

BABERGH DISTRICT COUNCIL

FROM: THE HOUSING PANEL

REPORT NUMBER F59

**TO: OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY
(COMMUNITY SERVICES) COMMITTEE**

DATE OF MEETING: 25 July 2006

THE HOUSING PANEL'S 2006 HOUSING REVIEW

1. SUMMARY

1.1 The Housing Panel has undertaken a review of the following strategies and policy documents:

- Babergh's Housing Strategy 2004-2009 (including the Affordable Housing Programme)
- Babergh's Homelessness Strategy
- The Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Business Plan
- The Housing Stock Options Appraisal
- The Sheltered Housing Review

1.2 The Housing Panel has considered these strategies and plans in detail over the past year. The Panel concluded that good progress is being made delivering the action plans linked to these strategies and is not recommending any major policy changes at this time. However, the Panel does wish to make Members aware of a number of particular issues and these are referred to in this report. Ten of the conclusions reached require formal approval from Committee before they can be actioned and these are presented as recommendations.

1.3 It is the Panel's intention to review the strategies and the HRA Business Plan again in 12 months time.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS TO STRATEGY COMMITTEE AND COUNCIL

2.1 That the updated Affordable Housing Programme, as detailed in Appendix 1, be approved.

2.2 That delegated authority be given to the Head of Contract and Asset Management in conjunction with the Head of Community Development to sell the land adjoining No. 2 The Street, Monks Eleigh and for the proceeds of sale to be used, in the first instance, for the delivery of affordable housing in Monks Eleigh, then, failing that, for affordable housing elsewhere in the Babergh District.

2.3 That delegated authority be given to the Head of Contract and Asset Management in conjunction with the Head of Community Development to transfer the land adjoining No. 5 Bury Road, Alpheton to an Registered Social Landlord partner at a discount of up to 100% for the delivery of affordable housing.

2.4 That delegated authority be given to the Head of Contract and Asset Management in conjunction with the Head of Community Development to transfer Nos. 25 and 26 Harpers Estate Nayland to Flagship Housing Group at a discount of up to 100% for the delivery of higher density new affordable housing to meet local housing needs.

- 2.5 That, when submitting `Growth` theme bids for Social Housing Grant, the Head of Community Development be authorised to offer a proportion of any subsequent properties funded through this route to out-of- area nominations; the percentage of such nominations to be agreed with the Housing Corporation.
- 2.6 That the Housing Panel undertakes a feasibility study into all available options for the future use of the Council's Homelessness Reception Centre at Stour House in Sudbury when it is decommissioned as a hostel later in 2006, in consultation with Sudbury and Great Cornard Members and reports back to Strategy Committee with its conclusions.
- 2.7 That the Head of Community Development, in conjunction with the Human Resources Manager, be authorised to make all appropriate changes to the sheltered housing structure and the terms and conditions of sheltered housing staff, which become necessary as a result of the 2006 Sheltered Housing Review, as detailed in Para 11 in this report, the Supporting People Review and the need to meet the requirements of the Single Status Agreement.
- 2.8 That the current annual `mini` Housing Stock Options Appraisal be discontinued and, instead, a full Housing Stock Option Appraisal be commissioned in 2009/10; the Terms of Reference of which to be determined by Council nearer the time.
- 2.9 That the Housing Panel submit a report to Strategy Committee in 2007 with proposals for Babergh's response to the Gypsy and Travellers Needs Assessment, which is currently underway.
- 2.10 That the Council's Choice Based Lettings Scheme (CBL) be based on Colchester Borough Council's scheme and a report be prepared for Strategy Committee in 2007 detailing an implementation plan for Babergh's CBL Scheme.

The Committee is asked to make a recommendation to Strategy Committee and the Council on the above matters.

3. **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 3.1 The Housing Panel is keen to ensure that Members understand the implications of their recommendations to invest the proceeds of the sale of the Council's land and properties (in this case recommendations 2, 3 and 4) into more affordable housing. This does mean that the capital receipts will not be available to meet other corporate objectives of the Council.
- 3.2 The valuations of garden land at The Street, Monks Eleigh and at Bury Road, Alpheton are together likely to total between £200,000 and £300,000. The two properties at Harpers Estate, Nayland would be valued at around £150,000 each on the open market. If the properties were sold there would be between £500,000 and £600,000 potentially to invest in other capital priorities or reduce borrowing requirements.
- 3.3 However, it is recognised that the delivery of affordable housing is not only a corporate priority, but it also supports a number of other corporate objectives around sustainable communities and active citizenship. The level of investment proposed is felt to be essential if the target of 700 new homes over 5 years is to be achieved.

- 3.4 The feasibility study proposed for the future of Stour House (recommendation 6) will be undertaken by in-house staff and the costs will, therefore, be mainly funded from existing Housing Revenue Account. The financial implications will be fully assessed as part of that options appraisal.
- 3.5 The financial implications of the Sheltered Scheme Review and the implementation of the Single Status Agreement (recommendation 7) will fall entirely on the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) and are not expected to be significant. There may be an impact on the charges met by residents and Members will be advised if any issues arise in relation to this.
- 3.6 The costs of the Housing Stock Option Appraisal (recommendation 8) have been included in the HRA Business Plan for 2009/10.
- 3.7 Babergh's contribution to the cost of the survey of the Gypsy and Traveller Needs Assessment (recommendation 9) is £8,120 and will be found from existing budgets.
- 3.8 The costings for the Choice based lettings Scheme (Recommendation 10) will be provided for Committee to consider once the outcome of the sub-regional bid and the scheme's details are worked up.

4. **KEY INFORMATION**

- 4.1 The Housing Panel, in accordance with Committee's instructions last year, has completed its review of the Council's 2004-2009 Housing Strategy, Homelessness Strategy, HRA Business Plan and Housing Stock Options Appraisal.
- 4.2 The Panel held a Housing Strategy Consultation Day to which all Members and key partners were invited. The day included a tour of housing projects across the District and workshop sessions about key housing issues.
- 4.3 Following the review and the consultation exercise the Housing Panel concluded that the main priorities and objectives in all the policy documents under review should remain as they are. The Panel did, however, feel that some changes were required and these are detailed in the following paragraphs. Where the proposal requires Committee approval the number of the recommendation that relates to that proposal is shown under the main heading.

5. **THE UPDATED AFFORDABLE HOUSING PROGRAMME**

Recommendation 1

- 5.1 The overall target of 700 affordable homes over the next 5 years remains unchanged. Excellent work is currently being achieved and the Panel fully expects the target figure to be delivered.
- 5.2 A fully updated Affordable Housing Programme is provided as Appendix 1. Please note that all schemes proposed in this programme are dependant on gaining planning permission, the securing of all necessary funding packages and the results of associated consultation exercises. The Programme is also subject to further change as new sites are identified while other some schemes may prove unviable for development. The Housing Panel will continue to update Committee annually on all major changes.

- 5.3 While some of the Affordable Housing Programme can be delivered through planning obligations, our rural affordable housing delivery, in particular, is very reliant upon other sources of funding. Our main funding source is the Housing Corporation in the form of Social Housing Grant (SHG). We have been very successful in attracting good levels of SHG. One of the reasons for this is the Council's policy of providing its own land for affordable housing schemes at nil or discounted cost as well as providing some direct grant funding. These measures support the Council's case for Housing Corporation funding. In view of this the Panel did consider making our land available for affordable housing schemes at nil cost in all cases, as do most of the other Suffolk Local Authorities, but concluded that each case should be judged separately with the expectation that the disposal at nil cost would be the most likely outcome.
- 5.4 There are four particular additions to the Programme this year, three of which require Committee approval before they can be progressed, these are detailed below.
- 5.5 It is Babergh's policy to identify Council owned land that could be used to contribute to the development of new affordable housing and three of the additions to the Programme are the result of this policy in action.

6. **THE STREET, MONKS ELEIGH**

Recommendation 2

- 6.1 When a vacancy occurred recently at the council house at No. 2 The Street, Monks Eleigh a large area of garden land at the side of the property was identified as a potential development site. As this was a potential building site the property was let without the garden land in question being part of the tenancy.
- 6.2 It is only possible to build one property on the site. Such a small development would be expensive to develop and would require a substantial subsidy from both the Council and the Housing Corporation. A better way of using the land is to sell the site for its full value on the open market with outline planning approval for a detached dwelling for sale at full market value. This approach should bring in a substantial capital receipt as the site is in a desirable location with road frontage onto the main street of a high value village.
- 6.3 If outline planning permission was in place, the site would be worth in the region of £100,000 to £150,000. Such a capital receipt could help fund Babergh's Affordable Housing Programme. Babergh is currently working with the Rural Housing Trust and Monks Eleigh Parish Council to develop a scheme of between 10 and 12 homes on an exceptions site within the village. If the scheme is approved a substantial amount of funding will be required to deliver the new homes and a contribution of £100,000 to £150,000 would assist with the delivery of the scheme and possibly attract additional funding from other partners.
- 6.4 It is proposed, therefore, that the Council sell the land adjoining No. 2 The Street, Monks Eleigh and put the capital receipt towards the new affordable housing scheme planned in Monks Eleigh. If, for whatever reason, that scheme fails the Housing Panel propose the money be earmarked for affordable housing elsewhere in the Babergh District.

7. **BURY ROAD, ALPHETON**

Recommendation 3

- 7.1 When a vacancy occurred recently at the council house at No.5 Bury Road Alpheton a large area of garden land at the side of the property was identified as a potential development site for two affordable dwellings. This property was let without the garden land in question being part of the tenancy.
- 7.2 Plans for two houses on the site have been prepared. Both the Ward Member and the Parish Council have been advised of the proposal and further consultation is planned with the Ward Member, the Parish Council and the local community once a Housing Association partner has been chosen to develop the site. It is proposed that the Council transfer this garden land in Bury Road Alpheton to a Registered Social Landlord partner at a discount of up to 100% for the delivery of affordable housing.

8. **Nos. 25 & 26 HARPERS ESTATE NAYLAND**

Recommendation 4

- 8.1 Babergh has been working for sometime with Nayland Parish Council and Flagship Housing Group to deliver new affordable housing to meet identified housing needs in Nayland. Finding a suitable site in the parish has proved difficult because of the sensitive village environment. However, with approval of the Ward Member, a suitable site for redevelopment has now been identified. Details of the site are outlined below.
- 8.2 The Council owns Nos. 25 and 26 Harpers Estate, Nayland. These are an adjoining pair of 2-bedroom semi-detached bungalows built on a large plot in the 1950s. Both are in poor condition, each requiring between £14,000 and £18,000 worth of improvement works to bring them up to modern standards. Both are vacant and have not been relet. They would make an ideal site for a small affordable housing scheme to meet village needs.
- 8.3 It is therefore proposed that the properties be transferred to Flagship Housing Group at a discount of up to 100%, subject to planning approval, for demolition of the two old bungalows and the development of four new 2-bedroom houses with gardens and parking for rent to local people. This would be a major contribution to meeting the housing needs of the Parish.

9. **A NEW FUNDING OPPORTUNITY**

Recommendation 5

- 9.1 Last year the Housing Corporation introduced seven themed categories under which all bids for Social Housing Grant (SHG) had to be listed. Each theme was allocated a percentage of the total SHG funding pot. The categories were:

# Market Rural	# Rural Regeneration	# Black & Minority Ethnic Groups
# Local Needs	# Supported Housing	# Gypsy and Traveller
# Growth		

- 9.2 Babergh made bids under a number of these categories and overall, did very well; receiving nearly £3 million in SHG in total. However, in order to achieve our 700 new homes in 5 years target we must have a pro-active approach at all times. We are currently unable to access funding under the Growth theme and this is a missed opportunity. Central government and the Housing Corporation identified the Growth theme category as one of the most important themes within the bid process and awarded this a proportionally higher amount of the funding pot than any other category. It is, therefore, a pot of money certainly worth bidding for.
- 9.3 The Growth category is designed to encourage development in designated growth areas. The Haven Gateway Partnership has submitted a bid for growth status for its` entire area (this includes the eastern part of Babergh) but with focus on Ipswich, Colchester and the port expansion in Felixstowe and Harwich. However, bids supported by Local Authorities for affordable housing under the growth category will be considered even if the LA is not in a growth area if two conditions are met. These are:
- It can demonstrate that its` housing needs will be adversely affected by a designated growth area nearby
 - It is prepared to offer up a proportion of the vacancies from the new development to nominees from outside their own districts
- 9.4 The first condition is easy to meet. Babergh`s housing needs research clearly shows that local people on lower incomes are `priced out` of their local housing market because it is fuelled by people working across a number of growth areas in London, Cambridgeshire and Essex.
- 9.5 Achieving the second condition means amending Babergh`s allocations policy and this requires Committee approval. The policy needs to be amended to enable a percentage of nominations for the sites that are to be funded by any SHG growth bids to be given to out-of-area applicants. Fulfilling this requirement will not disadvantage local applicants as without the additional funding the schemes in question would not be developed in the same way.
- 9.6 In order to secure the best level of funding possible in future bid rounds, and particularly for our larger housing developments such as Chilton Woods, it is proposed that bids in this category are supported by Babergh in the hope that additional funding for affordable housing can be secured and the appropriate adjustment to the lettings policy be made.

10. **THE HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY**

Recommendation 6

- 10.1 The Council`s Homelessness Strategy (set out in Papers C49 & C180) commits us to move away from providing homeless people with temporary, shared housing towards giving them temporary, self-contained accommodation instead. This higher standard of provision is also something that the Government expects us to provide. The use of large homeless hostels, such as Babergh`s Homeless Persons Reception Centre at Stour House in Sudbury, with its` shared bathrooms and kitchens is no longer acceptable.
- 10.2 The priority within the Homelessness Strategy is to stop using Stour House in its` present form and a great deal of work has been going on to ensure that it is no longer in use by the end of 2006. The closure programme has meant we must identify sufficient numbers of self-contained units, both in the public and private sectors that we can use as temporary accommodation. To start with a number of the Council`s newly improved flats at Sandringham Court are to be used and more will be required.

- 10.3 Fortunately the number of homeless acceptances has been falling due, in the main, to the success of the Homelessness Strategy that puts emphasis on homeless prevention work designed to stop people ending up as homeless in the first place.
- 10.4 Last year Council agreed that the best alternative use for Stour House, once it was closed, was to convert the property into self-contained flats for social housing. The Housing Panel reviewed this plan and concluded that there would be considerable benefits in exploring other options, without discounting the original plan. There could be a number of options, but the main one that needs to be considered in detail is selling the property and the adjoining land and using the capital receipt to build more suitable social housing elsewhere (or use some or all of the capital receipts on other corporate priorities).
- 10.5 It is proposed that the Panel carry out a feasibility study on all possible future uses for Stour House and the adjoining land. The Housing Panel's study needs to involve local Members in both Great Cornard and Sudbury. If this arrangement is agreed it is planned to bring a report to Strategy Committee by the end of the 2006.

11. **THE SHELTERED HOUSING SERVICE REVIEW**

Recommendation 7

- 11.1 Last year the Housing Panel completed a review of the Sheltered Housing Service to determine what changes were needed to ensure our 14 Sheltered Schemes met the housing needs of older people in the future. A ten-year plan was developed as a result of this review. The Housing Panel has now considered the progress made in implementing this plan over the last year. The main achievement has been the Clibbon House Redevelopment Scheme, which is on target along with a small reduction in the size of a number of schemes that were designated for non-sheltered status in the long-term. The section below summarises the next phase of the Sheltered Housing Review, which accelerates the work started last year.
- 11.2 Firstly, a reminder for Members of the problems Babergh faces with its sheltered housing stock. Most of our sheltered housing schemes fall short of what older people want and, as a result, it is becoming more and more difficult to fill vacancies in many of them. This comes at a time when the demand for all types of non-sheltered housing is rising. The needs of older people have changed over the past few years and more changes can be expected. The Council's existing provision of small flats and bedsit bungalows, often with steps and few facilities are unpopular. The old concept of 'warden controlled flats' no longer fits well into modern day care arrangements and the needs of older people.
- 11.3 The review of the support being provided within sheltered housing in Suffolk under the terms of the *Supporting People* programme has also led to concerns about how effectively the grant is being utilised. Supporting People grant is aimed at helping people live independent lives within the community however, an increasing number of new tenants move into this form of accommodation not because they have a need for support but because it has always been more expedient to fill the vacancy.
- 11.4 The conditions for receiving Supporting People grant mean that we must commit to offer sheltered accommodation only to people who really need the service and we know this is not always possible. With nearly £4.5m of the grant within Suffolk allocated to fund the cost of providing scheme manager services, the Panel acknowledge that these financial implications will begin to impact on us. A review of services within Suffolk is underway and we are working with the other partner agencies so that a consistent approach to the problem is adopted.

11.5 The Housing Panel's programme of changes to the sheltered service, approved last year, are working well and the Panel want to continue making these changes in a phased programme that may well take in the region of ten years to fully implement. This 'softly softly' approach to the implementation plans is quite deliberate. The lives of the oldest and most vulnerable of all our tenants are involved and it is important that changes are implemented in a gradual manner, responding to opportunities as and when they occur naturally rather than forcing the pace of change.

11.6 The Panel has addressed these issues by planning a long-term reduction of the Council's sheltered housing stock by half and has divided Babergh's sheltered schemes into two groups; Group A schemes and Group B schemes. A summary of the revised plans the Housing Panel is proposing for each group is provided below.

11.7 Group A schemes will see major improvements and investment, making them highly popular and offering high standards of accommodation and service. These schemes will each have a residential Scheme Manager offering a full housing support service.

11.8 Group A schemes are:

Tenterpiece, Lavenham.	Steeds Meadow, Long Melford.
Elizabeth Court, Sudbury.	First Avenue, Sudbury.
Playford Court, Sudbury.	William Wood House, Sudbury.
Sydney Brown Court, Hadleigh.	

11.9 Group B schemes will be reduced in size and will see a reduction in the type of housing related support services that will be made available. The residential scheme manager service (where it still exists) will be phased out, to be replaced with a peripatetic 5-day week visiting service to those tenants still in need of the service. These Schemes will be reduced in size by allowing people under pensionable age to have access to vacancies. A reminder of what this policy is provided below (the Over 50s Lettings policy).

11.10 Group B schemes are:

Hill House, Bildeston.	Hadleigh Central.
Ash Street, Boxford.	Samford Place, Holbrook.
Spring Street, Lavenham.	Clover Court, Great Cornard.
Parkers Way, Nayland.	Grimwood Corner, Sudbury.

The Over 50s Lettings policy

11.11 Members are reminded what the *Over 50s Lettings policy* means as this is a crucial part of the Sheltered Scheme Review action plan. This policy was approved by Council last year as a way of dealing with particular properties in difficult-to-let sheltered vacancies while recognising the sensibilities of existing sheltered residents. It has worked well and it is proposed that this arrangement is extended to all vacancies arising in designated Group B schemes.

11.12 The Over 50s policy allows a vacancy in Group B schemes to be allocated to an applicant not in need of sheltered housing providing he or she is over the age of 50, if a suitable applicant in need of sheltered housing cannot be found. Crucial suitability criteria checks are made for such applicants (references, past tenancy record etc) before an offer is made. The long-term plan is, as these Group B schemes reduce in size, or earlier if the opportunity arises, to replace the residential scheme manager with a peripatetic 5-day week service for the remaining sheltered tenants.

Single Status Agreement implications

11.13 The National Single Status Agreement is the harmonisation of pay and conditions for all staff across an Authority in comparable posts. All Authorities have a final deadline of 31 March 2007 to fully implement the Agreement though Authorities are encouraged to complete this as soon as possible. The main features include: -

- One pay spine with grading reviews based on equal pay.
- Harmonisation of conditions of service
- A standard working week of 37 hours or less

11.14 While Sheltered Housing staff were offered personal contracts, a 37-hour week and job-evaluated salaries in March 2000 - they have unique fixed salaries. The reasons for this are historic and the variation essentially related to the different number of accommodation units within each of the sheltered schemes. Their current terms and conditions do not fully meet the harmonisation requirement as all other performance grade staff benefit from incremental salary scales. In planning the implementation of Single status across the Council it was recognised that the comprehensive review of Sheltered Housing would provide the opportunity to introduce a staff restructure that will address this issue and achieve full harmonization.

11.15 The Housing Panel propose that the changeover be incorporated into the wider changes going on as a result of the Sheltered Housing Review. The introduction of the Single Status Agreement for sheltered staff fits well into the plans to reduce the number and the size of some schemes, to replace some residential scheme managers with a peripatetic 5-day week service and to involve the peripatetic sheltered staff in related housing management duties.

11.16 In order to facilitate the very large amount of work that is required to move from the existing arrangements to the new arrangements the Housing Panel propose that the Head of Community Development, in conjunction with the HR Manager, be authorised to make all appropriate changes to the sheltered service staffing structure and the terms and conditions of sheltered housing staff, which become necessary as a result of the 2006 Sheltered Housing Review, as detailed above and the need to meet the requirements of the single status agreement.

12. THE 2006 HOUSING STOCK OPTIONS APPRAISAL

Recommendation 8

12.1 In February 2005 Babergh District Council agreed to retain the ownership and management of its` Council housing stock. It was also agreed that the Housing Panel would review the position on an annual basis, starting in 2006 and that a further full Stock Option Appraisal be undertaken by no later than 2009.

12.2 The Housing Panel has now completed its` 2006 Review. The Panel`s conclusion on this issue is, given that the key projections and assumptions made in the 2005 Appraisal still hold true, that the Council should continue to retain the ownership and management of its Council housing stock.

- 12.3 The Panel also concluded that the Council's decision in 2005 to review the position annually is too frequent, the major conditions on which the retention or transfer of the stock can be judged are unlikely to change within such a timeframe. Accordingly, the Panel propose that the annual appraisal of the stock options that Committee asked it to do should not take place, and that no further reviews are undertaken until the next full scheduled full scale review in 2009/10.
- 12.4 That review would follow the same lines as the 2005 Review and would involve setting up a member-led group that would commission an Independent Tenants Advisor and a specialist consultant to prepare an options report for Committee. However, there is a caveat to this proposal. If the annual review of the HRA Business Plan reveals new issues that undermine the 2005 decision to retain the stock it may well mean that we cannot wait until 2009/10 and that an earlier appraisal becomes necessary. The Housing Panel will keep Committee informed.

13. **GYPSIES AND TRAVELLERS**

Recommendation 9

- 13.1 The government is looking to increase authorised gypsy and traveller accommodation provision in order to improve the health and well being of these communities and to reduce tensions between settled and travelling communities. Accordingly, under provisions in the Housing Act 2004, it is now a requirement for Local Authorities (LAs) to take the lead in assessing the accommodation needs of gypsies and travellers, alongside those of the settled population. These assessed needs must then be reflected in Local Development Plans, in Housing Strategies and in statutory regional planning frameworks. LAs are also required, under section 87 of the Local Government Act 2003, to prepare a strategy on meeting the accommodation needs of gypsies and travellers.
- 13.2 The lack of authorised sites has resulted in an increase in unauthorised developments and encampments, which cause problems and impact on the settled community. Adequate provision will enable authorities to deal with unauthorised sites effectively. It is intended that the assessment, strategic development and delivery around gypsy and traveller accommodation should become part of mainstream housing and planning perspectives and functions. The government will intervene if LA plans are inadequate and will provide new funding to improve site provision where shortfalls are identified.
- 13.3 Five local authorities in Suffolk, shown below, have commissioned a joint Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment.
- # Babergh DC #Ipswich BC #Suffolk Coastal DC
Waveney DC #Mid Suffolk DC
- 13.4 The other LAs in Suffolk - St Edmundsbury BC and Forest Heath DC - have already completed their assessments, as part of the Cambridgeshire study, using a sub-regional approach.

- 13.5 Following a tender process *Salford Housing and Urban Studies Unit* (University of Salford) has been awarded the contract to undertake the needs assessment for the five Suffolk authorities. The cost of the study is £40,600 and this will be shared between the five authorities involved. A Steering Group has been established to work with the contractor, which is being lead by Mid Suffolk DC. It includes representatives from each of the Local Authorities involved, Suffolk County Council, Suffolk Police, the managers of two authorised encampments and representatives from the local Gypsy and Traveller communities. The Steering Group will also engage with other stakeholders throughout the duration of the study.
- 13.6 The survey started in July 2006 and expects to report findings in February 2007. It is proposed that the Housing Panel consider these findings and prepares a report for Committee with recommendations on the implications of the survey results for Babergh.

14. **BABERGH'S CHOICE BASED LETTINGS SCHEME**

Recommendation 10

- 14.1 The Housing Panel's Housing Strategy 2005 Review included a recommendation, which was approved, to establish a member-led Choice Based Lettings Steering Group. This job of this group was to develop a Choice Based Lettings (CBL) Scheme for Babergh and agree an implementation strategy. This was in line with government guidance requiring all council landlords to introduce CBL schemes by 2010.
- 14.2 The Steering Group has considered a number of options and is recommending that we adopt a sub-regional scheme based on the CBL scheme developed by Colchester Borough Council. Not only is this approach consistent with the governments choice agenda, it is also seen as both a practical and cost effective solution.
- 14.3 The government wants to see more local authorities delivering regional and sub-regional schemes and is providing £4 million to support some of the implementation costs. The maximum amount of grant is £100,000 per scheme. The Sub-Regional Housing Group to which Babergh belongs, is submitting a bid for £100,000, which would pay for the bulk of the implementation costs for a sub-regional scheme, which would include Babergh. However, we will not know whether this has been successful until January 2007. Clearly, such an award would make a great difference to Babergh.
- 14.4 Under these circumstances the Steering Group is recommending that responsibility for agreeing the way forward and the implementation plan be delegated to the Head of Community Development and that all issues requiring formal approval be reported directly to Strategy Committee in 2007.
- 14.5 Full details about Choice Based Lettings are available in the Members` Room.

15. **OTHER ISSUES**

- 15.1 The Housing Panel wish to draw Members` attention to a number of other issues, which, although do not require committee approval at this stage, will be useful for Members to be aware of.

The Housing Revenue Account Business Plan Review

- 15.2 The Housing Panel has reviewed the Housing Revenue Account Business Plan and concluded that it remains in a good position financially. There is no problem in fulfilling our current spending plan up to 2010 and achieving the Decent Homes Standard. The position after 2010 depends on the availability of capital receipts from Right To Buy sales and other areas and the extent to which the government continues to give the Council an annual borrowing approval. The position can be assessed with more certainty following the next Stock Condition Survey, which is scheduled for 2008/09. At that time, the Decent Homes Standard should have been more or less met.
- 15.3 In general terms, resources in the Housing Revenue Account are forecast to reduce significantly by 2009/10. Some minor adjustments to capital spending plans and efficiency savings are likely to be necessary before then in order to maintain the position in subsequent years. This means it will be important to find further efficiency savings. The Housing Panel will support the inclusion of key housing services in the Business Process Re-engineering Programme should this approach to finding efficiencies be proven and is continued by the Council. The Housing Panel will continue to monitor the HRA Business Plan annually.

Refugee and asylum seeker issues

- 15.4 Members will recall that the Local Authorities across Suffolk agreed to offer rehousing to up to twelve refugees living in Ipswich whose asylum applications have been successful each year. There was also an agreed facility to rehouse displaced homeless families or council house transfer applicants from the Ipswich Borough Council (IBC) housing register instead of refugee households.
- 15.5 Earlier in 2006 the National Asylum Support Service (NASS) appointed a private contractor called `Clearsprings` to provide accommodation for asylum seekers in the Ipswich area. IBC's administrative boundary exclude areas that are in Babergh and Suffolk Coastal District Councils yet, for all other purposes, are regarded as being within what is being called `Greater Ipswich` in terms of transport links, shop usage and so on. IBC recognises that Clearsprings may well find accommodation in the Ipswich area that is suitable for asylum seekers but may not strictly be within the administrative boundary of Ipswich Borough Council. EERA accepted this as a reasonable way forward and Clearsprings are seeking suitable properties to acquire for asylum seekers in `Greater Ipswich`, and this now includes those small parts of Babergh that adjoin Ipswich.
- 15.6 The Panel has reviewed the position regarding Babergh's permanent rehousing offer as the decision to take a `Greater Ipswich` approach took place after the countywide agreement was made. The Panel concluded that the rehousing commitment should stand. However, now the whole picture is known the Panel wishes to withdraw the offer to rehouse any homeless persons displaced by refugees electing to stay in Ipswich rather than come to Babergh. This change is a minor part of the original agreement made by Members last year and, in the view of the Panel, does not require Council endorsement and can, instead, be implemented using the Head of Community Development's delegated powers. This information is provided to Members as it represents a change from the agreement entered into by Council last year.

A new supported housing scheme to replace two supported schemes in Sudbury

- 15.7 The Panel is seeking to develop proposals for a housing scheme for the residents of two supported housing schemes in Sudbury. Details of both these schemes are as follows:

- 15.8 Granta Housing Society Housing has leased two adjoining 3-bedroom houses in Sudbury from the Suffolk Mental Health Partnership Trust since 1991 for use as a supported housing scheme for people with long-term mental health problems. The scheme provides a home to 6 residents. The residents are aging and the property is now becoming unsuitable for them. The principal problems are the stairs and the lack of a walk-in shower. The type and layout of the property means it cannot be easily adapted and the scheme itself no longer fits with the best practice requirements for accommodating people with mental health problem. Alternative, more appropriate, housing in Sudbury is becoming necessary.
- 15.9 Suffolk County Council has leased a large detached property in Sudbury from Babergh for many years for use as a group home for people with learning disabilities. The County is seeking alternative housing for these residents for similar reasons to the ones described above. In this case, the provision of an alternative scheme would return a significant piece of potential development land to the Council.
- 15.10 One solution, which would meet the housing needs of both sets of residents in the above schemes, as well as solving a problem for Babergh, would be to develop a housing package involving the transfer of a group of difficult-to-let and inadequate council owned bungalows in Sudbury to a Housing Association. The Housing Association would then, in turn, improve and convert the bungalows into a supported housing scheme. It is the intention of the Housing Panel to develop this housing solution, as well as exploring others, and come back to Committee with a fully costed and worked up proposal.
- 15.11 Members are alerted to this new housing need at this early point, as it is likely to be necessary to undertake some public consultation work on potential solutions before seeking formal approval from Committee. The Housing Panel will, of course, discuss any proposals with all local Members concerned before a Committee report is prepared.

APPENDIX 1

The updated Affordable Housing Programme

BACKGROUND PAPERS REFERRED TO:

Babergh's Housing Strategy 2004-2009
Babergh's Homelessness Strategy
HRA Business Plan
Sheltered Housing Review
Sub-regional Housing Strategy
Supporting People 5 year Strategy
Stock Options Appraisal

THE HOUSING PANEL:

Penny Clarke
Jennie Jenkins
Neil MacMaster
Wendy Sadler
Richard Searle (Tenants Forum Rep)
Sue Wigglesworth (Chairman)

CONTACT: Chris Foti, Head of Community Development DIRECT LINE: 01473 825768

The Affordable Housing Programme

Location	Scheme	Dwelling Mix	RSL	Comments
2005-2006				
Boxford/Groton – Partridge Close	Local Needs Housing	6 x 2BH 3 x 3BH 4 x 2BB	Flagship Housing/Suffolk Heritage HA	Completed June-05
Sudbury - Uplands Road	Regeneration of 14 low demand 1BB to provide 9 new 2-BB.	9 x 2BB for rent	Iceni Homes/Suffolk Housing Society	Completed November-05
Upper Layham	Mixed tenure housing for local people	3 x 2BBs rent 1 x 2 BB sale 1 x 3 BB S/O	Flagship Housing/Suffolk Heritage HA	Completed November-05
Bures – Maltings Cottage	Planning obligations site	1 x 2BH for Rent	Iceni Homes/ Suffolk Housing Society	Completed Jan-06
Shotley Peninsula, Sproughton, Copdock.	Regeneration of 21 Block Built Bungalows to create 36 bungalows in a phased programme.	2 & 3 bedroom bungalows for rent	Iceni Homes/Suffolk Housing Society	14 units completed to date.
Hadleigh – Aldham Mill Hill	Planning obligations houses for rent and shared ownership	Mixed units: 10 S/O 39 rent	Flagship Housing/Suffolk Heritage HA	Phase 1 handover Jan 2006 6 further phases due during 2006 Completion = Dec-06
Nedging - Crowcroft Road	Mixed tenure housing for local people	3 x 3BH – Rent 3 x 3BH – S/O	Flagship Housing/Suffolk Heritage HA	Completed May-06
Sudbury – Edgeworth Road	Planning obligations houses for rent and shared ownership.	3 x houses – Rent 4 x houses – S/O	Flagship Housing/Suffolk Heritage HA	Completion due July-06
Polstead – Rockalls Road	Local needs housing on BDC regeneration site.	2 x 2BB 4 x 2BF 2 x 2BH 4 x 3BH All for rent	Flagship Housing/Suffolk Heritage HA	Completion due July-06

Location	Scheme	Dwelling Mix	RSL	Comments
2006-2007				
Bures – Tawneys Ride. Phase One	Local needs housing for rent on Council owned land	7 x 2BH 2 x 3BH	Orwell HA	SoS July-06
Cockfield – Green Lane	Local needs housing for rent and shared ownership on BDC owned land.	9 units for rent and S/O	Orwell HA	SoS July-06
Shotley – Kingsland – land adjacent to 84	Affordable housing on undeveloped BDC owned land	2 x 2B Disabled Adapted Bungalows	Iceni Homes/ Suffolk Housing Society	BDC owned site currently under consideration for affordable housing use. Full consultation to follow.
Hadleigh – Long Bessels	Planning obligations flats for rent and houses for S/O	4 x 2 Bed Flats for rent 2 x 2 Bed houses S/O	Flagship Housing/Suffolk Heritage HA	SoS 2006/7

Location	Scheme	Dwelling Mix	RSL	Comments
Great Cornard - Poplar Road.	Houses and flats for rent and shared ownership, commercial shop units with private rent flats above and community facility.	41 mixed units Social Rent, Private rent and S/O	Flagship Housing/Suffolk Heritage HA	SoS due Autumn 2006
Cockfield – Cross Green	Local needs housing for rent and shared ownership on Rural Exception site	4 units for rent and S/O	Orwell HA	SHG approved Dec-05
Cockfield - County Farm Land	Local needs housing for rent and shared ownership on SCC land	6 units for rent and S/O	Orwell HA	SHG approved Dec-05
Bildeston – Rotherham Road	Local needs housing for shared ownership on BDC owned exceptions site	15x houses for shared ownership	Orbit HA	SoS Autumn-06
Lawshall – Churchill Close	Local needs housing for rent and shared ownership on BDC owned land	6 units for rent 2 units for S/O 2 for discounted sale	Flagship Housing/Suffolk Heritage HA	SoS Sept-06.
Great Cornard – Clover Court	Bungalows for rent	3 x 2 Bed Bungalows	Flagship Housing/Suffolk Heritage HA	SoS Autumn-06.
Great Cornard-Clibbon House	Redevelopment of Council owned sheltered housing scheme	23 mixed units for rent and shared ownership	Flagship Housing/Suffolk Heritage HA	SoS Winter 2006/7.
Long Melford – Woollards Gardens	General needs housing for rent on BDC owned land	2 x 2BH 1 x 3BB	Iceni Homes/Suffolk Housing Society	SoS Oct-06.
Boxford – Homefield	Local needs housing for rent and shared ownership on BD owned garage site	4 x flats – rent 4 x flats – S/O	Flagship Housing/Suffolk Heritage HA	Planning application Aug-06.
Capel St Mary – The Drift	Planning Obligations Site	1 x 2BB for Rent	RSL TBA	Completion date TBA
Hitcham - Syers Farm	Planning Obligations Site	1 x 2BB for Rent	RSL TBA	Completion date TBA
Stutton - Bakers Almshouses	Upgrade of almshouses for Local Needs Housing	5 x 1/2BB	Hastoe HA	Scheme under consideration.
Sudbury – St Bartholomew’s Priory	Planning obligations general needs housing	48 units for rent and S/O	Iceni/Suffolk Housing Society	Site development underway.
Gt. Cornard – Bakers Mill Site	Planning obligations site delivering rented and shared ownership dwellings.	12 units for rent 10 units for S/O	Iceni/Suffolk Housing Society/Colne	Site development underway.
Lavenham	Local Needs Housing	Numbers not confirmed	Rural Housing Trust/ Flagship Housing	Various sites being investigated

Location	Scheme	Dwelling Mix	RSL	Comments
2007-2008				
Hartest – Coach Depot Site	Planning Obligations Site	1 x 2BH	RSL TBA	Negotiations underway
Great Cornard – Bures Road	Rented and shared ownership dwellings from Planning Gain	107 mixed units 26 S/O 81 Rented	Colne Housing/Iceni Homes	Awaiting confirmation of development date
Sudbury – Sandringham Court	Flats for rent on BDC owned land	4 x 1B flats	Flagship Housing/Suffolk Heritage HA	SHG allocated Apr-06
Elmsett	Local Needs Housing on BDC owned land.	3 x 3BB Rent & S/O	Flagship Housing/Suffolk Heritage HA	Site design underway
Long Melford	Mixed scheme for rent, shared ownership and local needs on exceptions site	Numbers not known	Hastoe HA	Bid for HC funding Oct-05
Monks Eleigh	Local needs housing for rent and shared equity on exceptions site	7 units for rent 3 for shared equity	RHT/ Flagship Housing	Planning & Funding to be achieved.
Monks Eleigh – 2 The Street	Garden Land – potential site for 1 x 3-4BH	1 x 3-4BH	NA	Site under assessment for sale with outline PP.
East Bergholt	Local needs housing for rent and shared equity	7 units for rent 3 for shared equity	RHT/ Flagship Housing	Site to be identified
Sudbury – Priory Stadium	Planning obligations rented dwellings	12 units	RSL not appointed	Awaiting confirmation of development date
Gt. Cornard – Guilford Europe	Planning obligations Shared Ownership dwellings	12 flats	RSL not appointed	Awaiting confirmation of development date.
Gt. Cornard - Cats Lane	Planning obligations rented and shared ownership dwellings	9 x 2BF for S/O 2 x 3BB for Rent	No RSL appointed	No grant required planning gain site
Acton – Land adjacent to Barrow Hill	Planning obligations rented and shared ownership dwellings	1 x 2BH Rent 1 x 2BH S/O	No RSL appointed	No grant required planning gain site
Nedging - Crowcroft Road	Planning obligations shared ownership dwellings	3 x 2-BH	No RSL appointed	No grant required planning gain site
2008-2009				
Alpheton – 5 Bury Road	Affordable housing for general needs on BDC land	2 units	Iceni Homes/Suffolk Housing Society	Site plans being developed.
Nayland – Harpers Estate	Local needs housing	4/5 2/3 BH	Flagship Housing	Scheme currently being worked-up
Nayland – Exceptions Site	Local needs housing on exceptions site	4/5 units	Flagship Housing	Potential sites being identified
Holbrook – Ipswich Road	Local needs housing on exceptions site.	10/12 units	Orwell HA	Site drawings being developed
Brantham	Local needs housing on exceptions site	10/15 units	Orwell HA	Site identification underway
Stoke by Nayland	Local Needs Housing	TBA	TBA	PC conducting local needs housing survey

Location	Scheme	Dwelling Mix	RSL	Comments
				to establish need. Will then consider progression of a scheme.
Stoke by Nayland – The Blundens	Local Needs Housing	3 Houses	TBA	BDC owned site currently under consideration for affordable housing use. Full consultation to follow.
Gt. Cornard - Butt Road	Garage site redevelopment to provide residential flats	6 x flats	Flagship Housing Group	BDC owned site currently under consideration for affordable housing use. Full consultation to follow.
Gt. Cornard - Cornerth Crescent	Garden land development	1 x 3BH	Flagship Housing Group	BDC owned site currently under consideration for affordable housing use. Full consultation to follow.
Copdock & Washbrook	Local needs housing	TBC	TBA	PC conducting local needs survey September 2006
Thorpe Morieux	Local needs housing	TBC	TBA	PC considering need for a scheme
Brettenham	Local needs housing	TBC	TBA	PC conducting local needs survey September 2006
Sudbury – Harp Close Meadow	Planning obligations rented dwellings	Numbers not confirmed	RSL not appointed	Awaiting confirmation of development date
Sudbury – St Leonard's Hospital	Planning obligations rented dwellings	5 x 2 B Houses	RSL not appointed	Awaiting confirmation of development date
Long Melford – List House	Planning obligations rented dwellings	5 units for rent	RSL not appointed	To be worked up
Shotley – Ganges	Planning obligations rented and shared ownership dwellings	Numbers not confirmed	RSL not appointed	Development awaiting Secretary of State decision.
Boxford – Goodlands Farm	Planning obligations rented and shared ownership dwellings	4 units for rent 2 units for S/O	RSL not appointed	To be worked up
Capel St Mary	Local Needs Housing	30 very sheltered flats	Orwell HA	Housing need confirmed. Site identification underway Jan-06
Ipswich Fringe – Thorrington Hall	Planning obligations site for rented and shared ownership dwellings	53 units approx for rent and S/O	RSL not appointed	Awaiting confirmation of development date
Bures – Eves Orchard	Planning obligations rented dwellings	Numbers not confirmed	RSL not appointed	RSL not appointed.
Hadleigh – Grays Close	Planning obligations rented and shared ownership dwellings	24 units for rent 7 units for S/O	RSL not appointed	No grant required planning gain site
Chilton – Chilton Woods	Planning obligations rented and shared ownership dwellings	245 units – mix to be agreed	RSL not appointed	Planning obligation scheme approved by Local Plan Inspector Nov-05. Scheme to be delivered over 10 years.

Location	Scheme	Dwelling Mix	RSL	Comments
Sproughton	Local Needs Housing	10 units (appx)	Hastoe HA	Site identification underway
Chelmondiston	Local Needs Housing	8 units	Hastoe Housing Association	Site identification underway
Deleted Schemes				
Holbrook – Vine Cottage	Local Needs Housing for rent	8 units for rent	Orwell Housing Association	Site unsuitable on Highway safety grounds
Brantham –East End – Park Road	Local Needs Housing	12 units	Orwell HA	Site unsuitable on Highway safety grounds
Bures – Tawneys Ride Garage Site.	Local needs housing for rent on Council owned land	3 units for rent	Orwell Housing Association	Site unsuitable – too small & no ability to replace existing parking facilities.

1 Year	2 Babergh`s Supported Housing Programme – current progress and plans
2006/07	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sudbury Vulnerable Persons Scheme. Needs have been identified and multi-agency project group established to develop scheme to provide 6 to 8 self-contained flats with office, laundry and meeting room. To be managed by specialist RSL. No commitment yet on revenue funding.
2006/07	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sudbury Very Sheltered Housing Scheme (VSH). Needs established – looking for possible sites. The upgrade of Babergh`s sheltered scheme at Playford Court to a Very Sheltered Scheme managed by a RSL a possible way of delivering such a scheme.
2006/07	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leasehold VSH Scheme – Need has been identified. Possible site at Capel St Mary. Multi-agency project team established that is developing proposals.
2007/08	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lavenham leasehold sheltered units. The provision of a number of leasehold sheltered units to be included in the feasibility study into a regeneration scheme on council owned land in Lavenham.
2007/08	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mental Health Scheme and Learning Disabilities Scheme Sudbury. Reprovision of two existing housing schemes. Exact requirements of reprovision to be established and proposals developed.
2009/10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning Disabilities Scheme in Hadleigh. SCC has registered a level of need. Site, mix and size of scheme to be identified.
TBC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mental health Scheme in Hadleigh. Need for supported scheme for four single people with mental health problems established. Site to be identified.