

Babergh District Council

Housing Revenue Account Business Plan



Contents

Introduction	2
Background	3
Assumptions and Financial Baseline	Error! Bookmark not defined.
HRA Business Plan Forecast	5
HRA Business Plan 2024-25 – 30 Year Summary	6
Background and Context: National	1
The Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023	1
The Building Safety Act 2022	1
Decent Homes Standard & Awaab’s Law	1
Energy Efficiency of Housing Stock	1
Background and Context: Local	2
Setting the Scene: Babergh Data:	2
Our Plan for Babergh District Council	2
Declaration of Climate Emergency	2
Rural districts	3
Ageing population	3
Tenant Engagement Strategy	3
Joint Homelessness Reduction and Rough Sleeping Strategy	3
Joint Local Plan	3
Homes & Housing Strategy and Master Housing Action Plan	4
Housing Revenue Account Business Plan Priorities:	5
Priority 1: Investing in our current homes	5
Priority 2: Tackling and adapting to climate change	6
Priority 3: Building and buying new Council Housing	7
Priority 5: Improving the neighbourhoods that we manage	9
Priority 6: Involving tenants in the running of the service	10
Priority 7: Implementing digital transformation	11
Priority 8: Ensuring sustainable financial management of our council housing services	12
Performance and Benchmarking	13
Monitoring and Governance	14
Links and Appendices	14

Housing Revenue Account Business Plan – Babergh District Council

Introduction

The Housing Revenue Account (HRA) is a ringfenced pot of money, that is used solely for council-owned housing. All rent and service charge income goes into it, and all expenditure, such as management and maintenance, comes out of it. Although the HRA is ringfenced, meaning that the funds are allocated for a particular purpose and cannot be spent on anything else, there still needs to be a focus on maximising income and gaining efficiencies to ensure we deliver the very best value for money.

During the summer of 2021 all tenants, Members and Housing staff were asked to give their views on what priorities should be funded using the HRA over the long term. Feedback was given via digital surveys, with the option of telephone surveys for those not online, and a virtual workshop.

The results identified the following seven priorities:

- Investing in our current homes
- Tackling and adapting to climate change
- Building and buying new Council housing
- Improving the services that we provide our tenants
- Improving the neighbourhoods that we manage
- Involving tenants in the running of the service
- Implementing digital transformation

Since then, we have been regularly engaging with our tenants through collection of the Tenant Satisfaction Measures, transactional surveys on repairs, Anti-Social Behaviour cases and moving into our homes. This insight is being used across our services to improve the customer experience and help us to deliver landlord services our tenants expect and deserve.

The financial business plan provides a view of whether the Council can (over the next 30 years):

- afford to repay its housing loans as they fall due; and
- meet its obligations to maintain the housing stock within the Decent Homes Standard (DHS) and any other legislative building requirements; and
- meet the requirements of the Regulator of Social Housing (RSH) in terms of the Rent Standard and the Consumer Standard

The current version of the business plan was built in October – November 2023 and updated after discussion with Councillors and the Senior Management Team. It uses current 2023-24 evidence from the council's systems and the proposed HRA revenue and capital budgets to be presented to Members for 2024-25.

Background

The plan uses current 2023-24 evidence from the council's systems and the proposed HRA revenue and capital budgets to be presented to Members for 2024-25. These include:

Rent

Stock and average weekly rental income agreed to the BDC housing rental system at 1 April 2023, with an assumption that rents for 2024-25 will rise by 7.7% in line with the Government's Rent Policy, then CPI only thereafter.

Right to Buy

Estimated sales numbers and values of receipts of homes under the Right to Buy from historic information and current records – taken together with the opening stock numbers, the business plan assumes future increases in line with forecasts of inflation to give average annual rental income over 30 years.

Other Non-Rental Income

Budgets based on 2023-24 revenue budgets updated to reflect the forecast outturn position for 23-24 based on performance to December 2023. Calculated budgets for 2024-25 which take not account recommendations for increases in non-rental income, and then with increases in inflation in line with CPI going forwards.

Management & Maintenance

Management and day-to-day repairs budgets for 2023-24, updated to reflect the forecast outturn position for 23-24 based on performance to December 2023. Thereafter the revenue budgets for 2024-25 onwards are calculated to reflect the requirements of the business going forwards taking into consideration transformation objectives and new regulatory requirements. Going forwards, inflation is added to the 24-25 budgets over the next 30 years.

Capital Works Programme

The Council is currently undertaking a new independent Stock Condition Survey which will eventually provide a profile of major works costs over 30 years. The survey is designed to provide the estimated costs to maintain the current housing stock to at least the Decent Homes Standard for 30 years and will provide costs based on lifecycle replacements of elements of the properties.

The current asset management information cannot be relied upon as it an independent view of the data is long overdue. The profile of required works produced by the asset management system at present presents a programme of works that would not be deliverable due to the peaks and troughs indicated in the level of works. The current HRA business plan therefore assumed a very simply smoothed view of average works required over 30 years to begin the business planning process.

The HRA business plan should be treated with some caution at this point as the data available will be updated with the new Stock Condition Survey in the near future.

Year 1 (2023-24) assumes the Capital Programme as forecast for delivery by 31 March 2023. From 2024-25 onwards the "smoothed" major works figures are included with inflation assumed at 6%, then 3% then 2% thereafter.

Additional budgets have been included to cover Other Repairs and Maintenance budgets of £1.09m per annum. Disabled Adaptations are provided for at £400,000 in 2023-24 and continued at that rate thereafter. £3.268m of neighbourhood improvements are included over the next three years (including slippage from 2023-24). There are only two years of budget for net carbon zero at £2m per annum in 2024-25 and 2025-26 at this point. ICT projects are included at £200,000 per annum for 2023-24 and the next three years.

Development Schemes currently approved or in progress are included in the business plan which provides 46 new affordable homes, of which 6 will be for shared ownership. There is no further development included from April 2026 at this point.

Reserves, Debt & Loans

Opening balances for all reserves including the HRA, MRR, RTB 1-4-1 receipts and unused other RTB receipts per the Council's draft accounts 2022/23.

Debt and loan balances at 1 April 2023 together with interest rates and repayment dates per the Council's Finance Department. The total existing debt (internal and external at 1 April 2023 is £94.419 million.

HRA Minimum Working Balances is assumed to be £1 million per annum.

Assumptions and Financial Baseline

To develop the HRA Business Plan it's important to create a financial baseline.

The assumptions that have been used are as follows:

- Revised inflation assumptions
- Consumer Price Index (CPI) based on ONS (September each year) and Government estimates based on the OBR forecasts provided in the Autumn Statement (November 2023)
- Retail Price Index (RPI) tracks at 1% above CPI
- Rents increase by 7.7% in April 2024 (CPI +1%)
- Rent increases reflect CPI +1% until 2024/25, then CPI only from 2025/26
- Future borrowing requirements based on interest rates currently estimated in the housing sector.
- Rent loss from voids assumed at 2% from 2022/23
- Management salaries and wages are assumed to rise by 3% in 2025-26, then by 2% thereafter.
- Non-staffing management costs rise by 3% in 25-26 and 2% thereafter.
- Repairs costs rise by 3% in 25-26 and 2% thereafter.

Naturally these assumptions will need to be continually monitored and updated due to the level of uncertainty within the wider environment, for example the rate at which CPI increases, the cost-of-living crisis and other global and national factors needing to be considered.

HRA Business Plan Forecast

The business plan forecast shows that with the current profiles and economic assumptions, the HRA:

- Deliver the programme of major works as profiled; and
- Deliver the new housing development identified to date; and
- Maintain at least a minimum agreed level of HRA balances over 30 years; and
- Borrow when required to fund the profile of the major capital stock investment works but can afford the interest payments. These works have been profiled using the “smoothed” stock condition survey and as such will change when the new stock condition survey data is included. Borrowing in excess of the current loans is required to maintain the programme of works.

To minimise borrowing over the short term when interest rates are assumed to remain higher than in the past years, it is assumed that HRA balances are used to fund the Capital Programme as far as possible. This does mean that in 2030/31 when a £25 million loan is due for repayment, it may need refinancing (new loan to pay off an old loan) and similarly in 2036/37 £46.647 million may need to be refinanced.

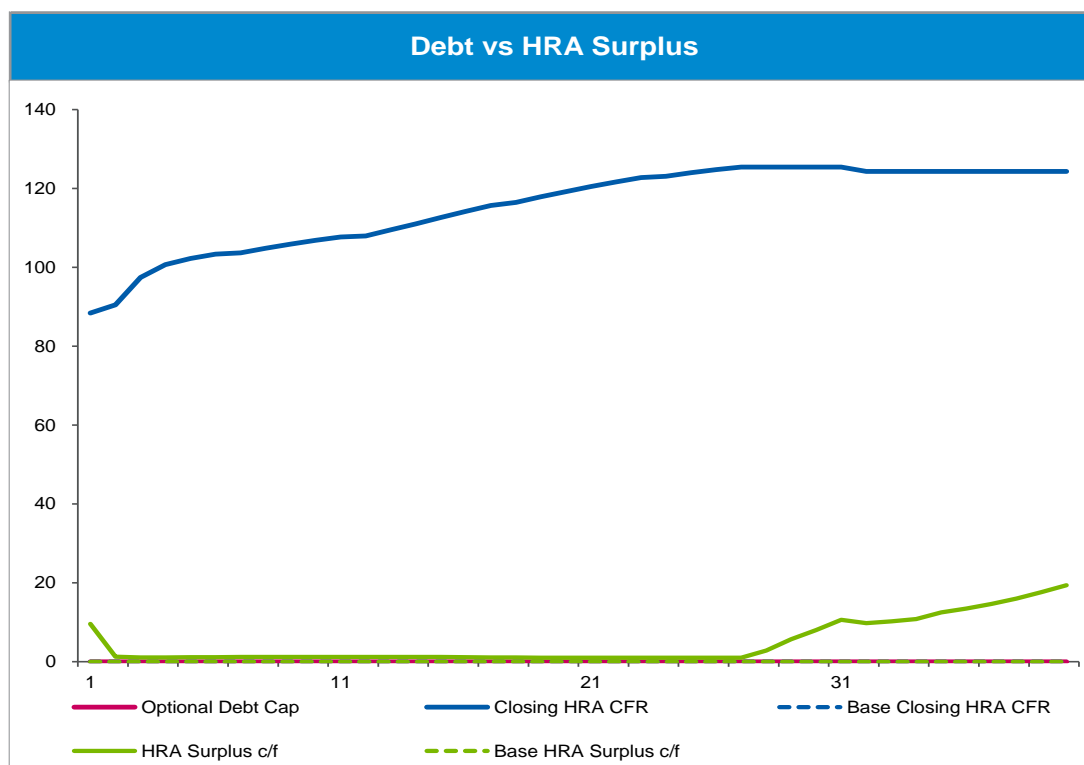
If additional HRA housing development was planned in future years these would need to be considered on a case-by-case basis and would be subject to a delegated decision and full cost appraisal.

At that time an analysis of the affordability of any scheme would be undertaken and any borrowing requirement would be considered along with access to any external grant funding and/or use of receipts. It should be noted that any future HRA new build funding requirement cannot be at the expense of investment in the council’s housing stock given the current regulatory regime and raised expectations of social landlords.

HRA Business Plan 2024-25 – 30 Year Summary

HRA Business Plan | Babergh DC HRA
Financing Summary

Year	Year	Opening Loan Balance £'000	Loan Drawdowns £'000	Loan Repayments £'000	Drawdown of Revolver £'000	Repayment of Revolver £'000	Closing Loan Balance £'000	HRA Surplus c/f £'000
1	2023/24	94,419	0	0	0	0	94,419	15,837
2	2024/25	94,419	0	-6,000	0	0	88,419	6,690
3	2025/26	88,419	0	-6,000	6,927	0	89,346	1,359
4	2026/27	89,346	0	0	1,755	0	91,101	1,234
5	2027/28	91,101	0	0	1,911	0	93,012	1,227
6	2028/29	93,012	0	0	1,836	0	94,848	1,209
7	2029/30	94,848	0	0	1,803	0	96,650	1,202
8	2030/31	96,650	25,000	-25,000	1,543	0	98,194	1,200
9	2031/32	98,194	0	0	2,003	0	100,196	1,197
10	2032/33	100,196	0	0	2,143	0	102,340	1,195
11	2033/34	102,340	0	0	2,292	0	104,632	1,192
12	2034/35	104,632	0	0	2,357	0	106,989	1,190
13	2035/36	106,989	46,647	-46,647	2,038	0	109,027	1,187
14	2036/37	109,027	0	0	2,475	0	111,502	1,184
15	2037/38	111,502	0	0	2,648	0	114,149	1,181
16	2038/39	114,149	0	0	3,769	0	117,919	1,165
17	2039/40	117,919	0	0	3,886	0	121,805	1,135
18	2040/41	121,805	0	0	4,019	0	125,824	1,106
19	2041/42	125,824	0	0	3,618	0	129,442	1,077
20	2042/43	129,442	0	0	4,278	0	133,720	1,048
21	2043/44	133,720	0	0	4,051	0	137,771	1,034
22	2044/45	137,771	0	0	4,179	0	141,951	1,034
23	2045/46	141,951	0	0	4,296	0	146,247	1,034
24	2046/47	146,247	0	0	4,416	0	150,663	1,034
25	2047/48	150,663	0	0	3,934	0	154,597	1,034
26	2048/49	154,597	0	0	4,648	0	159,245	1,034
27	2049/50	159,245	0	0	4,777	0	164,021	1,034
28	2050/51	164,021	0	0	4,909	0	168,930	1,034
29	2051/52	168,930	0	0	5,045	0	173,975	1,034
30	2052/53	173,975	0	0	4,514	0	178,489	1,034



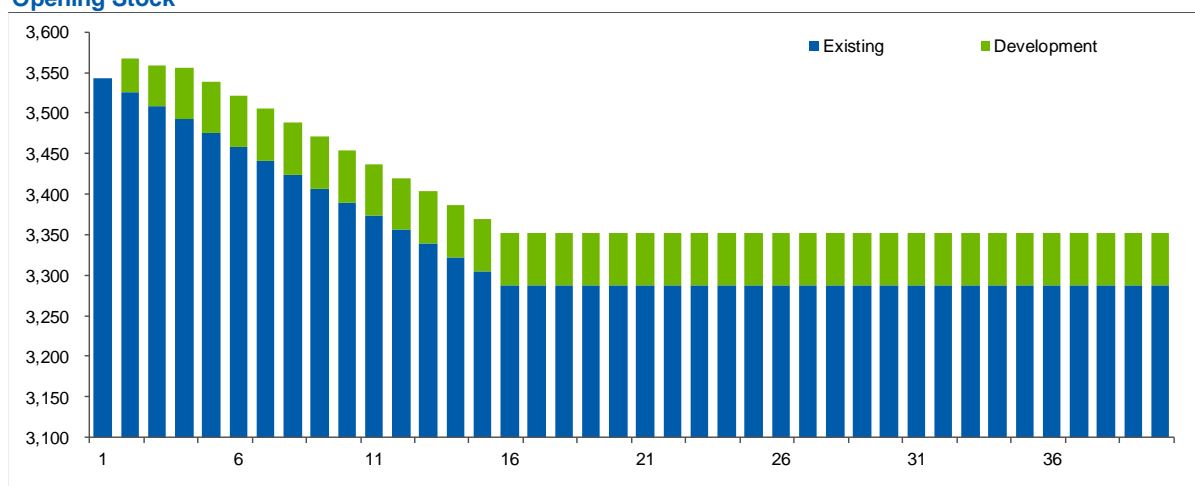
The base plan shows that the minimum revenue balance is maintained.

Interest cover after year 1 is maintained above 1.25 times until year 16, but does not go below 1.18 times.

Borrowing in excess of the current loans is required to maintain the programme of works throughout the plan.

RTB 1-4-1 receipts would be repaid from year 4 if no more development is planned (if sales continue as estimated). Recent developments have been S106 acquisitions for which RTB 1-4-1 receipts cannot be used.

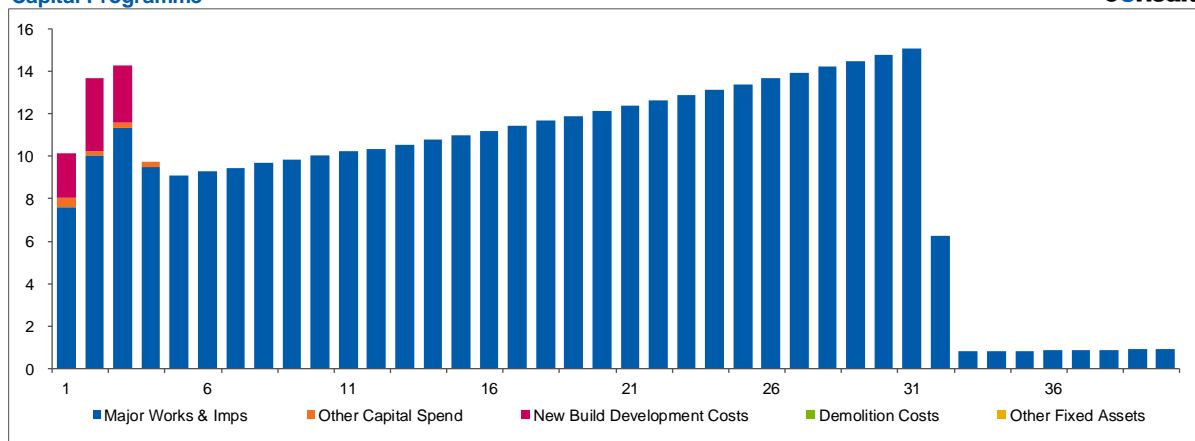
Opening Stock



Developments are due to complete in year 3 (2026/27) and then without further grant funding, we cannot afford to develop further. Therefore, our stock will reduce whilst the Right to buy scheme is assumed to continue until year 14, 2037/38.

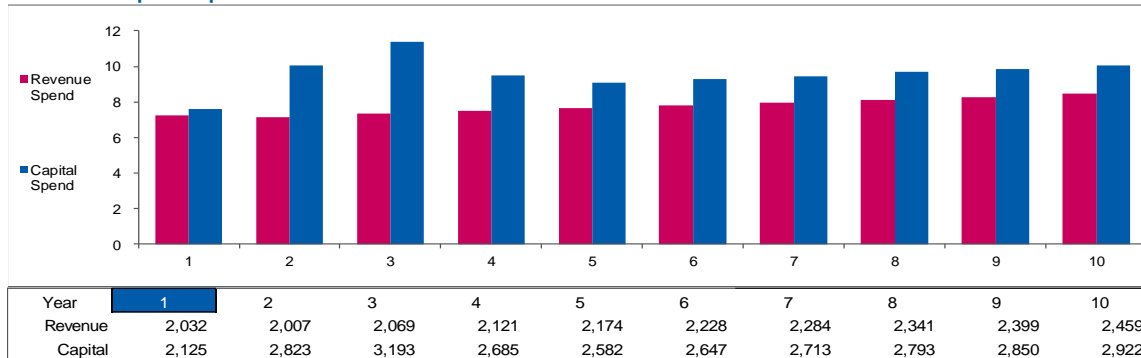
Plans for the Development spend can be seen in detail below:

Capital Programme



Please note that the large increased spend in years 2 and 3 is for the Decarbonisation project and increased spend to bring our level of non-decent homes down.

Revenue / Capital Repairs



Currently the Revenue spend is outweighing the Capital spend. Our plan is to switch this around and by investing in our properties and spending more on the assets.

HRA Business Plan | Babergh DC HRA

Operating Account - Traditional View

Year	1	2	3	4	5	6
Year	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Rental Income	19,291	21,264	21,494	21,896	22,231	22,571
Service Charge Income	0	0	0	0	0	0
Void Losses	-193	-212	-214	-218	-221	-225
Non-Dwelling Rents	224	238	245	250	255	260
Charges For Services	703	907	934	953	972	991
Cont Towards Exp	0	0	0	0	0	0
SP Grant	0	0	0	0	0	0
Other Income	54	79	82	84	85	87
Total Income	20,080	22,277	22,541	22,964	23,322	23,684
S&M - General	-4,918	-5,166	-5,321	-5,427	-5,536	-5,646
S&M - Special	0	0	0	0	0	0
Other Charges	0	0	0	0	0	0
Responsive & Cyclical	-7,251	-7,144	-7,358	-7,505	-7,656	-7,809
Depreciation	-4,817	-4,913	-5,012	-5,112	-5,214	-5,318
Debt Mgmt Expenses	0	0	0	0	0	0
Bad Debts	-101	-113	-114	-117	-119	-120
Total Expenditure	-17,088	-17,336	-17,805	-18,161	-18,524	-18,894
Net Cost of Services I&E	2,992	4,941	4,736	4,803	4,798	4,790
Corp & Demo Core	0	0	0	0	0	0
Continuing Operations (not service specific)	0	0	0	0	0	0
Net Cost of HRA Services	2,992	4,941	4,736	4,803	4,798	4,790
Interest Received	0	0	0	0	0	0
Interest Charges	-3,303	-3,283	-3,102	-2,980	-3,084	-3,081
G/L on Sale of HRA Non-Current Assets	0	0	0	0	0	0
Surplus / (Deficit) in Year on HRA Services	-311	1,658	1,633	1,823	1,714	1,709
Provision for Debt Repayment	0	0	0	0	0	0
Repayment of Arranged Loans	0	-6,000	-6,000	0	0	0
Repayment of Revolver	0	0	0	0	0	0
Transfer to MRR	0	0	0	0	0	0
Transfer from / (to) Other Revenue Reserve	0	0	0	0	0	0
RCCO	-970	-5,572	-1,323	-2,182	-1,948	-1,936
Surplus / (Deficit) for the Year	-1,282	-9,914	-5,690	-359	-234	-227
HRA Surplus / (Deficit) b/f	16,093	15,837	6,690	1,359	1,234	1,227
Major Repairs Reserve Interest	0	0	0	0	0	0
Other Capital Receipts Reserve Interest	57	0	0	0	0	0
Debt Repayment Provision Interest	0	0	0	0	0	0
RTB Receipts for Repl Homes Interest	151	211	205	194	190	172
Other RTB Receipts Interest	0	0	0	0	0	0
Revenue Reserve Interest	6	6	5	4	3	3
Operating Account Interest	811	551	149	36	34	33
HRA Surplus / (Deficit) c/f	15,837	6,690	1,359	1,234	1,227	1,209
Required Minimum Year End Working Balance	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000
Minimum Balance Check	0	0	0	0	0	0
Closing Existing Loan Balance	94,419	88,419	82,419	82,419	82,419	82,419
Closing Revolver Balance	0	0	6,927	8,682	10,593	12,429
Total Closing Loan Balance	94,419	88,419	89,346	91,101	93,012	94,848
Optional Debt Cap	0	0	0	0	0	0
Headroom	0	0	0	0	0	0

HRA Business Plan | Babergh DC HRA

Major Repairs & Development Financing

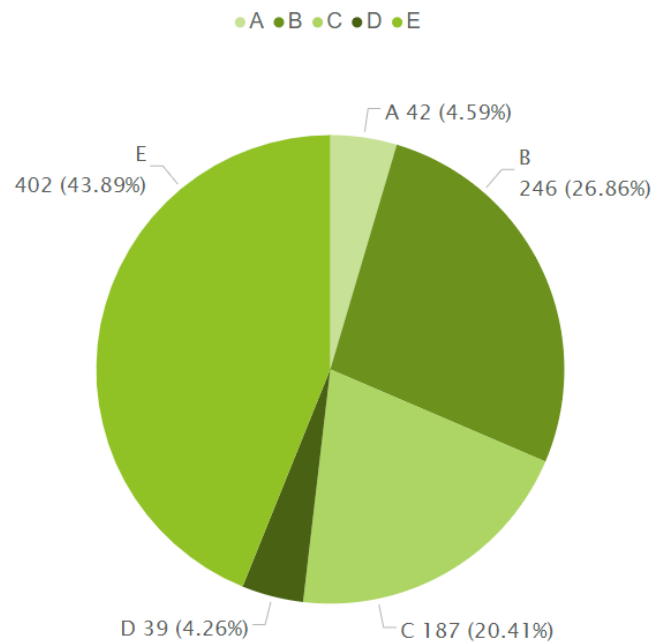
Capital Expenditure								Financing									Total Financing £'000
Year	Year	Major Works & Imps £'000	Other Capital Spend £'000	New Build Development Costs £'000	Demolition Costs £'000	Other Fixed Assets £'000	Total Capital Expenditure £'000	External Grant £'000	Homes England Grant £'000	RTB 141 Receipts £'000	Arranged Borrowing £'000	Other RTB Receipts £'000	Other Capital Receipts £'000	MRR £'000	RCCO £'000	Revolver Borrowing £'000	
1	2023/24	7,581	461	2,075	0	0	10,117	0	0	0	0	700	3,629	4,817	970	0	10,117
2	2024/25	10,045	212	3,406	0	0	13,664	255	0	0	0	743	2,180	4,913	5,572	0	13,664
3	2025/26	11,356	218	2,708	0	0	14,282	255	0	0	0	766	0	5,012	1,323	6,927	14,282
4	2026/27	9,503	223	0	0	0	9,726	0	0	0	0	677	0	5,112	2,182	1,755	9,726
5	2027/28	9,095	0	0	0	0	9,095	0	0	0	0	22	0	5,214	1,948	1,911	9,095
6	2028/29	9,277	0	0	0	0	9,277	0	0	0	0	186	0	5,318	1,936	1,836	9,277
7	2029/30	9,462	0	0	0	0	9,462	0	0	0	0	380	0	5,425	1,855	1,803	9,462
8	2030/31	9,694	0	0	0	0	9,694	0	0	0	0	392	0	5,533	2,225	1,543	9,694
9	2031/32	9,844	0	0	0	0	9,844	0	0	0	0	415	0	5,644	1,783	2,003	9,844
10	2032/33	10,041	0	0	0	0	10,041	0	0	0	0	439	0	5,757	1,703	2,143	10,041
11	2033/34	10,242	0	0	0	0	10,242	0	0	0	0	463	0	5,872	1,616	2,292	10,242
12	2034/35	10,357	0	0	0	0	10,357	0	0	0	0	487	0	5,989	1,523	2,357	10,357
13	2035/36	10,564	0	0	0	0	10,564	0	0	0	0	512	0	6,109	1,904	2,038	10,564
14	2036/37	10,775	0	0	0	0	10,775	0	0	0	0	538	0	6,231	1,531	2,475	10,775
15	2037/38	10,991	0	0	0	0	10,991	0	0	0	0	564	0	6,356	1,423	2,648	10,991
16	2038/39	11,210	0	0	0	0	11,210	0	0	0	0	0	0	6,483	958	3,769	11,210
17	2039/40	11,435	0	0	0	0	11,435	0	0	0	0	0	0	6,613	936	3,886	11,435
18	2040/41	11,663	0	0	0	0	11,663	0	0	0	0	0	0	6,745	899	4,019	11,663
19	2041/42	11,897	0	0	0	0	11,897	0	0	0	0	0	0	6,880	1,399	3,618	11,897
20	2042/43	12,135	0	0	0	0	12,135	0	0	0	0	0	0	7,017	839	4,278	12,135
21	2043/44	12,377	0	0	0	0	12,377	0	0	0	0	0	0	7,158	1,168	4,051	12,377
22	2044/45	12,625	0	0	0	0	12,625	0	0	0	0	0	0	7,301	1,144	4,179	12,625
23	2045/46	12,877	0	0	0	0	12,877	0	0	0	0	0	0	7,447	1,134	4,296	12,877
24	2046/47	13,135	0	0	0	0	13,135	0	0	0	0	0	0	7,596	1,122	4,416	13,135
25	2047/48	13,397	0	0	0	0	13,397	0	0	0	0	0	0	7,748	1,716	3,934	13,397
26	2048/49	13,665	0	0	0	0	13,665	0	0	0	0	0	0	7,903	1,115	4,648	13,665
27	2049/50	13,939	0	0	0	0	13,939	0	0	0	0	0	0	8,061	1,101	4,777	13,939
28	2050/51	14,218	0	0	0	0	14,218	0	0	0	0	0	0	8,222	1,086	4,909	14,218
29	2051/52	14,502	0	0	0	0	14,502	0	0	0	0	0	0	8,387	1,071	5,045	14,502
30	2052/53	14,792	0	0	0	0	14,792	0	0	0	0	0	0	8,554	1,724	4,514	14,792

Housing those in need: Babergh and Mid Suffolk Charts:

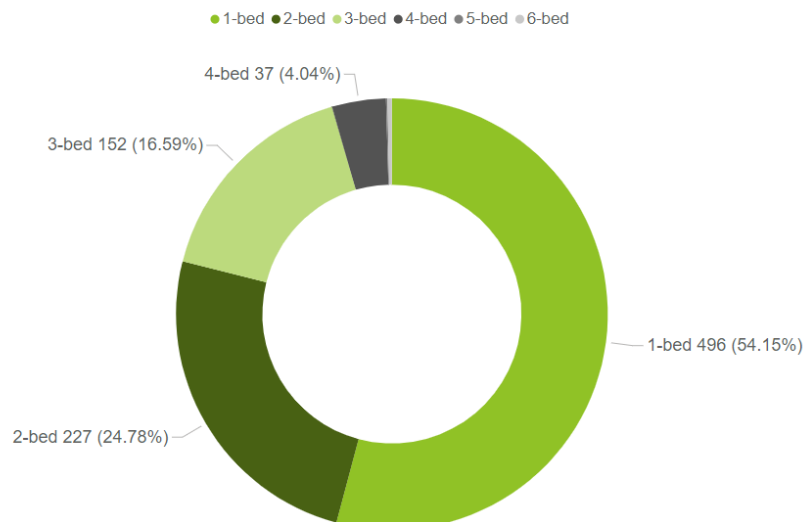
Households active on the Housing Register



Babergh - Banding Breakdown



Babergh - Bedrooms Required



Background and Context: National

The Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023

The past few years have seen some of the most significant events in social housing, with the Grenfell fire tragedy in 2017 highlighting the inadequacy of social housing and the lack of tenant involvement and empowerment.

The Government published the Social Housing Green Paper: A New Deal for Social Housing in 2018 and the Social Housing White Paper: The Charter for Social Housing Residents in 2020 all with the aim of improving how social housing is regulated. The Act consolidates a stronger and more proactive regulatory regime to drive up standards in the sector and hold landlords to account for the services they provide to their tenants.

The Building Safety Act 2022

The Building Safety Act 2022 was introduced in the wake of safety concerns for occupants of high-rise buildings after the 2017 Grenfell Tower tragedy. The legislation is intended to improve the design, construction and management of higher-risk buildings. It came into force on the 1st April 2023.

Decent Homes Standard & Awaab's Law

The Decent Homes Standard sets the minimum standards for council owned homes. The government launched a further review of the Decent Homes Standard in June 2023. This review will consider a range of changes to the standard including whether the current Decent Homes Standard sets the right standard on Housing Health and Safety Rating System issues, to help keep residents safe.

Energy Efficiency of Housing Stock

To meet national carbon targets all housing, including council housing, must meet net zero carbon levels by 2050, and all Council homes must meet Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) rating of C by 2030.

Background and Context: Local

Setting the Scene: Babergh Data:

- Nearly 3000 tenants receive 'My Home Bulletin' email
- 52 Properties sold through the Right to Buy between 2020 – 23
- 3698 Properties (All Tenures)
- £18,434,603.84 total income in 2022/23
- Average Energy efficiency Rating of C
- 97.03% of rent collected in 2022/23
- 6231 average number of repairs completed in 2023
- 937 households on housing register as of December 2023
- 253 homes let in 2022-23 including 13 new builds
- 291 new homes built or purchased between 2015 - 2023
- 56 residents with disabilities were supported in their homes with major works in 2023
- 334 homes adapted through Disabled Facilities or Minor Adaption grants 2020-2023
- 93 Affordable homes for rent were built or acquired between 2015 - 2023
- 58 Shared ownership sales between 2015 – 2023
- 1197 Garages

Our Plan for Babergh District Council

Our Plan for Babergh District Council from 2023 – 2027 vision is “To help to create a resilient, more sustainable future, with and for, all the residents and communities of Babergh”. To achieve this Babergh District Council will focus on the following:

- Delivering good quality core council services;
- Ensuring Babergh District Council is a financially viable organisation now and for the future;
- Providing open & honest leadership;
- Putting sustainability at the heart of everything we do;
- Continuing to listen to you and work in partnership on the things that matter most to you;
- Supporting and empowering you to design and deliver community-based solutions to local issues;
- Working in partnership and cooperation with all our communities, the local voluntary sector, our partners across the public sector and our local businesses to tackle the challenges we all face; and
- Influencing others to ensure you have local access to all the services and facilities that you need to be able to live well.

More details can be found here: [Our Plan for Babergh](#)

Declaration of Climate Emergency

Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Council's declared a Climate Emergency in 2019 and set up a joint Environment and Climate Change Task Force, to look at the climate challenges we face.

The Government's Clean Growth Strategy set a target of 2030 for all Social Housing to have an Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) rating of C. Our properties currently on average have a rating of C. The Government also set a target for all new homes to be "net zero" in relation to carbon emissions by 2030.

Rural districts

Suffolk has double the national average of people resident in rural areas and this rural population is older (higher percentage of those aged 65+) than its urban population.

An All-Party Parliamentary Group inquiry into rural housing showed:

- People living in very rural areas, like ours, experience more limited social networks, isolation, and loneliness which can be exacerbated by poor transport.
- There is an urgent need to provide affordable housing for people wanting to live and work in the most rural communities.

Ageing population

Over the next 20 years the population across both Districts is projected to increase by 9% (18,200). The biggest increase is projected to be in people over 75. As a population ages there are increasing and different demands on services and facilities, especially housing, transport, medical care, and social care services

Tenant Engagement Strategy

Our Tenant Engagement Strategy was launched in November 2022. The strategy was informed by the findings of a tenant engagement survey; over 1,000 tenants responded to the survey and these responses were used to inform our priorities and promises within the strategy.

The strategy, and its action plan, were approved by the Tenant Board and Councillors. They are reviewed annually, so that progress can be tracked and to ensure that the work we are doing is still relevant.

Further details can be found here: [Tenant Engagement Strategy](#)

Joint Homelessness Reduction and Rough Sleeping Strategy

Preventing Homelessness is a priority for Babergh and Mid Suffolk. Everyone needs somewhere to live and a place that they can call home.

Our vision is to end rough sleeping in our Districts. We have already gone some way to achieving this through our work to date by helping families to access accommodation in the private sector, reduced the use of B&B accommodation, bringing empty homes back into use, and developing and purchasing additional properties to add to our existing Housing Stock.

Our Housing and Homelessness Rough Sleeping Strategy sets out our commitments up to 2024.

Further details can be found here: [Joint Homelessness Reduction and Rough Sleeping Strategy](#)

Joint Local Plan

The Babergh and Mid Suffolk Joint Local Plan (Part 1) sets out a planning framework to guide development and facilitate growth in the Districts over the long term. It will play an important role in shaping our future – how towns and villages develop, how we protect and enhance our natural environment, develop our local economy, improve leisure and visitor facilities, improve social infrastructure and support more sustainable forms of travel.

Part 1 of the Joint Local Plan was adopted by both Councils in November 2023 and can be found here: [Babergh and Mid Suffolk Joint Local Plan November 2023](#)

Homes & Housing Strategy and Master Housing Action Plan

We all need and deserve somewhere to live and call home. Having a place to call our own provides belonging, contributes to positive health and wellbeing and strengthens community spirit.

Our Housing vision is for residents to live in affordable and high-quality homes that enable them to build settled, safe and healthy lives, within sustainable and thriving communities.

Our Homes and Housing Strategy sets out how we will meet this challenge and can be found here:

[Joint Homes and Housing Strategy](#)

Housing Revenue Account Business Plan

Priorities:

Priority 1: Investing in our current homes



We will

- Develop an asset register to help decisions on our future stock profile, including disposal/redevelopment of the poorest and worst performing stock.

What does success look like?

It is vital that we invest the limited resources we have in the right place at the right time. We will utilise stock condition, demand and needs data, along with local intelligence to make decisions on future investment and disposals.

We will

- Invest in new technology to improve the maintenance of existing homes. We intend to invest in homes by introducing smart devices that can reduce fuel poverty and provide remote data insights that could cut maintenance costs and improve resident well-being.

What does success look like?

Maintenance will be focused using accurate and up to date data. This will save on costs and improving on time and communication with tenants around the repairs and maintenance of their homes.

We will

- Develop a ten-year Capital Investment Programme (2024 – 2034). The 10-year planned maintenance schedule, which will allow us to accurately predict where investment needs to take place.

What does success look like?

This programme will allow us to inform tenants of exactly what improvements they can expect and when this will take place and all our homes will meet the Government's Decent Homes Standard.

We aim to exceed tenant expectations. Data shows that our existing performance in maintenance, repair and renewal of homes does not always meet the expectations of tenants. We expect the improvements outlined in this Business Plan to increase tenant satisfaction with our services.

Priority 2: Tackling and adapting to climate change



We will

- Retrofit 100 homes across both councils using grant funding and additional capital investment.

What does success look like?

We will have successfully gained grant funding and worked with a partner to retrofit at least 100 properties and our tenants will benefit both financially and from improved wellbeing.

We will

- Develop a range of information guides as well as providing bespoke advice and support, where appropriate to tenants around energy efficiency, reducing the risk of damp and mould prevalence.

What does success look like?

Residents will be aware of how to implement and use energy efficiency measures, new technologies, reduce their energy bills and reduce the number of damp and mould cases in our homes.

We will

- Encourage greater levels of Biodiversity within our estates and neighbourhoods

What does success look like?

We will have increased our provision of wildflowers, reducing grass cutting (where appropriate) and using more natural solutions to ground maintenance. We will have worked with Tenants and our Neighbourhoods and Public Realm Teams to develop local solutions through the Greater Spaces initiative.

We will

- Develop a program of works to help ensure we meet our obligations to have all housing stock at EPC C by 2030.

What does success look like?

Increase the number of our homes performing at EPC C and above and ensure 100% are by 2030.

Priority 3: Building and buying new Council Housing



We will

- Work with partners to provide new homes at affordable rent or for affordable home ownership, and where financially viable, social rent.

What does success look like?

Increase levels of social housing at affordable or social rent by utilising Right to Buy receipts, ensuring new homes are built to the council's New Build Design Guide and Technical Specification, emphasising Good Quality Design, Energy Efficiency, low running costs, Sustainability and Modern Methods of Construction.

Priority 4: Improving the services that we provide our tenants



We will

- Continue to listen to tenants to ensure they have their voices heard and have opportunities to influence the services they receive.

What will success look like?

Tenants will be active in shaping our priorities and all complaints will be dealt with promptly and fairly, lessons will have been learnt and changes will be made as a result. We will ensure tenants can scrutinise our services and performance.

We will

- Develop a coherent approach to Data, Performance, Scrutiny and Satisfaction.

What will success look like?

We will have introduced a Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system. This will enable our teams to collaborate more easily, break down silo working and improve our communication. A CRM system will ensure tenants only need to tell us once and help us to get it right first time. Ensuring we have accurate data will enable us to make informed decisions on how we deliver services.

We will

- Benchmark our performance and report on it.

What will success look like?

We will have a continuous improvement plan which will ensure we are learning from those performing well in the sector, continuously improve in the areas in need of development and celebrate our successes.

We will

- Meet the new Regulatory Framework and Standards as set by the Regulator of Social Housing.

What will success look like?

We will have a regulatory team and will have had a mock inspection, with any actions arising will be in the homes and housing strategy action plan. We will also have developed a housing governance framework which meets the requirements of both the regulator and customer. The activities of the governance arrangements will be accessible to the public so they can hold us to account.

Priority 5: Improving the neighbourhoods that we manage



We will

- Review each of our larger estates and actively engage tenants and stakeholders in how we could develop solutions to improve the environment and create neighbourhoods that are attractive and desirable to all using capital funding through our HRA Greater Places scheme.

What will success look like?

Tenant satisfaction with our contribution to our neighbourhoods will increase as well as tenant's happiness, well-being and pride and improvements are identified through resident engagement.

We will

- Develop a new approach to housing management which is proactive, community focussed and is more responsive to the needs and vulnerabilities of our tenants.

What will success look like?

Our Housing Management offer enables us to provide a modern housing service to our tenants and we know who our tenants are and how we need to deliver services to them in line with the requirements of the Consumer Standards.

We will

- Working with public realm, develop a Service Level Agreement for the provision of grounds maintenance services to council estates, within budget communicated to residents.

What will success look like?

Service Level Agreement is communicated to residents and monitored and reported to enable residents to hold us to account.

Priority 6: Involving tenants in the running of the service



We will

- Ensure that our tenant governance model can scrutinise our services and performance and involves members and senior leaders input for policy and operational development.

What will success look like?

Services tenants receive and performance around those services will be visible to cabinet members and senior leaders of the organisation and tenants are able to hold us to account.

We will

- Increase levels of satisfaction that we listen to tenant views and act upon them. We will then regularly monitor progress by making improvements to what we do and how we do it.

What will success look like?

Our Tenant Engagement Strategy action plan will be incorporated into our master Housing Service Action to ensure tenant engagement is integral to all that we do.

We will

- Increase the pride tenant's feel living in our council homes and communities by carrying out a tenant respect and fairness campaign, working to reduce the stigma some tenants may feel.

What will success look like?

Tenant satisfaction around being treated fairly and with respect increases and we work with partners such as TPAS and Stop Social Housing Stigma to help publicise positive perceptions of tenants to the wider public and across our staff.

Priority 7: Implementing digital transformation



We will

- Ensure our Housing Management systems are fit for purpose, provide value for money and enable us to deliver a modern housing service that our tenants and staff expect.

What will success look like?

A comprehensive requirements exercise is carried out around the future systems needs of the housing service and a decent housing management system is procured and successfully implemented.

We will

- Ensure the data we hold about our tenants and our homes is kept up to date, is of good quality and is used to benefit our tenants.

What will success look like?

We make data driven decisions about the provision of services to our tenants and ensure we are meeting the requirement of the Regulator's Consumer Standards.

Priority 8: Ensuring sustainable financial management of our council housing services



We will

- Continually review the HRA Business Plan, at least annually, to reflect our current position and our mid-term financial position.

What will success look like?

The business plan remains solvent.

We will

- Create a defined plan for actions that could alleviate financial stress of the housing revenue account

What will success look like?

An action plan of savings and increased income is approved and carried out.

We will

- Improve and increase the financial data we provide to cabinet and members, so they are aware of the status of the HRA account.

What will success look like?

Cabinet members receive regular briefings on our financial position and what we are all doing to help improve it.

Performance and Benchmarking

We work with Housemark, a provider of benchmarking comparable data within the Social Housing sector. We receive monthly and annual performance summaries which show us, at a glance, what the numbers mean to our tenants, our people, and our business. These reports compare our costs and performance with a peer group of similar social landlords.

In line with The Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023 we publish performance data on the Tenant pages of our website and share this directly with tenants via the My Home Bulletin on a quarterly basis.

In 2022 Babergh & Mid-Suffolk District Council's commissioned Acuity Research & Practice (Acuity) to carry out an independent survey of residents to collect data on their opinions and attitudes towards their landlord and the services provided. Acuity is also collecting our Tenant Satisfaction Measure data through tenant perception surveys. The results of this analysis have been taken into consideration through the development of this Business Plan. It highlighted that we should concentrate our efforts upon the following three areas, as this would lead to a noticeable increase in resident satisfaction: Resident Engagement, Customer Services and the quality of Homes.

We will demonstrate to tenants that we have actively listened to their feedback and will improve our services. We will provide good quality, safe homes. We will monitor progress through regular tenant satisfaction perception surveys.

Monitoring and Governance

A detailed 'smart' action plan will be developed in response to this plan being adopted by both Councils and will run alongside the Master Housing Action Plan.

The HRA Business plan goes to full council for comment and then to cabinet for adoption annually.

An annual review will consider both financial performance of the accounts alongside the qualitative outcomes being delivered and the satisfaction of tenants and leaseholders. This will enable us to ensure that we are continuously adjusting the Business Plan to reflect the environment around us.

Links and Appendices

[Our Plan for Babergh District Council Corporate Plan.](#)

[Tenant Engagement Strategy](#)

[Joint Homelessness Reduction and Rough Sleeping Strategy](#)

[Joint Local Plan](#)

[Joint Homes and Housing Strategy](#)

[Regulatory Standards - Regulator of Social Housing](#)