

BABERGH DISTRICT COUNCIL

FROM: Corporate Plan Working Group

REPORT NUMBER F143

TO: STRATEGY COMMITTEE

DATE OF MEETING 11 January 2007

DRAFT 2007/08 CORPORATE PLAN

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The report sets out a draft Corporate Plan for 2007/08 (Appendix). Further work is necessary for its completion before being considered again by this committee on 8 February for recommendation to Full Council on 26 February.
- 1.2 The committee is asked to review the Plan, especially the Priority Action Plans. The Working Group will note and consider any amendments, additions or deletions deemed necessary.

2. RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 That initial consideration is given to the amendments proposed to the Corporate Plan, and to the key actions proposed for inclusion in the Corporate Plan.

The committee is able to resolve this matter.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 The financial implications are as set out in the draft budget for 2007/08.

4. RISK MANAGEMENT

- 4.1 It is essential that all the risks associated with the Corporate Plan are identified and set out in the Plan itself. Analysis of the strategic risks faced by the council is being assessed through risk management workshops, and these and other associated major risks will be set out in the final Corporate Plan.

5. KEY INFORMATION

- 5.1 The Corporate Plan Working Group has met on three occasions to consider the key challenges facing the council, the actions required to deal with these, and the subsequent compilation of a 2007/08 Corporate Plan.
- 5.2 As part of its deliberations, the Working Group took into consideration:
- The current Corporate Plan
 - The community strategies
 - Previous surveys and consultation exercises
 - The results of the 2006 State of the District Debate
 - The work of the Service and Financial Planning Group
 - The White Paper *Strong and prosperous communities*
 - Input from service heads.

- 5.3 The various sections within the Plan have been amended or updated as necessary, but the main focus has been on the Priority Action Plan which set out for each corporate priority:
- The context for each priority
 - Key concerns
 - Key objectives
 - Key actions.
- 5.4 The lists setting out what the council already does under each priority, and the mass of detailed indicators and targets have been removed as it was felt these obscured the key actions the council needed to focus on over the life of the Plan.
- 5.5 Indicators are necessary to quantify the key actions and will be included. The remaining indicators and detail are extremely important but are best dealt with through the plans necessary to support the delivery of the Corporate Plan, such as the service plans and other actions plans – examples being those set up to deliver CPA improvements and the Homelessness Strategy.
- 5.6 The committee is asked to review the Plan, especially the Priority Action Plans. The Working Group will note and consider any amendments, additions or deletions deemed necessary.
- 5.7 Prior to the council's CPA assessment, a separate Best Value Performance Plan was necessary, setting out the council's performance over the past year and targets for the next three. Because of the 'Good' assessment, limited Best Value information is required and can be incorporated within the council's Corporate Plan. Such information will be included in the final Plan. It should be noted that much of the information required is not available until 31 March 2007, and the Head of Corporate Services, as last year, will be seeking delegated authority to include the necessary indicators and targets.

Next Steps

- 5.8 The Working Group will complete the Corporate Plan taking account of any suggestions made by this committee, and will then submit it to both overview and scrutiny committees, which will consider the deliverability of the Plan, by reviewing allocated responsibilities for the key actions and alignment of the key actions to the key concerns and key objectives.
- 5.9 The Corporate Plan will then be brought back to the Strategy Committee for approval and recommendation to the Full Council.
- 5.10 Following the May elections, the Corporate Plan will be recommended to the new Council as a vehicle to take it through 2007/08 whilst a longer term Corporate Plan is compiled.

6. APPENDIX

Draft 2007/08 Corporate Plan

7. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Reports and minutes of the Corporate Plan Working Group, 1 August, 24 November and 15 December 2006.

CONTACT: Andrew Hunkin

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DIRECT LINE: 01473 825820

Foreword – Chair of Strategy Committee

To be updated

Introduction – Chief Executive

To be updated

The Function of the Corporate Plan

The Corporate Plan, in conjunction with other plans and partners, plays an important role in ensuring that the council's corporate priorities are achieved.

This updated plan is based around a vision that both harnesses and focuses our resources to deliver those things that will make the most difference to the quality of life for local people.

The Corporate Plan does not cover everything that we do as a council, but focuses on a combination of those issues that matter most to local people, the national priorities set by Central Government and the unique challenges arising from the district's changing social, economic and environmental contexts.

The Plan is a key component of our Corporate Planning and Performance Management Framework, and, with the incorporated Best Value Performance Plan, provides a 'golden thread' linking the corporate priorities directly to the activities of each employee.

If you want to know more about the council's performance, or improvement plans, please contact:-

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The Babergh District

The Area

Babergh District Council in South Suffolk takes its name from one of the Saxon hundreds referred to in the Domesday Survey. With a population of 85,100 the district covers 240 square miles. On its immediate fringes lie the towns of Bury St Edmunds to the north, Ipswich to the east and Colchester to the south.

The district has a rich environmental heritage, embracing almost the whole of what is known as "Constable Country", the Stour Valley, and the valleys of the rivers Box, Brett and Glem. It is covered by parts of two Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, there are 29 Conservation Areas and approximately 4,000 listed buildings.

The district has a strong agricultural history and is predominantly rural in nature with the two market towns of Sudbury and Hadleigh being the main centres of population, commerce and industry. In 69 of its 76 parishes the population is less than 3,000, and for 43 parishes the population is less than 1,000. There are pockets of rural isolation, with limited access to public transport.

Social and Economic Characteristics

Babergh's social and economic characteristics reveal two distinct communities of interest. The east of the district comprises villages and the small, but growing, market town of Hadleigh (7,200 population). It consists of relatively prosperous and healthy communities with many of the workforce commuting to Ipswich, Colchester and London.

The west of the district is part of the extended rural hinterland of Cambridge and Colchester. It contains Sudbury and its neighbouring parish of Great Cornard, which saw a doubling of population in the 1960s and 1970s as they absorbed East London overspill. They now have a population of approximately 20,000.

The Index of Multiple Deprivation updated in 2004 shows that the district doesn't have any wards in the top 25% most deprived nationally. However, within the various indicators that give the overall deprivation ranking, there are wards that have deprivation issues. The wards of Great Cornard North and South, and Pinewood do suffer from income deprivation. In addition those areas along with Hadleigh North also suffer from education, skills and training deprivation. The rural nature of the district means there are 16 areas that are in the top 10% most deprived and a further 11 in the top 25% most deprived in England for access to services and housing. This can be a significant issue for those who lack transport to access services in the larger market towns of Sudbury and Hadleigh

The most deprived wards face a range of economic and social problems, including the highest unemployment rates (wards vary between 2.8% and 1.5%) in the district, and in Sudbury and Great Cornard there is an over reliance on a single employer in the fragile automotive manufacturing sector. Around 36% of the residents within these wards have no educational qualifications compared to a national average of 29% whilst 12% have a degree level education or higher, compared to a national average of 20%. Only 65% described their health as 'good' compared to a district average of 70%, and 20% had a limiting long-term illness compared to a district average of 16%. The teenage pregnancy rate is 37.4 per 1,000 girls aged 15 to 17, compared with 35 for the eastern region.

Population Changes

Between 1993 and 2005 the district population grew by 4,800 (6.1%). 1.28% of our residents are from black and minority ethnic communities.

25.9% of our residents are aged over 60, compared with the UK average of 21.1%. 14.1% of our residents are over 70, compared with a UK average of 11.5%. This age group has seen a 19% increase over a ten year period.

While the under 20s population is close to average (24.3% compared to a UK average of 24.5%) and the figure has remained fairly static, there has been a sizeable reduction in the number of young adults in their 20s and this age group is significantly lower than the national average (8.5% compared to 12.8%).

Approximately 70% of the working age population is employed in the service sector, 25% in manufacturing and construction, and nowadays only 5% in agriculture and associated employment. 475 (1.4%) people in the district are unemployed. This compares with rates of 2% for Suffolk, 1.9% for the East of England and 2.5% for Great Britain.

Skills and Education

Our partners have told us their concerns about the skills base and low levels of higher education attainment in Suffolk relative to many other parts of the UK, and the generally low wage economy. We share those concerns. 6th form education is not available at all high schools in Babergh and there are only limited further education centres. A large proportion of young people in their 20s move out of the area. Projected changes in the age profile over the next 20 years towards an ageing population and a substantial reduction in the 16-49 age group add to fears that there will be an acute shortage of skilled workers, and a consequently depressed economy.

Housing

House purchase prices are amongst the most expensive in Suffolk. The average house in Babergh costs £240,028 compared to £198,724 in Suffolk and £218,083 in the East of England. The district has an average house price to income ratio of 8.53:1. There are approximately 36,900 homes in the Babergh district, of which some 450 are second homes and 3,700 are rented from the council, Housing Associations or private landlords. The number of applications on the Housing Register exceeds available lets from the council and Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) by a ratio of 4.9 to 1.

Waste, Cleanliness and Crime

There is widespread support for environmental initiatives, such as the council's commitment to increasing recycling rates in the district, which has seen rates rise from 8% in 1999/2000 to nearly 33% by the end of 2005/06. Residents, however, continue to produce higher than average volumes of domestic waste.

On all quality of life surveys, there are high satisfaction levels with environmental amenities in the district. Babergh is also one of the safest places in the country. Nonetheless, surveys have shown a fear amongst residents that the district will become both less clean and less safe over the next 10 years.

Understanding our Priorities

In deciding our corporate priorities we have taken into account a number of factors:

1. **The views of local people.** The council is committed to listening to the views of local people and acting on what they tell us. We have a range of mechanisms in place supported by a recently revised Public Consultation Strategy. Examples include:

- A State of the District Event and Debate
- The Suffolk Speaks Citizens' Panel
- Best Value Satisfaction Surveys
- The Youth Conference
- The Tenants' Forum
- The Sudbury Area Community Forum
- The Western Suffolk LSP Community Forum
- Business Consultation Evenings
- Parish Council Consultation Evenings
- Babergh Communities Together.

2. **How the council and our services are performing.** We need to know what we are doing well and where we need to improve. In 2004 the council's performance was assessed by the Audit Commission through a Comprehensive Performance Assessment. The council was categorised as 'Good', but we are not complacent and have a plan in place to address those areas most in need of improvement.

We also monitor the various plans and performance indicators we have in place to ensure services are improved.

3. **Central/Local Government priorities.** Our corporate priorities draw on the shared priorities developed between Central Government and the Local Government Association. Aimed at improving the quality of life for local people the shared priorities have been adapted to reflect the issues facing Babergh District Council.

Our Vision for Babergh

A district where strong and inclusive communities are built on active citizenship and where all citizens have the opportunity to develop to their full potential.

The Council's Priorities

In order to support strong and inclusive communities in the district, the council will concentrate on the following priorities:

- Promote **healthy living** and reduce **health inequalities**
- Increase the **supply of housing** that local people can afford to rent or buy
- Maintain a **safe, clean** and **sustainable** environment
- Give easy, convenient **access to quality public services**
- Raise individual **and community ambitions** and encourage **active citizenship**.

The Council's Role

In delivering the priorities, the council's role is to:

- ✓ Provide responsible community leadership and influence in building, sustaining and helping to deliver a vision for the district that is shared by Babergh's citizens and the council's partners

- ✓ Create, support and sustain the social, economic and environmental conditions in which the shared vision for the district is realistically achievable
- ✓ Encourage and contribute to partnerships that help to deliver that vision
- ✓ Make decisions that best reflect and balance the diverse needs of individuals and communities in the district
- ✓ Maintain a skilled, flexible and motivated workforce to deliver the services that citizens need
- ✓ Make it easy for all citizens to access those services as conveniently as possible.

Values

43 Councillors run the council. The political composition of the current council is 18 Liberal Democrats; 11 Conservatives; 7 Independent Group; 6 Labour and 1 of no description. The council has never had any form of overall political control and there has never been a Council Leader. This means that decisions about what is best for the district are reached by consensus.

As part of that consensus, we have agreed that we will base all of our actions on the following values:

- Recognition of individual, community and economic diversity within the district
- Treatment of all people with fairness, dignity and respect
- Provision of maximum individual choice within a framework of responsible citizenship
- Open and accountable decision making
- Responsible stewardship of public money and resources on behalf of all Babergh's citizens.

Financial Strategy

The council's general Financial Strategy is "to do our best to achieve council tax increases that do not exceed the rate of inflation, whilst at the same time having a phased reduction in the use of reserves".

This will depend on the level of Government grant and our ability to make further savings and raise additional income. It may prove difficult in some years to provide services at the desired level and keep council tax increases to inflation.

A 3-year Medium-Term Financial Strategy exists and this is updated annually.

Additional expenditure of £40,000 results in a 1% increase in the council tax rate for this council.

2006/07 Budget

Approach

A Service and Financial Planning Group, comprising Members from the two Overview & Scrutiny Committees, worked closely with officers over several months to arrive at a budget which supported the development of the council's priorities and financial Strategy of doing its best to achieve a council tax increase at the rate of inflation.

Revenue Budget

A brief summary of the change in the budget from 2006/07 to 2007/08 is shown:

| | 2006/07 £000 | 2007/08 £000 |
|-----------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| 3 Net revenue expenditure | 10,000 | 10,390 |
| 4 Use of reserves | -574 | -413 |
| 5 Deficit on Collection Fund/prior year grant adjustments | +26 | -33 |
| | 9,452 | 9,944 |
| • Government Support | -5,511 | -5,836 |
| • Council Tax payers | 3,941 | 4,108 |
| • Council Taxbase (Band D equivalents) | 32,123 | 32,539 |
| • Council Tax for Band D property | £122.68 | £126.24 |
| • Council Tax increase | 2.7% | 2.9% |

A summary of the reasons for the change in net revenue expenditure is set out below. It can be seen that the two most significant items of Concessionary Fares and the Customer Access and Transformation Agenda (CAST) are financed respectively from Government Grant and Reserves and so do not affect the level of Council Tax.

| Change in net revenue expenditure | £ 000 |
|------------------------------------------|--------------|
| • Inflation | +350 |
| • Commitments & Service Priorities | +604 |
| • CAST (met from reserves) | -237 |
| • Other variations | +45 |
| Total | +762 |

Savings and additional income of £372,000 have been identified which enables additional expenditure in the following areas that are linked to the council's priorities

- Local Development (Planning) Framework
- Haven Gateway Partnership
- Affordable Housing
- Babergh Communities Together
- Sudbury Town Centre Partnership
- Sudbury CAB
- Dual Use Sports Centre

CAST Project

In addition to these specific areas, the council is undertaking a Customer Access and Service Transformation Project. This covers Customer Access, Business Process Re-engineering and Organisational Development and seeks to transform and improve the way services are provided to the customer. Significant investment is required and the estimated additional capital and revenue costs for this project over the next three years are shown below. The net revenue costs falling on the General Fund are being met from reserves and there is no impact, therefore, on Council Tax:

| | 2006/07 £000 | 2007/08 £000 | 2008/09 £000 | 2009/10 £000 | 2010/11 £000 |
|---------------------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| Capital Costs | 158 | 194 | 162 | - | - |
| Revenue | | | | | |
| - Costs | 208 | 236 | 226 | 95 | 106 |
| - Projected Savings from BPR | -4 | -64 | -115 | -193 | -195 |
| Net cost or saving | 204 | 172 | 111 | -98 | -89 |
| Met by Housing Revenue Account | -51 | -59 | -56 | -24 | -28 |
| General Fund | 153 | 113 | 55 | -122 | -117 |
| Use of General Fund Reserves | - | - | -55 | - | - |
| | 153 | 113 | | | |
| Effect on General Fund/Council Tax | - | - | | -122 | -117 |

Capital Investment

The General Fund Capital Programme combines the existing Capital Programme with new service priority bids that are considered to support the council's priorities. A summary of the position is shown below. The 2008/09 programme includes provision for the possible replacement of Hadleigh Swimming Pool, but no decision has been made at this stage as this involves significant funding issues.

| Service Area | 2007/08 £000 | 2008/09 £000 | 2009/10 £000 |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| OD, ICT and E-Government | 934 | 832 | 562 |
| Contract and Asset Management | 492 | 477 | 309 |
| Community Development) | 110 | 2,100 | 1,350 |
| Natural & Built Environment | 237 | - | - |
| Private/Affordable Housing | 683 | 1143 | 744 |
| | 2,456 | 4,552 | 2,965 |

Although the council is setting aside money to fund some of the above, there are reducing and limited other capital resources available. The council will, therefore, need to undertake prudential borrowing to fund the above programme and that will result in ongoing costs for future revenue budgets.

Use of Resources/Sensitivity Analysis

To be completed

Partnership Working

The council works in partnership at several levels. At a regional level it works with the East of England Regional Assembly (EERA) and others in developing strategy for planning and for setting frameworks for the monies that come into the region. It is also associated with the Centre of Excellence, developing procurement practices and exploring ways of improving joined-up working with other local government tiers and other public agencies.

At a sub-regional level the council has been proactive in working with partners on developing the Local Area Agreement for Suffolk and the Haven Gateway Partnership. At the local level it also plays a significant role in supporting neighbourhood programmes in Sudbury and Cornard.

The council is active in three key strategic partnerships that address mutually agreed priorities. Through the countywide Suffolk Strategic Partnership and its associated Local Area Agreement we aim, for example, to improve the quality of life for older people and to encourage higher levels of educational attainment. We have two Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs) – the Western Suffolk LSP and the Babergh East LSP – to reflect our distinct communities of interest rather than the administrative boundaries of this council. All three strategic partnerships have produced community strategies reflecting local priorities.

We are engaged in a number of partnerships to provide affordable housing in the district; to increase recycling, to minimise waste and to develop associated new procurement models with the private sector; to reduce crime and disorder and tackle their underlying causes, and to give easy access to services.

Risk Management

To be updated

The council agreed a new Risk Management strategy in November 2005.

All of the major risks facing the council have been identified and categorised in terms of their likelihood and impact as follows:

| Likelihood | Impact |
|----------------------|-----------------|
| A. Very high | 1. Catastrophic |
| B. High | 2. Critical |
| C. Significant | 3. Marginal |
| D. Low | 4. Negligible |
| E. Very low | |
| F. Almost impossible | |

Any risk classified as C2 or above, are above the tolerance level for this council. Action plans have been drawn up to mitigate, manage and monitor the risk.

Priority Action Plans

For each of the five priorities a Priority Action Plan (PAP) has been produced following a common template that sets out:-

- Context
- Key concerns
- Key objectives
- Key actions

The PAPs provide a corporate strategic planning framework that greatly assists in linking the operational service delivery plans and the overarching vision and strategic focus of the council.

PRIORITY ACTION PLANS

Promote healthy living and reduce health inequalities

Context

Whilst Babergh is seen as one of the healthiest places to live in, public consultation has demonstrated that improving the health of the population is seen as a high priority for the residents of Babergh. This corresponds with the national objectives of the Government to improve the health of the nation and reduce the inequalities that exist.

The council seeks to improve health and well-being by supporting physical activity and active lifestyles. People can be helped to participate in physical activity through the use of leisure centres, and sports and recreation initiatives.

Whilst the council is not a provider of health care services, it recognises that it has a role to play in helping to improve people's health and well-being. Through working in partnership with health service providers, health educators, employers, sports/leisure providers and clubs it endeavours to prevent risks to health and ensure that people have access to opportunities to protect and improve their health.

The needs of the population are shifting and local services need to respond to these changes. For example, the growing elderly population is placing increasing pressure on health care and local authority services. In addition, while we are becoming generally a more healthy community there are inequalities between different parts of the district. Health strategies and action plans have been developed which concentrate on the area of greatest need, the west of the district.

The key health issues as identified in partnership with health partners and that will be addressed through the local strategic partnerships and the Local Area Agreement are: obesity, teenage conceptions, coronary heart disease, cancer and mental health.

Through its statutory enforcement powers in relation to health and safety at work, food safety etc. the council will seek to reduce cases of preventable ill-health from sickness and accidents.

Key concerns

- Obesity and inactivity increasing nationally
- Life expectancy shorter and teenage pregnancy higher in Great Cornard and parts of Sudbury
- Drugs, substances and alcohol abuse
- Smoking
- Rising levels of mental health problems
- Poor housing conditions affect health
- Age profile of district and special needs of elderly and disabled people
- Food poisoning and accidents at work.

Key objectives

- Promote the advantages of a healthy lifestyle
- Increase the use and development of leisure facilities and activities in the area

- Reduce teenage pregnancy rates in Great Cornard and Sudbury
- Improve housing stock – both council owned and private
- Meet the needs of elderly and disabled people
- Reduce the incidence of food and water borne illness in Babergh (to also meet Food Standards Agency national objectives for food-borne disease)
- Improve targeted enforcement of food and health and safety law at business premises, based on risk of impact on key concerns above.
- To support measures to encourage smoking cessation.

Key Actions

Health and Leisure

- Develop and implement health strategies, initiatives, programmes and action plans in partnership with other organisations. Concentration will be on our greatest need, the west of the district, through the Western Suffolk LSP
- Work with key partners (especially the South Suffolk Leisure Trust) and communities to provide and support leisure facilities.
- Provide new health related exercise courses
- Work with key partners on smoking cessation initiatives, including promote and enforce workplace smoking legislation that comes into force on 1st July 2007
- Continue to improve the health of residents in rural areas by increasing opportunities to participate in exercise
- Set out plans and work with partners to optimise the benefits to Suffolk of the London 2012 Olympics
- Undertake a feasibility study for Hadleigh Swimming Pool.
- Promote the Be-Active Scheme

Teenage Pregnancy Rates

- Work with the Sudbury Area Forum and other public and voluntary organisations to reduce pregnancy rates in Great Cornard and Sudbury.

Housing

- Ensure that every council house meets the Decent Homes Standard (by 2009/10 – earlier than the Government target)
- Give financial assistance to improve property, heating and energy efficiency
- Make improvements to council housing, such as double-glazing and central heating
- Ensure the council's information regarding the quality of housing in the district is robust, up to date and embedded to inform future housing policy. This will include a target to reduce numbers of vulnerable households in “non decent homes” by 30% by 2010.
- Implement the appropriate regulatory and licensing provisions to ensure standards in houses in multiple occupation are adequate.
- Continue to improve the energy efficiency of dwellings by promoting financial assistance for insulation and installation of high efficiency heating systems so that adequate heating becomes more affordable for low-income households
- Continue partnership of the Suffolk-wide SEAL scheme to promote renewable energy options
- Further develop and implement the fuel poverty strategy for West Suffolk
- Ensure new development is of a sustainable form, which facilitates journeys on foot and by bicycle.

Vulnerable people

- Provide a Community Alarm Care service to enable clients to remain independent in their homes
- Support the Care and Repair Agency to assist the elderly in improving their homes
- Give Disabled Adaption Grants for private properties and make disabled adaptations to council houses
- Work in partnership with Supporting People to address the needs of vulnerable people by funding a home improvement Agency Service.
- Provide Very Sheltered Housing Schemes
- Provide specialist housing for people with mental health problems
- Deliver a supported housing programme that includes schemes in Hadleigh and Sudbury.
- Improve the quality of life for older people, especially through the Suffolk Strategic Partnership

Public Health

- Provide alternative enforcement strategies for food and health and safety enforcement to ensure that resources are focused on those that have the highest risk of impact on the Babergh population.
- Co-ordinate enforcement with the provision of advice and support to businesses to encourage compliance with the law, for example through seminars and workshops via our Safer Food Better Business campaign.
- Monitor the bacteriological quality of food sold within Babergh using a risk-based programme.
- Participate in the Central Government scheme to investigate causes of high incidence rate of cryptosporidiosis in Suffolk.
- Support and take part in local, regional and national promotion campaigns to improve the health and safety of workplace staff and the public within workplaces

Increase the supply of housing that local people can afford to rent or buy

Context

There is a large demand for housing in the district with a number of people in 'housing need', often because they cannot afford to own or privately rent homes in the area. The council cannot meet all housing needs. However, through its housing and planning policies, and working in partnerships with others, it will seek to maximise the impact that it can have on helping people to find appropriate accommodation. It will do this by increasing the number of homes being built in the district in line with Local Plan policies, regional and sub-regional strategies, and in particular by increasing the number of affordable homes, for which there is greatest need.

The council will provide housing advice to prevent homelessness where possible and to help people with housing difficulties to help themselves.

The council will use the powers available to it to help people to obtain housing in the private sector. Where homelessness is otherwise unavoidable, the council will provide temporary accommodation, but will keep its use to a minimum.

One of the aims of the benefits service is to provide speedy, secure and accurate access to support that enables claimants to get suitable accommodation quickly, while reducing the risk of fraud and error.

Key concerns

- Inadequate supply of smaller properties
- Property prices have increased faster than local earnings
- Many people on lower incomes cannot afford to buy their own property
- In rural areas, those on low incomes are often excluded from their home village because of the house price level
- Demand for rented housing from the council and Registered Social Landlords outstrips supply by a ratio of 4.5 to 1
- Private sector rented accommodation is expensive and limited
- There are 1,200 people on the council's Housing Register with a pointing award indicating some housing need
- The council's Homeless Reception Centres are generally full, provide mainly shared facilities, and the length of stay in that accommodation has increased.

Key objectives

- Increase the supply on new developments of affordable properties for rent or shared ownership, and ensure a percentage of smaller open market houses
- Increase the supply of local needs housing
- Increase the number of properties available for rent through housing associations
- Increase the supply of decent private sector rented accommodation
- Continue the efficient management of the council's own housing stock
- Reduce homelessness and support those who find themselves homeless
- Increase the efficiency and effectiveness of the council's benefits service.

Key Actions

Housing Policy

- Work through the Greater Haven Gateway Housing Sub-regional Group to identify housing problems and solutions to these.

Affordable Housing

- Carry out a further assessment of housing needs and develop plans, such as the Housing Investment Strategy and the Affordable Housing Programme, to meet those needs
- Continue delivery of the 700 affordable homes that are needed during the period 2004 to 2009. Co-ordinate the delivery of the proposed major scheme at Chilton (700 homes of which 35% are to be affordable homes)
- Promote affordable housing issues with parish councils
- Provide opportunities for housing for local people on "exception sites" on the edge of villages
- Identify any small plots of council land that can be developed.
- Increase the efficiency and effectiveness of handling planning applications

Housing Association Properties

- Develop social housing in partnership with 5 of the 15 Housing Associations. Over 1,000 Housing Association homes have been built in the last 10 years
- Give financial support to Housing Associations to provide new housing for rent

- Make council land available to Housing Associations at discounts of up to 100%.

Private Sector Housing

- Work with private sector landlords, both individually and through a local forum, to promote and retain the availability of affordable rented accommodation of a decent standard
- Promote the availability of financial assistance for the renovation of private sector housing to provide decent homes and affordable rented accommodation
- Identify and attempt to limit the number of ‘long-term’ vacant properties across the district by bringing them back into occupation.
- Review the council tax discount on long-term empty properties and on second homes to further encourage more homes to be put onto the market for sale or rent.

Council Housing

- Manage the council stock of 3,700 homes for rent
- Introduce a choice based lettings scheme to give people more choice about where they live and assist in letting harder to let properties.

Homelessness

- Develop and implement a Homelessness Strategy that emphasises the prevention of homelessness.
- Redevelop the Homeless Persons’ Reception Centre to provide self-contained units of accommodation.

Benefits Service

- Increase the efficiency and effectiveness of the council’s Benefits service

Maintain a safe, clean and sustainable environment

Context

Babergh is one of the safest places to live in the UK. Actual levels of recorded crime are low. However, high levels of the fear of crime continue to have an impact upon peoples’ quality of life in the district.

The Home Office compares areas across England and Wales with a similar socio-economic makeup. Of 376 areas, Babergh is ranked 343rd, making it one of the safest areas in the country. Crime rates are well below the county average at 56.2 offences per 1,000 population compared to 77.8 offences for Suffolk as a whole. However there are seven wards (Sudbury South, Sudbury North, Sudbury East, Hadleigh North, Great Cornard North, Great Cornard South and Pinewood) that have rates above the Suffolk average in three or more of the five crime categories.

Whilst the council is not primarily responsible for crime prevention and detection, it is responsible for and leads the Babergh Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership (CDRP), and it works in partnership with other organisations on a number of initiatives to reduce the incidence and fear of crime, to address anti-social behaviour and improve quality of life.

The council will use the powers available to it to reduce the amount of crime and anti-social behaviour, and where appropriate it will use highly visible deterrents such as CCTV to offer reassurance to local communities.

The council has implemented the new licensing regulations but is conscious of the concerns that residents have expressed concerning the additional opening hours. The council will monitor the impact the new regulations has upon the night time environment and will use its enforcement powers to address problems should they arise.

The council will take into account community safety issues when planning and delivering all of its services.

Residents have identified road safety as a serious issue that affects how safe they feel. The council will work with other agencies to develop actions that address the issues that residents have raised.

The council will improve the management of waste. This ultimately means reducing the amount of household waste produced. It means dealing with waste appropriately, by increasing the amount of material that is recycled or composted, and the introduction of further processes to reduce the final disposal of waste.

The council will continue to deal quickly with incidents of environmental crime such as fly-tipping and abandoned vehicles.

South Suffolk is one of the most attractive areas of England in which to live. The council is committed to maintaining the quality of both the rural and built environment in order to improve people's quality of life. The council's approach to planning policy and control will ensure that developments are appropriate to the rural environment. Through its membership of partnerships such as the Haven Gateway Partnership, the council will seek to balance the need for growth and new investment with the need to protect the area's special environment.

The council will protect the local environment and the people who live in it by monitoring and reducing pollution, and by protecting the countryside and its diverse ecosystems. It will act to prevent pollution and contamination, and where appropriate take action to deal with instances of these, including enforcement action where necessary. The council will also develop its own Green Travel plan for staff and will work with others to develop Green transport plans for the district.

In view of the Government refusal of the Sudbury By Pass, the council will work with Suffolk County Council and others to monitor pollution in the built environment of Sudbury, and will consider a number of transport schemes to assist traffic flow in Sudbury.

Key concerns

- Criminal damage
- Anti-social behaviour
- Domestic violence
- Public perception that the area will be less safe and less clean in 10 years time
- Fear of crime
- Waste per household above national average
- Shortage of landfill sites for waste in the longer term
- Government recycling targets for domestic waste
- Litter and fly tipping
- Re-use of previously developed land

- Quality of the environment.

Key objectives

- Decrease the amount of crime and disorder, and incidents of anti-social behaviour
- Decrease public perception that the district will become less safe in the next 10 years
- Reduce litter and incidents of fly-tipping, through increasing standards and enforcement
- Decrease public perception that the district will become less clean over the next 10 years
- Reduce waste volume
- Increase recycling and composting rates
- Protect and improve the quality of the built environment and street scene
- Ensure licensing regulations and conditions are adhered to, using enforcement powers as appropriate
- Protect and improve the quality of the green space environment, and improve access to green space within the built environment and the countryside
- Minimise environmental pollution.

Key Actions

Safe and dealing with Crime and Disorder

- Complete implementation of the Civil Contingencies Act 2004
- Work with partners to develop the Babergh CDRP strategy and action plans, and associated funding streams.
- Contribute to the effective operation of Neighbourhood Policing Teams, supporting an integrated approach to crime and disorder.
- Look to expand the Estate Ranger scheme
- Continue the implementation of new powers and develop initiatives on anti-social behaviour.
- Apply the Building Safer Communities Initiative (HO funding) to provide safer environments on new developments
- Participate in the Prolific and Priority Offenders Scheme (PoPo)
- Support a Domestic Violence Forum and give financial support for Women's Refuges
- Implement a risk based monitoring programme for licensed premises in partnership with Suffolk Police
- Detect, investigate and prosecute those people who fraudulently obtain public money or help to which they are not entitled.

Litter and Environmental Crime

- Enter into discussions with other Suffolk districts to investigate the joint procurement of street cleansing and grounds maintenance services, and investigate the options for further service delivery partnerships.
- Work with food outlets to resolve litter problems
- Look at the way the council maintains the 'street scene' in light of residents' comments and in negotiating the new contract.
- Provide education on keeping the environment clean
- Strengthen monitoring and enforcement of abandoned vehicles, street cleaning, fly tipping and dog fouling

- Introduce measures for fixed penalty fines and improved enforcement including covert surveillance techniques

Waste Management and Recycling

- Implement a jointly procured (with Mid Suffolk DC) waste collection service through a single contract, benefiting from economies of scale and operational savings whilst maintaining a high quality service.
- Continue the successful implementation of the 10 year Waste Management strategy in partnership with other Suffolk authorities
- Finalise the implementation of policies and mechanisms to deal with bulky waste, waste electrical goods, waste from municipal parks and gardens, commercial and industrial collection, hazardous waste, and biodegradable waste
- Develop improved facilities for the collection of glass and other materials.
- Increase the recycling rate, especially through promotional and educational schemes
- Introduce a scheme to recycle material from trade and commercial premises
- Introduce a scheme for the separate collection of household kitchen and catering waste
- Increase the number of households signed up to the Brown Bin (garden refuse) Scheme
- Send out the “Sort It” environmental newspaper to every household
- Provide encouragement and advice on home composting, plus the provision of compost bins.

Built and Natural Environment

- Obtain contributions from residential developers towards the provision of additional public open space or play facilities in the vicinity, and adopt a cross divisional approach for identifying local needs for Section 106 agreements
- Provide a Parish Tree Warden Scheme
- Seek to increase rural area road safety in conjunction with the county council
- Deliver the regeneration and redevelopment scheme for Poplar Road shops area, Great Cornard
- Carry out a review of the Conservation Areas and consider the need for Article 4(2) directions
- Prepare Local Development Documents
- Work with Suffolk County Council in monitoring the impact of new traffic reduction schemes and pollution in the built environment of Sudbury, and continue to encourage the county council to work towards a Western By Pass as soon as possible
- Develop a Sustainable Tourism Development Strategy in partnership with Suffolk Tourism

Sustainability and Environmental Pollution

- Carry out a review of the council’s approach to sustainability
- Monitor and seek to improve climate issues such as air quality through exploring whether initiatives/new programmes can be developed with partners
- Complete issue of all LAPPC (pollution control) permits
- Ensure that all LAPPC (pollution control) requirements are fully integrated into departmental monitoring programmes
- Implement the contaminated land strategy
- Explore the issues behind a Green Travel Plan.

Give easy convenient access to quality services

Context

The Babergh district is a large rural area of some 240 square miles. It has 76 parishes, 69 of which have populations of less than 3,000, and 43 have populations of less than 1,000. Around two-thirds of the population live outside the two main towns.

The relatively sparse population of the district means that both public and private sector services can be more difficult and costly to deliver, and may be less accessible to parts of the population.

A high percentage of the population are IT literate, but not all residents can contact us using a computer. In addition, the 2005 State of the District Debate and a survey carried out through the council's publication *Babergh Matters!* demonstrated that around 87% of the public were likely to contact the council by telephone, 28% by e-mail or through the website, 22% by letter and 27% would come to the offices. The council's Customer Access Strategy reflects this research and seeks to enable the public to access information and transactional services through the website, or for staff to use the same website sites to respond to telephone calls, letters or visits to the offices

The council is very clear that it wishes to provide quality services to its communities, and in order to achieve this, it must ensure that services are what communities want, and that they are economic, efficient and effective. Linked to this, the council itself must be well run and focussed to deliver best value for money. We are also concerned that we may not be providing services that effectively meet the needs of some groups such as people with disabilities, the elderly and young people.

The council expects to be judged through independent assessment of the quality of its services and, far more importantly, by the satisfaction expressed by its residents. The council also expects to be judged on how resources are managed and intends to demonstrate this by doing its best to keep council tax increases to the rate of inflation. But that will depend on the level of Government grant and our ability to make further savings and raise additional income. The council must manage its resources efficiently if it is to achieve its aims of quality services and value for money, and achieve the savings target set by central Government.

Key concerns

- 76 parishes spread over a large rural area of 240 square miles
- Residents often travel, sometimes significant distances to access some of our services when easier and more efficient options are available
- Some residents are unable to access the Internet, which reduces their options for accessing services.
- We need to ensure equality of access for all to all of our services
- Government target to make savings of 2.5% per year
- Continuing financial pressure on the council's budget and council tax levels
- Lower than acceptable public satisfaction with some of our services.

Key objectives

- Improve access to the council's services and facilities
- Improve the quality, efficiency and value for money of the council's services

- Achieve savings and additional income in order to try to keep council tax increases within the rate of inflation
- Embed risk management throughout the organisation
- Improve procurement arrangements to save time and money
- Implement more partnership arrangements for services where appropriate, especially through the Suffolk-wide Service Integration Group

Key Actions

Improve Access

- Implement the High Level 2-Year Programme Plan, to implement the council's long-term internal customer access solution based on the 'Positioning Option', including major deliverables and milestones, resource requirements, spending plans and risks set out at Appendix 2 of Paper F85.
- Undertake a 'Take Stock' review of the CAST Programme including a comparison of Babergh's progress with other Councils (particularly in Suffolk), to determine whether any further changes, initiatives or investments need to be pursued.
- Support the Sudbury Advice Centre run by Sudbury Town Council and investigate whether further improvement and services are possible
- Encourage the public to use new technology for access to services
- Publish service standards for access to council services so we are accountable to residents for the standard of service they can expect and actually receive.
- Respond to customer's telephone calls and communications efficiently and within the advertised response times
- Implement the Disability Equality Scheme Action Plan
- Extend the role of visiting officers to enable them to provide services in people's homes (both private and council-owned) on all aspects of the council.
- Introduce a Gender Equality Scheme
- Continue to develop a Suffolk-wide Community Cohesion Strategy
- Make available to Babergh residents concessionary travel vouchers to people with severe mobility problems, or senior citizens living in remote areas of the district with limited provision (if any) of public transport.

Improve Services

- Look to improve two-tier local government working across Suffolk in accordance with the principles set out in the Government's White Paper *Strong and prosperous communities* (may be a pathfinder)
- Implement more partnership arrangements for services where appropriate, especially through the Suffolk-wide Service Integration Group
- Implement suitable organisational development plans to meet the needs of the organisation, including leadership programmes and effective programme and project management
- Implement phase 2 of the LAMP project (subject to Member approval)
- Review and revise service standards in the light of public consultation, priorities and finance, and ensure outcomes are measured and monitored to bring about improvement to the delivery of services
- Consult regularly with service users and check the quality and value of services through customer feedback and the National Comparison BVPI exercise
- Use the Best Value User Satisfaction Surveys to help drive service improvements

- Review the complaints procedure including member involvement and interaction with the Ombudsman
- Fully embed risk management in the organisation's arrangements, reviewing strategic and operational risks every three years
- Carry out a review of the council's private sector housing work to determine its effectiveness
- Explore the possibility of joint working on Local Development Frameworks
- Continue to develop and deliver the e-government and ICT capital programmes
- Complete the development, and implement the ICT Strategy
- Continue to identify and deliver savings and efficiencies throughout the council
- Raise additional income through appropriate charges
- Continue to develop and promote programme and project management
- Continue implementation of the CPA Improvement plan
- Review and improve the council's use of resources as part of the CPA process
- Continue to achieve a positive 'direction of travel' judgement by the Audit Commission
- Implement the Procurement Strategy and action plan
- Produce a financial strategy for the life of the new council
- Achieve level 2 of the Equalities Standard
- Conduct a study on the advertising of vacancies to ensure that minority groups and females are reached.

Raise individual and community ambitions, and encourage active citizenship

Context

While community leadership has always been part of what councils provide and are expected to provide, it is now firmly established in statute. Councils are able 'to do anything' to promote the well-being of their area as a whole, and are encouraged to look beyond immediate service delivery to the wider economic, social and environmental well-being of their area. This is achieved by councils developing a strategy for their communities with local people and partner organisations. The strategies are delivered by local strategic partnerships (LSPs) that bring together statutory, non-statutory, private, voluntary and community organisations to promote and improve residents' lives.

Community leadership requires the active involvement of individuals and communities, so Babergh needs robust mechanisms for communication and consultation to turn local aspirations into reality within a transparent democratic process.

Generally Babergh has a well-balanced economy with low levels of unemployment. However two wards have relatively high unemployment rates and an over reliance on a single employer. Two other wards were in the top quartile of deprived areas both nationally and in Suffolk. Around 36% of the residents within these wards have no educational qualifications compared to a national average of 29%, whilst only 12% have a degree level education or higher, compared to a national average of 20%.

Babergh's skills base needs to be developed and the low wage economy tackled. The council will work with the Suffolk Development Agency and the Greater Haven Partnership to develop initiatives that increase employment and training opportunities for local people.

There are relatively low levels of higher education attainment in Suffolk when compared to many other parts

of the UK. 6th form education is not available at all high schools in Babergh and there are only limited further education centres. However there is a proposal to develop a new centre that will provide for the education of young people (post 16) in south and west Ipswich and South Suffolk. Plans are also well underway to develop a university in Suffolk.

A large proportion of young people in their 20s move out of the area, with a change of -24.5% (-2,524 people) between the 1991 and 2001 census. The 30-39 age range changed by +8.9% (+931 people) which may partially be through some of the people who left in their 20s returning to the area. However projected changes in the age profile over the next 20 years towards an ageing population and a substantial reduction in the 16-49 age group add to fears that there will be an acute shortage of skilled workers, and a consequently depressed economy in the region and sub-region.

Due to the attractiveness of the district, it is a popular place for people to visit and tourism is very important to the local economy generating in excess of £120m per annum. The council will continue to market and promote tourism in the area, working in partnership where appropriate.

Key concerns

- Village shops, pubs and other facilities are closing
- Employment opportunities are reducing in many villages
- The continuing viability and vitality of our town centres
- Disadvantage within communities in parts of Sudbury, Great Cornard and part of the Hadleigh North ward
- Most members of the public only get involved if an issue could affect them adversely
- Young people can feel disenfranchised and not listened to
- Two-way communication between the council, the public and diverse groups
- Transparency of decision-making
- Skills availability affects job opportunities and pay levels
- Limited opportunities to access further and higher education locally
- Relatively low levels of higher education attainment in Suffolk
- Large proportion of young people in their 20s move out of the area
- Electoral turnout at council elections is low.

Key objectives

- Increase individual and community ambition
- Increase the participation and inclusion of individuals, communities and hard-to-reach groups in the council's democratic processes
- Encourage increased election turnout.

Key Actions

Government White Paper *Strong and prosperous communities*

- Devise plans and strategies to implement a system of local government that:
 - provides strong and visible local leadership
 - becomes more accountable, standardising the ways in which local people can demand action from their local authority and empowering local people, and their elected representatives, in their communities

- transforms local public services so that they can combine greater efficiency with greater responsiveness
- incorporates greater joined-up working between councils and with other partners, businesses, the voluntary sector, and local groups and people.

Individual and Community Ambition

- Continue to evaluate and develop the two local strategic partnerships
- Develop the Suffolk and Haven Gateway Investing In Communities (IIC) 10 year action plans
- Encourage parish/town councils to produce Parish Plans to identify the needs of their communities and to put in place arrangements to meet those needs
- Provide grants for recreational and community facilities and developed funding streams which unlock the potential of community and voluntary groups to directly contribute to village hall and sports clubs schemes, and community transport programmes
- Carry out a review of the capital and revenue grants awarded by the council
- Grant rate relief for village halls, community centres, post offices, shops, pubs, petrol filling stations and non-profit making sports clubs
- Support the Sudbury Area Forum
- Support the Babergh Communities Together
- Support and develop community ambition e.g. CANN – the Community and Neighbourhood Network
- Have Community Achievement Awards for active members of the public
- Champion people who help to deliver the council’s priorities
- Take a more ambitious view to volunteering by working more closely with the voluntary sector and through promoting volunteering

Democratic Consultation and Participation

- Continue the implementation of the youth strategy including holding an annual youth conference
- Implement the Suffolk Children and Young People’s Involvement Strategy
- Support Councillors visiting schools to talk to young people
- Encourage the formation of more council tenants’ groups and develop the Tenant Participation Compact
- Support the Sheltered Tenants’ and Tenants’ Forums
- Develop the voluntary and community infrastructure in Sudbury and Great Cornard, and enhance the local consultative role of Sudbury Communities Area Forum
- Consider the expansion of area forums
- Take the views of both area forums and Parish Plans into account when planning and delivering services.
- Develop communication, consultation and involvement – especially with the private sector and private sector tenants
- Promote local tenants’ and residents’ groups
- Consult with and give feedback to members of the public on a wide variety of service issues
- Further develop customer focus groups.
- Increase the involvement of members of the public in decision making, such as in the “State of the District” debate
- Hold annual meetings with parish and town councils
- Send “Babergh Matters!” twice a year to 36,000 households

Economic Development

- Implement Local Plan policies to retain existing employment sites and allocate new land for employment and have provided grants to convert redundant buildings into new workspaces for new local jobs
- Develop key employment sites at Brantham and British Sugar to increase economic opportunity for those communities.
- Implement Local Plan policies to retain existing village shops.
- Grant rate relief to small businesses in the district
- Enable growth of new businesses, expanding local firms and inward investment
- Support and work with the Suffolk Development Agency to deliver the Economic Strategy to ensure the needs of Babergh business are met
- Support the Haven Gateway Partnership to ensure the benefits of growth status provide employment and learning opportunities in Eastern Babergh
- Deliver the regeneration and redevelopment scheme for Poplar Road shops area, Great Cornard
- Enable the development of 40 acres of employment land at Chilton Woods, Sudbury, and seek to improve the associated road infrastructure (including the Sudbury Western By-pass), to enhance growth of local companies and to attract new growth sector companies, including a graduation centre

Learning and Education

- Support the creation of a Suffolk University Campus
- Work with partners such as the Learning and Skills Council to develop a proposal on the development of a new centre that will provide for the education of young people (post 16) in south and west Ipswich and South Suffolk
- Encourage the development of a learning and business centre at Brantham
- Make Business/Learning Centres available for wider community use.
- Participate in a school inclusion and training programme at Great Cornard Upper School.
- Work with local businesses to establish their needs for educational and other skills and liaise with education providers
- Support others to ensure skills needs match the requirement of our employers and ensure delivery of those skills, including provision of infrastructure where appropriate

Election Turnout

- Held elections in accordance with legal requirements.

Tourism and the Arts

- Continue working in partnership with the Suffolk Tourism Partnership on a countywide sustainable tourism project to encourage tourism businesses to “go green”, and to provide training and development opportunities
- Sit on the Dedham Vale Management Group to ensure sustainable tourism development and management in Constable Country and the wider Dedham Vale
- Develop a Community Arts strategy
- Work with Suffolk Art Link to develop arts activities and improve access for vulnerable members of the community.
- Provide funding for a number of arts related initiatives including the Great Cornard Arts Project, the Rural Cinema Project and the Amplifier Project
- Provide funding for the Quay Theatre