

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of a meeting of the **Overview and Scrutiny Committee** held on **Monday 2 September 2019** at **5.00 pm** in the **Conference Chamber West (FR1-09), West Suffolk House, Western Way, Bury St Edmunds IP33 3YU**

Present: **Councillors**

Chair David Nettleton

Richard Alecock
Michael Anderson
Tony Brown
Mike Chester
Patrick Chung
Terry Clements
Diane Hind

Lisa Ingwall King
Joe Mason
Richard Rout
Marion Rushbrook
Ian Shipp
Jim Thorndyke

In attendance:

John Burns
Max Clarke
Susan Glossop, Cabinet Member for Growth
Sara Mildmay-White, Cabinet Member for Housing
Margaret Marks, Council's appointed representative on the SCC Health Scrutiny Committee

17. **Substitutes**

The following substitutions were declared:

Councillor Jim Thorndyke substituting for Councillor Stephen Frost.
Councillor Richard Alecock substituting for Councillor Paul Hopfensperger.

18. **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Simon Brown, Simon Cole, Stephen Frost and Paul Hopfensperger.

19. **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 11 July 2019 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

20. **Public Participation**

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

21. **Announcements from the Chair Regarding Responses from the Cabinet to Reports of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

The Chair informed members he attended Cabinet on 23 July 2019 to present the Committee's report on items it considered on 11 July 2019 and drew relevant points from the report to the Cabinet's attention. In particular the establishment of the West Suffolk Parking Review Group.

He then updated members on the work carried out to date by the Parking Review Group. In response, some members felt the on-line questionnaire was basic and there was no free text box to submit additional comments. The Chair agreed to raise member's comments with the Lead Officer, Darren Dixon, Service Manager (Property).

22. **West Suffolk Homelessness Reduction and Rough Sleeping Strategy**

[Councillor Mike Chester declared a non-pecuniary interest as he provides assists to the Portfolio Holder for Housing, and remained in the meeting, and did not take part in the vote].

[Councillor Jim Thorndyke arrived at 5.20pm during the consideration of this item, and prior to the vote taking place].

Prior to the Cabinet Member for Housing, Councillor Sara Mildmay-White presenting the West Suffolk Homelessness Reduction and Rough Sleeping Strategy, she provided members with a brief overview of her housing portfolio; the areas which it covered; and how it links into the Council's Strategic Framework 2018-2020. Housing was critical for the wellbeing of residents in West Suffolk, and the Council's Strategic Framework set how this would be achieved through "increased and improved provision of appropriate housing in West Suffolk in both our towns and rural areas", by:

- planning for housing to meet the needs of current and future generations throughout their lifetimes, that is properly supported by infrastructure, facilities and community networks
- improving the quality of housing and the local environment for our residents
- enabling people to access suitable and sustainable housing.

Councillor Mike Chester helped with the housing development side of the portfolio. There was also three housing teams as follows:

- 1) Strategic Housing Led by Julie Baird, (Assistant Director for Growth) and Simon Phelan (Service Manager – Strategic Housing);
- 2) Housing Standards: Led by David Collinson (Assistant Director for Planning and Regulatory Services) and Andy Newman (Service Manager – Housing Standards); and

3) Housing Options and Homelessness: Led by Davina Howes (Assistant Director for Families and Communities) and Sara Lomax (Service Manager – Housing Options and Homelessness)

She then briefly referred to questions which had been submitted by Scrutiny Members in advance of the meeting, on a wider basis around housing delivery, which would be covered later on in the meeting, following the consideration of the above mentioned Strategy.

Before presenting the Strategy, the Cabinet Member wished to thank all officers involved in housing for all their hard work. She then presented Report No: OAS/WS/19/008, which sought the approval of a revised Homelessness Reduction and Rough Sleeping Strategy and a new Temporary Accommodation Procurement and Placement Policy.

Attached to the report were a number of appendices, namely:

- Appendix 1: Homelessness Reduction and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2018-2023;
- Appendix A: Evidence Base for the Homelessness Reduction and Rough Sleeping Strategy;
- Appendix B: Delivery Plan for the Homelessness Reduction and Rough Sleeping Strategy;
- Appendix C: Temporary Accommodation Procurement and Placement Policy.

It was report that in June 2018, West Suffolk councils adopted the Homelessness Reduction Strategy. This report (OAS/WS/19/008) sets out a review of the strategy and changes that had been made in response to new duties and requirements which had been placed on local authorities. The strategy was now be called the "Homelessness Reduction and Rough Sleeping Strategy".

The Committee considered the report and the attached appendices in detail and asked a number of questions to which comprehensive responses were provided.

In particular discussions were held on Suffolk County Council's floating support contract; feedback from the Drop In Centre; social media in relation to verbal aggression and public shaming; landlord forums; empty homes; housing support for under eighteens; and sharing lessons learnt with other local authorities.

In response to a question raised regarding how realistic was Central Government's target to eliminate rough sleeping altogether by 2027, members were informed that it would be extremely challenging to eliminate completely, but the Council hoped it would achieve the target.

In response to a question raised on how could councillors/members of the public report people who they thought were rough sleeping, officers explained that "Street Link" was a service whereby members of the public/councillors could report cases of rough sleepers (www.streetlink.org.uk).

In response to a question relating to entrenched rough sleepers, members were informed that all the specialist services required to help rough sleepers were located in Bury St Edmunds. The homelessness team knew where rough sleepers were located, and continued to engage with them. The team had had some successes, but it was ongoing work. The team also carried out a rough sleeper count every other month.

In response to a question raised regarding staffing, officers explained that the rough sleeping team was currently funded through the rough sleeper grant and other staff were funded by government grants.

In response to a question raised as to whether migration of rough sleepers into West Suffolk was an issue, officers explained that the council was not seeing a big influx from out of area. The council looked at people's local connections, and referred them back to their local area only if the customer wished to return. The homelessness team tries to encourage reconnections with their families if appropriate.

In response to a question raised as to whether there were clear links between the police and the rough sleeping team, officers advised the team had a good working relationship with the police and were in regular contact regarding rough sleeping and other anti-social behaviour (ASB) matters.

Unfortunately, Bury St Edmunds had seen more ASB over the summer months due to more street drinking taking place. Officers explained there was a difference between begging and rough sleeping. The Council had a Public Space Protection Orders in place in Bury St Edmunds to reduce ASB, and was now looking at Civil Injunctions to further prevent nuisance.

In response to a question raised relating to the predicted levels of homelessness as set out on page 22 of Appendix A, officers advised this was a national prediction if nothing was done, and hoped that interventions would come into place so that homelessness/rough sleeping did not double over the next 20 years. To ensure this did not happen, there needed to be more housing supply with the right mix of housing; more affordable housing/temporary accommodation/social rent; and reinstating prevention and early intervention services across a number of service areas, including mental health and drug/alcohol support services.

The Committee did not suggest any amendments to be made to Appendix 1 or Appendix C, prior to being presented to Cabinet on 8 October 2019.

Councillor Richard Rout then proposed the recommendations, these were duly seconded by Councillor Diane Hind, and with the vote being 12 for and 1 abstention, it was:

RECOMMENDED: That

- 1) The Revised Homelessness Reduction and Rough Sleeping Strategy attached as Appendix 1, to Report No: OAS/WS/19/008, be approved.

- 2) The performance of the Housing Options and Homelessness Team in the evidence base attached as Appendix A, to Report No: OAS/WS/19/008, be noted.
- 3) Progress against the Homelessness Reduction and Rough Sleeping Delivery Plan, attached as Appendix B, to Report No: OAS/WS/19/008, be noted.
- 4) The New Temporary Accommodation Procurement and Placement Policy attached as Appendix C, to Report No: OAS/WS/19/008, be approved.

The Cabinet Member for Housing then referred to the housing questions which had been submitted in advance of this meeting by members of the Committee, and to the comprehensive responses provided, which had been emailed to all Scrutiny Members on 29 August 2019 (see attached document).

The Committee asked follow-up questions, to which responses were provided.

In response to a question raised regarding space standards and various reasons as to why Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) did not take up space standards, members were informed that national guidance applied but that until our next local plan we would not have policy in place. The Environment and Climate Change Taskforce would be looking at what the council could do more in relation to policies ensuring the environmental sustainability of house building.

The Portfolio Holder and officers reminder members of the Local Plan Workshops scheduled during September, as they were extremely important in helping to shape the future needs of our communities.

The Portfolio Holder then informed the Committee she had three areas of concern regarding housing, namely:

- The Rough Sleeping Grant: Is this being spent effectively and achieving its aims?
- Registered Social Landlords (housing providers): How can we ensure that registered social landlords are providing the housing that is required for this area, including social rent.
- Registered Social Landlords: To understand whether the Council was working as effectively as it could with key RSL's to deliver social housing objectives.

In response, to the Portfolio Holder's concerns the Chair suggested inviting RSLs to give a presentation to a future meeting of the Committee to look at their aims/objectives and their future housing provision/types of affordable social housing in West Suffolk.

Councillor Terry Clements then proposed the recommendation, this was duly seconded by Councillor Tony Brown, and with the vote being unanimous, it was:

RESOLVED:

That the Chair of the Committee, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Housing looks at inviting Registered Social Landlords in West Suffolk to a future meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Housing Questions Submitted by Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to the Portfolio Holder for Housing on the Wider Housing Delivery, including Responses

Overview and Scrutiny Committee - 2 September 2019

1) The role of Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) over the next 5 years in West Suffolk?

1a) Who will they be and what type of housing will they provide?

Currently in West Suffolk the principal housing associations (known as registered providers) are Havebury, Orbit (mainly larger schemes or land led), Flagship and Clarion. Cambridge Housing has also now started buying S106 units in the area, they have brought units in Newmarket. We are seeing more for-profit registered providers such as Sage and Legal and General in the area and buying the S106 units. There are likely to be more 'for profit' registered providers in the future.

Organisations such as Havebury, Flagship and Orbit are bringing forward open market dwellings on their sites and this will continue unless they are able to get grant for 'additionality' (more than the 30% affordable housing).

It is predicted that a variety of homes will become available from one to four bedroom properties as the Council influences the S106 scheme mix. However we are struggling to secure five beds as these are unaffordable to registered providers as rents are not sufficient to meet costs. However, with the social rent funds now available this may assist the registered providers. Over the recent months with increasing levels of grant available from Homes England we are seeing registered providers beginning to provide Social Rented properties, but this is very much dependent upon the amount of grant they can secure. It is important to note that registered providers cannot secure Homes England grant on S106 schemes, only on their own land lead schemes or where there is additionally, i.e. they are able to secure more than the 30% policy required affordable housing.

1b) There are many players in this area, but some are leaving some areas of provision, some are not buying this year or next. What is the state of play?

None of the registered providers have indicated to us that they are not seeking to continue to actively work in our area other than Suffolk Housing. A number of the larger national organisations such as Nottingham Genesis have decided to rationalise and dispose of their stock in the area, while others have or are considering withdrawing from providing supported housing, due mainly to the re-structure of housing related support payments.

1c) What is the shape of the market and which areas are we short of provision?

We are short of the larger four and five bedroom affordable/social rent properties in all areas. We are also short of bungalows/adapted properties and 'older' person housing (not necessarily age appropriate but homes suitable for older people).

Newmarket is very short of provision if you consider this area has one of the highest number of applicants with a preference to live in West Suffolk with limited build taking place.

In terms of open market there is a need for first time buyer homes i.e. two beds.

2) Building standards. While Suffolk County Council state building standards for Suffolk and parking standards, they are only guidelines.

2a) Can we have stricter building standards for houses so that we don't build sub-standard homes unfit for the 21st century for our citizens as has happened in, for example: Red Lodge.

Building Regulations cover the technical quality of houses. In relation to space standards there are national space standards that we have 'adopted' as technical guidance but cannot incorporate into policy formally until we have a relevant DM policy, which will be part of the ongoing policy review that the Strategic Planning team are just starting for West Suffolk as a whole.

2b) Same with parking standards and access requirements?

This concern may have arisen as a result of the legacy of places like Red Lodge, that were approved under early 2000's policy of limiting car parking spaces to no more than 1.5 a dwelling on average over the whole development. Policy has already moved on a long way since then and the 2015 Suffolk Guidance for Parking Standards are considerably more generous in terms of onsite car parking.

2c) Ian Gallin stated at the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in June 2019 that planning as a whole (all our local policy) would be reviewed soon after the new council is formed. When will that now happen?

See response to question 4a below.

3) Homelessness.

3a) Providing homes is one thing, continued support they need for various issues they have to them homed is another, what efforts / progress are we making in terms of a West Suffolk Homing Support team to keep those people making progress.

Identifying support needs:

Between April 2018 and December 2018, the Council received 2,351 approaches from individuals and families in relation to homelessness. Of those, 818 were found to be owed a duty due to the fact they were either homeless or threatened with homelessness. Advice was provided to all customers who contacted the Council.

Each homelessness application requires a Personal Housing Plan to be prepared and agreed between the applicant and the Housing Team. Part of this plan includes an assessment of the support requirements of the individual and/or their family. A number of support needs can be highlighted. The table below shows the support needs for those who are owed a prevention and relief duty between April 2018 and December 2018. Note that people can have more than one support need.

West Suffolk Council support needs identified April to December 2018:

Support needs of households owed a prevention or relief duty⁷:	Apr-Jun	Jul-Sep	Oct-Dec
History of mental health problems	93	135	100
Physical ill health and disability	56	90	66
At risk of / has experienced domestic abuse	48	76	49
Offending history	28	48	42
History of repeat homelessness	38	44	47
History of rough sleeping	35	24	28
Drug dependency needs	21	25	13
Young person aged 18-25 years requiring support to manage independently	22	13	6
Alcohol dependency needs	18	15	14
Learning disability	27	31	26
Access to education, employment or training	38	24	31
At risk of / has experienced abuse (non-domestic abuse)	15	26	18
At risk of / has experienced sexual abuse / exploitation	12	26	11
Old age	13	8	7
Young parent requiring support to manage independently	19	11	4
Young person aged 16-17 years	3	6	3
Care leaver aged 21+ years	5	3	5

Former asylum seeker	0	1	0
Care leaver aged 18-20 years	1	3	2
Served in HM Forces	7	3	5

Providing support:

The Council works closely with a number of agencies to provide appropriate support to help people to maintain a tenancy. This can range from signposting for those who are able to source their own support, to direct and/or urgent referrals for specialist services. The Housing Team also co-ordinate or attend case conference meetings to discuss applicants who require the support from a number of organisations. Similarly the Council attends discharge or 'move on' meetings to ensure that people who are leaving institutions, such as prison, hospital or supported accommodation, have in place appropriate plans to support their moves.

The Council has also invested in two teams to provide support (i) Solutions Team; and (ii) Rough Sleeper Outreach Team.

(i) Solutions Team

The aim of this Team is to provide solutions and support to ensure that we can either keep people in their existing accommodation, or to provide alternative housing when needed. The Team focusses on providing short-term/crisis management to enable handover to longer term support agencies such as social care.

Within this team staff provide the following roles:

- Welfare Advice to maximise income and reduce outgoings to help clear, for example, rent arrears and arranging repayment plans.
- Lettings Partnership staff liaise with letting agents and private landlords to either find or retain private rented sector housing. Incentives are offered to landlords, this includes ensuring support is in place to enable tenants to retain their tenancies.
- A member of the team also provides specialist support to those who have or are experiencing domestic abuse and substance misuse.

(ii) Rough Sleeper Outreach Team

Using temporary government funding, a Rough Sleeper Outreach Team has been in place since September 2018. The aim is to provide support for those who are sleeping rough. At the same time as increasing the number of bed spaces available for rough sleepers, this Team engages with rough sleepers to get them off

the streets into accommodation. The aim being that once in accommodation, the Team can continue to provide the necessary support and co-ordinate the necessary support agencies to enable resettlement. This includes mental health, drug and alcohol services, social care etc. The first step is to encourage rough sleepers to speak to, and trust, the Outreach Team staff. This can take a significant amount of time and often people do not feel able to accept the help that is offer, so it requires a sustained period of engagement. Within the Rough Sleeper Outreach Team there is a specialist substance misuse worker and a mental health nurse seconded from the Norfolk and Suffolk Foundation Trust.

Since September 2018, the team has dealt with 186 people whom they have prevented or relieved from rough sleeping. The team has been successful in securing accommodation in hostels, care homes, private rented accommodation and social housing.

In addition to these two teams, West Suffolk Council worked with colleagues in Babergh Mid Suffolk councils and Ipswich Borough Council to access government funding to establish two further teams providing specialist support:

Supported Lettings Team - With Babergh/Mid Suffolk we secured £209,000 to establish a Supported Lettings Team to help people at the early stages of rough sleeping before they become entrenched in the lifestyle and their support needs become much more complex. Often private sector landlords are unwilling to house somebody who has been homeless and sleeping rough as that person may have addiction, mental health or other complex needs and require support. This team will provide the necessary support to the tenant and to provide reassurance to the landlord.

Tenancy Sustainment - Earlier this year the Council secured £320,000 of Government funding as part of a joint bid with Ipswich Borough Council, to enable it to do more work preventing tenants in the private rented sector from being made homeless. Part of that money is used to employ two new tenancy sustainment officers who will work with struggling tenants and their landlords in both council areas.

Challenges:

The Council has invested directly in terms of increasing the number of staff it has, particularly those with specialist roles who provide support. It has also invested in time liaising with relevant partner agencies who are key to providing much of the support that is needed to help some people retain or maintain a tenancy.

Notwithstanding this additional investment, demand for services remain high and our experience is that the complexity of cases has increased in recent years. The Council has to focus on those

who are most in need and vulnerable and this means that often the work is mainly crisis response and management. The Housing Team relies on the expertise and resources of other organisations whilst recognising that each organisation has its own eligibility criteria and demand for services. Many organisations will only provide support to people who are willing to engage with their services and this remains a challenge. The Council has had success in preventing homelessness and in helping people into settled homes. However, demand for housing services remain high.

3b) What is the Council's definition of a resident(s) being homeless and or rough sleeping? Some people "sofa surf" / stay with families / temporary accommodation and wonder if issues such as these are included in the Councils figures.

We use the legal definitions for both homeless and rough sleeping. These are listed on the government website here:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/homelessness-data-notes-and-definitions#statutory-homelessness>

4) Local Plan:

4a) Apart from being on the local plan working group how does a councillor help shape housing in their area to get the right type and balance of homes needed in their area?

All Councillors are invited to attend a series of three workshops in September, to support the shaping and preparation of the Strategic Framework, Medium Term Financial Strategy and the West Suffolk Local Plan. These workshops will inform preparation of the first Issues and Options consultation which is timetabled to commence in January 2020.

They are open for all Councillors to attend and engage and have replaced the Local Plans Working Group. At the workshops, Councillors will have the opportunity to:

- Hear about the current context in West Suffolk, including the challenges and opportunities we face;
- Give their input on the key outcomes they would like to see achieved over the next 20 years;
- Shape the way in which West Suffolk Council will contribute to inclusive growth; and
- Support the development of the approach to the Issues and Options engagement and consultation process (due to commence in January 2020)

	Workshop
4 September WSH 6pm	What are our priorities for West Suffolk over the next 20 years?
9 September WSH 6pm	How should we achieve inclusive growth for West Suffolk? (themes and ways of working) How we respond to wider growth challenges
17 September WSH 6pm	Where – options for where growth could take place

Following the workshops. Officers will draft the West Suffolk Local Plan Issues and Options document for consideration at Cabinet and Council (17 December) and subject to endorsement consultation will commence in January.

This consultation is the first stage in Local Plan preparation setting out issues facing the District and options for policy development. This stage will set out the housing requirement for West Suffolk (which is set by National policy) and options for where and how this growth could take place. No policy decisions are made at this stage as this consultation is about consulting on genuine options available to the Council in accordance with national policy.

Further evidence gathering and feedback from this consultation will inform preparation of the West Suffolk Local Plan preferred policy approach – including the distribution of housing and policies relating to housing type and need. This is programmed for consultation later in 2020 and all Councillors will be invited to engage in that process.

The complete timetable for the development of the West Suffolk Local Plan is available here:

https://www.westsuffolk.gov.uk/planning/Planning_Policies/upload/Local-Development-Scheme-June-2019.pdf

4b) What procedures and mechanisms are in place in the actual planning process for us to engage with the LPA, the developer, the Parish/Town Council and local people. I for one, have never found any and I would like to know why not. I have always found that the Parish/Town council are consulted as consultees but my influence has always been from the outside, planning officers only impart information to me when asked and never pro-actively consult me, developers are quite helpful and will happily listen and often accommodate my requirements EASIER than officers and that there is an important role for me to play. But NO official mechanisms or procedures that I know of... please advise.

The Statement of Community Involvement sets out how the Local Planning Authority will consult in relation to policy review and planning applications. Ward Councillors are notified of every application submitted in their ward and are encouraged to engage at an early stage with planning case officers regarding any applications they are interested in. At pre-application stage,

developers are encouraged to engage with Ward Councillors and the local community at an early stage. In the case of larger or potentially controversial applications officers brief Ward Councillors as necessary. Finally, Councillors can register on the Council's public access system to get updates on new and live applications enabling them to keep abreast of amendments and consultation responses from statutory consultees, Parish Councils and third parties. Officers in Development Management are happy to help any Councillor register for this service if needed.

5) Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document 2019:

5a) What provision are we making to ensure that there will be social housing?

The Affordable Housing SPD is designed to provide additional guidance on key development plan policies and how they will operate. This SPD aims to provide advice to developers, including registered providers (RPs) on the council's approach to affordable housing provision.

The Affordable Housing SPD informs developers that on schemes of 10 or more dwellings or on sites 0.5 hectares and above that our Core Strategy policies on affordable housing will apply. This is policy CS5 for the St Edmundsbury area and CS9 for the Forest Heath area. The SPD also informs developers of the tenure requirement with regards to the percentage split on the rented products and low cost home ownership. Both the rented and the low cost homeownership products must comply with the affordable products as described in the 2018 National Planning Policy Framework. (St Edmundsbury area tenure split is 80% rented and 20% low cost home ownership and the Forest Heath area is 70% rented and 30% low cost home ownership).

West Suffolk does have a need for affordable social rent and this is highlighted within West Suffolk Tenancy Strategy 2018. Social rented properties are more costly to deliver for RPs due to the reduced rental income, typically 60-65% of open market rents and therefore this is why we have seen affordable rented properties (80% of open market rents) secured on most sites within the past five years. We are currently beginning to see some Registered Providers delivering social rented properties but this is dependent on whether they have managed to secure grant from Homes England to deliver social rent. The grant monies available for social rented properties is time limited and not available to Registered Providers bringing forward S106 schemes, unless they can demonstrate additionally.

The Affordable Rent product for West Suffolk has now been capped at the Local Housing Allowance rate for that area as we were finding that up to 80% of the open market value was in some areas significantly higher than the LHA rate. This is now enforced within the S106 agreement.

5b) Extra care and sheltered housing schemes, how many schemes will have units for sale in addition to units to rent?

This will be dependent on the classification of the older person's scheme. If the development is classed as C2 use which is residential care then our affordable housing requirement is not applicable on such developments. If however the scheme is considered CS3 use then we can secure our affordable housing obligations as above in line with policy CS5 and CS9.

As with any extra care or sheltered scheme this will incur support and service charges which we may find are unaffordable to bring forward as affordable housing. High services charges can affect a Registered Providers offer for affordable housing significantly as the service charge cannot be past back onto the tenant and therefore when making an offer for the affordable dwellings the RP will need to deduct this from their offer to the developer.

We are currently working on a Specialist Housing Development Plan for West Suffolk which will hopefully be a material consideration in the emerging West Suffolk Local Plan. This plan aims to contribute to diversifying the housing stock across West Suffolk by exploring opportunities on how to work with developers and RPs to help older people who may wish to downsize and to consider the creation of co-housing schemes that support intergenerational living. This report should hopefully be available early 2020.

5c) Distribution of new affordable homes within the development site. Point 4.11 – This is a good point that affordable housing must be ranged around sites and properly integrated with private sector properties. Obviously it is easier for registered providers to have them located together, will we act to ensure that we persuade RPO's of the benefits of mixing social and private?

The Affordable Housing SPD recommends that the affordable housing is distributed in parcels no greater than 15 dwellings. This is to ensure that we help to create a balanced and sustainable community. This is also conditioned within the S106 so developers are aware of our requirements at the time planning consent is granted.

5d) The council recognises that there can be exceptional circumstances where an alternative to the inclusion of affordable housing on-site may be appropriate. However particularly in the case of the Town Centre we should press hard to ensure that in all appropriate cases affordable housing is provided on the town centre site being developed. Many elderly, infirm, or those with particular health needs would benefit from Town Centre location perhaps negating the need for them to use inadequate public transport

The need for town centre housing developments is important for many households within West Suffolk and can benefit both young families and older persons with access to jobs, transport and services. Often town centre developments are brought forward on brownfield sites, the conversion to existing buildings or as a flatted developments. Particularly on new build flatted developments we tend to try and secure the affordable housing on the ground floor to enable older people and young families' level access in and out of the building. If the development is over three stories high then the scheme will need to provide a lift for the users which will attract high service charges and can again make the development unaffordable. As described above this can potentially be an unattractive option for a Registered Provider to pursue as they tend to offer less for the accommodation than if a similar size property was built as a house elsewhere.

Only in exceptional circumstances do we consider off site provision and this is dependent on whether we can obtain better quality housing of the right size and tenure within West Suffolk. We try where possible to provide this accommodation in the same location but this is dependent on the availability of land and a willing Registered Provider to partner with us. Accepting off-site contributions is not common practice for West Suffolk and something the council tries to avoid where ever possible.

5e) Relates to Rural exception sites (RES). We need to change the criteria from sustainable economically to sustainable on social and community needs. If we do not rural populations and services for those that remain will continue to decline. This point was made during a meeting of the Rural Task Force. As a rural ward member will you pursue this change?

There has been a significant decline in affordable rural housing brought forward in West Suffolk within the past five years and this has mainly been due to changes in Government policy whereby affordable housing can only be sought on developments of 10 or more. Both St Edmundsbury and Forest Heath area Local Plans have provisions within their core strategies to enable affordable housing to be brought forward on schemes of five or more and provided a significant benefit for smaller rural locations. The Government's Policy however supersedes West Suffolk's own local plans, which means we can no longer secure affordable housing on sites of less than ten units.

We are working with Community Action for Suffolk who specialise in delivering rural housing across Suffolk as well as parishes councils to bring forward exceptions sites for local people which will help to create both economically and socially sustainable communities. This is however very much dependant on a willing land owner to bring forward land for housing for local people that is affordable. It is our intention as highlighted within the Housing Strategy and Affordable Housing SPD to work closely with parishes

councils to bring forward housing for local people and we are currently looking at the housing register to identify households with a specific connection to each parish. Once we have identified the demand for housing we will contact the parish council to try and gain support in bringing forward a housing needs study which will look at the housing needs for the whole parish and how and where we can try and bring forward a site to accommodate that need. We have also recently produced a guide to affordable housing which will shortly be distributed to all parish councils.

23. **Suffolk County Council: Health Scrutiny Committee - 11 July 2019**

Councillor Margaret Marks, the Council's appointed representative on the Suffolk County Council Health Scrutiny Committee informed the Committee, with the agreement of the Chair, Councillor David Nettleton that all members and substitute members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee would receive a link to the Health Scrutiny papers, once published. This would enable members to consider and inform Councillor Marks of any concerns or suggestions they would like raised at the Health Scrutiny Committee.

The Committee then received Report No: OAS/WS/19/009, prepared by Councillor Marks setting out what was considered at its meeting held on 11 July 2019; being Home Care Procurement (future arrangements for delivery of home care services in Suffolk); and Appointments to Joint Committees and observers, and for the NHS Boards.

Councillor Marks advised the Committee she had been appointed to the following strategic health bodies:

- CCG Executive Board meetings as an observer;
- West Suffolk Board meetings as an observer; and
- The NHS Ambulance Service Trust as a substitute observer.

In addition, Councillor Marks had been nominated as the West representative on the Joint Health and Scrutiny (West, East and North East Essex). This would be ratified by the Suffolk County Council Health Scrutiny Committee at its next meeting on 10 October 2019.

The Committee considered the report and asked a number of questions to which Councillor Marks provided comprehensive responses. In particular discussions were held on the meaning of "re-ablement"; provisions for working across two health authority areas (Suffolk / Cambridgeshire); and standardised care packages and training.

Members shared the same concerns as Councillor Marks, in that some care agencies were recording patients data/medical needs on IPADs, which were then removed from the patient's home. It was felt that a book should be left in the patient's home, so that relatives etc. could easily refer to the data record.

There being no decisions required, the Committee **noted** the report on the Suffolk County Council Health Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 11 July 2019, from Councillor Margaret Marks.

24. **Cabinet Decisions Plan: 1 September 2019 to 31 May 2020**

The Committee received Report No: OAS/WS/19/010, which informed Members on forthcoming decisions to be considered by the Cabinet for the period 1 September 2019 to 31 May 2020.

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 September 2019 to 31 May 2020 Decisions Plan.

25. **Work Programme Update**

The Committee received Report No: OAS/WS/19/011, which updated Members on the current status of its rolling work programme of items for scrutiny during 2019-2020 (Appendix 1).

The Chair raised a topic regarding the Abbey Gardens in relation to events held in the grounds. He suggested that a general report should be presented to the Committee in January 2020 covering the following, which was supported by Councillor Terry Clements:

- Number/types of Events held per year in the Abbey Gardens.
- What Terms and Conditions were placed on Event Organisers?
- Legal Frameworks and Conditions (national).
- How does the Council ensure Event Organisers complied with the conditions placed on them, and how was this then enforced?
- Whether nearby houses still had clauses in their covenant/lease agreements informing them that property owners had to accept that events would be held in the Abbey Gardens.

There being no decision required, the Committee **noted** the update, subject to the inclusion of a future item on Registered Social Landlords (see Minute No: 22 above) and a general report on the "Management of Events in the Abbey Gardens" in January 2020.

The meeting concluded at 7.05 pm

Signed by:

Chair
