

Overview and Scrutiny Committee



Title	Agenda																							
Date	Thursday 18 January 2024																							
Time	5.00 pm																							
Venue	Conference Chamber West Suffolk House Western Way Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk, IP33 3YU																							
Full Members	<div>Chair Sarah Broughton</div> <div>Vice Chair Marion Rushbrook</div> <table><tr><td rowspan="4">Conservative Group (7)</td><td>Sarah Broughton</td><td>Marion Rushbrook</td></tr><tr><td>Susan Glossop</td><td>Andrew Smith</td></tr><tr><td>Beccy Hopfensperger</td><td>Andrew Speed</td></tr><tr><td>Birgitte Mager</td><td></td></tr><tr><td rowspan="2">Independents (4)</td><td>Tony Brown</td><td>Aaron Luccarini</td></tr><tr><td>Dawn Dicker</td><td>Don Waldron</td></tr><tr><td rowspan="3">Progressive Alliance Grouping (5)</td><td>Luke Halpin</td><td>Andrew Martin</td></tr><tr><td>Rowena Lindberg</td><td>Kevin Yarrow</td></tr><tr><td>Andrew Martin</td><td></td></tr></table>			Conservative Group (7)	Sarah Broughton	Marion Rushbrook	Susan Glossop	Andrew Smith	Beccy Hopfensperger	Andrew Speed	Birgitte Mager		Independents (4)	Tony Brown	Aaron Luccarini	Dawn Dicker	Don Waldron	Progressive Alliance Grouping (5)	Luke Halpin	Andrew Martin	Rowena Lindberg	Kevin Yarrow	Andrew Martin	
Conservative Group (7)	Sarah Broughton	Marion Rushbrook																						
	Susan Glossop	Andrew Smith																						
	Beccy Hopfensperger	Andrew Speed																						
	Birgitte Mager																							
Independents (4)	Tony Brown	Aaron Luccarini																						
	Dawn Dicker	Don Waldron																						
Progressive Alliance Grouping (5)	Luke Halpin	Andrew Martin																						
	Rowena Lindberg	Kevin Yarrow																						
	Andrew Martin																							
Substitutes	<table><tr><td rowspan="2">Conservative Group (4)</td><td>Ian Houlder</td><td>Sara Mildmay-White</td></tr><tr><td>Margaret Marks</td><td>Joanna Rayner</td></tr><tr><td rowspan="2">Independents (2)</td><td>Michael Anderson</td><td>Tracy Whitehand</td></tr><tr><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr><tr><td rowspan="2">Progressive Alliance Grouping (2)</td><td>Pat Hanlon</td><td>Sue Perry</td></tr><tr><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr></table>			Conservative Group (4)	Ian Houlder	Sara Mildmay-White	Margaret Marks	Joanna Rayner	Independents (2)	Michael Anderson	Tracy Whitehand				Progressive Alliance Grouping (2)	Pat Hanlon	Sue Perry							
Conservative Group (4)	Ian Houlder	Sara Mildmay-White																						
	Margaret Marks	Joanna Rayner																						
Independents (2)	Michael Anderson	Tracy Whitehand																						
Progressive Alliance Grouping (2)	Pat Hanlon	Sue Perry																						
Interests – declaration and restriction on participation	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.																							
Quorum	Six Members																							
Committee administrator	Christine Brain Democratic Services Officer (Scrutiny) Telephone 01638 719729 Email democratic.services@westsuffolk.gov.uk																							

Public information



Venue	Conference Chamber West Suffolk House Western Way Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk, IP33 3YU
Contact information	Telephone: 01638 719729 Email: democratic.services@westsuffolk.gov.uk Website: www.westsuffolk.gov.uk
Access to agenda and reports before the meeting	The agenda and reports will be available to view at least five clear days before the meeting on our website.
Attendance at meetings	<p>This meeting is being held in person in order to comply with the Local Government Act 1972.</p> <p>Measures have been applied to ensure the health and safety for all persons present at meetings.</p> <p>We may also be required to restrict the number of members of the public able to attend in accordance with the room capacity.</p> <p>If you consider it necessary for you to attend, please let Democratic Services know in advance of the meeting so they can endeavour to accommodate you and advise you of the necessary health and safety precautions that apply to the meeting. For further information about the venue, please visit http://www.westsuffolk.gov.uk/contact-us-cfm</p>
Public participation	<p>Members of the public who live or work in the district are welcome to speak and may ask one question or make a statement of not more than three minutes duration relating to items to be discussed in Part 1 of the agenda only.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>There is an overall time limit of 15 minutes for public speaking, which may be extended at the Chair's discretion.</p>
Accessibility	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.

Recording of meetings	<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>
Personal information	<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: https://www.westsuffolk.gov.uk/Council/Data_and_information/howweuseinformation.cfm or call Customer Services: 01284 763233 and ask to speak to the Information Governance Officer.</p>

Agenda

Procedural matters

1. Substitutes

Any member who is substituting for another member should so indicate, together with the name of the relevant absent member.

2. Apologies for absence

3. Minutes

1 - 8

To confirm the minutes of the meeting held on 9 November 2023 (copy attached).

4. 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.

5. Announcements from the Chair regarding responses from the Cabinet to reports of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Part 1 – public

6. Public participation

Members of the public who live or work in the district are welcome to speak and may ask one question or make a 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.

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.

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

- | | | |
|-----------|---|----------------|
| 7. | Housing Update | 9 - 56 |
| | Report number: OAS/WS/24/001 | |
| 8. | Cabinet Decisions Plan: 1 February 2024 to 31 May 2024 | 57 - 74 |
| | Report number: OAS/WS/24/002 | |
| 9. | Work programme update 2024 | 75 - 78 |
| | Report number: OAS/WS/24/003 | |

Part 2 – exempt

None

This page is intentionally left blank

Overview and Scrutiny Committee



Minutes of a meeting of the **Overview and Scrutiny Committee** held on **Thursday 9 November 2023** at **5.00 pm** in the **Conference Chamber, West Suffolk House**, Western Way, Bury St Edmunds IP33 3YU

Present

Councillors

Chair Sarah Broughton

Vice Chair Marion Rushbrook

Tony Brown

Susan Glossop

Luke Halpin

Beccy Hopfensperger

Rowena Lindberg

Birgitte Mager

Andrew Martin

Andrew Smith

Julia Wakelam

Don Waldron

Kevin Yarrow

Substitutes attending for a full member

Tracy Whitehand

In attendance

Victor Lukaniuk, Deputy Leader of the Council

Ian Shipp, Cabinet Member for Leisure

Phil Wittam

247. **Substitutes**

The following substitution was declared:

Councillor Tracy Whitehand substituting for Councillor Dawn Dicker.

248. **Apologies for absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Dawn Dicker.

Councillors Aaron Luccarini and Andrew Speed were also unable to attend the meeting.

249. **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 21 September 2023 were confirmed as correct record and signed by the Chair.

250. **Declarations of interest**

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

251. **Public participation**

No members of the public in attendance had registered to speak.

252. **Announcements from the Chair regarding responses from the Cabinet to reports of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

No announcements were made on this occasion regarding responses from the Cabinet to reports from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

253. **Review of West Suffolk Council Grounds Maintenance Operations**

The Committee received report number OAS/WS/23/018, presented by the Cabinet Member for Operations, which asked members to consider and discuss the intended scope as set out in paragraph 2 of report on 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.

The Council owned or was 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 rested with the Landscape Team within the Green Space and Heritage Service in the Operations Directorate.

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.

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.

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 going back to using some form of weed killer.

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.

At the conclusion of the discussions the Committee **noted** the scope of the Review Group's work subject to the above suggestion.

254. **Abbeycroft Leisure Strategic Partnership Task and Finish Group- Findings and Recommendations**

The Committee received report number OAS/WS/23/019, presented by the Chair of the Task and Finish Group (the Group), Councillor Marion Rushbrook which set out the Groups approach to the review, key findings and proposed recommendations to Cabinet.

Councillor Rushbrook wished to thank Warren Smyth, Chief Executive of Abbeycroft Leisure, who was in attendance and his Team and Trustees for the questions they had answered and for hosting the Groups visits, and also thanked Council officers for their support during the review.

The members of the Group were Councillors Sarah Broughton, Peter Armitage, Rowena Lindberg and Andy Neal.

The last review was due in 2018, which was delayed due to covid. During covid Abbeycroft coped with the challenges and helped residents in West Suffolk, for example by introducing outdoor gyms and online classes and supported programmes delivered by partner organisations.

All members of the Group had broadened their understanding of the wider health, wellbeing and community support which Abbeycroft provided alongside conventional leisure centre activities such as swimming and had concluded that it was a credit to Abbeycroft that they had recovered so well post covid in terms of usage at their centres and financial performance. With that in mind the Group was pleased to see the Abbeycroft management fee payable from the Council to Abbeycroft had reached zero from April 2023, and also felt they and the Council should be congratulated on meeting the significant challenges arising from higher utility bills in particular.

The Group visited all the Abbeycroft sites, with many of the buildings being over 35 years old with ageing plant and equipment which was not terribly efficient. With that in mind the Group felt funds should be made available from the net zero fund to support energy efficient measures within the buildings to reduce energy consumption.

The Group was also aware that officers were undertaking building condition surveys of all the sites and not pre-empting outcomes the Group anticipated a high degree of capital investment would be required in the older sites and hoped this would be supported through the Council's Asset Management Plans.

In summing up, Cllr Rushbrook explained that the Group felt there was a high degree of compliance by Abbeycroft in the existing legal agreements with the Council and the Group therefore did not recommend any significant changes to these agreements. She asked the Committee to support the six recommendations, as set out on page 16 of the report, and also encouraged all councillors to attend the Abbeycroft MS Teams member development session on Wednesday 22 November 2023 at 6pm.

The Committee considered the report in detail 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.

At the conclusion of the discussions, it was recommended by Councillor Tony Brown, duly seconded by Councillor Andrew Smith and with the vote being unanimous it was:

RECOMMEDED: That

- 1. Cabinet instructs officers to update the Collaboration Agreement 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.**
- 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).**

255. Exclusion of Press and Public

With the vote being unanimous, it was

Resolved:

That, under Section 100(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt 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.

256. Abbeycroft Leisure Strategic Partnership Task and Finish Group - Findings and Recommendations: EXEMPT Appendix 1

The meeting moved into private session to allow for the Committee to pose specific questions on the information which related to the exempt Appendix.

Once the discussion was concluded, the Committee then moved back into the open session of the meeting.

257. Re-admittance of press and public

The press and public were re-admitted to the meeting.

258. Suffolk County Council: Police and Crime Panel - 6 October 2023

The Committee received report number OAS/WS/23/020, which was presented by the Chair of Overview and Scrutiny on behalf of Councillor Mike Chester who was unable to attend tonight's meeting as he was at the National Police and Crime Conference in Warwick.

Attached at 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.

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

There being in decision required the Committee **noted** the contents of the report.

259. Suffolk County Council: Health Scrutiny Committee - 11 October 2023

Councillor Andrew Martin, the Council's appointed representative on the Suffolk County Council Health Scrutiny Committee presented report number OAS/WS/23/021, which set out what was considered at its meeting held on 11 October 2023. The primary focus of the meeting was:

- Pharmacy provision

Attached to the report was the following appendix:

- Appendix 1 – Report from Councillor Martin

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 for addressing the pharmacy closures; the impact of prescriptions being delivered to your door; and the reduction of pharmacies offering services on Sundays and the national shortage of the pharmacy workforce.

There being no decision required, the Committee **noted** the report presented by Councillor Andrew Martin.

260. **Cabinet Decisions Plan: 1 November 2023 to 31 May 2024**

The Committee received report number: OAS/WS/23/022, which informed members on forthcoming decisions to be considered by the Cabinet for the period 1 November 2023 to 31 May 2024.

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

There being no decision required, the Committee **noted** the contents of the 1 November 2023 to 31 May 2024 Decisions Plan.

261. **Work programme update**

The Committee received report number: OAS/WS/23/023, which updated members on the current status of its rolling work programme of items for scrutiny during 2024 (Appendix 1).

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.

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.

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

There being no decision required, 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.

The meeting concluded at 6.30 pm

Signed by:

Chair

This page is intentionally left blank

Housing Update

Report number:	OAS/WS/24/001	
Report to and date(s):	Overview and Scrutiny Committee	18 January 2024
Cabinet member:	Councillor Richard O'Driscoll Cabinet Member for Housing Email: richard.o'driscoll@westsuffolk.gov.uk	
Lead officers:	<p>Julie Baird Director (Planning and Growth) Telephone: 01284 757613 Email: julie.baird@westsuffolk.gov.uk</p> <p>Jennifer Eves Director (Human Resources, Governance and Regulatory) Telephone: 01284 757015 Email: jennifer.eves@westsuffolk.gov.uk</p> <p>Davina Howes Director (Families and Communities) Telephone: 01284 757070 Email: davina.howes@westsuffolk.gov.uk</p>	

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

Wards impacted: **All wards**

Recommendation: **It is recommended that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee:**

- Notes progress and challenges against the [Housing Strategy Implementation Plan 2018 to 2024](#) (as set out in sections 1.9 and 1.10 of this report)**

- 2. Notes progress and challenges against the [Homelessness Reduction and Rough Sleeping Strategy Delivery Plan 2018 to 2024](#) (as set out in sections 1.11 and 1.12 of this report)**
- 3. Notes Council's priorities for housing as set out in the [Strategic Priorities](#) for 2024 to 2028.**
- 4. Considers emerging actions to be investigated and explored and plans for the development of the Housing, Homelessness Reduction and Rough Sleeping Strategy for 2024 onwards and considers how it would like to be involved. Appendix A provides housing market context.**
- 5. Notes the situation regarding refugees and asylum seekers in West Suffolk and how the council is addressing the issues being faced in the district.**
- 6. Considers the responses provided to questions raised by the committee for the Portfolio Holder for Housing, as set out at Appendix B.**

Context to this report

- 1.1 The council will adopt a new Housing Strategy and is required to adopt a new Homelessness Reduction and Rough Sleeping Strategy, in 2024.
- 1.2 During a [mid-term review](#) of the Housing Strategy in 2021 it was agreed that the life of the strategy be extended from 2023 to 2024 to fit with adoption of the new strategic priorities in 2024. Whilst the emerging local plan is programmed for adoption in 2025, in December 2023, Council agreed to its final stages of the plan for consultation prior to examination. This sets the council's planning policies relating to housing, and sites which will form its pipeline for the supply of new homes.
- 1.3 It is proposed that the Housing Strategy is combined with the Homelessness Reduction and Rough Sleeping Strategy to form a single strategy document. All local authorities have a statutory duty to produce a homelessness reduction and rough sleeping strategy every five years.

The role of a Housing, Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy

- 1.4 We know that good quality housing that meets the needs of residents plays an important role in improving health and wellbeing of people in our area and is vital to realising our ambitions for economic growth. Through the development of a Housing, Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy, we will build on the work of the previous strategies and continue to move this work forward. By combining the housing strategy with the statutory requirement for a homelessness and rough sleeper strategy, this further strengthens and aligns our commitment to housing and homelessness and how services and partners will continue to work closely together to support local people.

Purpose of this report

The opportunity is being taken to present the Overview and Scrutiny Committee with:

- (a) Progress and challenges against the Housing Strategy 2018 to 2024 Implementation Plan (as set out in sections 1.9 and 1.10 of this report).
- (b) Progress and challenges against the Homelessness Reduction and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2018 to 2024 Delivery Plan (as set in sections 1.11 and 1.12 of this report).

- (c) Council's priorities for housing as set out in the Strategic Priorities 2024 to 2028.
- (d) Taking into account the above information, considers emerging actions to be investigated and explored and plans for the development of the Housing, Homelessness Reduction and Rough Sleeping Strategy and asks that the committee considers how it would like to be involved in the development of the strategy. **Appendix A** provides housing market context.
- (e) An overview of the situation regarding refugees and asylum seekers in West Suffolk and how the council is addressing the issues being faced in the district as requested by the Chair of the committee.
- (f) Considers the responses provided to questions raised by the committee for the Portfolio Holder for Housing, as set out at **Appendix B**.

1.5 At the last meeting of the Committee, members asked some questions about increases in service charges and other matters involving Registered Providers (RPs). These have been followed up directly with the RPs, who are also keen to attend a scrutiny session with the committee at a later date to discuss them. Some of these topics are also covered in other parts of this update report. However, a briefing on the specific topic of service charges was sent separately to all members at a later date to discuss these and other issues.

The current housing situation in West Suffolk

- 1.6 It is understood that there is an insufficient supply of some types of housing, and particularly affordable housing, in West Suffolk to meet housing needs, further information is included at **Appendix A**. We also know that there are some key issues emerging around housing delivery with a focus on the right type and mix of housing and the right affordable homes to meet the needs of residents. Affordability and the environment (such as cost and availability of land, build costs and supply issues in the construction industry) are all interlinked. The number of older people and single-person households is expected to increase over the next decade and beyond and this will impact on the type of homes needed, including adaptable homes with increased demand for one and two-bedroom low-level properties.
- 1.7 There are environmental factors in terms of new build homes and retrofitting the existing housing stock. This is important to both reduce the impact on the environment and to provide good quality housing that provide safe places to live and thermal comfort impacting positively on people's lives and reduces costs to residents. Given all properties being built at the time of writing do not comply with the Future Homes Standard, new builds are included in this cohort of properties that will require retrofitting. The lack of suitable

housing is also a potential factor in overcrowding of existing homes which has a knock-on effect on health, wellbeing and social inequality.

- 1.8 Average house prices and rents have continued to rise in West Suffolk, and this is partly driven by the unique situation around demand from RAF Lakenheath and Mildenhall personnel in the rental market. Additionally, proximity to Cambridge and London and changes in working patterns have an impact. The cost-of-living crisis is making the affordability of housing more challenging for many families. We know this has a detrimental impact on physical and mental health and wellbeing with long-term negative impacts on the population as well as placing additional demand on the wider Suffolk system. The lack of affordable housing places additional demand on the housing register with people finding it difficult to maintain a tenancy in the private rented sector, which is further exacerbated by the fact there are few properties available to rent within Local Housing Allowance levels.

Housing Strategy Implementation Plan – progress and challenges

- 1.9 The current Housing Strategy has been in place since 2018. and progress against the actions have been reported to Cabinet on 7 December 2021 (report CAB/WS/21/059 refers). Significant **progress** has been made against the current Housing Strategy Implementation Plan and the key activities include:
- a. Exceeded our Housing Delivery Test (HDT) target of 95 per cent and achieved 129 per cent for the year 2022 to 2023. The total number of homes delivered was 1003. Following consultation on the proposed revised National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and planned changes to how the HDT and five-year Housing Land Supply would be calculated, government has not published the HDT results this monitoring year. The Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities has now published the new NPPF which replaces the previous version (published in September 2023). The NPPF provides further guidance including a change in requirements from five to four years for councils that have an emerging local plan that has either been submitted for examination or has reached regulation 18 or 19;
 - b. Continued progress on our commitment to develop a West Suffolk Local Plan by 2025. The Local Plan is at an advanced stage with the draft Local Plan approved by Council on 19 December 2023 for consultation which will commence on 30 January 2024. This is the last consultation before submission to Secretary of State for examination in public. As part of the Housing and Communities chapter policies proposed include increasing the percentage of affordable housing from 30 per

cent to 40 per cent on Greenfield sites to maximise delivery, raising accessibility standards to help support the ageing population remain in their homes for longer and the introduction of new affordable housing products such as First Homes and a new Housing Types Policy.

- c. On 24 December 2023, the Planning Policy for Traveller Sites (PPTS) 2015 was updated. This updated guidance is a response to recent case law which deemed the PPTS 2015 definition of a Traveller to be discriminatory. As a result, the definition will revert back to the PPTS 2012 definition, which encompasses Travellers who have permanently ceased travelling. The West Suffolk Gypsy Traveller Accommodation Assessment (GTAA) was commissioned in 2023. The findings indicate a net shortfall of 39 pitches (cultural need) between 2023 and 2040. It has been recommended that West Suffolk meet the majority of this need by regularising tolerated sites and intensifying and or reconfiguring existing established sites.
- d. Update of Housing Needs Assessment finalised. This update forms part of the evidence base for the Local Plan and provides an understanding of the amount and type of housing that is needed across West Suffolk;
- e. The total number of affordable homes completed in West Suffolk in 2022 to 2023 was 212 (gross). Net homes delivered was 1003. Note that we do not assess delivery on a like for like basis, as the gross number of affordable units is used and a net figure of total completions is used. All sites of 10 or more homes delivered in 2022 to 2023 achieved 30 per cent affordable housing with the exception of one site in Bury St Edmunds which secured 18 per cent affordable housing due to viability issues.
- f. Supporting Registered Providers (RPs) to secure additional affordable homes through “off the shelf opportunities” such as purchasing additional affordable rented or low-cost homeownership homes directly from the developer. By supporting RPs to secure additionality, this has helped to address some of the backlog in affordable housing need which was not meet in previous years.
- g. Wickhambrook and Risby Parish Councils have both commissioned independent local Housing Needs Surveys and the findings have been published on their websites. Wickhambrook Parish Council is currently progressing with a neighbourhood plan which is at pre-submission stage and includes consideration to bring forward a Community Land Trust development. There is a local plan policy in place that supports the delivery of affordable homes in rural areas where there is a proven local housing need. Officers continue to

support parish councils aiming to bring forward affordable housing to meet a local need and where they have expressed an interest in further understanding the housing needs of their community.

- h. There are currently 16 town and parish councils within West Suffolk who are either at draft stage of the Neighbourhood Plan process or have submitted their Neighbourhood Plans and are Under Review. Once adopted, they will have legal force and will form part of the statutory development plan for the area. Some of the advantages of a Neighbourhood Plan include:
 - The policies are used in determining planning applications.
 - They enable the community to prepare a shared vision for development and growth in their local area.
 - They can plan for the specific housing requirement of the settlement.
 - Many policies protect and propose protection of local green spaces, gaps etc.
 - Encourage better designed places.
 - They include policies which require a 'local connection' for affordable homes such as housing exception sites.
- i. Barley Homes (council owned housing development company) has completed two developments in Haverhill at Westmill Place in Haverhill and Stonemill Park at which 63 homes were built and sold. Barley Homes will continue to deliver homes in line with its agreed business plan. All sites will meet current Affordable Housing policy.
- j. Continually working with developers and registered providers to bring forward adapted and accessible properties. With the use of commuted sum monies an increase in the housing standards of an affordable rented bungalow in Mildenhall to deliver an M4 (2) accessible and adaptable property was agreed. Through partnership working with a developer, a five bedroom fully accessible house in Exning for a family with multiple medical issues was secured. Two units of temporary accommodation have also been adapted to be accessible and two adaptable bungalows in Brandon have been secured;
- k. The Independent Living Suffolk (ILS) is in place which is a service provided by Suffolk County Council in partnership with local district and borough councils. Through this new model, in place since December 2020, local people are being supported to live safely, comfortably and independently in their own home for as long as possible. Following the introduction of this new model the number of grants approved and completed has increased each year and we now expect to spend the full allocation of Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) funding. A key

change was the introduction of a Fast Track DFG for non-complex works that removed barriers to accessing the grant and enabled works to progress rapidly; this included taking referrals from health professionals other than an Occupational Therapist (OT), removing the means test, removing a financial charge and enabling the resident to manage the works. Due to the cost of materials rising the threshold of the Fast Track grant was increased from £7,500 to £15,000. Working with partners across Suffolk there is the aspiration to build on the ILS and maximise the Better Care Fund budget.

- l. Improved safety and living standards in Houses of Multiple Occupation (HMOs) through an in-depth review of data and exploring how we work with landlords, support tenants and undertake HMO inspections. As a result, we have improved engagement with landlords and tenants to help them understand what they should expect in terms of better-quality housing and how to make a complaint in confidence. There has also been a focus on raising awareness of issues relating to fire safety and damp and mould. This work is ongoing and will feed into our inspection programme, mandatory licensing and proactive identification of Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs).
- m. Addressed issues around damp and mould in the private rented sector and in the council's properties as a social landlord. This was in response to the increased government focus in this area and has resulted in new guidance, a focus away from tenant lifestyle as a cause to having adequate ventilation and energy efficiency measures;
- n. [Safe Suffolk Renters](#) is a Suffolk-wide initiative backed by government funding with the aim of improving standards in the private rented sector through building relationships between tenants, landlords, property managers and councils and through education and awareness raising to align everyone's understanding of responsibilities and expectations. Specific actions include a Suffolk-wide housing stock condition survey which will inform a more proactive response to poor housing conditions, support for residents facing illegal eviction, support for landlords (to comply with the legislation, access guidance and energy funding) support for tenants (know their rights, access financial assistance available and maintain their tenancies) and support for Private Sector Housing teams across Suffolk through additional resource, intelligence and training;
- o. The council received 231 complaints relating to disrepair in the private rented sector in 2023 and completed 92 inspections. It is a reactive approach to addressing hazards in the private rented sector;

- p. worked with Suffolk partners on a Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards project to identify low energy efficient and non-compliant properties in the PRS. We identified 119 properties that fell below MEES (Band F-G), 43 of these were improved to a Band E, 29 registered exemptions, 10 left the private rented sector, 1 Notice was issued.

1.10 West Suffolk Council has continued to face **challenges** in achieving the priorities set out in the current Housing Strategy. A number of these are outside of our direct control but we continue to liaise with and influence our partners. We are working to address challenges in the following areas which are likely to be included in the new Housing Strategy:

- a. Increasing the rate of housing delivery for the right type of housing. We are taking a proactive approach to exploring new ways of increasing the rate of housing delivery and being more creative in encouraging new types of housing that meet the current and future needs of our residents. Lack of Homes England funding and registered providers needing to be more competitive with their bids due to an increase in registered providers from outside of the area wanting to work in West Suffolk. This has had led to developers expecting a higher rate of return than previously sought on the affordable housing properties. We are working closely with Homes England to support additionality on site and using commuted sum monies to support the delivery of more complex housing types.
- b. Rising construction and development costs. We are meeting with developers regularly, as we do with RPs to understand challenges around delivery and to understand best practice.
- c. Delivering the right amount of affordable housing to meet local needs, including social rented properties;
- d. Change in policy within the emerging local plan to secure 40 per cent affordable housing on greenfield developments over 10 dwellings. The emerging local plan also includes policies:
 - Housing Type and Tenure – to ensure all new homes are of the appropriate size and type continuing towards a mixed, balanced and inclusive communities.
 - Incorporation of space standards to ensure room and garden sizes meet a minimum standard.
 - Accessible homes – All new homes to be accessible and adaptable and 13 per cent of affordable homes are required to be built for a wheelchair user.

- Specific policy to allow affordable homes which would otherwise not be permitted in rural locations (subject to criteria);
 - Specific policy to allow market homes in small rural hamlets which would otherwise not be permitted in rural locations;
 - Specific policy to support the delivery of specialist housing with care accommodation; and
 - Specific policy for supporting custom and self-build development so that people can build homes to meet their own needs.
- e. The local plan strategy directs housing to the most sustainable settlements and has also made provision in smaller settlements which will support local services and facilities. Our strategy seeks to bring forward a range of sites of different sizes to maintain pace of delivery. We also have policies to increase energy efficiency on our new homes.
- f. We will work with RPs to support plans to regenerate housing on significant brownfield sites and will look to develop agreed principles to embed good practice.
- g. Work with Parishes to explore housing needs to bring forward community led exception schemes for local people.
- h. Working with partners through the use of intelligence and putting support in place to reduce the number of empty homes which will provide more accommodation for those in housing need and improve these to a higher energy efficiency standard;
- i. Working with developers to achieve the Future Homes Standard by 2025 to ensure that all new homes are carbon zero-ready;
- j. Improve energy efficiency in existing housing by working with registered providers, the private rented sector and privately owned homeowners. The challenges lie in funding the level of retrofitting that is required;
- k. The demand for accommodation in the private rented sector is increasing and we need to be ready to address concerns that the number of landlords could be reducing.

1.11 Significant **progress** has been made against the current Homelessness Reduction and Rough Sleeping Strategy Delivery Plan and the key activities are listed below:

- a. Providing support with a focus on preventing and relieving homelessness to ensure that more people are able to maintain and secure a settled home. In West Suffolk (2022-2023), 46.6 per cent of those owed a duty had a successful prevention duty outcome (compared to 52.7 per cent across England) and 30.7 per cent had a successful relief duty outcome (compared to 36.2 per cent across England);
- b. In West Suffolk (2022-2023), 43.1 per cent of the successful prevention duty outcomes resulted in households staying in their existing accommodation (compared to 33.8 per cent across England);
- c. The number of rough sleepers across West Suffolk in the autumn 2022 rough sleeper snapshot was six;
- d. Contributing to the development of the system wide approach to rough sleeping with a focus on prevention that is being led by the Suffolk Housing Board;
- e. West Suffolk was awarded £453,359 Rough Sleeper Initiative funding in 2020 to 2021 (as part of a joint bid with Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils) and £1,316,852 for 2022 to 2025 (in West Suffolk only) and this included additional funding in 2023 to provide rough sleeper beds and support staff on top of the existing provision;
- f. Providing effective advice, preventative and information services which has resulted in high homelessness prevention and relief rates and accommodating 196 individuals through the 'everyone in', the government initiative to ensure rough sleepers and those at risk of homelessness were provided with accommodation during the early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic; and
- g. As part of the Next Steps Accommodation Programme (NSAP) (funding announced in response to the pandemic) £634,099 of capital and revenue funding has been granted to West Suffolk with additional funding of £131,220 to continue the support of this provision until March 2025. This has provided 14 units of accommodation for former rough sleepers;
- h. Alongside this NSAP funding, West Suffolk has received a further £30,000 funding from the former West Suffolk Clinical Commissioning Group to provide personalised care that will be delivered by the Marginalised and Vulnerable Adults (MVA) service. We are seeing positive outcomes from this innovative new way of providing personalised and

coordinated health provision such as clients engaging with, and recognising the benefits of support, effective delivery of healthcare and communication between all agencies to provide a joined-up approach;

- i. Working closely with colleagues across Suffolk to support residents who are at risk of homelessness due to the increased cost of living and those impacted by fuel poverty;
- j. Implementing pathways for tackling homelessness, identifying risks early and promoting self-help and resilience and working with partners to provide services with the aim of breaking the cycle of homelessness;
- k. Increasing accommodation options for vulnerable households including those who have experienced domestic abuse specifically two accessible bungalows in Brandon, 11 ring-fenced rough sleeper accommodation units and with Suffolk County Council purchased two units of accommodation for those with high support needs; and
- l. Purchased two units of temporary accommodation, repurposed two units and refurbished two units;
- m. £1,426,858 Local Authority Housing Funding to deliver ten units of accommodation in partnership with local registered providers for the resettlement of Afghans, Ukrainians and for general needs use; and
- n. Responding to new requirements around the Domestic Abuse Act. West Suffolk has been allocated funding to provide a domestic abuse link worker and satellite provision.
- o. Ensured earlier identification of homeless applications with high support needs for example affordability concerns, homelessness and domestic abuse. Supporting residents through the cost-of-living crisis.
- p. Successfully advertised and shortlisted a high number of new build developments and supported the onboarding of new registered providers to the Cambridge Sub-region partnership to provide a smooth allocations process.
- q. Supported landlords to ensure properties are in a habitable and safe condition which has been achieved through engaging with the Safer Suffolk Renters project.
- r. As at January 2024, the total number of properties under the Guaranteed Rent Scheme was 107, the total number of properties under the Rent Deposit Scheme was 146.

- s. From January 2023, the total number of residents moved from temporary accommodation to private rented accommodation was 23.

1.12 West Suffolk Council continues to face some **challenges** in achieving the priorities set out in the current Homelessness Reduction and Rough Sleeping Strategy Delivery Plan. A number of these are outside of our direct control but we continue to liaise with and influence our partners. We are working to address challenges in the following areas:

- a. Working with registered providers and the voluntary sector to increase access to accommodation including lodging schemes, shared accommodation, temporary accommodation and tenancies to support move on; and
- b. Accessing accommodation options through private sector landlords in a competitive market. However, the team has been actively seeking opportunities to work with local landlords and estate agents about incentives with the aim of increasing the number of properties to meet demand in the local area. Despite the challenges, between January 2021 and October 2023, 87 new landlords started working with the West Suffolk Lettings Partnership and 145 properties were obtained.

2. Proposals within this report

2.1 Council's strategic priorities for housing 2024 to 2028

At its meeting on 19 December 2023, Full Council agreed its [Strategic Priorities document](#) which set out its housing priority (report COU/WS/23/019 refers). These priorities were set taking into consideration the (i) progress made in the current Housing Strategy and Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy; (ii) challenges as set out above in paragraphs 1.10 and 1.12; and (iii) housing market context as set out in **Appendix A**.

In order to deliver on our strategic priority of **affordable, available and decent homes**, we will:

- Use planning powers to significantly increase the supply of affordable housing in West Suffolk, particularly for social rent, and explore other options for increasing provision.
- Investigate options to address the specific market conditions in West Suffolk that make it challenging for local people to afford to rent or buy
- Use the council's planning, regulatory and other powers to ensure all housing is of a good quality and sustainably build and has minimal environmental impacts, including noise
- Work with communities to ensure all housing is supported by the right infrastructure

- increase the requirement in the draft Local Plan for the amount of affordable housing that is required on new housing sites, from 30 to 40 per cent on larger greenfield sites subject to viability
- work to understand and address the unique issues and affordability pressures facing West Suffolk residents in accessing the local housing market
- work with partners to bring forward opportunities for regeneration on brownfield sites
- explore the role of different housing models such as custom build-to-rent to diversify our housing and address housing need
- build on the work of the county-wide private rented sector pathway project. This project makes better use of data to improve our responses to hazards and non-compliance in poor quality housing and to enhance engagement and communications with tenants, landlords and communities
- ensure good management and standards in Houses in Multiple Occupation through proactive inspections and licensing
- support the work underway to enable safe and warm homes and to facilitate necessary aids and adaptations to enable residents to continue to live safely and independently within their own homes
- continue to build affordable homes for sale and rent through Barley Homes
- take further opportunities to acquire more temporary and move-on accommodation to support households
- strengthen our strategic partnership with Cambridgeshire and participate in the Suffolk Housing Board to drive forward improvements in the availability and quality of housing and associated support in the county
- increase access to good quality private rented housing including meeting the challenge of empty homes

2.2 **Housing, Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2024 onwards**

Emerging actions to be investigated and explored

There are four emerging themes from Cabinet's priorities, given the evidence base, our understanding of current housing pressures and options around addressing these in the future. The emerging actions and areas of focus to be investigated and explored are set out below:

	Priority	Emerging actions to be investigated and explored
1.	Housing delivery	Increase housing delivery including affordable housing – the right amount in the right place to meet different local need such as for first-time buyers and for older people. The emerging draft Local Plan includes the requirement for the amount of

		<p>affordable housing that is required on new housing sites, from 30 to 40 per cent on larger greenfield sites subject to viability. Lobby Government for a replacement for Help to Buy to support people who wish to access their first home.</p> <p>Planning to create a sense of community that leads to improved health and wellbeing including through the use of Health Impact Assessments on sites of over 100 homes.</p> <p>Understand need around adapted accommodation</p> <p>Explore options and models such as build to rent and custom build to increase the supply of the right types of housing including affordable housing.</p> <p>To support pace of delivery by providing opportunities on a mix of sites, smaller sites as well as large strategic sites.</p> <p>Review the council's brownfield sites register, identifying and working with others to address barriers and provide new opportunities to increase delivery. Work with developers to bring forward custom build and self-build and our communities to support Community Land Trusts.</p>
2.	Regulation and housing standards	<p>Monitor and actively promote high standards in the rented sector and take appropriate action where standards are not being met, to tackle disrepair, poor housing conditions and criminal landlords.</p> <p><u>Understand</u> the challenges and scope of our privately rented sector better and influence the private sector to improve standards and access by building relationships across the sector with voluntary, statutory and commercial organisations.</p> <p>Respond to the stock condition survey results in 2024 and develop an action plan to inform our work and improve living conditions.</p>

		<p>Explore the next steps post the Safer Suffolk Renters Project to continue to grow a better private rented sector for everyone</p> <p>Explore and support networking opportunities for private landlords; promoting events widely and using them to consult the Private Rented Sector on the issues that are affecting them</p> <p>Reduce the number of empty homes and consider how we can bring homes back into use as we respond to the Suffolk-wide review.</p> <p>Proactively support independent living and also support people with disabilities to remain in their homes through disabled facility grants and make effective use of the better care fund.</p> <p>Support and encourage high quality and well managed, Houses in Multiple Occupation in the local area.</p> <p>Ensure all HMOs are licensed and inspected according to necessary timeframes and pursue landlords of unlicensed houses in multiple occupation.</p> <p>Explore all intelligence and data sets available to assist in the positive identification and enforcement of unlicensed and licensable HMOs.</p> <p>Work in collaboration with the Revenue and Benefits team in bringing empty properties back into use by working with property owners and where necessary take appropriate and proportionate enforcement action (and respond to the outcomes of the county wide review)</p> <p>To undertake the licensing of mobile homes and caravan sites.</p>
3.	Supporting and housing local people	<p>In the new strategy to include our statutory duty to produce a homelessness reduction and rough sleeping strategy</p>

		<p>Prevention of homelessness and rough sleeping at an earlier stage, including working with colleagues across the public and voluntary and community sector.</p> <p>Increase options for temporary accommodation to mitigate the need for bed and breakfast accommodation.</p> <p>Increase access to good quality private rented sector accommodation using the council's West Suffolk Letting Partnership which provides incentives for private landlords.</p> <p>Provide support and signposting for households facing issues with the cost of living, including using funding and income maximisation.</p> <p>Manage the Home Link Service and allocate housing in line with the council's Lettings Policy.</p> <p>Work with partners, such as social care and mental health services, to find appropriate accommodation options for those with support needs.</p> <p>Continued support through the outreach team for those who are rough sleeping or former rough sleepers including managing accommodation ring-fenced for rough sleepers.</p>
4.	The Environment	<p>Achieve Future Homes Standard by 2025 with developers and all new homes carbon zero ready. The emerging Local Plan includes a policy which seeks to address climate change through sustainable design and construction with a fabric first approach to achieve carbon standards for all new homes. Photovoltaic panel on roofs are requirements where practically possible and on developments of over 100 homes requiring an energy standard certification which is meeting an excellent rating.</p> <p>We will consider bids for future rounds of funding such as Social Housing</p>

		<p>Decarbonisation Fund (SHDF) and the Local Authority Delivery (LAD) funding from the Government and others in order to reduce emissions across all housing markets.</p> <p>We will take opportunities to bid for funding to deliver improvements in energy efficiency particularly focusing on low-income households and vulnerable residents, working with partners across Suffolk.</p> <p>Link the climate change agenda with the inequality and health agendas focusing on responding to poor-quality housing, fuel poverty and the cost-of-living crisis.</p> <p>Effectively promote and administer Government grants available to all tenures.</p>
--	--	---

Developing the strategy

- 2.3 Over the next few months, the council will engage with residents and stake holders including tenants, landlords, registered providers, businesses and partner organisations in the development of the new strategy. It is essential that we hear from a range of local voices to ensure we are working to deliver or influence against the council's housing priorities and the emerging themes. We will undertake this engagement in a number of ways such as online consultation, stakeholder events, social media and learning about the needs of residents through information and knowledge gained through Councillor engagement and by local Ward Members. We will also use information and feedback that we already have, such as, feedback from the local plan process, Safer Suffolk Renters project and user experiences (for example, we have lived experience information from rough sleepers).
- 2.4 We will work with colleagues from local authorities across Suffolk, and the Cambridge Sub Region, as a number of districts and boroughs are looking to adopt new Housing and Homelessness Strategies at a similar time. Furthermore, we will build on the Suffolk-wide work around Safer Suffolk Renters, the Rough Sleeper Project and the Housing and Health Needs Assessment.
- 2.5 Over the duration of the strategy we will continue the conversation with residents, partner organisations and stakeholders to understand local need and how we need to respond through our approach to delivering on our priorities.

- 2.6 The Overview and Scrutiny Committee is asked to consider the role it would like to take in the development of the new strategy.

Overview of the situation regarding refugees and asylum seekers in West Suffolk and how the council is addressing the issues being faced in the district

- 2.7 The Chair of the committee requested an update on the situation regarding refugees and asylum seekers in West Suffolk Council.
- 2.8 As a result of international crises there has been an increase in requests from government to support refugees and asylum seekers. In recent years, the Council has responded and provided support in particular the Homes to Ukraine Scheme and the Afghan resettlement schemes. The Council works alongside other organisations, such as Suffolk County Council, the Strategic Migration Partnership (part of the East of England Local Government Association), Home Office and the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) to ensure that sufficient support is available to welcome new arrival into the community.
- 2.9 This is an evolving situation with the key support being provided as follows:

Homes for Ukraine scheme – Suffolk County Council manages the host and guest relationships with West Suffolk Council providing the housing checks (to ensure that they are suitable and meet the requirements of the scheme). Housing support is provided to those who require assistance to move from a host home. In addition, the Families and Communities Team identified local community support for guests and hosts.

Afghan resettlement schemes – Via registered providers, some families resettled from Afghanistan have been provided homes in the community. For a period of time a bridging hotel for Afghan families was located in the West Suffolk area and one family was found alternative accommodation before the hotel was closed.

Local Authority Housing Fund (LAHF) – Working with registered providers, the Council has secured nine additional social housing homes in the districts using funding from LAHF. This is central government money which provides up to 50 per cent of funding to purchase homes for Afghan and Ukrainian families and is used as general needs social housing stock. The Council is currently in the process of purchasing a house for use as temporary accommodation for Afghan families waiting to move from hotels which was subject of a Portfolio Holder decision, implemented on 29 September 2023. Government has announced of a further round of LAHF and we are waiting details of the scheme. LAHF has provided the opportunity to use central government funding to support the increase in social housing stock in the district.

Asylum seekers - The Home Office is responsible for sourcing asylum seeker accommodation via its contractor, Serco. As at December 2023, there was no asylum seeker accommodation in West Suffolk.

3. Alternative options that have been considered

- 3.1 The council could decide not to adopt a Housing Strategy; however, it would not be able to set out the priorities around housing to support local residents with the type of housing to meet their needs and improve the quality of existing housing.
- 3.2 The council has got a statutory duty to adopt a Homelessness Reduction and Rough Sleeping Strategy.

4. Consultation and engagement undertaken

- 4.1 The Housing, Homelessness Reduction and Rough Sleeping Strategy will be the subject of public and stakeholder consultation. Plans for the consultation will be shared with Members in due course.

5. Risks associated with the proposals

- 5.1 The council is programmed to commence consultation on 30 January 2024 for its third consultation on the Local Plan. Following consultation the plan will be submitted with all the responses received for independent examination. Given the policies have a viability impact, the inspector will examine the deliverability of all the Local Plan policies cumulatively and determine whether the policies are viable and deliverable. This may result in a change to the targets and policies proposed. The outcome of the process is expected in Spring 2025.

6. Implications arising from the proposals

- 6.1 Financial – there will be financial implications arising from the emerging actions to be investigated and explored as set out in section 2.2 of the report. However, these are currently in development as will be part of the budget setting process for the life of the strategy.
- 6.2 Legal compliance – not applicable
- 6.3 Personal data processing - not applicable
- 6.4 Equalities – An Equalities Impact Assessment will be carried out as part of the development of the strategy.
- 6.5 Crime and disorder - not applicable
- 6.6 Safeguarding - not applicable

- 6.7 Environment or sustainability – there will be environmental and sustainability considerations around new and existing housing that will be addressed through the new Housing, Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy.
- 6.8 HR or staffing - not applicable
- 6.9 Changes to existing policies – This work will result in the adoption of the new strategy.
- 6.10 External organisations (such as businesses, community groups) – the new strategy will detail how the council will continue to work alongside partner organisations to provide affordable, available and decent homes for those living and working in West Suffolk.

7. Appendices referenced in this report

- 7.1 Appendix A – housing market context
Appendix B - responses provided to questions raised by the committee for the Portfolio Holder for Housing,

8. Background documents associated with this report

- 8.1 [Housing Strategy 2018 to 2024](#)
- 8.2 [Homelessness Reduction and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2018 to 2024](#)
- 8.3 [Strategic Priorities 2024 to 2028](#)

This page is intentionally left blank

Housing market context

1. The projected housing need across West Suffolk

- 1.1 The [Cambridge and West Suffolk Housing Needs Assessment](#) was conducted in 2021, the purpose of which is to set out the amount and type of housing that is required in West Suffolk (and the wider sub-region) between 2020 to 2040.
- 1.2 The report highlighted the need for 800 additional dwellings per annum in West Suffolk with 51 per cent being affordable housing. West Suffolk is meeting the delivery target of 30 per cent **affordable housing** on new developments, however, there continues to be unmet demand for this type of housing. We are seeing continued demand for one bed accommodation and dwellings for larger families.
- 1.3 The housing needs assessment also highlighted the need for increasing levels of **specialist housing** over this period. The Office for National Statistics predicts that the number of residents in West Suffolk that are 65 and over will increase by 12,621 (or 33 per cent) between 2020 and 2040. This will result in a 20% increase in demand for specialist housing for older people and a 16 per cent increase in demand for housing for those with a long-term health condition or disability.
- 1.4 As a council, we want to do more to understand the barriers for **young people** accessing housing across West Suffolk. We need to look at how average salaries for this group compare to the UK average against house prices and look to identify and address any trends.
- 1.5 We will also want to understand the housing needs across and barriers for other groups such as those who live in rented accommodation, those claiming benefits and looking at the potential of build to rent and self and custom build.

2. Health and social implications of housing

Private rented sector

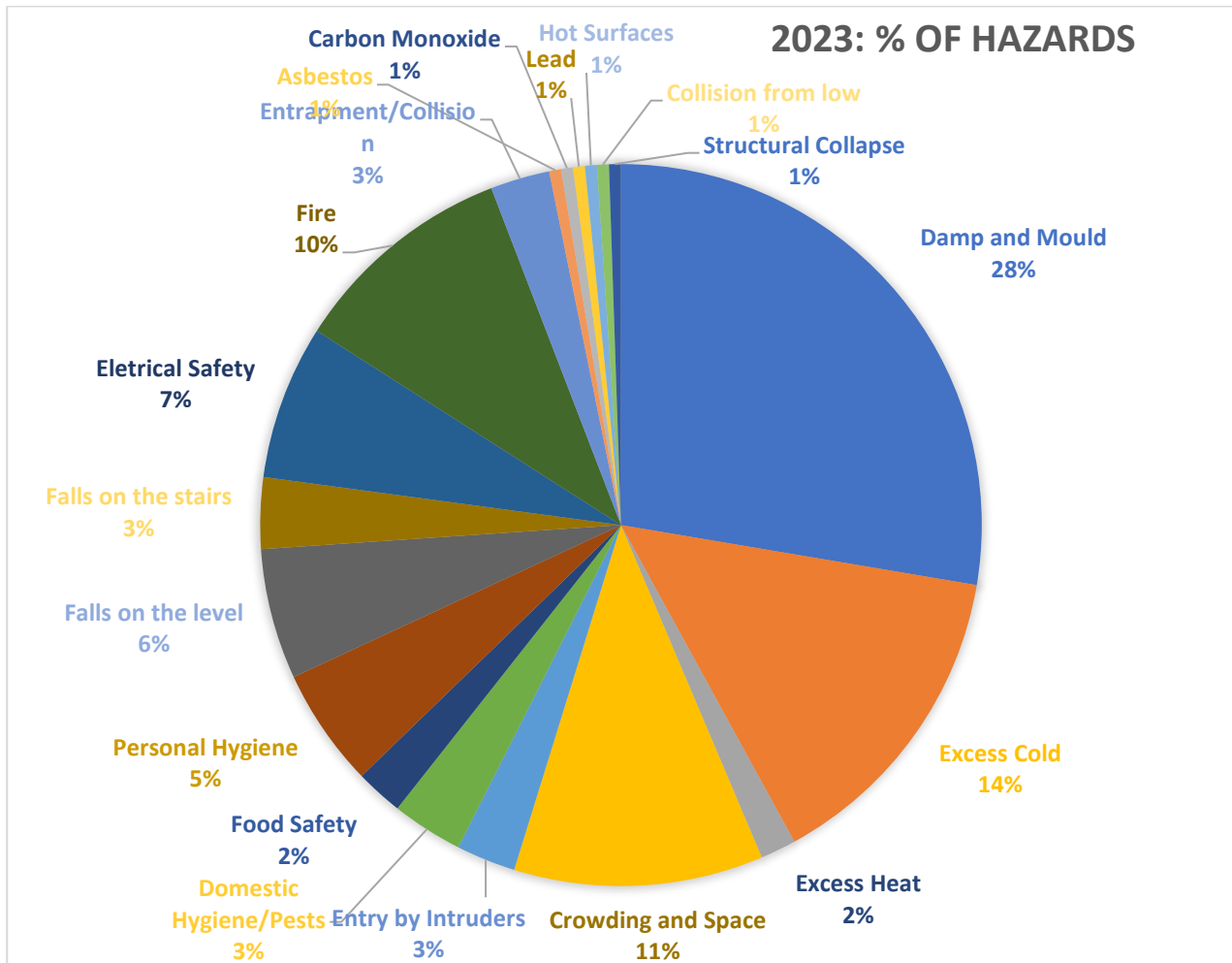
- 2.1 The cost of the private rented sector leaves tenants with reduced choice and a market that does not drive-up standards. Research finds that tenants are less likely to complain about poor conditions where they have concerns of eviction, increasing rent or moving location. Poor conditions are particularly prevalent in the Private Rented Sector with 21 per cent of properties being non-decent and/or 12 per cent having a Category 1 hazard which can pose a serious risk to health. Source: [English Housing Survey 2021 to 2022: private rented sector - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

The link between health and good quality housing

- 2.2 There will be an increased demand for housing that will meet the needs of an ageing population that will inevitably be living with an increased number of long-term conditions and will need more support through the NHS and social care. Building properties suitable to meet the general needs of an aging population will decrease the need to adapt them at a later date.
- 2.3 There is a clear link between good quality housing and better health outcomes. The emerging Housing and Health Needs Assessment that is due to be published in early 2024, will provide an evidence base and list of recommendations to focus action. The emerging themes include housing supply, energy efficiency, non-decent homes, damp and mould, retrofitting of existing homes, overcrowding, affordability and homelessness. Improving poor housing has multiple benefits beyond healthier lifestyles, all of which are interlinked, such as reduced energy costs and carbon emissions, local job creation, improved education and productivity alongside increased value of the property and improved rental income.
- 2.4 We know having access to safe, suitable and secure housing has a profound impact on health and wellbeing, be that physical or mental. Housing is regarded as a wider social determinant of health and the importance of good housing does not stop at the absence of physical harm for example overcrowding is linked negatively to school attainment, the local economy is impacted by time taken off sick, affordable warmth and fuel poverty are influenced by the energy efficiency of a property.
- 2.5 The cost to the NHS of treating conditions linked to poor housing is £1.4 billion per year. This is a conservative figure and only represents the first year treatment costs of leaving people in the poorest 15% of housing stock in England. Once expanded to include all properties with a significant hazard this rises to £2 billion per year for England.
- 2.6 As referenced at section 2.1, poor conditions are most prevalent in the private rented sector. Nationally, almost 1 in 4 of private rented households (21 per cent) are living in a home that fails to meet the Decent Homes Standard, higher than owner occupiers (13 per cent), local authority renters (9 per cent), and housing association renters (10 per cent). Dampness disproportionately impacts privately rented homes, where 11 per cent of households experience damp - significantly higher than other tenure types. Source: [English Housing Survey 2021 to 2022: private rented sector - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/english-housing-survey-2021-to-2022-private-rented-sector)
- 2.7 Lower rents are associated with those properties that are least desirable, in the worst conditions or locations, with the lowest energy efficiency performance. Housing is therefore a key factor in persisting health and social inequality. Excess cold is the most prevalent hazard and costs the NHS £540 million per year and results in 30,000 excess deaths each year (based on pre-pandemic figures for England). Sources: [BRE cost of poor housing tenure analysis 2023](#) and [excess winter mortality in England and Wales 2020 to 2021 \(provisional\) and 2019 to 2020 \(final\)](#).

The issues being faced in West Suffolk

- 2.8 The main issues in the private rented sector are around damp and mould, excess cold and overcrowding and in houses in multiple occupation, the main hazard is fire. The chart below shows the hazards identified in 2023, across all tenures. The number of private sector housing inspections carried out was 79 with 24 category 1 and 164 category 2 hazards identified.



Energy efficiency

- 2.9 In Suffolk, 41 per cent of Suffolk dwellings have an Energy Performance Certificate rating at band C and above. This means that 59 per cent of Suffolk properties have an energy rating of D or below. With an ageing population (most vulnerable to excess cold) and growing energy costs this is a challenge that must be addressed not only to assist residents but meet net zero ambitions. Data source: Suffolk Observatory.
- 2.10 The underlying principle when assessing conditions within properties is that any residential premises should provide a safe and healthy environment for any potential occupier or visitor. The council recognises the importance of continuing to work with health partners across the Suffolk system and with the housing sector to achieve these aims.

This page is intentionally left blank

Overview and Scrutiny Committee – 18 January 2024

The following sets out questions raised by the committee for the Portfolio Holder for Housing together with the responses:

Question 1:

Is there, or is there planned, an up-to-date survey of housing condition outside of the rented sector (where I understand a survey will be carried out in the Spring) with particular reference to insulation/fuel efficiency?

Response: We are not aware of any work to explore the housing conditions outside of the private rented sector. However, as part of the Safer Suffolk Renters project, there will be a stock condition survey undertaken of the private rented sector. Suffolk County Council will be publishing the Health and Housing Needs Assessment in early 2024. It will outline some of the wider challenges around housing condition across the housing sector more broadly. We will assess stock conditions with registered providers at our regular meetings.

We do know that there are more than 62,000 properties in Suffolk that are thought to have the worst Energy Performance Certificates of E, F or G, and an estimated 28 per cent of homes - 95,000 households – are in fuel poverty (data sourced from the Suffolk Climate Change Partnership). As part of the Suffolk Climate Change Partnership, work has been taking place to try to engage with residents and improve the energy efficiency of these homes. We are starting to report on the upgrades of homes on a regular basis and this may lead to further analysis through the county wide partnership in the future.

Question 2:

As part of your increased engagement with Registered Providers, are you able to request such a survey of their stock? And then require improvements to be made?

Response:

We have recently been in contact with one of the largest registered providers in the area who provided information about their de-carbonisation programme. A further meeting is planned, which will also cover housing standards and adaptations in their stock. It would seem appropriate to use this approach with the other main social housing provider too. There have been requirements of Housing Providers made through the Housing Ombudsman to ensure that through their policies and plans, tenants are protected, the Decent Homes Standard being a legal requirement for the social rented sector. We will assess stock conditions with registered providers at our regular meetings.

Question 3:

Has consideration been given to providing financial assistance to homeowners who want to make their properties more energy efficient? If so, what is proposed?

Response:

One of the actions arising from the Environmental Sustainability Group which oversees and supports the delivery of the Environment and Climate Change Action Plan agreed by Cabinet in July 2023, is to explore the viability of a local scheme to retrofit housing as well as reporting on the performance of existing government funded schemes that support retrofit. The feasibility of developing such a project is currently being explored at a high level as part of the emerging housing strategy conversations, linked to the wider budget and resourcing conversations amongst Cabinet members.

Question 4:

Disappointingly, following objections from the likes of Persimmon, the draft Local Plan no longer requires new homes to be built to Minimum Space Standards. Given that the standards are not exactly generous anyway, could Housing please explore the possibility of the Council adopting of a Supplementary Planning Document in support of Policy LP10. ("New homes should be of a high architectural quality, meaning that: m. They are fit for purpose and function well, providing adequate space, light and privacy") which does require houses generally to be built to the Standards.

Response: The emerging Local Plan includes a policy which seeks all new builds to meet or exceed the nationally described space standards or any subsequent national standard or policy (Policy LP21 Housing Type and Tenure).

Developers have challenged a number of the housing policy requirements. These will be tested by the inspector throughout the examination in public programmed for late 2024.

A Design Code and/or Supplementary Planning Document will be prepared in accordance with national guidance to provide additional detail and support policies SP3 Design and LP10 Well Designed Places following adoption of the Local Plan to ensure that new housing is fit for purpose, can be developed with sustainable construction measures in mind, with adequate space, light and privacy.

Question 5:

How many families / people on the housing register and for how long?

- a. What type of property are they after – 1, 2, or 3 bedrooms?

Response: see tab 1 of the spreadsheet attached at Annex 1.

- b. How long they have been on the register?

Response: applications have been broken down into the year they were registered. See tab 2 of the spreadsheet attached. It should be noted that date in band and length of time on the register is impacted by applicants who are serving in the armed forces or veterans. Our [Lettings Policy](#) states that that date in band is backdated by the total cumulative period of their length of military service (including where they have made a homeless application). This will have the effect of raising their priority above applicants in similar circumstances who have not undertaken military service. This additional priority is awarded to meet the expectations set out in the Armed Forces Covenant and national legislation.

- c. Of the people on the housing register, how long have they been in West Suffolk?

Response: the reason for local connection has been included here because it was difficult to ascertain from the data how long an applicant had lived in West Suffolk. See tab 3 of the spreadsheet attached at Annex 1.

- d. Number of people looking to downsize and what incentive is available for them to do so?

Response: see tab 4 of the spreadsheet attached that shows 'under occupancy'. This relates to the number of applicants wanting to downsize. The two separate bandings are included for comparison purposes. The council incentivises downsizing by awarding a higher band to those who are under-occupying. A band A is awarded to households that are under-occupying by two or more bedrooms, or release of adapted property. Band B is awarded to households under-occupying by one bedroom. This aims to facilitate a move to a more suitable property and releasing larger properties for use.

- e. What is the preferred location of those on the housing list?

Response: the main towns in West Suffolk are included and the data shows how many households have ticked the area of preference for that location. See tab 5 of the spreadsheet attached as Annex 1.

Question 6:

Amount of social or affordable homes available each year and what is the difference in pounds in rent for social versus affordable? Also, would be helpful to understand the difference in say Bury, Haverhill, Newmarket, Brandon and Mildenhall for what tenants pay.

Response: the difference in social and affordable rents is included as tab 6 of the spreadsheet attached as Annex 1 and the averages have been added.

Question 7:

An idea of complaints from tenants to Havebury and Flagship and other providers and how quickly are the complaints dealt with?

Response: this matter should be raised by Members directly with the registered provider concerned.

Question 8:

Anti-social behaviour from tenants and the ability of housing providers to deal with this and move them on.

Response: Registered providers have their own anti-social behaviour policies in relation to their tenants. Action is taken in line with these policies and registered providers seek the advice and support of the Council and other partners as appropriate. Some cases are brought to the attention of the Anti-Social Behaviour Forum which is co-ordinated by the Council. At this Forum, cases are discussed, and a partnership approach is agreed. This can lead to a series of escalated action culminating, if necessary, in a Closure Order whereby tenants are not allowed to return to their properties. A problem-solving approach is taken with eviction and Closure Orders being considered as rare and extreme.

Question 9:

Housing built in the last year – numbers and then a breakdown of what was provided for social and affordable as well as shared ownership and private sale?

Response: In 2022 to 2023, the total number of homes delivered was 1003. Of these 212 were affordable units and can be broken down as follows:

Affordable rented – 91
Social rented – 46
Shared ownership – 73

If we deduct the 212 figure from the 1003 (total homes), the presumption is that the remainder of 791 equals the number of units available for market sale. However, as referenced in 1.9 (e) of the Overview and Scrutiny report there are two different reporting categories specifically net and gross which can skew the data to make it appear that we have not achieved the 30 per cent affordable. It should also be noted that registered providers are securing additional affordable homes off the open market after completion of the development.

Question 10:

Number of migrants West Suffolk are housing?

Response: the issue of support for migrants is covered in section 2.7 to 2.9 of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee report (report number OAS/WS/24/001 refers).

Question 11:

Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) – how many in West Suffolk and therefore the number of individuals?

Total number of known Licensable HMOs (5+ occupants) in West Suffolk	113
Number of Occupants living in Licensable HMOs (assuming full occupancy of known licensable HMOs)	982
Total number of known Non-Licensable HMOs (3-4 occupants)	116
Number of Occupants living in Non- Licensable HMOs (assuming full occupancy of known non-licensable HMOs)	436

Question 12:

Can we have numbers who rent privately but their rent is covered, or part covered by Universal Credit?

Response: The total number of applicants who rent privately and have an entitlement to Universal Credit for the housing element only is 589.

Question 13:

Homeless – idea of age and how many?

Response: see tab 7 of the spreadsheet attached as Annex 1.

Question 14:

Number of families / people – presenting as homeless – is this due to rent arrears, landlords selling? What is available to them?

Response: see tab 8 of the spreadsheet attached as Annex 1.

This page is intentionally left blank

How many applications are on the housing register:

As of 27/12/2023 there are 2569 applications on Home-Li

Bedroom Need	No. of households
1 bedroom	1269
2 bedrooms	713
3 bedrooms	445
4 bedrooms	110
5 bedrooms	26
6 bedrooms	5
7 bedrooms	0
8 bedrooms	1
Total	2569

nk

Year application was registered	Number of applications
1998	1
1999	1
2002	1
2004	1
2005	2
2006	1
2007	2
2008	1
2009	3
2010	7
2011	2
2012	5
2013	12
2014	18
2015	15
2016	22
2017	25
2018	64
2019	170
2020	175
2021	339
2022	638
2023	1064
Total	2569

It should be noted that date in band and length of time on the register is impacted by applicants who are serving in the armed forces or veterans. Our [Lettings Policy](#) states that that date in band is backdated by the total cumulative period of their length of military service (including where they have made a homeless application). This will have the effect of raising their priority above applicants in similar circumstances who have not undertaken military service. This additional priority is awarded to meet the expectations set out in the Armed Forces

This page is intentionally left blank

Local connection reason	No. of households
Residence	1624
Family	462
Work	405
Special circs	59
Housing Duty	10
Armed/reserved forces	9
Total	2569

This page is intentionally left blank

	No. of households
Under occupancy by 1 bedroom	61
Under occupancy by 2 bedrooms or release of an adapted property	38
Total	99

This page is intentionally left blank

Area preference	No. of applications
Bury St Edmunds	1365
Newmarket	984
Haverhill	966
Mildenhall	812
Brandon	657

This page is intentionally left blank

In 2023 there were 162 Social rent and 159 Affordable rent properties advertised via Home-Link

Below are the average rents broken down by number of bedrooms within the property.

1 bed	Social rent	£97.43
	Affordable rent	£143.07
2 bed	Social rent	£114.40
	Affordable rent	£168.79
3 bed	Social rent	£126.66
	Affordable rent	£208.59
4 bed	Social rent	£129.84
	Affordable rent	£243.95
5 bed	Social rent	None
	Affordable rent	£287.58

This page is intentionally left blank

As at 20 December 2023

Number of current cases

Prevention cases	68
Relief cases	134
Main Duty cases	114
Total	316

Average age of applicants

Prevention cases	40
Relief cases	37
Main Duty cases	40

This page is intentionally left blank

As at 20 December 2023

Reason for Homelessness	Number of applicants
Departure from institution: Custody	7
Departure from institution: Hospital (psychiatric)	1
Domestic abuse – alleged perpetrator excluded from property	2
Domestic abuse – victim	61
End of private rented tenancy – assured shorthold tenancy	68
End of private rented tenancy - not assured shorthold tenancy	10
End of social rented tenancy	10
Eviction from supported housing	15
Family no longer willing or able to accommodate	57
Fire or flood / other emergency	1
Friends no longer willing or able to accommodate	17
Home no longer suitable due to disability / ill health	8
Left HM Forces	2
Loss of tied accommodation	2
Mortgage repossession or sale of owner occupier property	6
Non-racially motivated / other motivated violence or harassment	15
Property disrepair	3
Relationship with partner ended (non-violent breakdown)	29
Unsuccessful placement or exclusion from resettlement scheme/sponsorship	2
	316

This page is intentionally left blank

Cabinet Decisions Plan: 1 February 2024 to 31 May 2024

Report number:	OAS/WS/24/002	
Report to and date(s):	Overview and Scrutiny Committee	18 January 2024
Cabinet member:	Councillor Cliff Waterman (Leader) Tel: 01284 757001 Email: cliff.waterman@westsuffolk.gov.uk	
Lead officer:	Christine Brain Democratic Services Officer (Scrutiny) Tel: 01638 719729 Email: christine.brain@westsuffolk.gov.uk	

Decisions Plan: This report refers to items which are listed in the Cabinet's Decisions Plan.

Wards impacted: All wards.

Recommendation: It is recommended that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee:

- 1. Peruses the Decisions Plan for items on which they would like to receive further information on, or which they feel might benefit from the Committee's involvement during the coming year: or**
- 2. Notes the contents of the report.**

1. Context to this report

1.1 Holding the Cabinet to Account

1.2 Part of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's role is to hold the Cabinet to account for the discharge of its functions (*paragraph 7.2.5 of [Article 7 of the Constitution](#)*). The principal elements by which it will do this is as follows:

- (a) Scrutinising decisions which the Cabinet is planning to take, as set out in the Decisions Plan, or of which proper notice is given (*including decisions referred to it in accordance with paragraph 6.6.2 of Article 6 of the Constitution*).
- (b) Scrutinising decisions of the Cabinet and individual Portfolio Holders before they are implemented and if necessary, using the "call-in" mechanism to require the decision taker to reconsider the earlier decision.
- (c) Scrutinising decisions of the Cabinet or Portfolio Holders after they have been implemented as part of a wider review.

2. Proposals within this report

2.1 Attached as **Appendix 1** is the most recently published version of the Decisions Plan to be considered by Cabinet for the period 1 February 2024 to 31 May 2024.

2.2 Members are invited to peruse the Decisions Plan for items on which they would like to receive further information on, or which they feel might benefit from the Committee's involvement during the coming year.

2.3 Members are asked to note that the Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee, in most instances will receive reports on Financial, Audit and Governance related items published in the Decisions Plan.

3. Alternative options that have been considered

3.1 Not applicable.

4. Consultation and engagement undertaken

4.1 Not applicable.

5. Risks associated with the proposals

5.1 Not applicable.

6. Appendices referenced in this report

6.1 **Appendix 1** – Decisions Plan: 1 February 2024 to 31 May 2024

7. Background documents associated with this report

7.1 Not applicable.

This page is intentionally left blank

Decisions Plan

Key Decisions and other executive decisions to be considered

Date: 1 February 2024 to 31 May 2024

Publication Date: 5 January 2024

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 or via West Suffolk Council, West Suffolk House, Western Way, Bury St Edmunds IP33 3YU.

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>For information only</p> <p>Page 62</p>	<p>UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) and Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF) allocations 2024 to 2025</p> <p>Individual portfolio holders will be asked to consider the allocation of UKSPF and REPF funding for 2024 to 2025 where applicable to their own portfolios.</p> <p>Separate Notice of Intention notices will be published in due course setting out the proposed decisions to be made by each portfolio holder.</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
For information only Page 63	Delivering a Sustainable Medium-Term Budget This item was not considered as a separate item on the Cabinet agenda for 5 December 2023 as there was no decision to make at this stage.						
For information only	Review of West Suffolk Council Grounds Maintenance Operations This item was not considered as a separate item on the Cabinet agenda for 5 December 2023 as there was no decision to make at this stage but would be						

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
	incorporated into the budget setting process.						
06/02/24 New Item	Review of Contaminated Land Strategy The Cabinet will be asked to consider and approve an updated West Suffolk Council Contaminated Land Strategy, which forms part of a framework affecting the quality and use of land locally.	Not applicable	(D)	Cabinet	Gerald Kelly Governance and Regulatory 07968 396389	Jen Eves Director (HR, Governance and Regulatory) 01284 757015 Andrew Newman Service Manager (Regulatory) 01638 719276	Report to Cabinet with updated strategy 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
06/02/24 New Item Page 65	Great Barton Air Quality Action Plan (AQAP) The Cabinet will be asked to consider and approve a revised Air Quality Action Plan for Great Barton.	Not applicable	(D)	Cabinet	Gerald Kelly Governance and Regulatory 07968 396389	Jen Eves Director (HR, Governance and Regulatory) 01284 757015 Andrew Newman Service Manager (Regulatory) 01638 719276	Report to Cabinet with draft revised Great Barton Air Quality Action Plan attached.
06/02/24	Community Chest Grants 2024 to 2025 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	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
	applicants to the Community Chest funding scheme for 2024 to 2025.						
06/02/24 Page 66	Delivering a Sustainable Medium-Term Budget 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.

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 members-hip)	Portfolio holder contact details	Lead officer contact details	Documents to be submitted
06/02/24 Page 67	Budget and Council Tax Setting 2024 to 2025 and Medium-Term Financial Strategy 2024 to 2028 The Cabinet will be asked to consider the proposals for the 2024 to 2025 budget and Medium-Term Financial Strategy 2024 to 2028 for West Suffolk Council, 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. The fees and charges	Not applicable	(KD) (e)– in relation to fees and charges element where proposed increases will be more than five percent (R) – Council 20/02/24 Unless separate proposals are recommended by Cabinet,	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
Page 68	have been reviewed in accordance with the Council's Fees and Charges Policy, which has resulted in proposed increases to 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.		consideration by Council will take place as part of the separate budget setting paper on 20/02/24				
06/02/24	Financial Resilience - Strategy Statement 2024 to 2025 and Treasury Management Code of Practice 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 69	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	Treasury Management Report – December 2023 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 31 December 2023.	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
12/03/24 Page 70	Revenues Collection Performance and Write Offs 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.
- 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.
- 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 £100,000 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
 - vi. A matter that the decision maker considers to be a key decision.
- f. 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

Cabinet Member	Portfolio
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

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)

Member Council	Full representative	Substitute representatives
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

Jennifer Eves
Director (Human Resources, Governance and Regulatory)
Date: 5 January 2024

This page is intentionally left blank

Scrutiny Work Programme 2024 Update

Report number:	OAS/WS/24/003	
Report to and date(s):	Overview and Scrutiny Committee	18 January 2024
Chair of the Committee:	Councillor Sarah Broughton Chair of Overview and Scrutiny Telephone: 01284 787327 Email: sarah.broughton@westsuffolk.gov.uk	
Lead officer(s):	Christine Brain Democratic Services Officer (Scrutiny) Telephone: 01638 719729 Email: christine.brain@westsuffolk.gov.uk	

Decisions Plan: This item is not included in the decisions plan.

Wards impacted: Not applicable.

Recommendation: It is recommended that Overview and Scrutiny Committee:

- 1. Reviews and notes the current status of topics currently scheduled in its rolling work programme for 2024, attached at Appendix 1.**

1. Context to this report

1.1 Scrutiny Rolling Work Programme

- 1.1.1 The Committee has a rolling work programme whereby suggestions for scrutiny reviews are brought to each meeting, following the completion of the work programme suggestion form, and if accepted, are timetabled to report to a future meeting.
- 1.1.2 The work programme also leaves space for Call-ins and Councillor Calls for Action.
- 1.1.3 The current position of the work programme, including any Task and Finish Group(s) or Review Group(s), and items currently agreed is attached at **Appendix 1**.

2. Proposals within this report

2.1 Scrutiny Rolling Work Programme

- 2.1.1 The Committee is asked to note the current status of its rolling work programme attached at **Appendix 1**.

3. Appendices referenced in this report

- 3.1 Appendix 1 – Scrutiny Work Programme 2024

4. Background documents associated with this report

- 4.1 None

West Suffolk Council

Overview and Scrutiny Committee: Rolling Work Programme (2024)

The Committee has a rolling work programme, whereby suggestions for scrutiny reviews are brought to each meeting, and if accepted, are timetabled to report to a future meeting. The work programme also leaves space for Call-ins and Councillor Calls for Action.

Description	Lead Member	Details
14 March 2024 (Time: 5.00pm)		
Venue: West Suffolk House, Western Way, Bury St Edmunds		
Suffolk County Council: Health Scrutiny Committee	Councillor Andrew Martin	To receive an update from the Council's appointed representative on discussions held by the Suffolk Health Scrutiny Committee on 24 January 2024.
Suffolk County Council: Police and Crime Panel	Councillors Mike Chester and Diane Hind	To receive an update from the Council's appointed representative on discussions held by the Suffolk Police and Crime Panel on 26 January 2024.
Decisions Plan	Leader of the Council	To receive information on forthcoming decisions to be considered by the Cabinet.
Work Programme	Chair of the Committee	To receive suggestions for scrutiny reviews, appoint Task and Finish Groups for these reviews and indicate review timescales.
Future Item(s) for Review		
Mildenhall Hub	Cabinet Member for Leisure	Cabinet endorsed a future review on progress against the year five financial test by way of a final report on the Mildenhall Hub Post Implementation Review be included in the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's work programme for 2026 , subject to the completion of a scoping / key lines of enquiry exercise being carried out with the Strategic Director.

Current position of Overview and Scrutiny Working Groups

	Title	Purpose	Start Date (Established)	Members Appointed	Estimated End date
1.	Transport and Infrastructure Review Task and Finish Group	A Task and Finish Group was established in July 2023 to establish ways to get upstream on areas relating to transport and infrastructure to help influence future local plans and provide a report and recommendations for Overview and Scrutiny to consider before referring to Cabinet.	September 2023	- Sarah Broughton - Beccy Hopfensperger - Birgitte Mager - Andrew Smith - Don Waldron - Julia Wakelam - Kevin Yarrow	October 2024