



Scrutiny Committee

Members are invited to a **Meeting of the Scrutiny Committee** to be held in the Deben Conference Room, East Suffolk House, Melton on **Thursday, 16 November 2023 at 6.30pm**

This meeting will be broadcast to the public via the East Suffolk YouTube Channel at <https://youtube.com/live/fhgmXPLJ5-c?feature=share>

Members:

Councillor Mike Deacon (Chair), Councillor Dan Clery (Vice-Chair), Councillor Edward Back, Councillor Seamus Bennett, Councillor Amanda Folley, Councillor Louise Gooch, Councillor Owen Grey, Councillor Mark Jepson, Councillor Geoff Lynch, Councillor Stephen Molyneux, Councillor Sally Noble, Councillor Sarah Plummer, Councillor Ed Thompson.

An Agenda is set out below.

Part One – Open to the Public

Pages

- 1 Apologies for Absence and Substitutions**
- 2 Declarations of Interest**

Members and Officers are invited to make any declarations of interests, and the nature of that interest, that they may have in relation to items on the Agenda and are also reminded to make any declarations at any stage during the Meeting if it becomes apparent that this may be required when a particular item or issue is considered.
- 3 Minutes**

To confirm as a correct record the Minutes of the Meeting held on 19 October 2023 - copy to follow.
- 4 Review of the Provision of Social Housing in East Suffolk ES/1735** **1 - 20**

To consider the report of the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member with responsibility for Housing.
- 5 Cabinet Member Scrutiny Session**

To receive an update from Councillor Beavan, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member with responsibility for Housing on the direction of travel for the services within his portfolio.
- 6 Scrutiny Committee's Forward Work Programme**

To receive any updates in relation to the Committee's Forward Work Programme

There are no Exempt or Confidential items for this Agenda.

Close



Chris Bally, Chief Executive

If you require this document in large print, audio or Braille or in a different language, please contact the Democratic Services Team on 01502 523521 or email: democraticservices@eastsoffolk.gov.uk

Filming, Videoing, Photography and Audio Recording at Council Meetings

The Council, members of the public and press may record / film / photograph or broadcast this meeting when the public and press are not lawfully excluded.

The Council cannot guarantee public seating areas will not be filmed or recorded. By entering the Conference Room and sitting in the public seating area, those present will be deemed to have consented to the possible use of filmed images and sound recordings. If you do not wish to be recorded, please speak to a member of the Democratic Services team at the earliest opportunity.



The national Charter and Charter Plus Awards for Elected Member Development

East Suffolk Council is committed to achieving excellence in elected member development

www.local.gov.uk/Community-Leadership



SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
Thursday, 16 November 2023

Subject	Review of the Provision of Social Housing in East Suffolk
Cabinet Member	Councillor David Beavan, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member with responsibility for Housing
Report Author and Head of Service	Heather Fisk Head of Housing Heather.fisk@eastsoffolk.gov.uk
Director	Andrew Jarvis Strategic Director Andrew.jarvis@eastsoffolk.gov.uk

Is the report Open or Exempt?	OPEN
-------------------------------	------

Wards Affected:	All Wards
------------------------	-----------

Purpose and high-level overview

Purpose of Report:

The Scrutiny Committee requested a review of the provision of Social Housing as there is a perception that there is not enough social housing being provided in East Suffolk. The Scrutiny Committee provided a scope and outlined key lines of enquiry, which have been responded to within this report.

Options:

Not applicable.

Recommendation/s:

The Scrutiny Committee considers the contents of the report.

Corporate Impact Assessment

Governance:

The Gateway to Homechoice Allocations Policy sets out the approach that should be taken for the assessment of housing need and allocation of social dwellings.

There is a Project Board, which manages the overall management of the Gateway to Homechoice Scheme and an Operations Group, which manages operational issues, including procedures to ensure consistency across partners.

ESC policies and strategies that directly apply to the proposal:

There are several strategies and policies, which apply to this review, which are all referenced within the report.

Environmental:

There are no direct environmental elements to this report. However, it should be noted that ESC and RP's are currently reviewing how they can retrofit their housing stock, to achieve EPC C and eventually Net Zero.

Equalities and Diversity:

The Gateway to Homechoice Allocations Policy sets out the approach to the assessment of housing need and allocation of Social Housing.

Section 1.7 of the Policy states:

"This partnership promotes equality of opportunity and will ensure that all applicants are treated fairly and without unlawful discrimination on the grounds of race, gender, disability, age, sexual orientation, religion or belief, pregnancy and maternity."

Financial:

.

Human Resources:

.

ICT:

The Gateway to Homechoice Housing Register is delivered through an IT solution, which is procured and financed collectively by the partner organisations.

Applicants can make their own application and register their interest in available dwellings through the website.

For those who are unable to use the website, officers can support with both making applications and registering interest on dwellings.

Legal:

There are many legal requirements for the management, allocation and provision of Social Housing. The different legislative responsibilities are covered within this report.

Risk:

If there is an insufficient supply of affordable housing, then residents will be unable to access suitable accommodation. This could lead to an increase in homelessness and additional pressure of temporary accommodation services.

External Consultees:	None.
-----------------------------	-------

Strategic Plan Priorities

Select the priorities of the Strategic Plan which are supported by this proposal: <i>(Select only one primary and as many secondary as appropriate)</i>		Primary priority	Secondary priorities
T01	Growing our Economy		
P01	Build the right environment for East Suffolk	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
P02	Attract and stimulate inward investment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
P03	Maximise and grow the unique selling points of East Suffolk	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
P04	Business partnerships	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
P05	Support and deliver infrastructure	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
T02	Enabling our Communities		
P06	Community Partnerships	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
P07	Taking positive action on what matters most	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
P08	Maximising health, well-being and safety in our District	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
P09	Community Pride	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
T03	Maintaining Financial Sustainability		
P10	Organisational design and streamlining services	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
P11	Making best use of and investing in our assets	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
P12	Being commercially astute	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
P13	Optimising our financial investments and grant opportunities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
P14	Review service delivery with partners	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
T04	Delivering Digital Transformation		
P15	Digital by default	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
P16	Lean and efficient streamlined services	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
P17	Effective use of data	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
P18	Skills and training	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
P19	District-wide digital infrastructure	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
T05	Caring for our Environment		
P20	Lead by example	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
P21	Minimise waste, reuse materials, increase recycling	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
P22	Renewable energy	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
P23	Protection, education and influence	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
XXX	Governance		
XXX	How ESC governs itself as an authority	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
How does this proposal support the priorities selected?			
This report was commissioned by the Scrutiny Committee to review the provision of Social Housing across the district and, if necessary, look at any possible ways to increase it.			

Background and Justification for Recommendation

1 Background facts	
1.1	The Scrutiny Committee is reviewing the provision of Social Housing as there is a perception that there is not enough social housing being provided in East Suffolk. The Scrutiny Committee provided a scope and outlined key lines of enquiry, which have been responded to within this report.
1.2	The Committee received a report from the Planning Service on a Review of Affordable Housing Planning Requirements , in October. To gain a full picture on East Suffolk Council's role on this topic, the reports should be read together and not in isolation. The Committee agreed to consider recommendations relating to both reports at the meeting on 16 November 2023.
1.3	East Suffolk Council (ESC) is the strategic Housing Authority for East Suffolk. At the point the Council was created in 2019 it became responsible for the social housing stock of 4,404 properties, held previously by the then Waveney District Council. These properties are managed through the Housing Revenue Account (HRA).
1.4	Prior to the formation of East Suffolk Council, a significant number of years ago, the former Suffolk Coastal District Council engaged in a Large Scale Voluntary Stock Transfer (LSVT) of its social housing stock to a Registered Provider (RP). At the time the RP was called Suffolk Heritage Housing Association, but is now known as Newtide, which is part of the Flagship Housing Group.
1.5	For background information on housing need and demand across Suffolk, there is lots of useful information on housing needs and stock levels across Suffolk, held on the Housing Dashboard , which is updated regularly by the Suffolk Office for Data and Analytics, through Suffolk County Councils Public Health Service.

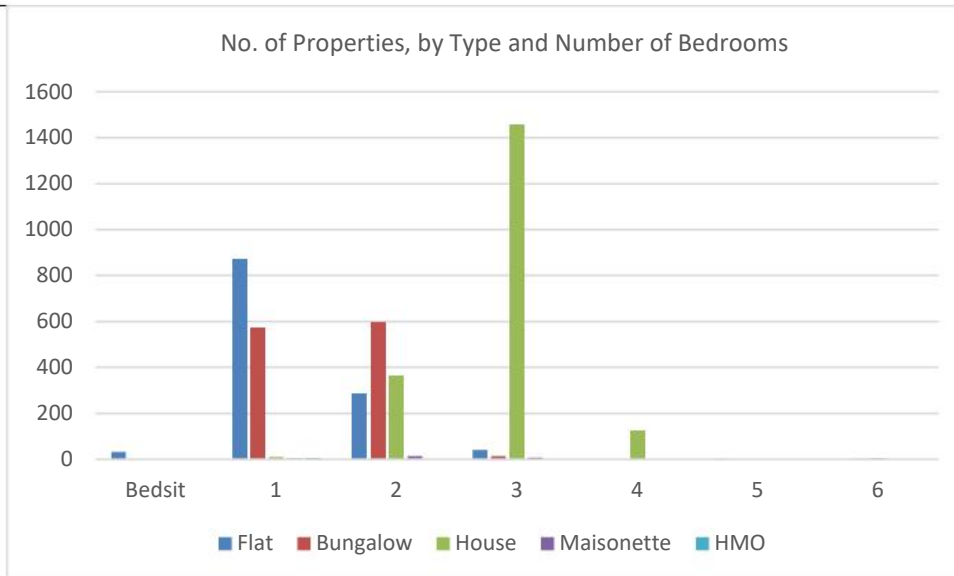
2 Current position	
Background enquiries	
2.1	<p>What is the definition of social housing?</p> <p>There is a difference between Social Housing and Affordable Housing.</p> <p>Affordable housing can be split into two categories:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rented housing – which includes Social Rented and Affordable Rented • Intermediate housing – which includes homes for rent and sale provided at a cost above social rent but below market levels.
2.2	The term low-cost home ownership is used to collectively describe a variety of schemes that are aimed at helping those that cannot afford to buy a home on the open market. These fall within the definition of Intermediate housing.

	<p>Social rented housing is owned by local authorities and Registered Providers, for which guideline target rents are determined through the Rent Standard, set out from the Regulator of Social Housing, which develops it using the Government Rent Policy.</p>
2.3	<p>The rent is calculated using a set formula that takes into account the value of the property, the average earnings in the area and the number of bedrooms. Social Rented properties are the most affordable tenure type, typically around 60% of an open market rent.</p> <p>Housing Benefit / Universal Credit Housing Cost is available to qualifying households where they are unable to pay their Social Rent.</p>
2.4	<p>Some Registered Provider tenancies are offered as either fixed term tenancies for no less than five years or assured tenancies, which have no defined time period.</p> <p>East Suffolk Council only offers a 12-month introductory tenancy, followed by a Secure Tenancy, provided the tenancy conditions have been complied with during the first 12 months.</p> <p>If East Suffolk Council were to consider offering Fixed Term Tenancies (FTT), then additional resources would be required to administer this. When granting a FTT, there is a requirement to review them on a regular basis, before any extensions are approved.</p> <p>A number of RP's are moving away from FTT as they find them quite an onerous process, and don't deliver the benefits, that was originally intended / expected in 2012.</p>
2.5	<p>Does the Council have to provide social housing?</p> <p>No, Councils do not have to provide Social Housing directly, and many transferred their stock to Arm's Length Management Organisations (ALMO's) or completed Large Scale Voluntary Stock Transfer (LSVT), to Registered Providers (RP's), many years ago.</p>
2.6	<p>What is the relevant legislation and national guidance that governs social housing?</p> <p>Local authorities with social housing stock became "registered providers of social housing" pursuant to the Housing and Regeneration Act 2008.</p> <p>Registered Providers of social housing, which includes both Councils and Housing Associations, are governed by the Regulator of Social Housing (RSH).</p> <p>The Housing and Regeneration Act 2008 and the Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023, sets out the role of the RSH.</p>

	<p>However, local authority registered providers were not subject to any of the economic standards set by the RSH until they became subject to the Rent Standard with effect from 1 April 2020.</p> <p>In July 2023, the Social Housing Regulation Act received Royal Assent, which will be enacted in April 2024. This sets out significant new responsibilities, which Registered Providers must comply with.</p> <p>There are many different legislative requirements that, as a landlord of Social Housing, that East Suffolk is required to comply with.</p>
2.7	<p>Are there any other responsibilities that Councils/Registered Providers (RPs) have when providing social housing?</p> <p>There are many legal requirements, which Social Housing providers must follow including:</p>
2.8	The Landlord and Tenant Act 1985 and 1987 , set out a lot of our responsibilities as a landlord.
2.9	The Housing Act 1985 , 1988 , 1996 , 2004 set out how we manage a number of aspects including possession, homelessness accommodation duties and right to buy.
2.10	The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 sets out how we should effectively manage the risk of fires being caused and from spreading in our homes.
2.11	The Housing and Regeneration Act 2008 sets out that we are a 'Registered Provider of Social Housing' and the role of the Regulator of Social Housing.
2.12	The Localism Act 2011 sets out certain requirements, which we have to consider within our Housing Allocations Policy. It also allowed RP's of Social Housing to start issuing Fixed Term Tenancies.
2.13	The Prevention of Social Housing Fraud Act 2013 strengthens the powers that providers of Social Housing can take to tackle tenants who unlawfully sublet their property for profit.
2.14	The Welfare Reform and Work Act 2016 set out a number of changes, including reducing the amount of rents that social landlords could charge, by 1% per year for 4 years, which had a significantly detrimental impact on RP's long term Business Plans. It also introduced the bedroom cap and the spare room subsidy rules, which affect some tenant's affordability, which was aimed to encourage people under-occupying their home to downsize.
2.15	The Fire Safety Act 2021 was introduced following lessons learnt from the Grenfell Fire tragedy in 2017. Its aim was to strengthen the responsibility of building owners. As an example, it requires Responsible Persons of multi-occupied residential buildings with two or more sets of domestic premises to update their

	<p>fire risk assessment to include an assessment of the building's structure, external walls, and flat entrance doors.</p>
2.16	<p>The Smoke and Carbon Monoxide Alarm (Amendment) Regulations 2022, which effectively amend the Smoke and Carbon Monoxide Regulations 2015 to remove the exemption of social landlords, so that from 1 October 2022 housing associations and local authorities were subject to the 2015 Regs. This means that from this date ESC must ensure:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At least one smoke alarm is equipped on each storey of their homes where there is a room used as living accommodation: and • A carbon monoxide alarm is equipped in any room used as living accommodation which contains a fixed combustion appliance (excluding gas cookers)
2.17	<p>The Building Safety Act 2022 was also introduced following lessons learnt from the Grenfell Fire tragedy in 2017. The Building Safety Act makes significant reforms to give residents and homeowners more rights, powers, and protections, which will ensure that homes across the country are safer.</p> <p>It delivers protections for qualifying leaseholders from the costs associated with remediating historical building safety defects and includes an ambitious toolkit of measures that will allow those responsible for building safety defects to be held to account.</p> <p>It overhauls existing regulations, creating lasting change and makes clear how residential buildings should be constructed, maintained and made safe.</p> <p>The Act creates three new bodies to provide effective oversight of the new regime: the Building Safety Regulator, the National Regulator of Construction Products and the New Homes Ombudsman.</p> <p>Together these changes mean owners will manage their buildings better, and the home-building industry has the clear, proportionate framework it needs to deliver more, and better, high-quality homes.</p>
2.18	<p>The Social Housing Regulation Act 2023 received Royal Assent in July 2023 and will be enacted in April 2024. The Act seeks to improve the regulation of social housing by bringing forward a stronger and more proactive regulatory regime and putting in place the measures set out in the Social Housing White Paper.</p> <p>The core objectives of the Act are to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitate a new, proactive consumer regulation regime; • Refine the existing economic regulatory regime; and • Strengthen the Regulator’s powers to enforce the consumer and economic regimes. <p>The Act also contains provisions to empower the Housing Ombudsman to issue a code of practice on complaint handling and monitor compliance with the code; and to formalise and strengthen the relationship between the Regulator and the Housing Ombudsman.</p>

2.19	<p>Who provides social housing in East Suffolk?</p> <p>There are many providers of Social and Affordable Housing in East Suffolk. The Council works with many Registered Providers, through the Gateway to Homechoice Housing Register.</p> <p>The Gateway to Homechoice consists of a single housing register and a choice-based lettings scheme, for the allocation of social housing. There are 7 partner organisations, who form part of the Gateway to Homechoice:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Babergh District Council • Braintree District Council • Colchester City Council • East Suffolk Council • Ipswich Borough Council • Maldon District Council • Mid Suffolk District Council
2.20	<p>Gateway to Homechoice provides a consistent approach to accessing housing across the diverse area of operation of the scheme and where possible, to ensure that applicants have choice over where they live.</p> <p>The scheme is managed by a Project Board, made up of housing managers from the participating POs and Registered Providers. The scheme is subject to a consortium agreement. Registered Providers, charities, Community Land Trusts (CLT's) and alms-houses (RPs), allocate properties using this scheme and are subject to a Service Level Agreement (SLA).</p> <p>The list of providers, which work with PO's of the Gateway to Homechoice Scheme, can be found here.</p>
2.21	<p>What types of social housing are currently provided in East Suffolk and in which locations?</p> <p>East Suffolk Council (ESC) owns and is the social landlord for approximately 4,404 properties, which are managed under the Housing Revenue Account (HRA).</p> <p>The stock consists of a mixture of bungalows, flats and houses and includes 13 Retired Living Schemes, one block over 18m tall and a number of properties used as Temporary Accommodation for homelessness under s188 and s193(2) of the Housing Act 1996.</p>
2.22	<p>A breakdown of the Stock Profile, can be seen in the graph below:</p>



Prior to East Suffolk Council being created, only Waveney District Council had retained its housing stock. Suffolk Coastal District Council had transferred its properties to a Registered Provider a number of years before. Therefore, the stock is predominantly located in the north of East Suffolk.

East Suffolk has a few properties in the southern part of the District, which will be increased further, once the Deben Fields development in Felixstowe is completed.

2.23 How does the Council work with Housing Associations and other stakeholders to provide social housing across the district?

Gateway to Homechoice Housing Register

Residents can apply to join the Gateway to Homechoice Housing Register.

The 7 local authorities in the Gateway to Homechoice scheme advertise vacancies in rented social housing (both Local Authority and Registered Providers) using the same system that operates as follows:

Each week the vacant social housing in the area of operation of the 7 local authorities is advertised on the Gateway to Homechoice website.

Applicants who are registered can indicate up to 2 properties they are interested in either online or by phone.

All of the vacancies advertised through the scheme are owned by councils or housing associations.

All of the local authorities operate the same [Allocations Policy](#).

2.24 Wider Work with Registered Providers

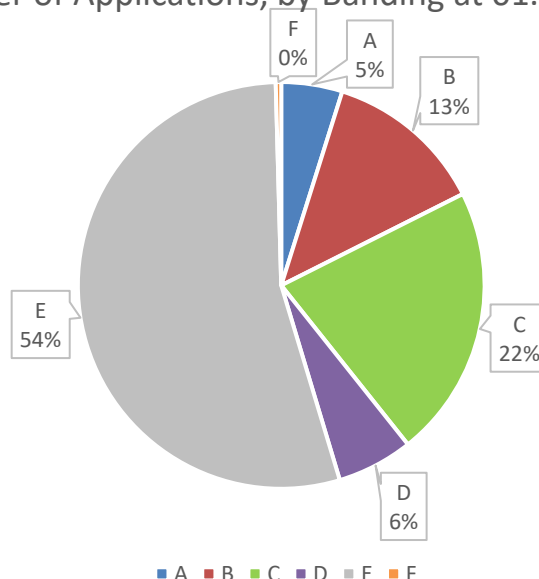
ESC works well with Registered Providers across East Suffolk on a range of initiatives.

For example, ESC have provided financial assistance to Hastoe Housing Association, to provide affordable housing at the Old Hospital Site in Southwold.

	<p>ESC have worked closely with Orwell Housing, to develop a specialist supported housing scheme in Lowestoft for former rough sleepers, who require a higher level of support, to enable them to live independently.</p> <p>ESC have also worked well with the Peninsular Villages Community Land Trust and provided financial assistance to enable them to acquire their first homes, in partnership with Orwell Housing in Bawdsey.</p> <p>ESC work closely with RP's when they are looking to bring forward new developments and share important housing needs information, to feed into the planning process and ensure the right homes are delivered in the right locations.</p>								
2.25	<p>Does the Council have any influence over the way in which Registered Providers operate e.g. creating standards for operation within East Suffolk?</p> <p>Through the Gateway to Homechoice, we aim to provide a consistent approach to accessing housing across the diverse area of operation of the scheme and where possible, to ensure that applicants have choice over where they live.</p> <p>The scheme is managed by a Project Board, made up of housing managers from the participating POs and Registered Providers. The scheme is subject to a consortium agreement. Registered Providers, charities, Community Land Trusts (CLT's) and alms-houses (RPs), allocate properties using this scheme and are subject to a Service Level Agreement (SLA).</p> <p>The way that Registered Providers are expected to look after their homes, is set out in the Regulator of Social Housing Consumer Standards.</p>								
2.26	<p>Are there guidelines on how much social housing should be provided across a District or in towns/villages?</p> <p>The report to Scrutiny Committee in October on the review of Affordable Housing Planning Requirements explained the planning policies in the Council's two Local Plans which set out affordable housing requirements on residential developments.</p> <p>This is summarised in the table in paragraph 2.9 of that report and is explained further in the Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document.</p>								
2.27	<p>There generally are not different requirements for individual towns and villages; however, there are three different requirements in the Waveney Local Plan area, and one in the Suffolk Local Plan area, based on the viability assessment undertaken as part of the preparation of the Local Plans.</p> <p>The table is copied below for reference:</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th></th> <th>Threshold</th> <th>Requirement</th> <th>Tenure</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Suffolk Coastal Local Plan (SCLP5.10)</td> <td>10 dwellings or more and/or sites of 0.5ha or more</td> <td>1 in 3 – applies to whole plan area. No affordable housing is required on 100%</td> <td>50% affordable rent / social rent 25% shared ownership</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>		Threshold	Requirement	Tenure	Suffolk Coastal Local Plan (SCLP5.10)	10 dwellings or more and/or sites of 0.5ha or more	1 in 3 – applies to whole plan area. No affordable housing is required on 100%	50% affordable rent / social rent 25% shared ownership
	Threshold	Requirement	Tenure						
Suffolk Coastal Local Plan (SCLP5.10)	10 dwellings or more and/or sites of 0.5ha or more	1 in 3 – applies to whole plan area. No affordable housing is required on 100%	50% affordable rent / social rent 25% shared ownership						

			flatted developments on brownfield sites.	25% discounted home ownership
	Waveney Local Plan (WLP8.2)	11 dwellings or more	20% in Lowestoft and Kessingland (excluding Corton) 40% in Southwold and Reydon 30% elsewhere	50% affordable rent
2.28	<p>The policies in the Local Plans allow that Neighbourhood Plans may set requirements for a greater proportion of affordable housing where this is supported by evidence of need and viability assessment. Only one Neighbourhood Plan has set such policies, which is the Kessingland Neighbourhood Plan.</p> <p>The Waveney Local Plan sets out that 20% affordable housing is required for Kessingland, but in addition to a 100% affordable housing site (Policy SA3, for approximately 25 dwellings), two other sites allocated in the Neighbourhood Plan have a higher requirement (SA1, for up to 35% on a site of approx. 25 dwellings (9 units), and SA2, for a site of approx. 55 dwellings, just below 20% (10 units, when 11 units would be required at the 20% level).</p> <p>In addition, other Neighbourhood Plans such as Reydon, Southwold, Oulton and Bungay have affordable housing policies, some of which allow variation of tenure split (as relevant), but none include actual allocations, or vary the amount of affordable housing. In the Reydon case, policy allows affordable housing development to take place where it otherwise would not be able to do.</p>			
2.29	<p>How does the Council/RPs know the level and type of housing required in which locations across the district? How often is the need reviewed to ensure its up to date?</p> <p>Information contained within the Housing Strategy, the Strategic Housing Market Assessment and the information held on the Gateway to Homechoice Housing Register are all used to determine housing need. Some areas will commission their own local needs survey, which also feeds into our assessments of need.</p> <p>Housing and Planning work closely together and when a planning application is submitted, Housing is consulted on the level of affordable housing required.</p>			
2.30	<p>On 1st November, there were 4,591 'Active Applications' on the Gateway to Homechoice Housing Register. The applications are given a banding, based on their housing need.</p> <p>The graph below, shows the breakdown by banding:</p>			

Number of Applications, by Banding at 01.11.2023



As you can see from the graph, 54%, which is over half of the applicants on the Housing Register, do not meet any of the criteria assessed, to move. Therefore, they are classed as adequately housed. Unless they are interested in moving into one of our Retired Living Schemes, or interested in a Rural Exception, Local Needs Scheme, where the demand is lower, they are unlikely to ever be rehoused.

2.31 An explanation of each banding is listed below, with an example of what would qualify for that level of priority.

Band A – Applications with a ‘Severe’ or ‘Critical’ Need

This banding includes applicants with a critical medical or welfare need and emergency situations.

Band B – Applications with a ‘Serious’ Need

This banding includes those who are overcrowded and living in social or privately rented housing and those who have been accepted under a Main Homelessness Duty under the Housing Act 1996, as amended.

Band C – Applications with a ‘Medium’ Need

This banding includes those who have been issued with a valid notice to leave their accommodation, and those sharing facilities, such as living with friends and family.

Band D – Applications with ‘Reduced Preference’

This banding includes applicants who have applied for rehousing, have a housing need, but either don’t have a local connection or due to their behaviour, their banding has been reduced. This may be because they have outstanding rent arrears, or due to their tenancy conduct, such as anti-social behaviour.

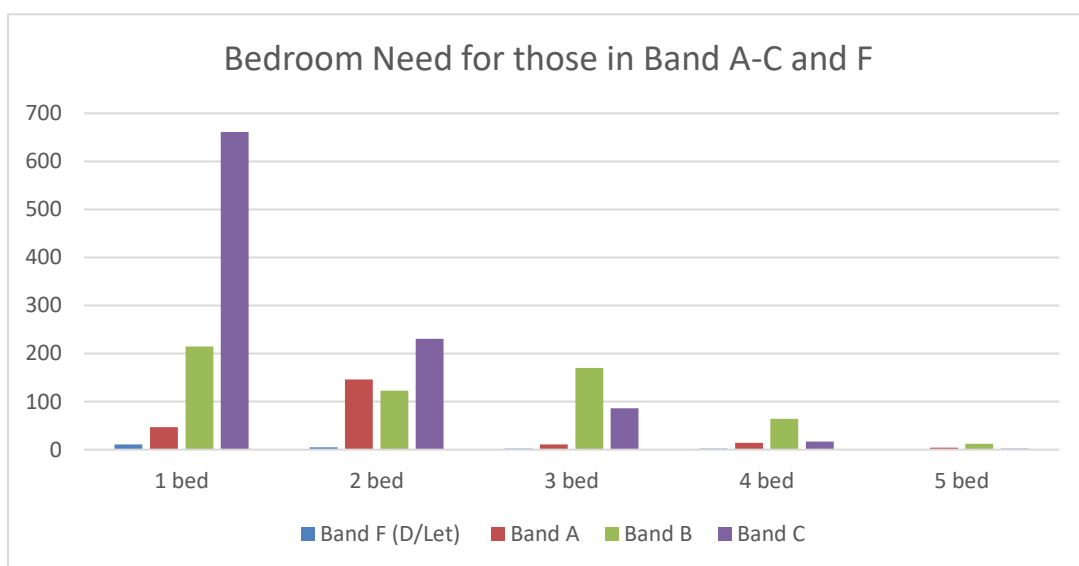
Band E – Applications with ‘No Housing Need’

This banding includes applicants who have applied for housing, but do not have a specific housing need, and therefore, do not qualify for priority under any of the criteria we assess.

Band F – Applicants in a ‘non bidding band’

This band is for applicants who have a specific housing need, which cannot be met by bidding in the normal way. They will have properties offered to them under a ‘Direct Let’.

2.32 If we consider, just those in Band A-C and F, this is the current demand, based on bedroom size:



2.33 **Are there any locations in the district where we know there is not enough supply of social housing? If so, what are we doing about it?**

Officers are currently working on the development of interactive maps, which will show the identified need on the Housing Register alongside the affordable housing delivered over the past five years and projected delivery over the next five years.

Once the maps are completed, these will be shared with all Members.

2.34 The Council’s Local Plans contain strategies and site allocations to deliver overall housing requirements. This includes delivery of affordable housing as per the policies described in paragraph 2.27 above.

However, as explained in the October report to Scrutiny Committee, for the Waveney Local Plan area the net needs for affordable housing identified in the Strategic Housing Market Assessment (evidence underpinning the Local Plan) would not be viable to deliver as assessed by the Whole Plan Viability Assessment (this would amount to 55% of the total housing need for the plan area).

	Guidance is currently being prepared for Neighbourhood Plan groups on delivering housing, including affordable housing, through Neighbourhood Plans.										
2.35	<p>How do we compare with other Local Authorities in building new Council housing over the last 5 years?</p> <p>Affordable Housing Delivery Statistics are published by the Government, which shows the number of properties delivered over the last 5 years.</p>										
2.36	<p>Are the East Suffolk RPs building new social housing? If so, how many were built over the last 5 years?</p> <p>Yes, the Council’s Planning Policy Open Data Portal includes a breakdown (by tenure) of affordable housing completed over the years 2018/19-2022/23, which totals 949 (<i>the 2022/23 figure of 155 has not yet been published through the 2022/23 Authority Monitoring Report</i>).</p> <p>For social housing (i.e. social rent, not affordable rent), the totals are set out below; the vast majority has been delivered by RPs, with a smaller number by ESC itself. (<i>Note that the figures below only cover those completions which came through the planning process – any direct acquisitions and conversions of market houses to social housing by ESC or another RP are separate figures</i>):</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="300 1003 1385 1211"> <tr> <td>2022/23</td> <td>3*</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2021/22</td> <td>14</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2020/21</td> <td>7</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2019/20</td> <td>-3**</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2018/19</td> <td>-1***</td> </tr> </table> <p>* this figure has not been published formally through the 2022/23 AMR yet and therefore is not on the Open Data Portal ** a loss of three units, due to conversion of a maisonette and two x 2 bedroom flats into a single 5-bedroom house) *** due to conversion of two dwellings into a single unit</p>	2022/23	3*	2021/22	14	2020/21	7	2019/20	-3**	2018/19	-1***
2022/23	3*										
2021/22	14										
2020/21	7										
2019/20	-3**										
2018/19	-1***										
2.37	<p>Does the Council/RPs buy properties on the open market to boost stock? If so, what criteria are used to determine suitable properties?</p> <p>Yes, we have a scoring matrix, which we use to determine whether we wish to purchase a unit.</p> <p>We will often use commuted sums to support the acquisition of units.</p> <p>We are offered the opportunity to purchase properties formerly sold under Right to Buy (RTB).</p>										
2.38	<p>How do we make sure that we have enough stock available given tenants are able to exercise their Right to Buy at any point?</p> <p>We only receive a limited amount of money for properties sold under RTB, which does not cover the costs of replacing the property. Therefore, despite an</p>										

	<p>ambitious build programme, we often struggle to increase the number of Affordable Homes overall, because we lose 30 per year on average through RTB.</p> <p>Nationally, there is a housing crisis, and the demand for housing in East Suffolk is much greater than supply.</p> <p>We know that although the average wait in 2022.23 was just over 11 months, for Bands A-C, but for some areas, applicants can face a far greater wait time.</p>
2.39	<p>What does it mean when Housing Associations divest their stock and how does this work?</p> <p>Registered Providers can sell some of their properties, often referred to as 'disposal'. Some properties are sold because they cannot recover the cost of bringing them up to standard for subsidised rentals.</p> <p>Some Registered Providers, who have taken on stock from other providers over the years, can have a portfolio spread over a very large geographical area. If they only hold a small number in one locality, sometimes, it can be more cost effective for them to dispose of those dwellings.</p> <p>Some landlords or property developers will buy these properties, often at auction, as they are prepared to take the risk of doing them up and making a profit. It is the case often when Registered Providers do not wish to invest in a property that may require significant investment to make it more energy efficient for example and the only option is to sell them when they fall vacant; removing the investment need and providing cash receipt to put towards the conversion of the others.</p> <p>It is sometimes the case when Registered Providers will let the District Council know of any disposals and when they do we consider each property on its own merits to determine viability.</p>
2.40	<p>How do Housing Associations determine which stock to divest and that they have enough stock of certain types left in their portfolio in the right location?</p> <p>Most RPs are currently reviewing their stock, considering regulatory changes and the requirement to reach the decarbonisation targets. As a result, many RPs are disposing of stock, which is too expensive to retrofit.</p> <p>We cannot control what an RP does with their stock. We can try to influence as much as possible, but we cannot force them not to dispose of their stock.</p>
Allocation	
2.41	<p>Who qualifies for social housing and is the Council/RP allowed to set their own criteria?</p> <p>The Criteria is set out in the Gateway to Homechoice Allocations Policy.</p>

	<p>Anyone aged 16 or over can apply to join the housing register, but not everyone will be eligible to join the housing register. The eligibility criteria for joining the housing register is set out below:</p>
2.42	<p>The main applicant must not be subject to immigration control or be a person from abroad, unless they are an 'eligible person' as defined in the Allocation of Housing and Homelessness (Eligibility) (England) Regulations 2006 (SI 2006 No.1294) ('the Eligibility Regulations').</p> <p>The main applicant and their household must be habitually resident in the UK or the Common Travel Area. (The Common Travel Area includes the United Kingdom, Republic of Ireland, Channel Islands and Isle of Man).</p> <p>Anyone aged 16 or over can apply to join the housing register, however under current law, applicants under the age of 18 cannot legally hold a tenancy.</p>
2.43	<p>Applicants will have a local connection to the area of operation of Gateway to Homechoice if they meet one or all of the criteria below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Their only or principal home is within the boundaries of the district or borough covered by the scheme. • They were placed in specialised housing which is not available in the area of the scheme but had a local connection previously through residence. • They (not a member of their household) are in permanent paid work in one of the partner districts or boroughs. • They have a son, daughter, brother, sister, mother or father, who is aged 18 or over and lives in the area of the scheme and has done so for at least five years. • A family member may live within different Gateway local authority areas as long as they have continuously lived within the Gateway area of operation for 5 years and this will give their close family member a local connection subject to any individual property restrictions, e.g. s106 or local lettings plan. The local connection will be where the family member currently lives and the corresponding local authority will host the application. • Homeless care leavers aged 18 – 20 who have been looked after by either Essex County Council or Suffolk County Council will have a local connection with every housing authority within the county that looked after them.
2.44	<p>The following people will also be deemed to have a local connection to the Gateway area of operation if:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The main or joint applicant is serving in the regular forces or who has served in the regular armed forces within five years of the date of their application. • The main or joint applicant has recently ceased or will cease to be entitled to reside in accommodation provided by the Ministry of Defence following the death of that person's spouse or civil partner. where the spouse or civil partner has served in the regular forces and their death was attributable (wholly or partly) to that service. • The main or joint applicant is serving or has served in the reserve forces and is suffering from a serious injury, illness or disability which is attributable whether wholly or partly to that service.

	<p>Spouses and civil partners who are required to leave accommodation provided by the Ministry of Defence following a breakdown in their relationship with their Service spouse or partner.</p>
2.45	<p>What process is used to determine who is allocated a Council property e.g. Choice Based Letting or waiting list?</p> <p>Please see Sections 7 and 8 of the Allocations Policy for the full details:</p> <p>At the end of each choice-based lettings (CBL) cycle a shortlisting of applicants who have bid for the property will be taken from the CBL computer system. The shortlist will identify the order of applicants based on who is in the highest housing Band (A is highest, E is the lowest) and who has the earliest effective date unless the property has been adapted or is subject to a local letting's agreement, such as a s106 agreement.</p> <p>The top three applicants from the shortlist will usually be invited to view the property.</p> <p>After viewing the property, the applicant at the top of the shortlist will usually be given up to 24 hours to accept or refuse the accommodation. If the offer is refused the next person on the shortlist will be offered the property.</p> <p>At the point of shortlisting, the PO or RP carrying out the shortlisting will verify the applicant's level of housing need and other details to ensure that the applicant remains eligible for housing, that their circumstances remain the same as when they applied and that their level of priority is correct. References from the applicant's current landlord will also be sought. Applicants may also be required to pay rent in advance.</p> <p>To effectively manage housing applications, shortlists and prompt allocation of properties, any open shortlists dated one month from the end of the advertising cycle, where applicants in Bands A-C have been exhausted, may be rejected and readvertised in the next suitable cycle.</p>
2.46	<p>How do RPs allocate their stock – is it through the Council or direct?</p> <p>RP's have an agreement with the Gateway to Homechoice Project Board to allocate their properties through the Housing Register. The majority allow for 100% to be allocated, but a small number retain a small percentage, so they can allocate themselves. These properties are advertised through the register; however, the final offer decision remains with the RP when offering a tenancy.</p>
2.47	<p>Does the Council have any flexibility in deciding who gets priority on the waiting list?</p> <p>Through the Gateway to Homechoice, we use a banding system to identify those in the greatest housing need and to reflect the aims and objectives of our policy. We</p>

	<p>will decide which band the application will be placed in depending on the information provided in the application form.</p> <p>Full details of the Bandings are set out in Section 5 of the Allocations Policy.</p>
2.48	<p>What types of tenancy are there and does the Council and RPs in East Suffolk offer the same types of tenancy?</p> <p>East Suffolk Council issues, Introductory and Secure Tenancies.</p> <p>RP's will usually offer either Fixed Term, with a minimum of 5 years, or Assured Tenancies.</p>
2.49	<p>Does the Council have any flexibility in terms of tenancy types to move tenants on once their circumstances have changed and then reallocate the property?</p> <p>No, as the Council allocates tenancies on a secure tenancy, there is no ability to enforce a move, without a breach of tenancy.</p>
2.50	<p>How do we know housing is allocated to those residents who have the most need/priority?</p> <p>All applications and assessed and verified, as set out in the Gateway to Homechoice Allocations Policy. All lettings are also carried out in line with the Policy.</p> <p>Often with s106 local needs properties, it is those who are adequately housed, in a Band E, who are prioritised over those in higher housing need, because they meet the strict local connection criteria, when others do not.</p>
2.51	<p>How do we know that those most in need are getting the most appropriate housing solution (type) for them?</p> <p>All applications and assessed and verified, as set out in the Gateway to Homechoice Policy. All lettings are also carried out in line with the Policy.</p>
2.52	<p>Are there any areas in the district that we struggle to rent out properties?</p> <p>No.</p>
2.53	<p>Would it help to develop strategies/protocols with neighbouring Local Authorities for any hard to let properties?</p> <p>Gateway to Homechoice addresses this already, by allowing people to bid across multiple areas.</p>

3 How to address current situation

3.1	The Housing Service reviews its policies and provisions on a regular basis. This includes ensuring we are delivering a service in line with legislation, working with internal services to increase the offering and working with local RPs.
-----	--

4 Reason/s for recommendation

4.1	This report is provided to support the Scrutiny Committee to review the provision of Social Housing across the District and make any recommendations as felt necessary.
-----	---

Appendices

Appendices:

Appendix A	None
-------------------	------

Background reference papers:

Date	Type	Available From
	None	