20. All respondents were asked if they had anything further to say on the proposals, with particular regard to the impact on protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010. Six responses were received. Five respondents referred to the need to support low-income and vulnerable residents as a priority during the cost of the living crisis.

21. One respondent made reference to their personal need for a discount, especially as there is heavy traffic on the road on which they live.

Response
At Citizens Advice, we are speaking with increasingly more people that are generally struggling with the cost-of-living crisis. Extra help with council tax frees up money for essentials such as food and energy for those clients on a low income.
No, we've just got to help the poorest and most vulnerable as a priority.
It is important to maintain support for those worst affected by the cost-of-living crisis.
I suggest that West Suffolk Council continues the 2023-24 changes to the Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme for working age customers that would extend the decreased contribution rate (maximum discount of 100 per cent) to support low-income households and those facing financial hardship, in light of the cost-of-living crisis.
Yes, I'm a widower of 78 but still pay £116 a month? On ST OLAVES ROAD ALLDAY ITS HEAVY TRAFFIC AND LARGE LORRYS GOING PAST OUR DOOR WE SHOULD GET A DISCOUNT ??
Not renewing will impact poorer people.

## Conclusion

22. Of the 24 responses received during the four-week consultation period, respondents were in favour of extending the 100 per cent discount for a further 12 months.
23. Respondents that disagreed with the extension highlighted the perception of waste or inefficiency in the council's proposal to extend.

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## Appendix B: West Suffolk Council Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme 2024-25

### Equality screening form

<p><b>Step 1: The changes being proposed</b>            What changes are being proposed? For example, in policy, service, charging, location.</p> <p>Changes to the West Suffolk Council Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme 2024-25. The four proposed changes are as follows:</p> <p><b>Proposal 1</b>            It is proposed that West Suffolk Council consults on a proposal to continue the 2023-24 changes to the Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme that would extend the decreased contribution rate (maximum discount of 100 per cent) to support low-income households and those facing financial hardship, in light of the cost-of-living crisis.</p>	
<p><b>Step 1a. Who will the changes have an impact on in general?</b> (For example, taxi drivers, customers, staff, owners of businesses)  <b>List the groups:</b></p>	<p><b>Step 1b. What changes will each of the groups listed experience?</b>  <b>Impacts on specific groups:</b></p>
Existing recipients of LCTRS	The average financial gain for these recipients will be £103.32 over a year.
Council tax payers not currently in receipt of LCTRS	No impact
Anglia Revenues Partnership staff	None
Carers and advocates of recipients of LCTRS	These proposed changes do not affect this group specifically; however, they may indirectly benefit as those they care/advocate for will benefit.
Voluntary sector organisations providing advice and advocacy services	No direct impact.

<p><b>Step 2: Impacts on specific groups</b></p>	
<p><b>Step 2a.</b> Within any of the groups you listed in Step 1, is there a <b>higher proportion of people with a protected characteristic</b> (see list below) that the populations of West Suffolk as a whole? (For example, users of Shopmobility are more likely to have a disability than the West Suffolk population)  <b>Describe how representation within the group affected differs from the</b></p>	<p><b>Step 2b.</b> Are there any elements of the decision or changes that will <b>impact differently</b> on people with a protected characteristic? (For example, people in rural areas with poor broadband may find it harder to access services if moved online.)  <b>Describe how the change will impact differently on different groups, positively and negatively.</b></p>

<b>West Suffolk population (use data if possible)</b>	
<p>Recipients of LCTRS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Disability</li> </ul> <p>A greater proportion of disabled people are likely to receive council tax discount than non-disabled people, therefore the chances that the changes will negatively impact this group are higher.</p> <p>(Evidence sources: In 2016, the proportion of people without a disability in work was 79.9% and with a disability in work was 46.9%. This is a statistically significant difference. <a href="#">Department for Work and Pensions Equality Information (Customer Data) 2016 (publishing.service.gov.uk)</a></p> <p>In 2018, median pay was consistently higher for non-disabled employees than for disabled employees; in 2018, median pay for non-disabled employees was £12.11 an hour whilst for disabled employees it was £10.63 an hour, resulting in a pay gap of 12.2% <a href="#">Disability pay gaps in the UK - Office for National Statistics (ons.gov.uk)</a></p>	<p>The proposed changes to the Council Tax Support Scheme will positively impact on disabled LCTRS recipients.</p> <p>There were two comments relating to this protected characteristic received during the consultation.</p> <p>“No, we've just got to help the poorest and most vulnerable as a priority.”</p> <p>“I suggest that West Suffolk Council continues the 2023-24 changes to the Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme for working age customers that would extend the decreased contribution rate (maximum discount of 100 per cent) to support low-income households and those facing financial hardship, in light of the cost-of-living crisis.”</p> <p>No mitigation is required as LCTRS is a means-tested benefit.</p>
<p>Recipients of LCTRS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Age</li> </ul> <p>The proposed changes only affect working age customers.</p>	<p>One comment was received on this protected characteristic during the consultation.</p> <p>“Yes, I'm a widower of 78 but still pay £116 a month? On ST OLAVES ROAD ALLDAY ITS HEAVY TRAFFIC AND LARGE LORRYS GOING PAST OUR DOOR WE SHOULD GET A DISCOUNT ??”</p> <p>No mitigation is required as LCTRS is a means-tested benefit.</p>
<p>Marriage and civil partnership:</p> <p>No evidence that the population in receipt of LCTRS has higher representation from individuals with protected characteristics under this strand.</p>	<p>No differential impact.</p>
<p>Pregnancy and maternity:</p>	<p>No differential impact.</p>

<p>No evidence that the population in receipt of LCTRS has higher representation from individuals with protected characteristics under this strand.</p>	
<p>Race:</p> <p>No evidence that the population in receipt of LCTRS has higher representation from individuals with protected characteristics under this strand.</p>	<p>No differential impact.</p>
<p>Gender reassignment:</p> <p>No evidence that the population in receipt of LCTRS has higher representation from individuals with protected characteristics under this strand.</p>	<p>No differential impact.</p>
<p>Religion or belief:</p> <p>No evidence that the population in receipt of LCTRS has higher representation from individuals with protected characteristics under this strand.</p>	<p>No differential impact.</p>
<p>Sex:</p> <p>No evidence that the population in receipt of LCTRS has higher representation from individuals with protected characteristics under this strand.</p>	<p>No differential impact.</p>
<p>Sexual orientation:</p> <p>No evidence that the population in receipt of LCTRS has higher representation from individuals with protected characteristics under this strand.</p>	<p>No differential impact.</p>
<p>Deprivation/Socioeconomic Disadvantage:</p> <p>A greater proportion of people on low incomes will receive council tax discount, therefore the chances that the changes will negatively impact this group are higher.</p>	<p>The proposed changes to the Council Tax Support Scheme will positively impact on those experiencing deprivation and socio-economic disadvantage.</p> <p>There were three comments relating to this protected characteristic received during the consultation.</p> <p>"At Citizens Advice, we are speaking with increasingly more people that are generally struggling with the cost-of-living crisis. Extra help with council tax frees up money for essentials such as</p>

	<p>food and energy for those clients on a low income.”</p> <p>“It is important to maintain support for those worst affected by the cost-of-living crisis.”</p> <p>“Not renewing will impact poorer people.”</p>
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<b>Step 3: Adjustments to the proposals</b>	
<p><b>Step 3a.</b> What are the views of the changes from those who are affected by them and what (if any) amendments would they like to see? Please note this engagement should precede formal consultation. For example, what do charities think of proposed changes to business rates relief?</p> <p><b>Record any feedback on the proposals that has been gathered</b></p>	<p><b>Step 3b.</b> Based on the feedback from 3a, can we alter the proposed changes so that the negative impacts are removed or reduced and the positive impacts maximised? For example, adjust eligibility criteria to exclude small charities from changes.</p> <p><b>What changes could be made to the proposals? If none, say why not.</b></p> <p><b>How can we ensure the proposals are communicated effectively to those affected?</b></p>
Appendix A to Cabinet paper which gives details of feedback received	No changes required
All consultations were conducted formally but included stakeholders and customers.	Effective communication of all of the changes will be required, including through the groups contacted as part of the consultation exercise.

**West Suffolk Council is committed to assessing the impact of our proposals on those with a protected characteristic** (that is age, disability, sex, pregnancy or maternity, marriage or civil partnership, race, religion, sexual orientation and gender re-assignment, as well as on families and those with caring responsibilities, people on low income, people suffering rural isolation and those for whom English is not their first language).



# Council tax base for tax setting purposes 2024 to 2025

<b>Report number:</b>	<b>CAB/WS/23/058</b>	
<b>Report to and dates:</b>	<b>Cabinet</b>	5 December 2023
	<b>Council</b>	19 December 2023
<b>Cabinet member:</b>	Councillor Diane Hind Portfolio Holder for Resources <b>Email:</b> <a href="mailto:diane.hind@westsuffolk.gov.uk">diane.hind@westsuffolk.gov.uk</a>	
<b>Lead officer:</b>	Rachael Mann Director (Resources and Property) <b>Tel:</b> 01638 719245 <b>Email:</b> <a href="mailto:rachael.mann@westsuffolk.gov.uk">rachael.mann@westsuffolk.gov.uk</a>	

**Decisions Plan:** The decision made as a result of this report will usually be published within 48 hours. This item will be referred to Council for a final decision and is, therefore, not subject to call-in. This item is included on the Decisions Plan.

**Wards impacted:** All wards

**Recommendation:** It is recommended that, subject to the approval of Council:

1. The tax base for 2024 to 2025, for the whole of West Suffolk is 58,684.97 equivalent band D dwellings, as detailed in paragraph 2.3 of Report number: CAB/WS/23/058.
2. The tax base for 2024 to 2025 for the different parts of its area, as defined by parish or special expense area boundaries, are as shown in Appendix 3.

## **1. Context to this report**

- 1.1 The council tax base is the total taxable value at a point in time of all the domestic properties in the council's area. It is a yearly calculation and represents the estimated number of chargeable dwellings after allowing for exemptions and discounts, projected changes in the property base and after applying an estimated collection rate.
- 1.2 The total taxable value referred to above is arrived at by each dwelling being placed in one of eight valuation bands (A – H) by the Valuation Office, with a statutorily set fraction then being applied in order to convert it to a 'band D equivalent' figure. These band D equivalent numbers are then aggregated at a district wide level and are also sub totalled for parishes. This calculation has to be done by the council responsible for sending the bills out and collecting the council tax ('the billing authority'). In two tier areas, district councils fulfil this function.
- 1.3 The council tax base is used in the calculation of council tax. Each authority divides the total council tax income it needs to meet its budget requirement by the tax base of its area to arrive at its band D council tax. The same fractions referred to in the previous paragraph are then used to work out the council tax for properties in each of the other bands.
- 1.4 The calculation of the tax base for council tax setting purposes consists of three stages:
1. Calculation of the tax base for central government purposes as at 2 October 2023 (DLUHC return – CTB).
  2. Calculation of the tax base for council tax setting purposes by adjusting the band D equivalents to reflect changes in the tax base as a result of Local Council Tax Support scheme changes (considered elsewhere on this agenda CAB/WS/23/057), projected changes in the property base and predicted collection rates.
  3. Analysis of band D equivalents over each of the parish areas in order to determine individual parish council tax bases.

## **2. Proposals within this report**

### **Calculation of the tax base for central government purposes**

- 2.1 The tax base return 'CTB' is used by central government for data collection, grant allocations and policy development (see Appendix 1). This return shows the analysis of properties across the eight valuation bands for the following classifications of liability:

- properties attracting 100 per cent liability
- properties attracting a premium, such as second homes
- properties with an entitlement to a discount of 25, 50 or 100 per cent, such as disabled relief
- properties that are exempt, such as those occupied by United States air force personnel
- local council tax reduction scheme discounts.
- 

2.2 The figures used to make the above calculations are derived from the Valuation List as deposited on 11 September 2023, and as amended to reflect any errors or omissions so far detected in reviewing that list. They are based on the data held on the council tax system at a set point in time – 2 October 2023.

2.3 The taxbase for this purpose, which is calculated at a West Suffolk level, is 59,651.1.

### **Calculation of the tax base for tax setting purposes**

2.4 The band D properties figure as at 2 October 2023 of 59,651.1, as quoted in line 33 of the CTB form at Appendix 1, has been updated as at 31 October 2023 to allow for:

1. Any changes to the Local Council Tax Support (LCTS) scheme. Proposals to increase the discount for Council Tax given to people on low incomes, which is being considered elsewhere on this agenda (CAB/WS/23/057), have been incorporated into the calculation of the tax base.
2. Any technical changes to discounts and exemptions such as empty properties and second homes. There are no plans to change the current scheme for 2024 to 2025.
3. Potential growth in the property base during 2024 to 2025 taken from an average of the housing delivery numbers for those sites within the local plan and those that have planning permission, adjusted for an assumed level of discounts/exemptions.
4. An allowance for losses in collection, which assumes that the overall collection rate for 2024 to 2025 will be 98.5 per cent.

2.5 The resulting tax base figure for council tax collection purposes, expressed in terms of the number of band D equivalent properties, is **58,684.97** for 2024 to 2025. This is an increase of 697.96 on the tax base for the current year of 57,987.01.

2.6 The table at Appendix 2 shows the actual number of dwellings in each tax band based on the current valuations which are discounted to 1 April 1991 and the percentage in each band. There has been no national revaluation

since that date. It also shows the spread of the tax base across the bands totalling the tax base for central government purposes (CTB) and the tax base for council tax setting purposes after all of the adjustments have been made.

### **Individual town and parish council tax bases and precept payment arrangements**

- 2.7 The tax base figure for West Suffolk outlined in paragraph 2.6, is analysed further across individual town and parish councils to form their tax base figures for the purpose of budget setting and determining the parish band D tax levels in each of those areas. Town and parish tax base figures are set out in Appendix 3.
- 2.8 In line with the delegated authority to administer the Council's financial affairs as outlined in the constitution, the arrangements for the scheduling of the precept payments for 2024 to 2025, will be determined by the Director (Resources and Property) (Chief Financial Officer).
- 2.9 The payments schedule for all parish and town councils in West Suffolk will be full payment of the precepts by 30 April 2024.

## **3. Alternative options that have been considered**

- 3.1 The Local Authorities (Calculation of Council Tax Base) Regulations 1992 set out the requirements for the calculation of the council tax base for tax setting purposes. Therefore, there are no alternative options.

## **4. Consultation and engagement undertaken**

- 4.1 The tax base figures provided within Appendix 3 of this report have been communicated to town and parish councils so that they can start to factor these into their budget setting process.

## **5. Risks associated with the proposals**

- 5.1 The Council's ability to collect council tax income in the current economic climate has been factored into the tax base by applying an appropriate collection rate in the calculation as detailed in paragraph 2.4.

## **6. Implications arising from the proposals**

- 6.1 All implications arising from the proposals are covered within the report and its associated appendices.

**7. Appendices referenced in this report**

- 7.1 Appendix 1 – West Suffolk CTB return made to DLUHC as at 2 October 2023
- 7.2 Appendix 2 – Distribution of West Suffolk properties and tax base across valuation bands
- 7.3 Appendix 3 – 2024 to 2025 council tax base for each town and parish council area within West Suffolk

**8. Background documents associated with this report**

- 8.1 None

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CTB(October 2023)

Calculation of Council Tax Base

Please e-mail to : [ctb.stats@levellingup.gov.uk](mailto:ctb.stats@levellingup.gov.uk)

Please enter your details after checking that you have selected the correct local authority name

Ver 1.2

Please select your local authority's name from this list

Check that this is your authority :	West Suffolk
E-code :	E3539
ONS code :	E07000245
Local authority contact name :	<a href="mailto:apfinance@angliarevenues.gov.uk">apfinance@angliarevenues.gov.uk</a>
Local authority contact telephone number :	1842756464
Local authority contact e-mail address :	<a href="mailto:apfinance@angliarevenues.gov.uk">apfinance@angliarevenues.gov.uk</a>

CTB(October 2023) form for West Suffolk

Completed forms should be received by DLUHC by Friday 13 October 2023

Dwellings shown on the Valuation List for the authority on Monday 11 September 2023	Band A entitled to disabled relief reduction COLUMN 1	Band A COLUMN 2	Band B COLUMN 3	Band C COLUMN 4	Band D COLUMN 5	Band E COLUMN 6	Band F COLUMN 7	Band G COLUMN 8	Band H COLUMN 9	TOTAL COLUMN 10
<b>Part 1</b>										
1. Total number of dwellings on the Valuation List		12,628	28,817	17,123	12,232	7,287	2,998	2,070	194	83,349
2. Number of dwellings on valuation list exempt on 2 October 2023 (Class B & D to W exemptions)		906	1,713	1,555	1,396	723	144	58	12	6,507
3. Number of demolished dwellings and dwellings outside area of authority on 2 October 2023 (please see notes)		10	0	0	3	0	1	0	0	14
4. Number of chargeable dwellings on 2 October 2023 (treating demolished dwellings etc as exempt) (lines 1-2-3)		11,712	27,104	15,568	10,833	6,564	2,853	2,012	182	76,828
5. Number of chargeable dwellings in line 4 subject to disabled reduction on 2 October 2023		28	129	88	92	54	32	26	19	468
6. Number of dwellings effectively subject to council tax for this band by virtue of disabled relief (line 5 after reduction)	28	129	88	92	54	32	26	19		468
7. Number of chargeable dwellings adjusted in accordance with lines 5 and 6 (lines 4-5+6 or in the case of column 1, line 6)	28	11,813	27,063	15,572	10,795	6,542	2,847	2,005	163	76,828
8. Number of dwellings in line 7 entitled to a single adult household 25% discount on 2 October 2023	11	6,850	9,814	4,360	2,458	1,141	442	300	13	25,389
9. Number of dwellings in line 7 entitled to a 25% discount on 2 October 2023 due to all but one resident being disregarded for council tax purposes	1	69	256	142	131	69	29	14	1	712
10. Number of dwellings in line 7 entitled to a 50% discount on 2 October 2023 due to all residents being disregarded for council tax purposes	0	15	19	13	9	13	7	20	8	104
11. Number of dwellings in line 7 classed as second homes on 2 October 2023 (b/fwd from Flex Empty tab)		107	147	91	73	59	30	26	6	539
12. Number of dwellings in line 7 classed as empty and receiving a zero% discount on 2 October 2023 (b/fwd from Flex Empty tab)		222	422	286	174	86	49	16	7	1,262
13. Number of dwellings in line 7 classed as empty and receiving a discount on 2 October 2023 and not shown in line 12 (b/fwd from Flex Empty tab)		6	14	14	15	7	2	3	0	61
14. Number of dwellings in line 7 classed as empty and being charged the Empty Homes Premium on 2 October 2023 (b/fwd from Flex Empty tab)		69	80	35	13	8	6	6	3	220
15. Total number of dwellings in line 7 classed as empty on 2 October 2023 (lines 12+13+14).		297	516	335	202	101	57	25	10	1,543
16. Number of dwellings that are classed as empty on 2 October 2023 and have been for more than 6 months. NB These properties should have already been included in line 15 above.		182	256	176	100	42	29	20	8	813
16a. The number of dwellings included in line 16 above which are empty on 2 October 2023 because of the flooding that occurred between 1 December 2015 and 31 March 2016 and are only empty because of the flooding.		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
16b. The number of dwellings included in line 16 above which are empty on 2 October 2023 because of the flooding that occurred between November 2019 and February 2020 and are only empty because of the flooding.		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
17. Number of dwellings that are classed as empty on 2 October 2023 and have been for more than 6 months and are eligible to be treated under empty homes discount class D (formerly Class A exemptions). NB These properties should have already been included in line 15 above. Do NOT include any dwellings included in line 16a above.		1	11	10	10	1	1	3	0	37
18. Number of dwellings that are classed as empty and have been empty for more than 6 months excluding those that are subject to empty homes discount class D or empty due to flooding (Line 16 - line 16a - line 16b - line 17) (equivalent to Line 18 in previous forms).		181	245	166	90	41	28	17	8	776
19. Number of dwellings in line 7 where there is liability to pay 100% council tax before Family Annexe discount	16	4,787	16,878	11,007	8,169	5,304	2,361	1,662	138	50,322

CTB(October 2023)

**Calculation of Council Tax Base**

Please e-mail to : [ctb.stats@levellingup.gov.uk](mailto:ctb.stats@levellingup.gov.uk)

Please enter your details after checking that you have selected the correct local authority name

Ver 1.2

20. Number of dwellings in line 7 that are assumed to be subject to a discount or a premium before Family Annexe discount	12	7,026	10,185	4,565	2,626	1,238	486	343	25	26,506
21. Reduction in taxbase as a result of the Family Annexe discount (b/fwd from Family Annexe tab)	0.5	31.1	1.5	0.5	0.5	2.3	0.5	0.5	0.0	37.4
22. Number of dwellings equivalents after applying discounts and premiums to calculate taxbase	24.5	10,148.9	24,649.3	14,490.9	10,153.6	6,240.6	2,732.1	1,926.7	161.5	70,528.0
23. Ratio to band D	5/9	6/9	7/9	8/9	9/9	11/9	13/9	15/9	18/9	
24. Total number of band D equivalents (to 1 decimal place) (line 22 x line 23)	13.6	6,765.9	19,171.7	12,880.8	10,153.6	7,627.3	3,946.3	3,211.2	323.0	64,093.4
25. Number of band D equivalents of contributions in lieu (in respect of Class O exempt dwellings) in 2023-24 (to 1 decimal place)										290.0
26. Tax base (to 1 decimal place) (line 24 col 10 + line 25)										64,383.4

**Part 2**

27. Number of dwellings equivalents after applying discounts and premiums to calculate tax base (Line 22)	24.5	10,148.9	24,649.3	14,490.9	10,153.6	6,240.6	2,732.1	1,926.7	161.5	70,528.0
28.Reduction in taxbase as a result of local council tax support (b/fwd from CT Support tab)	6.8	2,521.4	2,684.5	655.7	223.3	88.4	22.6	7.6	0.0	6,210.4
29. Number of dwellings equivalents after applying discounts, premiums and local tax support to calculate taxbase	17.7	7,627.5	21,964.8	13,835.2	9,930.2	6,152.1	2,709.4	1,919.1	161.5	64,317.6
30. Ratio to band D	5/9	6/9	7/9	8/9	9/9	11/9	13/9	15/9	18/9	
31. Total number of band D equivalents after allowance for council tax support (to 1 decimal place) (line 29 x line 30)	9.8	5,085.0	17,083.7	12,298.0	9,930.2	7,519.3	3,913.6	3,198.5	323.0	59,361.1
32. Number of band D equivalents of contributions in lieu (in respect of Class O exempt dwellings) in 2023-24 (to 1 decimal place)(line 25)										290.0
33. Tax base after allowance for council tax support (to 1 decimal place) (line 31 col 10 + line 32)										59,651.1

**Certificate of Chief Financial Officer**

I certify that the information provided on this form is based on the dwellings shown in the Valuation List for my authority on 11 September 2023 and that it accurately reflects information available to me about exemptions, demolished dwellings, disabled relief, discounts and premiums applicable on 2 October 2023 and, where appropriate, has been completed in a manner consistent with the form for 2022.

Chief Financial Officer : .....

Date : .....



Band	Tax band values as at 1 April 1991	Actual number of dwellings (Note 1)	Actual number of dwellings as a percentage	Number of chargeable dwellings (Note 2)	Relevant proportion	Relevant amount (Note 3)
@ (Note 4)				17.7	5/9	9.8
A	Up to £40,000	12,628	15.2%	7,627.5	6/9	5,085.0
B	£40,001 to £52,000	28,817	34.6%	21,964.8	7/9	17,083.7
C	£52,001 to £68,000	17,123	20.5%	13,835.2	8/9	12,298.0
D	£68,001 to £88,000	12,232	14.7%	9,930.2	9/9	9,930.2
E	£88,001 to £120,000	7,287	8.7%	6,152.1	11/9	7,519.3
F	£120,001 to £160,000	2,998	3.6%	2,709.4	13/9	3,913.6
G	£160,001 to £320,000	2,070	2.5%	1,919.1	15/9	3,198.5
H	Over £320,000	194	0.2%	161.5	18/9	323.0
<b>Total</b>		<b>83,349</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>64,317.6</b>		<b>59,361.1</b>
Contributions in lieu of exempt MOD properties (line 32 of CTB return)						290.0
<b>Tax base for central government purposes (line 33 of CTB return)</b>						<b>59,651.1</b>
<b>Tax base for council tax setting after applying adjustments set out in paragraph 2.4</b>						<b>58,684.97</b>

Note 1 This is the total number of dwellings on the Valuation List before making any adjustments (line 1 of the CTB returns at Appendix 1).

Note 2 This is the number of chargeable dwellings after adjusting for discounts, exemptions and local council tax support but before applying the relevant proportion (ratio to band D) (line 29 of the CTB returns at Appendix 1).

Note 3 This is the total number of band D equivalent dwellings after applying the relevant proportions (line 31 of the CTB returns at Appendix 1).

Note 4 Disabled reduction results in charging the property at one band lower (1/9th) than its actual band. The '@' figure relates to band A properties which are eligible for a disabled reduction (1/9th below a band A charge).

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Parish/Town	Tax Base 2023 to 24	Tax Base 2024 to 25	Difference in Tax base
Ampton, Timworth and Livermere	50.35	49.71	-0.64
Bardwell	315.42	317.05	1.63
Barnardiston	59.19	59.59	0.40
Barnham	236.44	238.25	1.81
Barningham	350.01	350.11	0.10
Barrow cum Denham	783.74	777.47	-6.27
Barton Mills	425.36	445.00	19.64
Beck Row	1,213.19	1,220.63	7.44
Bradfield Combust with Stanningfield	226.23	229.82	3.59
Bradfield St Clare	71.00	71.66	0.66
Bradfield St George	159.65	159.38	-0.27
Brandon (and Wangford)	2,543.72	2,538.02	-5.70
Brockley	131.19	133.70	2.51
Bury St Edmunds (see note)	14,256.01	14,518.34	262.33
Cavendish	426.00	434.37	8.37
Cavenham	63.60	65.94	2.34
Chedburgh	264.86	268.15	3.29
Chevington	270.59	275.52	4.93
Clare	873.76	875.24	1.48
Coney Weston	172.19	171.60	-0.59
Cowlinge	135.44	133.99	-1.45
Culford, West Stow and Wordwell	270.55	269.94	-0.61
Dalham (see note)	118.42	120.01	1.59
Denston (see note)	49.98	51.42	1.44
Depden	87.04	88.51	1.47
Elveden	106.88	96.07	-10.81
Eriswell	292.83	292.80	-0.03
Euston	59.89	59.22	-0.67
Exning	886.53	908.84	22.31
Fakenham Magna	62.35	61.05	-1.30
Flempton-Cum-Hengrave	150.46	152.70	2.24
Fornham All Saints	279.71	286.43	6.72
Fornham St Martin-cum-St Genevieve	495.07	494.68	-0.39
Freckenham	145.09	146.46	1.37
Gazeley	278.50	283.55	5.05
Great & Little Whelnetham	384.60	386.13	1.53
Great Barton	953.62	954.00	0.38
Great Bradley	157.62	162.50	4.88
Great Livermere	81.64	82.87	1.23
Great Thurlow	83.12	91.43	8.31
Great Wrattling	88.44	86.56	-1.88
Hargrave	118.91	119.90	0.99
Haverhill	7,780.90	7,925.59	144.69
Hawkedon	66.32	66.77	0.45
Hawstead	129.89	128.40	-1.49
Hepworth	218.77	221.31	2.54
Herringswell	145.09	149.48	4.39
Higham	75.24	75.20	-0.04
Honington-Cum-Sapiston	311.66	312.61	0.95
Hopton-Cum-Knettishall	262.18	254.25	-7.93

Parish/Town	Tax Base 2023 to 24	Tax Base 2024 to 25	Difference in Tax base
Horringer	413.92	414.66	0.74
Hundon	442.91	448.99	6.08
Icklingham	152.37	149.48	-2.89
Ickworth	8.62	8.67	0.05
Ingham	167.11	165.70	-1.41
Ixworth cum Ixworth Thorpe	782.85	787.63	4.78
Kedington	684.09	688.77	4.68
Kentford	433.47	458.48	25.01
Lackford	104.42	103.51	-0.91
Lakenheath	1,453.42	1,416.21	-37.21
Lidgate	100.36	100.96	0.60
Little Bradley	18.80	18.91	0.11
Little Thurlow	105.17	108.48	3.31
Little Wratting	65.30	65.24	-0.06
Market Weston	102.12	104.31	2.19
Mildenhall High Town	2,259.91	2,304.14	44.23
Moulton	429.15	432.13	2.98
Newmarket	5,655.60	5,716.10	60.50
Nowton	67.60	66.13	-1.47
Ousden (see note)	129.22	130.46	1.24
Pakenham	345.28	344.87	-0.41
Poslingford	94.31	94.38	0.07
Red Lodge (see note)	1,824.45	1,851.78	27.33
Rede	55.41	57.52	2.11
Risby	299.46	302.04	2.58
Rushbrook with Rougham (see note)	416.29	428.63	12.34
Santon Downham	91.52	92.17	0.65
Stansfield	93.24	100.87	7.63
Stanton	934.47	942.74	8.27
Stoke By Clare	223.53	223.65	0.12
Stradishall	175.09	173.56	-1.53
The Saxhams	123.36	129.09	5.73
Thelnetham	100.98	100.75	-0.23
Troston	272.43	280.74	8.31
Tuddenham	169.18	173.09	3.91
West Row	568.26	573.80	5.54
Westley	92.57	98.08	5.51
Whepstead	219.13	220.57	1.44
Wickhambrook (see note)	528.38	527.43	-0.95
Withersfield	327.66	329.25	1.59
Wixoe	63.09	65.66	2.57
Worlington (see note)	223.27	223.12	-0.15
	<b>57,987.01</b>	<b>58,684.97</b>	<b>697.96</b>

# Barley Homes Business Plan 2023

<b>Report number:</b>	<b>CAB/WS/23/059</b>	
<b>Report to and date:</b>	<b>Cabinet</b>	5 December 2023
<b>Cabinet member:</b>	Councillor Richard O’Driscoll Portfolio Holder for Housing Email: <a href="mailto:richard.o'driscoll@westsuffolk.gov.uk">richard.o'driscoll@westsuffolk.gov.uk</a>	
<b>Lead officers:</b>	<p>Julie Baird Director (Planning and Growth) Tel: 01234 757613 Email: <a href="mailto:julie.baird@westsuffolk.gov.uk">julie.baird@westsuffolk.gov.uk</a></p> <p>Rachael Mann Director (Resources and Property) Tel: 01234 751245 Email: <a href="mailto:rachael.mann@westsuffolk.gov.uk">rachael.mann@westsuffolk.gov.uk</a></p>	

**Decisions Plan:** The decisions made as a result of this report will usually be published within 48 hours and cannot be actioned until five clear working days of the publication of the decision have elapsed. This item is included on the Decisions Plan but no longer constitutes a Key Decision.

**Wards impacted:** All wards

**Recommendations:** It is recommended that Cabinet:

1. Notes the progress update for Barley Homes and steps outlined in this report to secure its medium-term pipeline of sites.
2. Approves the Barley Homes Business Plan 2023, covering 2024 to 2028, attached at Appendix A to Report number: CAB/WS/23/059.

## 1. Context to this report

- 1.1 Each year Barley Homes Ltd, the Council's wholly owned Housing Company, produces its annual business plan. This Barley Homes Business Plan is presented in a revised structure and one which focusses on the overall business activity, and ambitions for building a high performing portfolio.
- 1.2 The business plan contains a review of the previous year; an overview of the operating conditions for the company; a summary of the planned development programme, including aspirations around current and medium-term delivery rates; and an overview of the financial underpinnings to the future development strategy, all to demonstrate prudent resource planning.
- 1.3 The total investment facility already available to support Barley Homes Ltd is a £14.25 million revolving facility (available for loans to, equity in and land purchases to support, our wholly owned housing company) funded through a mixture of capital receipts (which supports the equity element) and the Investing in our Growth Agenda fund.
- 1.4 Since the previous business plan was approved by Council in December 2022 (report CAB/WS/22/072 refers) and as reported via the [Annual Report 2023](#) the company has made good progress in achieving its aims. This has included completing the sites set out in its business plan at Stonemill Park and Westmill Place in Haverhill. At these two sites Barley Homes Ltd have delivered 63 homes, of which 19 were affordable.
- 1.5 Following the agreement of the 2022 Business Plan, significant progress has also been made on purchasing and submitting a planning application for a site in Rougham.
- 1.6 Further progress includes Barley Homes purchasing the College Heath Road site in Mildenhall (One Public Estate assembled site) and working with a local registered provider in delivering a scheme that will help address local housing need.
- 1.7 Progress has also been made with the Great Barton draft development brief in preparation for a future application.
- 1.8 Overall, Barley Homes through this business plan will be facilitating the delivery of 93 homes of which 56 will be affordable. This ongoing viable development pipeline enables Barley Homes to continue to utilise the agreed £14.25 million investment fund which then provides financial returns to the Council through loan interest receipts and dividend payments.

1.9 The annual business planning process has not highlighted a need to revise the total investment fund, considering known cash flow forecasts across the medium term. As there is no change required to the investment fund for Barley Homes, the approval of the 2023 Business Plan sits as an executive function of the Cabinet.

1.10 **The purpose of this report**

The purpose of this report is to present the 2023 Business Plan to Cabinet for agreement. The Business Plan (Appendix A) outlines the progress with the committed sites and associated financial implications.

## 2. **Proposals within this report**

### 2.1 **The development of the Business Plan 2023**

2.1.1 This Business Plan (Appendix A) focuses on Barley Homes' completion of the development sites of Westmill and Stonemill Place, Haverhill as well as work undertaken to bring forward future development sites. It also summarises current market conditions as well as development objectives and financial projections.

2.1.2 This work has been set in the context of the Council's strategic framework and Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS).

2.1.3 In presenting the 2023 Business Plan, a set of appraisal criteria is used to evaluate potential sites (as referenced in the Cabinet report CAB/WS/19/041, paragraphs 3.16 and 3.17). Sites are selected based on these criteria and then progressed within the business plan. This appraisal criteria was continued to be used for potential new pipelines sites assessed throughout 2023 to ensure there is a consistent approach. Barley Homes and the Council are continuing to work up a number of sites. At this stage no additional named pipeline sites have been added to the business plan however this position may change as sites are appraised. Barley Homes are committed to delivery of housing within the West Suffolk area and in turn contributing to West Suffolk Council annual housing delivery target. Barley Homes are targeting delivery of 40 homes on average per annum by the end of this business plan period.

2.1.4 The 2022 Business Plan identified that work was being undertaken on the College Heath Road site in Mildenhall to refine the number of homes to be built, next steps and timescales. Updates since have included agreeing a delivery model and working on the disposal route that ensures the right housing development is present on this site in conjunction with West Suffolk Council's strategic objectives.

### 2.2 **Land assembly and planning**

2.2.1 The College Heath Road, Mildenhall site has now been purchased from West Suffolk Council and is now in the ownership of Barley Homes.

2.2.2 The parcel of land at Great Barton totalling 1.91Ha came into West Suffolk Council ownership in March 2021.

The Council has progressed pre-planning work for this parcel of land. This has been progressed in parallel with work on the adjacent “triangle” site with Suffolk County Council.

Extensive work has been progressed on a proposed development brief for this site following consultation with the public and the statutory stakeholder consultees.

Work continues to explore the timing for activating the land option for the phase 2 site at Great Barton. This will be subject to a development appraisal and agreement through the Shareholder Advisory Group.

2.2.3 The West Suffolk Council purchase of the site at Rougham was completed in September 2023, the following sale onto Barley Homes is in progress with Heads of Terms agreed, with anticipated completion by year end 2023. A reserved matters planning application has been submitted following extensive pre-application liaison with the statutory stakeholders and public, expected determination early 2024.

2.2.4 In addition to these sites, opportunities being evaluated include sites emerging from the One Public Estate programme including West Suffolk Council owned sites; sites for sale on the open market; and sites which have not yet been developed or may have stalled. Barley Homes have investigated and evaluated many different sites from these resources and will continue to evaluate fresh opportunities as when they arise.

### 2.3 Financial implications for West Suffolk Council

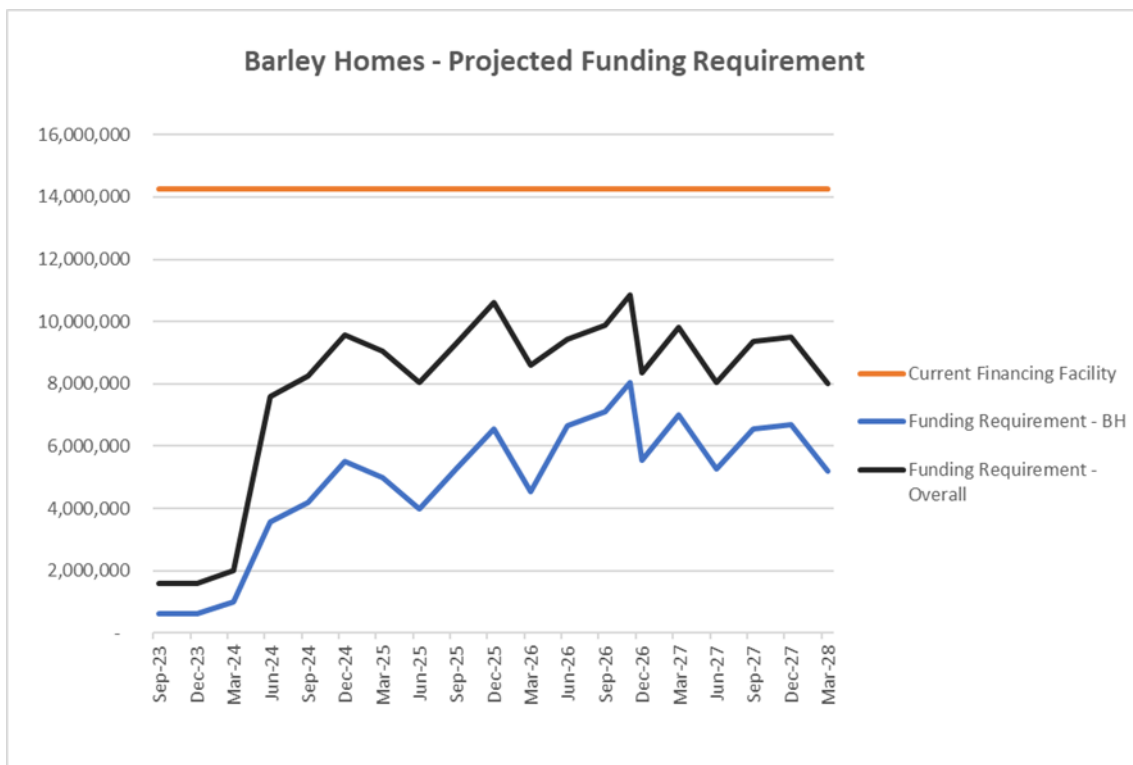
2.3.1 The business plan sets out the current forecast interest receivable on the loans to Barley Homes, as well as forecast dividend payments from Barley Homes. The table below details how these forecast returns compare to what the Council has currently assumed as part of its Medium-Term Financial Strategy.

Year	2023 to 2024	2024 to 2025	2025 to 2026	2026 to 2027	2027 to 2028	Total
<b>Forecast Revenue Return to Council as per Barley Homes Business Plan £000</b>						
Interest	2	242	294	384	362	1,284
Dividends	600	-	-	150	302	1,052
<b>Total Forecast Return</b>	<b>602</b>	<b>242</b>	<b>294</b>	<b>534</b>	<b>664</b>	<b>2,336</b>



<b>West Suffolk Council Budget £000</b>						
Interest from Barley Homes	210	210	210	210	210	1,050
Dividends from Barley Homes	300	300	300	300	300	1,500
<b>Total Budget</b>	<b>510</b>	<b>510</b>	<b>510</b>	<b>510</b>	<b>510</b>	<b>2,550</b>
<b>Forecast Variance against budget</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>(268)</b>	<b>(216)</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>154</b>	<b>(214)</b>

- 2.3.2 As can be seen from the table above, the business plan forecasts lower returns over the next two financial years than is assumed in the Council's budget. However, dividend returns from Barley Homes in the 2023 to 2024 financial year were £300,000 higher than budgeted. This over-achievement was placed into reserves to allow for the fact that no dividends are expected to be paid in the 2024 to 2025 financial year. As part of the Council's annual budget setting process, updated business plans will be reviewed to see if any amendments to the Council's budget is required. The Council's Capital Projects Financing reserve can be used to help smooth out any timing differences in returns, this is where the additional £300,000 achieved in the current year sits.
- 2.3.3 It is important to note that all the figures contained in the business plan are based on the current modelling including desk top appraisals so there maybe variations in both the costs and receipts in the final scheme delivery, as planning is sought, and a contractor is procured.
- 2.3.4 The total investment facility required by Barley Homes over the next five years has not changed since previous agreed levels as a result of this business plan. This investment facility is to cover the Council's overall exposure to Barley Homes. This includes loans to and equity investment in Barley Homes, as well as land purchases made by the Council to help facilitate some of the future pipeline sites for Barley Homes. The graph below shows the projected funded requirement, both the investment directly into Barley Homes as well as known pipeline land purchases, against the current financing facility.



2.3.5 As detailed in the business plan (and previous business plans) all future development loan funding (through the investment fund) will be repaid by Barley Homes. As of November 2022, all the previous development loan funding issued to Barley Homes has been repaid to the Council. As highlighted above, the Council funds Barley Homes through a mixture of loans (debt) and shareholdings (equity). The current level of equity that West Suffolk has in Barley Homes is £600,100. For clarity, the equity elements of the investment facilitate delivery of the business plan and supports the viability of Barley Homes as a standalone company but does not generate an annual financial return for the Council in its own right. It is reflected as an asset in West Suffolk Council’s balance sheet and equity in Barley Homes balance sheet.

**2.4 Operational and governance implications for West Suffolk Council**

2.4.1 As part of the ongoing management of the company, Barley Homes have reviewed its operational processes during the past year. These processes will be reviewed on a regular basis to ensure that they continue to be fit for purpose in light of ever evolving market conditions.

2.4.2 Meanwhile the company will continue to operate under the day-to-day operating model and governance structure for Barley Homes. The expectations in terms of the working relationship between the Council and Barley Homes are contained in the previous business plans.

2.4.3 Barley Homes is due to hold its Annual General Meeting on 19 December 2023 and will publish its Annual Report and Accounts [here](#)

### **3. Alternative options that have been considered**

- 3.1 The business plan sets out how Barley Homes, working with the Council, has evaluated potential development opportunities. Opportunities that do not meet the criteria, based on the principles set out in 2.1.2 and 2.1.3 above, and the evaluation method established in the 2019 report CAB/WS/19/041 have been discounted.

### **4. Consultation and engagement undertaken**

- 4.1 The proposals within this report have been developed in consultation with the Shareholder Advisory Group, namely the Leader of Council, Portfolio Holder for Housing and Portfolio Holder for Resources. The meetings are attended by the Chair of Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the Chair of Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee.

### **5. Risks associated with the proposals**

- 5.1 A formal risk assessment is provided within the business plan including time, cost, and quality impacts on Barley Homes, with house prices and build costs remaining a significant risk to housing development, and thus the Council's ability to obtain a financial return from Barley Homes. Similarly proposed changes to planning policy and current market conditions and remain a risk and will need to be monitored closely.
- 5.2 Local, regional, and national trends are frequently monitored to evaluate potential changes and how these may impact on costs and levels of returns achievable from developments. Should a significant negative change in trend emerge, options will be assessed to evaluate the way forward and if necessary, further reports provided on the recommended way forward.

### **6. Implications arising from the proposals**

#### **6.1 Crime and disorder**

- 6.1.1 Bringing empty brownfield sites can play a role in managing anti-social behaviour. Although there were no known current risks with the sites in this context.

#### **6.2 HR or staffing**

- 6.2.1 As part of its investing in growth agenda the Council has invested in resources who have the expertise to develop a housing pipeline. As

appropriate Barley Homes commission required in-house skills by service level agreement.

6.3 **External organisations (such as businesses, community groups)**

6.3.1 It is envisaged that local communities and parish councils will be engaged as part of the planning and development processes.

6.3.2 Where necessary consultation with community groups will shape the development.

**7. Appendices referenced in this report**

7.1 Appendix A: Barley Homes Business Plan 2023

**8. Background documents associated with this report.**

8.1 Business Case for Establishment of a Housing Development Company:

[COU/SE/15/031](#) (SEBC Council: 17 November 2015)

[COU/FH/15/036](#) (FHDC Council: 17 November 2015)

8.2 Barley Homes – Five Year Business Plan:

[OAS/SE/16/028](#) (SEBC Overview and Scrutiny Committee: 9 November 2016)

[OAS/FH/16/030](#) (FHDC Overview and Scrutiny Committee: 10 November 2016)

8.3 Barley Homes Interim Business Plan 2018:

[CAB/JT/18/032](#)(Extraordinary Joint Executive (Cabinet) Committee: 18 September 2018)

8.4 Barley Homes Business Plan 2019

[CAB/WS/19/041](#) (Cabinet: 26 November 2019)

8.5 Barley Home Business Plan 2021

[CAB/WS/21/062](#) (Cabinet: 7 December 2021)



Quality of life *built in*

# Barley Homes Business Plan 2023 to 2028

Barley Homes Group Ltd  
West Suffolk House, Western Way, Bury St Edmunds IP33 3YU  
[www.barleyhomesgroup.co.uk](http://www.barleyhomesgroup.co.uk)  
Company No: 10062735

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# Introduction

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## 1.1 Purpose of this Business Plan

Barley Homes is a housebuilding company wholly owned by West Suffolk Council. It is funded by the Council through a mixture of loans and equity. Accordingly, the Company produces an annual Business Plan to explain how it intends to function during the course of the next year, to provide assurance to its shareholder that it is being managed effectively and delivering on the Company objectives.

This business plan for Barley Homes focuses on looking forward to the next five years of activity between 2024 and 2029, subject to an annual review. Its purpose is to:

- Be adopted by the board of directors of Barley Homes as a basis for trading
- Be approved by the Council in its capacity as the shareholder of Barley Homes
- Support the provision of funding by the Council to Barley Homes

## 1.2 Structure

This year's Business Plan takes on a refreshed structure which focusses on the overall business activity, and ambitions for building a high performing portfolio. The business plan aims contains a review of the previous year; an overview of the operating conditions for the company; a summary of the planned development programme, including aspirations around current and medium-term delivery rates; and an overview of the financial underpinnings to the future development strategy, to demonstrate prudent resource planning.

# Chair's Review

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**Cllr Richard O'Driscoll**  
**Chair of Barley Homes**  
**Shareholder Advisory**  
**Group**

2023 has been a busy, albeit challenging year for Barley Homes. Work has been ongoing to tackle these challenges and position the company to continue with success over the years ahead.

Barley Homes has moved forward with its proposals for the site at Rougham, with a planning application for new homes now submitted. Additionally, work is underway, with various stakeholders, to progress the Development Brief and subsequent planning application for the land at Great Barton. Barley Homes aims to maximise affordable housing provision on each site. Its business model, and its relationship with West Suffolk Council, means it is driven by what most benefits the district - this means a commitment to providing affordable housing alongside sustainable well-built homes and communities, as well as making a financial return for the council as its shareholder, funding that can then be reinvested in council services. This focus is imperative in the challenging economic times our country faces and means that we take a carefully calculated approach to risk with our projects.

As we all navigate the changing economic times ahead, Barley Homes remains committed to creating thriving communities across our district.

Cllr Richard O'Driscoll  
Chair of Barley Homes Shareholder Advisory  
Group



## Since our last Business Plan we have:

- Completed two developments at Westmill and Stonemill
- Progressed both sites to formal adoption in respect of open space, highways and transfers to the relevant management companies
- Progressed the scheme designs for the project in Rougham, including undertaking consultation with stakeholders, and submitted a reserved matters planning application
- Undertaken public and stakeholder consultation for the Development Brief for the scheme at Great Barton
- Commenced work on the detailed design for Phase 1 of the scheme at Great Barton
- Taken ownership of the land at College Heath Road, Mildenhall, and commenced working with a preferred Registered Provider to progress a housing scheme.

## By the time of our next Business Plan in 2024 we will:

- Have obtained planning permission for the scheme in Rougham, appointed a main contractor and broken ground on the site to deliver 13 homes.
- Have achieved adoption of the Development Brief for the site in Great Barton
- Be progressing through the planning process on the Outline Planning Permission and Detailed Phase 1 consent for Great Barton
- Have secured at least 10 new plots for our development pipeline, and be working through the design, planning and procurement process.
- Completed and implemented a review of our gateway approval process

# Mission, values and objectives

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*built in*  
Quality of life

## 3.1 Mission

West Suffolk Council is the sole shareholder for Barley Homes. The primary mission for Barley Homes is to generate capital and revenue income for its shareholder through the development of new housing for sale and rent, initially in West Suffolk. At Barley Homes, we understand that things are constantly changing and we are not afraid of evolving our ideas and offers to accommodate these changes. Whether it is the location or the methods used, we will continue to adapt and grow. Throughout our building process, we have our future buyers and homeowners in mind, consistently ensuring the quality of our housing is to the highest possible standard.

## 3.2 Values

Barley Homes works in partnership to build sustainable, affordable homes that create communities, respect the environment, and contribute to the local economy.

## 3.3 Objectives

We have three objectives that help towards the achievement of this vision:

- **Building quality homes for life** - building homes that add great memories to every owner's life story.
- **Working as a trusted partner** - trusted relationships are at the core of Barley Homes, when working with customers and partners alike
- **Building and enhancing communities** - creating homes and spaces that are pleasures to live in.

# Environment

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## 4.1 Construction Methods, Building Performance and Renewable Energy

The UK construction industry can play a significant role in reducing the country's carbon emissions, alongside improving the environmental qualities of the built environment.

In the last few years, we have seen changes to local and national policies that reflect that ambition, including changes introduced via the Environment Bill to set mandatory minimum targets for Biodiversity Net Gain, a move away from the reliance upon gas as a source of heating and the introduction of modern methods of construction to reduce the carbon impact of construction.

Barley Homes follow the principle that, where at all possible, we will exceed policy requirements in such regards.

Barley Homes continues to actively look to employ new ways of building, whether that be through the use of off-site manufacture or the use of materials that incorporate recycled content and need much less energy to manufacture. The application of any particular solution is considered on a site-by-site basis to ensure the right products are available and able to meet the financial and design requirements of Barley Homes.

Government previously announced that by 2025 all new build homes will no longer be able to be heated via fossil fuels (gas boilers). Although recent ministerial statements suggest a divergence from or a delay to the date of implementation Barley Homes strive to include renewable forms of heating within our developments, to help reduce heating bills for the resident and tackle emissions. Current schemes under design development consider both the use of air source heat pumps and photovoltaic panels to provide renewable heating and low energy solutions.

Barley Homes also continues to work towards ensuring higher energy performance/low levels of heat and energy loss in the new build homes that we build. We are presently working with AECOM to produce a defined Technical Specification, against which all new homes will be delivered.

# Market Analysis

## 5.1 UK housing and new build market

The UK's housing market nationally has generally struggled across 2023. With rising mortgage rates and the cost-of-living crisis, house price indices have shown a significant year-on-year drop, although some regions have held up better than others. Nationwide reported UK house prices fell by 5.3% compared to August 2022. Meanwhile, mortgage approvals are also approximately 20% below pre-pandemic levels.

The cost-of-living crisis was building throughout 2022, with inflation levels well in excess of Bank of England targets, which saw monthly interest rate rises for 15 consecutive months. While there are signs of inflation easing, and mortgage rates stabilising, the interest rate remains high compared to the levels homeowners have been used to since the late 2000s. Balancing these higher rates alongside managing household finances will be a challenge for many through 2024. The impact of the cost-of-living crisis is greatest for lower income households, adding further difficulties on top of the challenges of the last few years.

Whilst demand for housing remains, the prospects for the housing market in 2024 are heavily dependent on what happens to mortgage rates - how high do they stay and for how long. If mortgage rates remain elevated, this will exclude significant proportions of prospective first-time buyers and home movers from the market. Recent statistics produced by property consultants Savills suggested that the proportion of cash buyers as part of the total number of house buyers has increased, however this will still likely lead to a continued reduction in housing market activity and potentially house price falls.

The new build market has been similarly impacted by the slowdown in the overall housing market with at least two major housebuilders reporting a year-on-year fall in the average weekly sales rate in August 2023. In addition, build costs (see commentary below in section 5.3) which remain historically high following significant build cost inflation which occurred during and post-Covid. These two pressures means that developers are, and will be, experiencing lower profits on schemes and there are indications that some are delaying or slowing down their build programmes. **Page 84**

In many ways the trends in the West Suffolk market reflect those played out nationally, in the sense of house prices softening whilst build costs remain relatively high. Estate agents have reported a lessening of demand, the requirement for more incentives to be offered with new build properties, and more offers being made by buyers and accepted by vendors and developers.

According to publicly available Land Registry data, the annual % change in house prices in West Suffolk stood at 0.8%, which compares to 0% for the whole of England, both as at August 2023 (the most recently available data at the time of writing this report). Meanwhile the average house price in West Suffolk in August 2023 stood at £312,681, compared to £309,616 for England.

For Barley Homes, the challenges arising from operating exclusively in the West Suffolk market is access to viable sites, with a predominately rural geographic area and many identified areas of allocated land subject to options with larger, established Housebuilders. Meanwhile the viability challenges of high build costs against falling/uncertain values applies to Barley Homes as it does to all other housebuilders.



### 5.3 Build costs

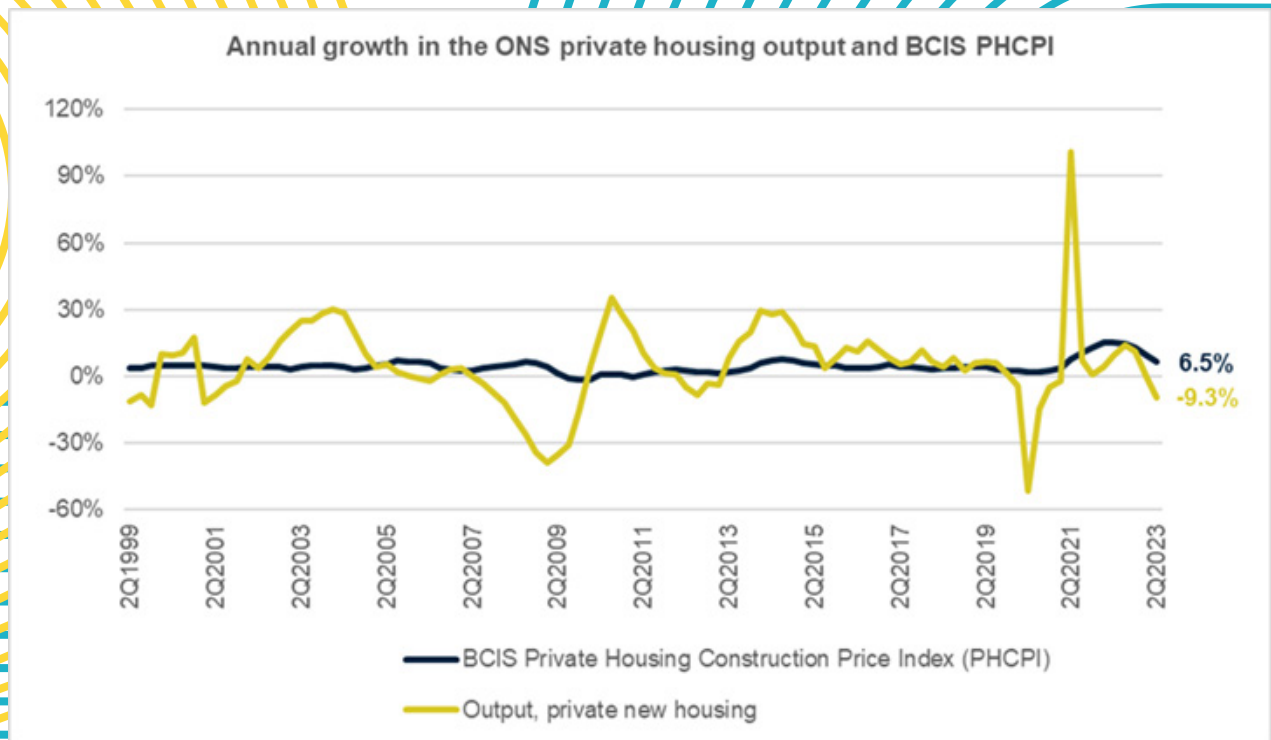
Housebuilders costs grew by 6.5% in the second quarter of 2023, according to the Building Cost Information Service (BCIS) Private Housing Construction Price Index (PHCPI), having stood at 9.7% in quarter one in 2023. Although inflation is slowing, this increase still stands at high end of the levels recorded since the initiation of the series in 1998. 38% of PHCPI respondents pointed to an increase in subcontractor costs as the main driver of change in costs, and a quarter of respondents cited an increase in materials costs. At the same time, for the third consecutive quarter, a small share of respondents reported a decrease in materials costs (6%).

The slowdown of materials cost inflation is also reflected in the BCIS Materials Cost Index, which reported 2.8% growth in quarter two 2023 on the same period in the previous year. This is a significant drop from a peak in the annual growth of 23.5% observed in quarter two 2022, although still affects forward projections for committed schemes, which have been re-baselined from inception.

Looking to quarter three 2023, the housebuilders surveyed by ONS expect to experience an average 1% increase in costs.

ONS construction output figures, which have been declining since quarter four 2022, clearly demonstrate the continued pressure on the private housing sector, as illustrated in the table below.





Barley Homes will continue to monitor trends in construction costs and the housing market, both from published sources and data from its own developments, to help inform both appraisals on potential pipeline sites and also to inform risk management decisions on active pipeline sites.

# Development Activity



## 6.1 Development objectives

Barley Homes is a commercial company, but with social values at our heart. In practice that means we aim to generate social, financial, and environmental benefit for West Suffolk. We aim to build sustainable housing developments with high levels of affordable homes in the right areas of the district, to support West Suffolk Council's strategic priority to "Increase and improve the provision of appropriate housing in west Suffolk in both our towns and rural areas", and in line with relevant future West Suffolk Council strategic priorities and policies.

In practice this means that we are committed to develop schemes in full compliance with the adopted Local Plan, adding value wherever we can, whilst ensuring that we provide a return on investment to our shareholder.

## 6.2 Design principles

Barley Homes aim to create great places to live for those who buy and rent. We also want to build robust schemes that look fantastic for many years to come. This can be achieved through a combination of successful design and the use of low maintenance details and materials.

We assess every project on an individual basis to ensure it fits our values. Where possible, we work with local communities to input into the design stage early. Each project is unique, which is why all of our schemes feature bespoke designs that are distinct but fit well within their local surroundings. Barley Homes aims to deliver high-quality, tenure blind housing to ensure communities are integrated, and all homes provide suitable space and good quality design.



## 6.3 Development programme

With delays to projects brought about by challenging market conditions, the company faces a period where development activity on-site has paused, meaning that, in the immediate term there is limited throughput of return on investment from sales in the current year.

This year's Business Plan, therefore, acknowledges the impact this has on cashflow, and sets a strategy to develop the pipeline up to a point where we can settle upon a consistent delivery rate whilst operating within the established funding envelope available.

To do so, the Business Plan contains two elements.

The first element is the table below which shows the Barley Homes pipeline as it stands today and the projects in delivery. In future, if a project is marked in bold this will mean it has started on site so that the number of homes is fixed, and less likely to change. The remaining projects have estimated housing numbers that will evolve as we procure our delivery partners and progress through the design and planning stages.

Figure 1: Current Development Pipeline

Site	Total Homes	Open Market	Affordable Homes (AH)	Policy AH %	Potential AH Provision %
<b>Started/Completed on site</b>					
Westmill	37	26	11	30%	30%
Stonemill	26	18	8	30%	30%
<b>Sites at planning stage</b>					
Rougham (Phase 1)	13	9	4	30%	30%
<b>Sites at pre-planning</b>					
Great Barton Phase 1	40	28	12	30%	30%
College Heath Road #	40	0	40	30%	100%
<b>Pipeline Sites - sites under option</b>					
Rougham Phase 2	26	18	8	30%	30%
Great Barton Phase 2*	145	102	43	30%	30%
<b>2023 Business Plan TOTALS</b>	<b>327</b>	<b>201</b>	<b>126</b>	<b>N/A</b>	<b>40%</b>

\* - site under option from Suffolk County Council.

# - Barley Homes is working with a preferred Registered Provider to bring this site forward, as previous appraisals have shown it to be unviable for a conventional policy compliant, mixed tenure scheme

The second element is the table below. This sets out Barley Homes proposed development programme as a composition of target acquisitions, build out and sales, which allows us to develop our financial and development proposals within our established financial envelope, namely the existing loan facility with our Shareholder. Later sections of this Business Plan elaborate upon the financial analysis that sits behind this, but there are a few key points to note.

Figure 2: Pipeline Targets Per Annum, for land acquisition, build and sales

Site	Dwellings per site per annum					
	23/24	24/25	25/26	26/27	27/28	28/29
Rougham Phase 1	13					
Great Barton Phase 1		40				
Future Pipeline Site(s)*		10	10	55	10	55
<b>Acquisition rate</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>55</b>
Rougham		10	3			
Great Barton Phase 1			17	23		
Future Pipeline Site(s)*				7	35	40
<b>Build Rate</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>40</b>
Rougham		4	9			
Great Barton Phase 1			12	24	4	
Future Pipeline Site(s)*					27	40
<b>Sales Rate</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>40</b>

\* - this will be a composition of existing identified sites, such as land already under option, and new site opportunities, as they emerge.

- where a box is empty, this assumes zero units for that year apply.

Both tables use combined estimates for the purposes of building our financial plan, and to forecast completions over the plan period. Our programme evolves as work is completed by the team on each project, meaning that this business plan varies from the estimates laid out in the previous plan and will not necessarily exactly track the build out on any given site as laid out in table two. The key aspect of this table is to illustrate target acquisition, build and sales rates per annum as a total over a five-year period, which we targeted after financial analysis to ensure peak borrowing does not exceed our financial capacity, namely the ceiling of Barley Homes previously approved loan facility.

It should be noted that the early years of the cycle have shown that, as a consequence of delays brought about via the pandemic and other commercial factors, target build and sales rates in the early years create a lag between outlay and return on investment. In the medium to long term, we aim to maintain a steady acquisition, build and sales rate to achieve a consistent throughput of 40 units per annum, which we have tested against a variety of assumptions based upon typical average sales values, build cost and land acquisition costs, but this will take time to establish, given the inherent lag between construction costs and sales income.

This is a prudently cautious estimate so as not to overstate revenue in the financial plan or overstretch Barley Homes beyond its financial capabilities, which would otherwise create risk for our Shareholder.

Regular performance management updates are provided to the Board of Directors and Shareholder Advisory Group during the year so that each project can be tracked in detail, with the business plan updated each year and subject to approval by the Shareholder (West Suffolk Council). Progress is also reported in an Annual Report and at an Annual General Meeting.

# Financial Projections and Risk Management

## 7.1 Introduction

This business plan sets out the forecast financial outcome arising from the acquisition and development of a number of sites.

Funding for Barley Homes is provided by West Suffolk Council. From the perspective of the Council, the distinction in funding which it provides is between short term loan funding and long-term equity funding. Whilst loan funding is fully repaid from development proceeds, equity funding is provided on a long-term basis.

To satisfy HMRC and state aid requirements, from the perspective of Barley Homes funding has to be separated into debt (loans) and equity (share capital). This leads to financial payments from the company to the Council in the form of:

- Interest on loans to the company
- Dividends payable out of post-tax profits

These returns are in addition to the land value receipts.

## 7.2 Summary of financial projections

Barley Homes is forecasting to make small losses during the 2023 to 2024 and the 2024 to 2025 financial years, before returning to a profit position from the 2025 to 2026 financial year. This reflects the proposed development programme detailed in section six above, with significant plot sales occurring from 2025 to 2026 onwards. Detailed financial projections can be seen in section 7.4 below.

In total, the peak funding requirement up until the end of March 2028 is currently forecast to be £8.05 million (within the £14 million current loan facility). This occurs in November 2026. Whilst all loan funding will be repaid, there is a long-term equity funding requirement which will remain with Barley Homes.

### 7.3 Project funding – overall envelope

Barley Homes produce individual site financial forecasts, which are monitored through the project lifecycle. For the purposes of the Business Plan these are combined into a single financial model which can be seen at section 7.4 below.

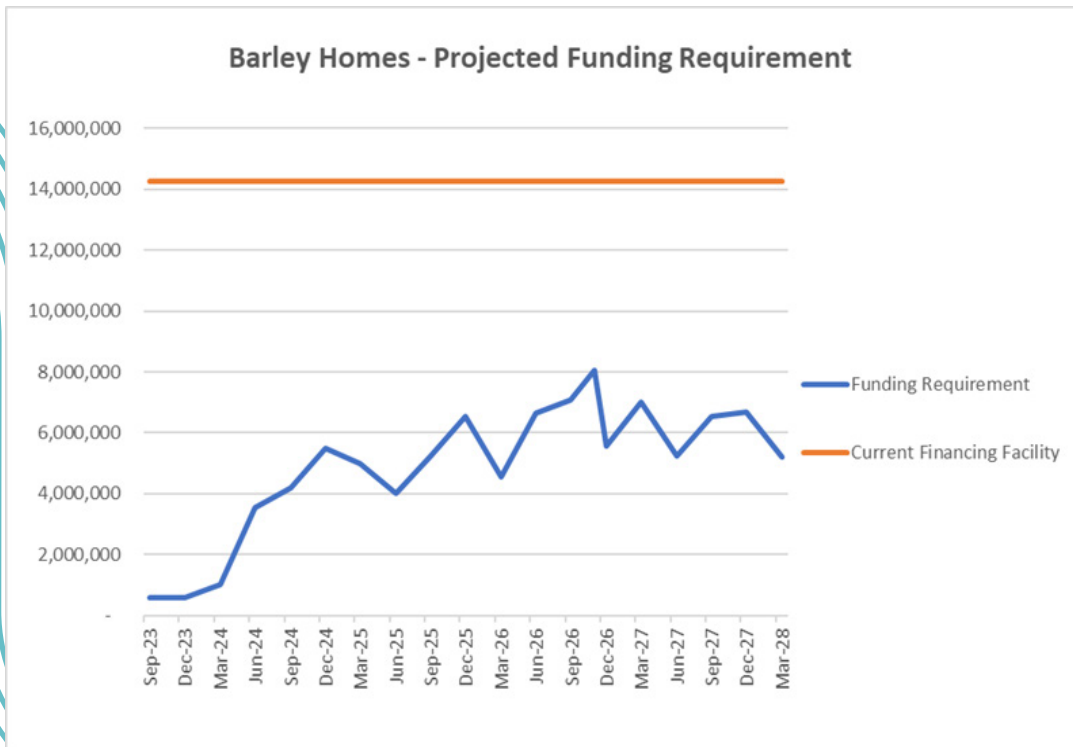
#### The principles of this funding are:

- Funding is provided by the shareholding Council
- From the perspective of Barley Homes, a part of the funding is treated as share capital and part as a loan – the principal difference is that the loan will bear interest.
- Interest charged on development loans is “capitalised”, this means it becomes an additional finance cost which is added to the loan.

#### In addition:

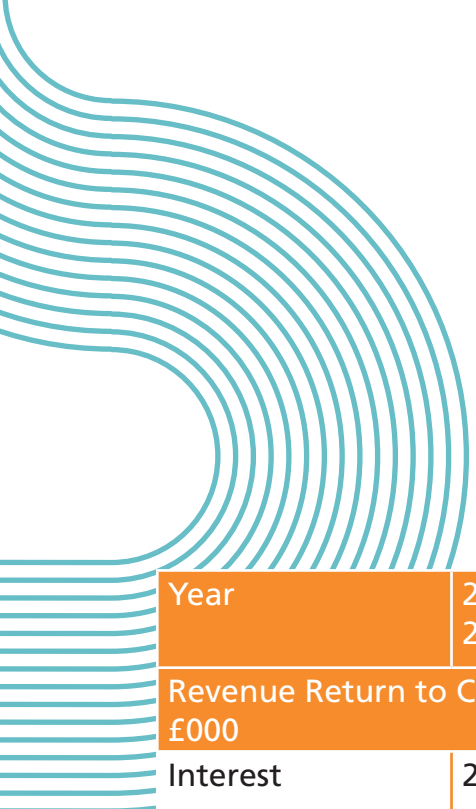
- An additional allowance for corporate costs of £200,000 per year has been allowed during the next five years of activity.
- A corporation tax liability of 25% arises on profits made by the company.

On this basis (and assuming profits are gradually paid back to the Council as dividends), the total cash flow and funding requirement for the company is shown in the graph below. This takes into account the sites in Rougham and Great Barton detailed in section three, as well as for the College Heath Road site. Estimates for future, as yet unknown, pipeline sites have also been included.



This shows the level of funding requirement building up in the short-term with it staying within the £4 million to £8 million range in the medium term to long term as sites start and complete at a more regular rate. This leads to a peak funding requirement of £8.05 million during quarter three of 2026 to 2027.

The table below shows the anticipated financial return to the Council from the development activity which is a combination of interest and dividends received. Note this return is in addition to the land receipts which the council would receive if it were the landowner. The overall return from the developments to the council are summarised below.



Year	2023 to 2024	2024 to 2025	2025 to 2026	2026 to 2027	2027 to 2028	Total
Revenue Return to Council £000						
Interest	2	242	294	384	362	1,284
Dividends	600	-	-	150	302	1,052
Total Return	602	242	294	534	664	2,336

## 7.4 Financial performance

Detailed financial modelling has been undertaken of the proposed development programme detailed in section six above, taking into account the projections on land acquisition, build and sales rates. A number of assumptions have had to be made, with the main ones being the purchase price of land, costs of building units and sales income.

The table below details the forecast Profit and Loss account, Balance Sheet and Cash Flow for Barley Homes up until the end of the 2028 to 2029 financial year.

Financials	2023 Mar-23 ACT	2024 Mar-24 F'CAST	2025 Mar-25 F'CAST	2026 Mar-26 F'CAST	2027 Mar-27 F'CAST	2028 Mar-28 F'CAST	2029 Mar-29 F'CAST
<b>Profit &amp; Loss</b>							
Turnover	7,148,109	-	1,330,000	7,139,000	6,969,600	10,419,200	11,985,600
Cost of Sales	(5,831,955)	(16,046)	(1,169,005)	(6,443,968)	(5,983,070)	(8,554,018)	(10,240,600)
Gross profit	1,316,154	(16,046)	160,995	695,032	986,530	1,865,182	1,745,000
Overheads	(85,416)	(69,696)	(200,000)	(200,000)	(200,000)	(200,000)	(200,000)
Finance Costs	(44,690)	(2,167)	(241,854)	(294,396)	(384,313)	(361,563)	(319,313)
Profit / (Loss) before Tax	1,186,049	(87,909)	(280,859)	200,636	402,217	1,303,620	1,225,687
Taxation	(225,349)	-	-	-	(58,521)	(325,905)	(306,422)

Profit / (Loss) Af- ter Tax	960,700	(87,909)	(280,859)	200,636	343,696	977,715	919,265
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Financials	2023 Mar-23 ACT	2024 Mar-24 F'CAST	2025 Mar-25 F'CAST	2026 Mar-26 F'CAST	2027 Mar-27 F'CAST	2028 Mar-28 F'CAST	2029 Mar-29 F'CAST
<b>Balance Sheet</b>							
Fixed assets	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Current Assets	2,144,688	1,775,503	5,716,571	5,846,235	9,193,153	8,658,579	5,578,658
Current Liabilities	(414,226)	(332,949)	(554,887)	(933,904)	(1,637,604)	(2,226,978)	(1,855,501)
Long Term Liabilities	-	(400,000)	(4,400,000)	(3,950,000)	(6,400,000)	(4,600,000)	(1,950,000)
Net Assets / (Liabilities)	1,730,462	1,042,554	761,694	962,330	1,155,549	1,831,601	1,773,152

Share Capital	600,000	600,000	600,000	600,000	600,000	600,000	600,000
Retained Earnings	1,130,462	442,553	161,694	362,330	555,549	1,231,601	1,173,152
Capital and Reserves	1,730,462	1,042,554	761,694	962,330	1,155,549	1,831,601	1,773,152

Financials	2023 Mar-23 ACT	2024 Mar-24 F'CAST	2025 Mar-25 F'CAST	2026 Mar-26 F'CAST	2027 Mar-27 F'CAST	2028 Mar-28 F'CAST	2029 Mar-29 F'CAST
<b>Cash Flow</b>							
Opening cash	38,247	1,049,063	1,170	91,940	903,250	51,609	39,625

Earnings Before In- terest, Tax, Deprecia- tion & Amortisation	1,230,739	(85,742)	(39,005)	495,032	786,032	1,665,182	1,545,000
Operating cash flows	2,633,724	(534,636)	(3,628,371)	1,060,674	(3,553,382)	844,581	2,715,362
Non-operating cash flows	(128,957)	(225,349)	-	-	-	(58,521)	(325,905)
Financing cash flows	(2,344,690)	397,833	3,758,146	(744,396)	2,065,688	(2,161,563)	(2,969,313)

Net Cash Flow	1,390,817	(447,893)	90,770	811,310	(701,165)	289,679	965,144
Dividends to Share- holder	(380,000)	(600,000)	-	-	(150,477)	(301,663)	(977,715)
Closing cash	1,049,063	1,170	91,940	903,250	51,609	39,625	27,054



### **7.4.1 Profit and loss**

The Profit and Loss account shows the trading performance of Barley Homes based on the proposed development programme. Profits are recognised at point of sale of the properties, with the costs of those sales showing at the same time as the sales income.

As a result of there being no sales expected until the end of the 2024 to 2025 financial year, we are forecasting to make a loss in both the 2023 to 2024 and 2024 to 2025 financial years, with profits being generated thereafter, when the results from the developments flow through.

The forecast incorporates trading performance from the sites in Rougham and Great Barton detailed in section three, as well as for the College Heath Road site. Estimates for future, as yet unknown, pipeline sites have also been included.

We will monitor this closely with the shareholder in the coming year and forecast as projects progress through the design, planning and tendering stages.

### **7.4.2 Balance sheet**

The Balance sheet below shows the forecast financial health of Barley Homes at the end of each financial year. It details the level of assets and liabilities of the company as well as the level of share capital and reserves.

The level of retained earnings drops in the short term to accommodate the forecast losses for the next two financial years, before increasing as forecast profits are made. This increase in retained earnings takes into account the forecast payment of dividends to the shareholder detailed above. As at the 31 March 2029, retained earnings forecast to be £1,173,152 although this could change depending on the dividend policy of the company. Any

### **7.4.3 Cash flow**

The Cash flow shows the cash movements of the company during the financial years, including cash ins and outs as a result of loan drawdown and repayments.

The forecasts show a closing cash balance as at 31 March 2029 of

## **7.5 Performance management**

Projects are managed directly in house, supported by the engagement of an Employer's Agent as soon as project is committed. The Board of Directors oversee the operational and financial performance of the developments with actions being taken to address or mitigate any shortcomings. In addition, the company holds regular meetings with both its Shareholder Advisory group, to provide strategic oversight

## 7.6 Risk management

Risks can generally be considered to have impacts relating to time, cost or quality. These impacts need to be managed by Barley Homes throughout the development process. The main risk triggers that lead to time/cost/quality impacts are summarised in the table below:

Development stage	Risk triggers/sources	Actions to identify and manage risk
Strategic objectives	Objectives and brief not sufficiently clear	Strategic objectives agreed by all key stakeholders.
	Financial parameters/benchmarks not agreed	Approach to development appraisal agreed by all key stakeholders
Site identification and acquisition	Chosen site does not deliver objectives	Development appraisal and options testing, underpinned by robust evidence to support costs and values.
	Estimated cost/value/returns uncommercial	Consideration of available land and funding to ensure most appropriate sites being development. Agreement with shareholder about priorities for site.
Site feasibility/enabling	Site conditions risks	Purchase of land subject to full site investigations including ground conditions, utilities, obstructions, contamination, ecology, existing utilities and future capacity, existing access/highways and future capacity, unexploded ordnance, asbestos.
	Estimated cost/value/returns uncommercial	Warrantable and assignable surveys were cost effective and practical.  Development appraisal and options testing, underpinned by robust evidence to support costs and values.  Agreement with shareholder about priorities for site.

Development stage	Risk triggers/sources	Actions to identify and manage risk
Detailed design	<p>Regulatory compliance</p> <p>Design inappropriate for end users</p> <p>Design not pegged to a value that needs to be achieved – too low/high</p> <p>Estimated cost/value/returns uncommercial</p>	<p>Design brief, specification, Employers Requirements.</p> <p>Working alongside West Suffolk Council at pre-planning stage.</p> <p>Market evidence – sales/lettings and management input into the specification.</p> <p>Development appraisal and options testing, underpinned by robust evidence to support costs and values.</p> <p>Early engagement of Employer’s Agent and Cost Plan Manager, alongside liaison with a building contractor to feed in build-ability advice.</p> <p>Agreement with shareholder about priorities for site.</p>
Procurement of works	<p>Market appetite poor</p> <p>Tender prices exceed estimate</p> <p>Length/complexity of process</p> <p>Choice of contractual structure</p> <p>Estimated cost/value/returns uncommercial</p>	<p>Soft market testing and partner profiling to ensure most suitable construction partners bid.</p> <p>Robust cost development and contingency budgeting</p> <p>Clear proposition and timetable put to the market – reduction of unknowns within a tender will lead to greater price certainty.</p> <p>Clear procurement strategy, process and timetable to give confidence to the market.</p> <p>Consideration of procurement frameworks if they clearly offer advantages.</p> <p>Development appraisal and options testing, underpinned by robust evidence to support costs and values.</p> <p>Decision gateways built in to review interim stage cost plans and create opportunities for review/limit cost exposure/outlays before other mitigation measures applied.</p>

Development stage	Risk triggers/sources	Actions to identify and manage risk
Construction	Poor management by contractor	Contract provisions need to balance protection of client interests with reward for good performance.
	Labour/materials shortages	Sufficient Employers Agent/Project Management resource to manage contract.
	Weather	
	Workmanship	Sufficient site inspection resource to ensure quality
	Client variations	
	Estimated costs/value/returns uncommercial.	Development appraisal and options testing, underpinned by robust evidence to support costs and values.
Exit	Forecast returns not realisable in the market	Exit route identified at early stage of the project to inform design, planning and delivery.
	Over supply	Timing of exit monitored closely to ensure disposal timed to maximise value.
	Lack of demand	

Barley Homes utilises a standard industry approach to development monitoring. An Employers Agent is employed for each site to produce the build specification for the homes to be built and undertake monthly valuations of work carried out by the contractor.

For each site, there is a scheme budget, delegated to the Development Manager and spend on development costs are monitored against this. Schemes are monitored through regular reporting to the Board. Costs for a Development Manager, Employers Agent, and all necessary professional team inputs have been included in the financial appraisals.

Given the current uncertain economic climate there is a risk that a project could be delayed. If delays are encountered this could prolong the programme and Barley Homes as the borrower may incur additional costs. There is also a risk that the cost of labour and materials could increase due to scarcity of resources, inflation, and shipment issues. There is an increase in cost of materials and labour across many developments. However, risks and unknowns can be mitigated at all stages of the process, for example sales risk is mitigated and managed at all stages through continual research, market updates, specification changes, pricing changes, marketing strategies, and timing of release of the product to the market.

The image features a vibrant blue background with a complex pattern of thin, wavy yellow and white lines that create a sense of movement and depth. In the center, there is a stylized graphic element resembling a house or a roof, composed of a white shape on the left and a yellow shape on the right, both with rounded corners. Below this graphic, the text "Quality of life *built in*" is displayed in a clean, white sans-serif font, with the words "built in" in a smaller, italicized font.

Quality of life *built in*

# Revenues collection performance and write-offs

<b>Report number:</b>	<b>CAB/WS/23/060</b>	
<b>Report to and date:</b>	<b>Cabinet</b>	5 December 2023
<b>Cabinet member:</b>	Diane Hind Portfolio Holder Resources Email: <a href="mailto:diane.hind@westsuffolk.gov.uk">diane.hind@westsuffolk.gov.uk</a>	
<b>Lead officer:</b>	Rachael Mann Director Resources and Property Tel: 01638 719245 Email: <a href="mailto:rachael.mann@westsuffolk.gov.uk">rachael.mann@westsuffolk.gov.uk</a>	

**Decisions Plan:** The decision made as a result of this report will usually be published within 48 hours and cannot be actioned until five clear working days of the publication of the decision have elapsed. This item is included on the Decisions Plan but no longer constitutes a Key Decision.

**Wards impacted:** All wards

**Recommendation:** The write-off of the amounts detailed in the exempt appendices to Report number: CAB/WS/23/060, be approved, as follows:

1. Exempt Appendix 1: NNDR totalling £68,414.51
2. Exempt Appendix 2: Sundry debt totalling £6,962.44

## 1. Context to this report

- 1.1 The revenues section collects outstanding debts in accordance with either statutory guidelines or council agreed procedures.
- 1.2 When all these procedures have been exhausted the outstanding debt is written off using the delegated authority of the Director, Resources and Property for debts up to £4,999.99 or by Cabinet for debts over £5,000.00.
- 1.3 It is best practice to monitor the recovery procedures for outstanding debts regularly and, when appropriate, write off irrecoverable debts.
- 1.4 Provision for irrecoverable debts is included both in the Collection Fund and the General Fund and writing off debts that are known to be irrecoverable ensures that staff are focussed on achieving good collection levels in respect of the recoverable debt.
- 1.5 As at 1 November 2023 the Council Tax percentage of debt written off during 2023/2024 for all previous years is 0.01 percent.
- 1.6 As at 1 November 2023 the business rates percentage of debt written off during 2023/2024 for all previous years is 0.01 percent.
- 1.7 As at 1 November 2023 the sundry debt percentage of debt written off during 2022/23 for all previous years is 0.02 percent.

## 2. Proposals within this report

- 2.1 To review the current revenue collection performance and to consider writing off outstanding debts, as detailed in the exempt appendices.
- 2.2 Provision is made in the accounts for non-recovery but the total amounts to be written off are as follows with full details shown in **Exempt Appendix 1 NNDR totalling £68,414.51**  
**Exempt Appendix 2 Sundry totalling £6,962.44**
- 2.3 As at 1 April 2023 the total National Non-Domestic Rates (NNDR) billed by Anglia Revenues Partnership on behalf of West Suffolk Council (as the billing Authority) is £70.3 million per annum. The collection rate as at 1 November 2023 was 65.96 percent against a profiled target of 63.44 percent.
- 2.4 As at 1 April 2023 the total Council Tax billed by Anglia Revenues Partnership on behalf of West Suffolk Council (includes the County,



Police and Parish precept elements) is £118.4 million per annum. The collection rate as at 1 November 2023 was 65.11 percent against a profiled target of 64.78 percent.

### **3. Alternative options that have been considered**

- 3.1 There is an extensive and supportive recovery process prior to the engagement of an enforcement agency. The council currently uses the services of the ARP Enforcement Agency to assist in the collection of business rates and Council Tax and also has online tracing facilities. Although this service was suspended during the lockdown and up to more recently, enforcement is now reinstated in line with Government guidance. It is not considered appropriate to pass the debts on to another agency.
- 3.2 It should be noted that in the event that a written-off debt becomes recoverable, the amount is written back on, and enforcement procedures are re-established. This might happen, for example, if someone has gone away with no trace, and then they are unexpectedly 'found' again, through whatever route.

### **4. Consultation and engagement undertaken**

- 4.1 Leadership Team and the Portfolio Holder for Resources have been consulted with on the proposed write-offs.

### **5. Risks associated with the proposals**

- 5.1 Low Risk - Debts are written off which could have been collected  
Control - Extensive recovery procedures are in place to ensure that all possible mechanisms are exhausted before a debt is written off.

Medium Risk – Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on recovery of debts and the increase in bankruptcies, IVA, CVA's are likely to impact this years' collection rates. Close monitoring is taking place and support provided where possible.

### **6. Implications arising from the proposals**

- 6.1 Financial as above
- 6.2 Legal Compliance  
- the recovery procedures followed have been previously agreed;  
writing off uncollectable debt allows staff to focus recovery action on debt which is recoverable.
- 6.3 Personal Data Processing  
- no changes to the way we process personal data.

- 6.4 Equalities
- the application of predetermined recovery procedures ensures that everybody is treated consistently.
  - failure to collect any debt impacts on either the levels of service provision or the levels of charges.
  - all available remedies are used to recover the debt before write-off is considered.
  - the provision of services by the Council applies to everyone in the area.
- 6.5 Crime and Disorder
- 6.6 Environment or Sustainability
- 6.7 HR or Staffing
- 6.8 Changes to existing policies
- 6.9 External organisations (such as businesses, community groups)
- No significant implications on 6.1 – 6.8 as a result of this report

## **7. Appendices referenced in this report**

- 7.1 Exempt Appendix 1: NNDR  
Exempt Appendix 2: Sundry

## **8. Background documents associated with this report**

- 8.1 None

## Decisions Plan

### Key decisions and other executive decisions to be considered

**Date: 1 December 2023 to 31 May 2024**

**Publication date: 3 November 2023**

The following plan shows both the key decisions and other decisions/matters taken in private, that the Cabinet, portfolio holders, joint committees or officers under delegated authority, are intending to take up to 31 May 2024. This table is updated on a monthly rolling basis and provides at least 28 clear days' notice of the consideration of any key decisions and of the taking of any items in private.

Executive decisions are taken at public meetings of the Cabinet and by other bodies/individuals provided with executive decision-making powers. Some decisions and items may be taken in private during the parts of the meeting at which the public may be excluded, when it is likely that confidential or exempt information may be disclosed. This is indicated on the relevant meeting agenda and in the 'Reason for taking the item in private' column relevant to each item detailed on the plan.

Members of the public may wish to:

- make enquiries in respect of any of the intended decisions listed below; or
- receive copies of any of the documents in the public domain listed below; or
- receive copies of any other documents in the public domain relevant to those matters listed below which may be submitted to the decision taker; or
- make representations in relation to why meetings to consider the listed items intended for consideration in private should be open to the public.

In all instances, contact should be made with the named officer in the first instance, either on the telephone number listed against their name, or via email using the format [firstname.surname@westsuffolk.gov.uk](mailto:firstname.surname@westsuffolk.gov.uk) or via West Suffolk Council, West Suffolk House, Western Way, Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk, IP33 3YU or Mildenhall Hub, Sheldrick Way, Mildenhall, Suffolk IP28 7JX.

Expected decision date	Subject and purpose of decision	Reason for taking item in private (see Note 1 for relevant exempt paragraphs)	Decision (D), Key Decision (KD) or Rec (R) to Council on date  (see Note 2 for Key Decision definitions)	Decision taker (see Note 3 for membership)	Portfolio holder contact details	Lead officer contact details	Documents to be submitted
05/12/23  (deferred from 14/11/23)  Update since publication:  Item deferred to January 2024	<b>UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) and Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF) allocations 2024 to 2025</b>  The Cabinet will be asked to consider the allocation of UKSPF and REPF funding for 2024 to 2025.	Not applicable	(D)	Cabinet	Cliff Waterman Leader 01284 757001	Ian Gallin Chief Executive 01284 757001  Liz Barnard Service Manager (Policy, Projects and Performance) 01638 719454	Report to Cabinet.
05/12/23  (new)	<b>Investing in our Commercial Portfolio</b>  The Cabinet will be asked to consider and approve a business case for an investment	Exempt Appendices (paragraph 3)	(KD) (a)	Cabinet	Diane Hind Resources	Rachael Mann Director (Resources and Property) 01638 719245	Report to Cabinet with exempt appendices attached.

Expected decision date	Subject and purpose of decision	Reason for taking item in private (see Note 1 for relevant exempt paragraphs)	Decision (D), Key Decision (KD) or Rec (R) to Council on date  (see Note 2 for Key Decision definitions)	Decision taker (see Note 3 for membership)	Portfolio holder contact details	Lead officer contact details	Documents to be submitted
	opportunity in the district.						
05/12/23 Page 109 (new)	<b>Abbeycroft Leisure Strategic Partnership Review</b> The Cabinet will be asked to consider the recommendations of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee following a review undertaken by the Committee's appointed task and finish group. The review principally focussed on reviewing the Council's partnership with Abbeycroft Leisure against the current	Exempt Appendix (paragraph 3)	(D)	Cabinet	Ian Shipp Leisure 07368 134769	Jill Korwin Strategic Director 01284 757252  Darren Dixon Service Manager (Leisure and Facilities) 01284 757678	Recommendations of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to Cabinet.

Expected decision date	Subject and purpose of decision	Reason for taking item in private (see Note 1 for relevant exempt paragraphs)	Decision (D), Key Decision (KD) or Rec (R) to Council on date  (see Note 2 for Key Decision definitions)	Decision taker (see Note 3 for membership)	Portfolio holder contact details	Lead officer contact details	Documents to be submitted
	Collaboration Agreement.						
05/12/23 (new)  Page 110	<b>West Suffolk Local Plan</b> The Cabinet will be asked to recommend to Council, approval of the West Suffolk Local Plan - Submission Document (Regulation 19) together with supporting documents to go out to consultation in January 2024.	Not applicable	(R) – Council 19/12/23	Cabinet / Council	Jim Thorndyke Planning 01359 250271	Julie Baird Director (Planning and Growth) 01284 757613  Marie Smith Service Manager (Strategic Planning) 01638 719260	Report to Cabinet with recommendations to Council.
05/12/23 (new)	<b>West Suffolk Council Corporate Priorities</b> The Cabinet will be asked to recommend	Not applicable	(R) – Council 19/12/23	Cabinet / Council	Cliff Waterman Leader 01284 757001	Ian Gallin Chief Executive 01284 757001	Report to Cabinet with recommendations to Council.

Expected decision date	Subject and purpose of decision	Reason for taking item in private (see Note 1 for relevant exempt paragraphs)	Decision (D), Key Decision (KD) or Rec (R) to Council on date  (see Note 2 for Key Decision definitions)	Decision taker (see Note 3 for membership)	Portfolio holder contact details	Lead officer contact details	Documents to be submitted
<p>Update since publication:</p> <p>This item will be considered directly by Council on 19/12/23</p>	<p>to Council, approval of new West Suffolk Council Corporate Priorities.</p>						
<p>05/12/23  (new)  Update since publication:</p>	<p><b>Medium Term Financial Strategy 2024 to 2028</b> The Cabinet will be asked to consider and recommend to Council, approval of a new Medium Term Financial Strategy 2024 to 2028.</p>	<p>Not applicable</p>	<p>(R) – Council 19/12/23</p>	<p>Cabinet/ Council</p>	<p>Diane Hind Resources</p>	<p>Rachael Mann Director (Resources and Property) 01638 719245</p>	<p>Report to Cabinet with recommendations to Council.</p>

Expected decision date	Subject and purpose of decision	Reason for taking item in private (see Note 1 for relevant exempt paragraphs)	Decision (D), Key Decision (KD) or Rec (R) to Council on date  (see Note 2 for Key Decision definitions)	Decision taker (see Note 3 for membership)	Portfolio holder contact details	Lead officer contact details	Documents to be submitted
<p>This item will be considered directly by Council on 19/12/23</p>							
<p>05/12/23 (new)</p> <p>Update since publication:</p> <p>This item will be directly incorporated</p>	<p><b>Review of West Suffolk Council Grounds Maintenance Operations</b></p> <p>The Cabinet will be asked to consider and approve recommendations as a result of the outcomes of the grounds maintenance review. Views were sought</p>	<p>Not applicable</p>	<p>(D)</p>	<p>Cabinet</p>	<p>Ian Shipp Leisure 07368 134769</p>	<p>Mark Walsh Director (Operations) 01284 757300</p>	<p>Report to Cabinet.</p>



Expected decision date	Subject and purpose of decision	Reason for taking item in private (see Note 1 for relevant exempt paragraphs)	Decision (D), Key Decision (KD) or Rec (R) to Council on date  (see Note 2 for Key Decision definitions)	Decision taker (see Note 3 for membership)	Portfolio holder contact details	Lead officer contact details	Documents to be submitted
ated into the budget setting process in February 2024.	from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee as part of the review process.						
Not before 05/12/23 (new)	<b>Barley Homes Business Plan 2023</b> The Cabinet will be asked to consider and approve a new business plan for Barley Homes.	Exempt appendices: paragraph 3  Update since publication:  No exempt appendix presented.	(KD) (a)  Update since publication:  Not a Key Decision	Cabinet	Richard O'Driscoll Housing	Julie Baird Director (Planning and Growth) 01284 757613	Report to Cabinet.
05/12/23	<b>Council Tax Base for</b>	Not applicable	(R) – Council	Cabinet/	Diane Hind	Rachael Mann	Report to Cabinet

Expected decision date	Subject and purpose of decision	Reason for taking item in private (see Note 1 for relevant exempt paragraphs)	Decision (D), Key Decision (KD) or Rec (R) to Council on date  (see Note 2 for Key Decision definitions)	Decision taker (see Note 3 for membership)	Portfolio holder contact details	Lead officer contact details	Documents to be submitted
Page 114	<p><b>Tax Setting Purposes 2024 to 2025</b> The Cabinet will be asked to recommend to Council the basis of the formal calculation for the Council Tax Base for West Suffolk Council for the financial year 2024 to 2025.</p>		19/12/23	Council	Resources	Director (Resources and Property) 01638 719245	with recommendations to Council.
05/12/23	<p><b>Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme 2024 to 2025</b> The Cabinet will be asked to consider proposals for potential revisions to the Local Council Tax Reduction</p>	Not applicable	(R) – Council 19/12/23	Cabinet/ Council	Diane Hind Resources	Rachael Mann Director (Resources and Property) 01638 719245	Report to Cabinet with recommendations to Council.

Expected decision date	Subject and purpose of decision	Reason for taking item in private (see Note 1 for relevant exempt paragraphs)	Decision (D), Key Decision (KD) or Rec (R) to Council on date  (see Note 2 for Key Decision definitions)	Decision taker (see Note 3 for membership)	Portfolio holder contact details	Lead officer contact details	Documents to be submitted
	Scheme prior to seeking its approval by Council.						
05/12/23 Update since publication:  No decision was required at this stage in the budget-setting	<b>Delivering a Sustainable Medium-Term Budget</b> The Cabinet will be asked to consider recommendations of the Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee for recommending to Council on proposals for achieving a sustainable budget in 2024 to 2025 and in the medium term.	Not applicable	(R) – Council 19/12/23  Update since publication:  Not applicable at this stage	Cabinet/ Council  Update since publication:  Not applicable at this stage	Diane Hind Resources	Rachael Mann Director (Resources and Property) 01638 719245	Recommendations of the Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee to Cabinet and Council.  Update since publication:  Not applicable at this stage

Expected decision date	Subject and purpose of decision	Reason for taking item in private (see Note 1 for relevant exempt paragraphs)	Decision (D), Key Decision (KD) or Rec (R) to Council on date  (see Note 2 for Key Decision definitions)	Decision taker (see Note 3 for membership)	Portfolio holder contact details	Lead officer contact details	Documents to be submitted
process							
05/12/23 Page 116	<b>Treasury Management Report – September 2023</b> The Cabinet will be asked to consider the recommendations of the Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee regarding seeking approval for the financial resilience activities between 1 April 2023 and 30 September 2023.	Not applicable	(R) – Council 19/12/23	Cabinet/ Council	Diane Hind Resources	Rachael Mann Director (Resources and Property) 01638 719245	Recommendations of the Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee to Cabinet and Council.
05/12/23	<b>Revenues Collection Performance and Write Offs</b>	Exempt appendices: paragraphs 1	(KD) (a) <b>Update since</b>	Cabinet	Diane Hind Resources	Rachael Mann Director (Resources and	Report to Cabinet with exempt appendices

Expected decision date	Subject and purpose of decision	Reason for taking item in private (see Note 1 for relevant exempt paragraphs)	Decision (D), Key Decision (KD) or Rec (R) to Council on date  (see Note 2 for Key Decision definitions)	Decision taker (see Note 3 for membership)	Portfolio holder contact details	Lead officer contact details	Documents to be submitted
Page 17	The Cabinet will be asked to consider writing-off outstanding debts, as detailed in the exempt appendices.	and 2	publication:  Not a Key Decision			Property) 01638 719245	attached.
06/02/24	<b>Community Chest Grants 2024 to 2025</b> The Cabinet will be asked to consider the recommendations of the West Suffolk Grant Working Party in respect of the levels of funding (if any) to be awarded to applicants to the Community Chest funding scheme for 2024 to 2025.	Not applicable	(KD) (a)	Cabinet	Donna Higgins Families and Communities	Davina Howes Director (Families and Communities) 01284 757070	Recommendations of the West Suffolk Grant Working Party to Cabinet.

Expected decision date	Subject and purpose of decision	Reason for taking item in private (see Note 1 for relevant exempt paragraphs)	Decision (D), Key Decision (KD) or Rec (R) to Council on date  (see Note 2 for Key Decision definitions)	Decision taker (see Note 3 for membership)	Portfolio holder contact details	Lead officer contact details	Documents to be submitted
06/02/24  Page 118	<b>Delivering a Sustainable Medium-Term Budget</b> The Cabinet will be asked to consider recommendations of the Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee for recommending to Council on proposals for achieving a sustainable budget in 2024 to 2025 and in the medium term.	Not applicable	(R) – Council 20/02/24  Unless separate proposals are recommended by Cabinet, consideration by Council will take place as part of the budget setting paper on 20/02/24	Cabinet/ Council	Diane Hind Resources	Rachael Mann Director (Resources and Property) 01638 719245	Recommendations of the Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee to Cabinet and Council.
06/02/24	<b>Budget and Council Tax Setting 2024 to</b>	Not applicable	(KD) (e)– in relation to	Cabinet/ Council	Diane Hind Resources	Rachael Mann Director	Report to Cabinet with recommend-

Expected decision date	Subject and purpose of decision	Reason for taking item in private (see Note 1 for relevant exempt paragraphs)	Decision (D), Key Decision (KD) or Rec (R) to Council on date  (see Note 2 for Key Decision definitions)	Decision taker (see Note 3 for membership)	Portfolio holder contact details	Lead officer contact details	Documents to be submitted
Page 119	<p><b>2025</b> The Cabinet will be asked to consider the proposals for the 2024 to 2025 budget, prior to its approval by Council. This report includes the Minimum Revenues Provision (MRP) Policy and Prudential Indicators, and also the outcomes of the Council’s review of its fees and charges.</p> <p>The fees and charges have been reviewed in accordance with the Council’s Fees and Charges Policy, which has resulted in proposed increases to</p>		<p>fees and charges element where proposed increases will be more than five percent</p> <p>(R) – Council 20/02/24</p> <p>Unless separate proposals are recommended by Cabinet, consideration by</p>			(Resources and Property) 01638 719245	ations to Council.

Expected decision date	Subject and purpose of decision	Reason for taking item in private (see Note 1 for relevant exempt paragraphs)	Decision (D), Key Decision (KD) or Rec (R) to Council on date  (see Note 2 for Key Decision definitions)	Decision taker (see Note 3 for membership)	Portfolio holder contact details	Lead officer contact details	Documents to be submitted
Page 120	some. Where the proposed increase is greater than five percent, this constitutes a Key Decision. The Cabinet will consider the proposals as part of its consideration of this report.		Council will take place as part of the separate budget setting paper on 20/02/24				
06/02/24	<b>Financial Resilience - Strategy Statement 2024 to 2025 and Treasury Management Code of Practice</b> The Cabinet will be asked to recommend to Council, approval of the Strategy	Not applicable	(R) – Council 20/02/24	Cabinet/ Council	Diane Hind Resources	Rachael Mann Director (Resources and Property) 01638 719245	Recommendations of the Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee to Cabinet and Council.



Expected decision date	Subject and purpose of decision	Reason for taking item in private (see Note 1 for relevant exempt paragraphs)	Decision (D), Key Decision (KD) or Rec (R) to Council on date  (see Note 2 for Key Decision definitions)	Decision taker (see Note 3 for membership)	Portfolio holder contact details	Lead officer contact details	Documents to be submitted
Page 12	Statement 2024 to 2025 and Treasury Management Code of Practice for West Suffolk Council, which must be undertaken before the start of each financial year.						
06/02/24	<p><b>Treasury Management Report – December 2023</b></p> <p>The Cabinet will be asked to consider the recommendations of the Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee regarding seeking approval for the financial resilience activities between 1</p>	Not applicable	(R) – Council 20/02/24	Cabinet/ Council	Diane Hind Resources	Rachael Mann Director (Resources and Property) 01638 719245	Recommendations of the Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee to Cabinet and Council.

Expected decision date	Subject and purpose of decision	Reason for taking item in private (see Note 1 for relevant exempt paragraphs)	Decision (D), Key Decision (KD) or Rec (R) to Council on date  (see Note 2 for Key Decision definitions)	Decision taker (see Note 3 for membership)	Portfolio holder contact details	Lead officer contact details	Documents to be submitted
	April 2023 and 31 December 2023.						
12/03/24 Page 122	<b>Revenues Collection Performance and Write Offs</b> The Cabinet will be asked to consider writing-off outstanding debts, as detailed in the exempt appendices.	Exempt appendices: paragraphs 1 and 2	(KD) (a)	Cabinet	Diane Hind Resources	Rachael Mann Director (Resources and Property) 01638 719245	Report to Cabinet with exempt appendices attached.

## **Note 1: Definition of exempt information and relevant paragraphs of the Local Government Act 1972**

### **In accordance with Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended)**

The public may be excluded from all or part of the meeting during the consideration of items of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information defined in Schedule 12(A) of the Act, as follows:

1. Information relating to any individual.
  2. Information which is likely to reveal the identity of an individual.
  3. Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).
  4. Information relating to any consultations or negotiations, or contemplated consultations or negotiations, in connection with any labour relations matter arising between the authority or a Minister of the Crown and employees of, or office holders under, the authority.
  5. Information in respect of which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained in legal proceedings.
- Page 123
- a. Information which reveals that the authority proposes –
    - a. to give under any enactment a notice under or by virtue of which requirements are imposed on a person; or
    - b. to make an order or direction under any enactment.
  - b. Information relating to any action taken or to be taken in connection with the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime.

### **In accordance with Section 100A(3) (a) and (b) of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended)**

Confidential information is also not for public access, but the difference between this and exempt information is that a Government department, legal opinion or the court has prohibited its disclosure in the public domain. Should confidential information require consideration in private, this will be detailed in this Decisions Plan.

## **Note 2: Key decision definition**

A key decision is an executive decision that either:

- a. Results in new expenditure, or a reduced income or savings of more than £100k in any one year that has not otherwise been included in the Council's revenue or capital budgets.
- b. Comprises or includes the making, approval or publication of a draft or final scheme, which is not a routine business decision, that may require, either directly or in the event of objections, the approval of a Minister of the Crown.
- c. Results in the formation of a new company, limited liability partnership or joint venture.
- d. Has a potentially detrimental impact on communities outside of West Suffolk District.
- e. Is a decision that is significant in terms of its effect on communities living or working in a definable local community in the District, or on one or more wards, in that it will:
  - i. Have a long-term, lasting impact on that community; or
  - ii. Restrict the ability of individual businesses or residents in that area to undertake particular activities; or
  - iii. Removes the provision of a service or facility for that community; or
  - iv. Increases the charges payable by members of the community to provide a service or facility by more than 5%; or
  - v. Have the potential to create significant local controversy or reputational damage to the Council
- f. A matter that the decision maker considers to be a key decision.
- g. Any matters that fall under the scope of e. above must be subject to consultation with the local Member(s) in Wards that are likely to be impacted by the decision prior to the decision being made.

**Note 3: Membership of bodies making key decisions**

**a. Membership of West Suffolk Council’s Cabinet and their portfolios**

<b>Cabinet Member</b>	<b>Portfolio</b>
Cliff Waterman	Leader of the Council
Victor Lukaniuk	Deputy Leader of the Council
Donna Higgins	Portfolio Holder for Families and Communities
Diane Hind	Portfolio Holder for Resources
Gerald Kelly	Portfolio Holder for Governance and Regulatory
Richard O’Driscoll	Portfolio Holder for Housing
Ian Shipp	Portfolio Holder for Leisure
David Taylor	Portfolio Holder for Operations
Jim Thorndyke	Portfolio Holder for Planning
Indy Wijenayaka	Portfolio Holder for Growth

**b. Membership of the Anglia Revenues Partnership Joint Committee (made up of Breckland Council, East Cambridgeshire District Council, East Suffolk Council, Fenland District Council and West Suffolk Council)**

<b>Member Council</b>	<b>Full representative</b>	<b>Substitute representatives</b>
Breckland	Philip Cowen	Sam Chapman-Allen Sarah Suggitt
East Cambridgeshire	James Lay	Anna Bailey Alan Sharp
East Suffolk	Paul Ashton	Peter Byatt Vacancy
Fenland	Jan French	Chris Boden Vacancy
West Suffolk	Diane Hind	Victor Lukaniuk David Taylor

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Jennifer Eves  
Director (Human Resources, Governance and Regulatory)  
Date: 3 November 2023

# Investing in our asset portfolio – Provincial House

<b>Report number:</b>	<b>CAB/WS/23/062</b>	
<b>Report to and date:</b>	<b>Cabinet</b>	5 December 2023
<b>Cabinet member:</b>	Councillor Diane Hind Portfolio Holder Resources Email: <a href="mailto:diane.hind@westsuffolk.gov.uk">diane.hind@westsuffolk.gov.uk</a>	
<b>Lead officer:</b>	Rachael Mann Director (Resources and Property) Tel: 01638 719245 Email: <a href="mailto:rachael.mann@westsuffolk.gov.uk">rachael.mann@westsuffolk.gov.uk</a>	

**Decisions Plan:** The decision made as a result of this report will usually be published within 48 hours and cannot be actioned until five clear working days of the publication of the decision have elapsed. This item is included on the Decisions Plan

**Wards impacted:** All Haverhill wards.

**Recommendation:** It is recommended that Cabinet:

1. Endorses the project objectives as set in the strategic case for Provincial House, Haverhill.
2. Approves up to £2 million of capital budget, funded by the Investing in Growth Fund, in line with this business case to progress the remodelling and refurbishment of Provincial

**House to enable both public sector and commercial lettings.**

- 3. Notes the revenue risks, including any project expenditure that is unable to be capitalised, will be covered by the Capital Financing Reserve.**
- 4. Acknowledges that in line with recommendations (2), (3) and (4) above, officers will proceed in line with the Council's agreed Scheme of Delegation.**
- 5. Agree for the Council's Section 151 Officer to make the necessary changes to the Council's prudential indicators as a result of recommendation (3).**



## 1. Context of this report

- 1.1 West Suffolk acquired Provincial House in Haverhill High Street in 2019 using £3.7 million of the Investing in Growth Agenda Fund. This fund was established to enable the council to use our influence, investments, and assets to maximise the positive impact we have on communities and businesses within the district. For example, by generating economic, social, and financial returns and re-investing where it will achieve the best outcomes for all.
- 1.2 The 2019 Business Case set out several strategic aspirations in support of the acquisition. These were to re-purpose vacant space creatively, create jobs, deliver wider public benefits, and drive footfall into the town centre.
- 1.3 Prior to the council's acquisition, AXA Insurance was the sole tenant to a private landlord of all three upper floors of Provincial House, as well as managing a busy ground-floor reception on the High Street.
- 1.4 Changing business practices and advances in technology meant AXA was renting more space than it required. At the end of their previous lease term, AXA declared two of the floors, previously held as disaster recovery space as surplus to requirements. The loss of income associated with this move prompted the landlord to dispose of the asset, the council stepped in, acquiring the property to enable the renegotiation of a single floor lease to AXA retaining them in the town. The income generated from this new lease and the established High Street commercial units supported the original acquisition.
- 1.5 In February 2023, AXA formally relinquished their old lease for the upper floors (which included paying the council a lease premium) and consolidated into the first floor, which they refurbished as part of a new lease with the council.
- 1.6 The council has since completed two phases of landlord improvements works, to ensure the safety and compliance of the building with duties such as around accessibility. The second phase is currently underway and is due to be completed in Spring 2024. The total amount of these works is around £1.9 million, which has been partly funded by the council re-investing the surrender premium back into the building and remaining balance from the council's asset management plan reserve.
- 1.7 The council has obtained market advice from suitably experienced and qualified property agents regarding the vacant space that now exists on floors two and three. Advice was consistent and concluded that the size, condition, and high business rateable values (RV) could

present barriers for most businesses wanting to be in the town centre.

- 1.8 Agents recommended seeking other public/civic uses due to low levels of private market interest. So, earlier this year, the council commissioned Pick Everard to complete a One Public Estate Hub Sites Options Appraisal in the town. This was built on a previous (2017/2018) Public Asset Study and considered three council-owned sites within the town centre.
- 1.9 The Pick Everard study considered a range of potential uses including health, local government, and education but concluded that the design and configuration of Provincial House presented several issues when considering the high levels of public access required by health and local government use.

## **2. Proposals within this report**

- 2.1 West Suffolk acquired Provincial House with the aspiration to re-purpose vacant space creatively, create jobs, deliver wider public benefits, and drive footfall into the town centre.
- 2.3 Finding a way forward, through the OPE Programme, the council is partnering with West Suffolk College to explore the potential re-location of the Adult Learning Centre (currently being rebranded as Personal and Professional Learning Centre) back into the heart of the town and centre of the community.
- 2.4 The College's current accommodation at the former Parkway Middle School is poorly accessible compared to a town centre location and is effectively obsolete given its very poor condition and performance. The site is owned by Unity School Partnership which is participating in a pilot scheme to bring the site forward for housing. This will support housing delivery in an area of high housing demand and will generate a valuable capital receipt re-investment by the trust in the local education estate.
- 2.5 With redevelopment in the pipeline, the College's lease has been left to expire and has not been renewed. The lack of security of tenure represents a key risk to the college and therefore future delivery of their services in the town.
- 2.6 The confidential business case attached at Appendix A sets out the proposal for Cabinet to agree to invest up to a further £2 million into Provincial House, from the Investing in our Growth Agenda fund (supported by external borrowing). This is to facilitate the investment in the remaining vacant floors including the works required to relocate the college offer into the town centre. The income generated

by the project currently is estimated to create a net surplus after borrowing in line with the Investing in our Growth Agenda fund that will go towards the delivery of Council services.

- 2.7 Therefore, the project will ensure adult learning provision remains in Haverhill and in the easily accessible town centre. It will also provide further commercial space at Provincial House more suited to the local market and therefore attract more people into the town centre to use these and surrounding facilities and businesses. At the same time the project will bring a return to the council which can be put back into funding services vital for West Suffolk communities.

### **3. Alternative options that have been considered**

- 3.1 **Option 1: Do nothing:** This option provides a baseline scenario where no refurbishment takes place. This option will result in; the loss of a potential anchor tenant in West Suffolk College, failure to deliver strategic outcomes identified in the acquisition business case, and results in the council continuing to incur significant indefinite holding costs (c.£200-250K p.a.) associated with the vacant space. Whilst this is a low financial risk option but would fail to deliver on the wider social and environmental improvements anticipated in the acquisition business case and which may have a reputational impact for the council. This option may also risk the retention of the adult learning centre for Haverhill.
- 3.2 **Option 2: Basic refurbishment:** This option considers the 'Do the Minimum' scenario and involves basic repairs and maintenance with minimal changes to the office layout or facilities. This option would be unlikely to be sufficient to change the status quo and would counter market advice which has highlighted the size and condition of the accommodation and the lack of flexibility as significant barriers to successfully letting the space. This option would deliver limited social, environmental, and growth outcomes.
- 3.3 Please refer to the economic case section of the business case for further information.

### **4. Consultation and engagement undertaken**

- 4.1 An assessment of the impact of the recommendation on different groups of people, including any potential discrimination or inequality issues have been made and no equality impact assessment has been deemed necessary.
- 4.2 Local members will be kept updated on progress of the works.

## **5. Risks associated with the proposals**

- 5.1 The risks associated with this decision are set out in the Exempt Appendix B business case and included the risk associated with construction works, costs associated with holding vacant space and the statutory approvals that the council will be required to go through, planning change of use and building control. These risks will be managed by the project and reported through the project board.

## **6. Implications arising from the proposals**

- 6.1 Financial - The financial implications associated with this decision are set out in the body of this covering report and in detail within the Exempt Appendix A business case.
- 6.2 Legal – The council will enter legal commitments as defined in relevant lease agreements and/or contracts. Council to be advised by Suffolk Shared (Legal) Services and/or their representatives.
- 6.3 Personal data processing – None
- 6.4 Equalities – None
- 6.5 Safeguarding – None
- 6.6 Environment or sustainability – None
- 6.7 HR or staffing – On-site Facilities Management (FM) will be provided in accordance with the council FM arrangements.
- 6.8 Changes to existing policies - None
- 6.9 External organisations (such as businesses, and community groups) – None

## **7. Appendices referenced in this report**

- 7.1 Exempt Appendix A: Provincial House – Phase III Final Business Case  
Exempt Appendix B: Provincial House – Risk Log  
Exempt Appendix C: Provincial House – Indicative Programme

## **8. Background documents associated with this report**

- 8.1 [CAB/WS/19/030](#) 'Investing in our Commercial Asset Portfolio'

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