

Quarter 4 Performance

Mid Suffolk District Council

June 2021 Cabinet





This performance report has been developed in collaboration with Cabinet members, Senior Leadership Team and corporate managers. It covers the period January - March 21 (Q4).

It covers a time where a further lockdown promoted the Senior Leadership Team and Councillors to review its strategic priorities and projects. This was to ensure the ambitions of the Corporate Plan, and critical services to support our communities and businesses during the pandemic were balanced. As part of this process, it should be noted that a number of projects were paused.

Despite this, the council are finalists in the iESE Public Sector Transformation Awards 2021 - in the Customer Focus, and Asset Management and Regeneration categories, as well as being in the running for the prestigious Council of the Year award.

Please note:

- This is a high-level report, highlighting how the council is performing against its six key priority areas from the Corporate Plan (2019-27). It also gives a snapshot of the overall health of the organisation (including headline performance indicators) and looks in brief towards projects commencing in the next quarter.
- The report provides high level assurance that the council is delivering against the Corporate Plan.

iESE Awards 2021

- We are delighted to report that we are once again finalists in the iESE Public Sector Transformation Awards 2021 - in the Customer Focus, and Asset Management and Regeneration categories, as well as being in the running for the prestigious Council of the Year award.
- Our planning enforcement team is flying the flag for us in the Customer Focus category, demonstrating how by harnessing technology and streamlining processes it has continued to deliver results despite the pandemic.
- In Asset Management and Regeneration category, our economic development team has shown how Sudbury's Virtual High Street is providing an innovative solution for businesses forced to close their doors during lockdown.
- Our place on the shortlist for the overall Council of the Year, is recognition of how our joint working and use of technology has helped us to support our communities through the pandemic, and champion places that people are proud to call home.
- We must now wait until the final on Wednesday 8 September, to find out whether we have been successful.



The Public Sector Transformation Awards



Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils shortlisted for iESE Council of the Year Award 2021

Customers

Headline Performance Indicators

Combined data for both councils



6,304
daily
web visits (av.)

39% increase from Q3

Reason: disruption (weather), Covid-19 business grants on: council tax billing, waste



513
calls per day (av.)

21% increase from Q3

Reason: council tax billing/housing repairs restarting (peak 900 per day)



62
email responded to
per day (av.)

35% decrease from Q3



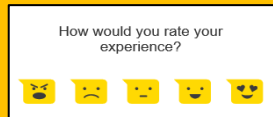
928
Social media responses
issued

49% increase from Q3



51
compliments

34% decrease from Q3



2
out of 5

Reason: service issues (e.g. missed bins), not about the website itself. New feedback tool being considered for Q1 2021.



12%
abandon rate

5% increase from Q3

Reason: higher call volumes



1 min & 52 sec
wait time (av.)

Reason: higher call volumes



3.2k
recorded chatbot
sessions

Average usage time: 28 seconds
Most used service: waste



215
stage 1 complaints

34% increase from Q3

87% not upheld, as majority were service requests e.g. a repair

Customers

Objectives and progress



Objective 1: We will implement the technology capabilities that support and enhance customer and employee experience, invest in our people to give them confidence to use and promote digital services and tools, and underpin this with an ethos and culture of listening and engagement.

Progress:

- Reviewed current complaints policy, engaging with tenants (via tenant sounding board) and officers.
- Telephony survey paused due to Q4 increase in customer activity, which is expected to restart in Q1. Enabled us to focus on supporting customers through the council tax billing period.
- The chatbot for environment and waste services went live in Q4. We have seen some positive activity levels predominately focused on waste services such as collection schedules, renewal of garden waste information and recycling information.
- Early findings from the chatbot are showing that approx. 3% of users are asking the bot questions relating to housing or council tax which the bot will let them know they cannot answer as the service is a 12-month trial for waste and environmental only.

What we plan to do next quarter:

- Complaint's policy review. This includes surveys to complainants over Q1 to ensure revised policy is based on customer feedback/is accessible.
- Improve our website's navigation, using insights from customer activity data from 2020, to ensure changes are most relevant to our customers.
- Produce trend data so we can compare the activity from quarter to quarter and understand how many people continue to try and use the chatbot for other services (aside from environment and waste).
- Review other chatbot and web chat options to ensure that we can see how the different types of technology may provide more online contact options for our customers.

Customers

Objectives and progress



Objective 2: We will develop and deliver a phased approach to supporting customers with digital inclusion and digital upskilling by working with like-minded community partners and using insight and intelligence to baseline our approach and measure our success.

Progress:

- Actively engaged in the digital inclusion network across Suffolk.
- Working up our digital skills training offer for digital champions.
- The tenants digital skills survey was paused to allow us to gain initial feedback from the tenant's board.

What we plan to do next quarter:

- Trialling some digital skills training with Suffolk Libraries in May.
- A device lending through Suffolk Libraries will commence in late Q1, ensuring that we brief customers on how they can gain access to the tablet lending scheme.
- In May/June the tenant's digital inclusion survey will commence to provide insight as to how we can support tenants with digital skills.

Customers

Objectives and progress



Objective 3 – We are committed to putting our customers first by reviewing our current processes and re-designing them to ensure that they are simple, intuitive and maximise the use of technology.

Progress:

- Worked on our replacement customer payment system to a new, more accessible payment system. This will allow us to track customer payments and to make further improvements over 21/22.
- A new NVQ cohort for Business Process Reengineering has been created and we will agree how it will be delivered virtually over Q1. This will aid future improvement of our processes for the benefit of our customers.

What we plan to do next quarter:

- Our payments system improvements will launch over Q1 and we will then review the opportunities to further enhance the customer experience, making payments online or over the phone as simple for customers as possible.
- Commence additional process reviews in Q1 and look to share the progress from our original work, recognising that some of the improvements will not be realised until Q3.



Mid Suffolk Communities Headline Performance Indicators



Community Grants



£154,976

Capital Grant spend

Projects supported include £25,000 to Stowmarket Lawn Tennis Club, £28,000 to Haughley's Ron Crascall Pavilion, and £23,000 to Earl Stonham Village Hall. The 2020/21 Capital budget has been 74% allocated.

£100,999

Covid-19 Emerging Needs spend

Groups supported include food banks, community support groups, provision for young people and charities operating within the district. 100% of the CV19EN budget has been allocated.

£192,108

S106 funds spent or allocated

Including funding for facility improvements to Elmswell's Blackbourne Centre, Badwell Ash & Bacton village halls accessibility improvements at Stowmarket Community Centre.

£5,710

Minor Grant spend

Projects include redeveloped phone box and defibrillator at Rickinghall and safety improvements at the Coddendam Centre. 36% of Minor Capital Grants funding has been spent or allocated.

£347,276

Total amount of funding offered (not spent) through Capital, Minor and Covid-19 EN Grants

(cumulative)

21

Voluntary, Community & Social Enterprises (VCSE) supported

All revenue-supported groups have been contacted on a regular basis throughout the pandemic, including Mid Suffolk Citizens Advice, the Museum of East Anglian Life and Community Action Suffolk.

Community Safety

Anti-Social Behaviour cases reviewed by the ASB partnership;

3

County Lines / Drugs / Alcohol

1

Domestic Abuse

6

Neighbour / Noise Nuisance

1

Open Spaces / Vandalism / Unauthorised Encampment



2

Neighbourhood Plans with final Examination Reports
Reports published for Wilby and Laxfield

Communities

Objectives and progress



Objective 1: To create great places to live and to empower local people and communities to shape what happens in their area

Progress:

- Working with Suffolk County Council on Women's Tour preparation for October, including engagement with communities and schools along the route.
- Supported our community groups with advice and support to apply to Community Restart Fund by Suffolk County Council.
- Completed Communities Strategy Action Plan.
- Updated the current Leisure, Sport and Active Participation Strategy, including two audits and stakeholder consultations to look at our built facilities and play pitches.
- The Joint Local Plan was submitted for Examination on 31 March 2021, this achievement is the culmination of five years' work. The examination hearing sessions will start on 21 June.

What we plan to do next quarter:

- Stowmarket will host to the Prima Donna festival this summer from 30 July - 1st August at the Museum of East Anglian Life.
<https://www.primadonnafestival.com/>
- Working with Stowmarket Cultural group and Periscope Cultural Partnership to offer creative events and activities during the summer for children and young people.
- Complete the Delivery Plan setting out the activities to be developed and delivered during the next financial year.
- We will aim to complete the refresh of the Leisure, Sport and Active Participation Strategy having consulted with key stakeholders and Councillors.

Communities

Objectives and progress



Objective 2 – To effectively deliver our Community Safety Statutory responsibilities deliver on the priorities agreed within the Western Suffolk Community Safety Partnership (WSCSP) Action Plan.

Progress:

BMSDC response to the Stella Maris Review included an extensive action plan of transformational improvements and activity.

Some key successes to date are:

- The roll out of Ecins (Case Management system) to report and manage high risk Anti Social Behaviour (ASB) cases.
- Improvements made to the effectiveness and frequency of ASB panel meetings, including a revised Terms of Reference for each panel to discuss at a future meeting or workshop.
- Development of a draft Council wide ASB Policy to ensure consistency and transparency of approach across Council Services.
- Development of a suite of documents and tools to support officers manage ASB cases better to ensure interventions when required are appropriate and timely.
- Continued to support the Western Suffolk Community Safety Partnership and contribute to the ongoing activities set out in its Action Plan.
- Successfully supported the Mix to apply for WSCSP funding to deliver a youth programme to expand 'Drop in ' sessions after school targeting those aged 15-18.

Communities

Objectives and progress



Objective 2 – To effectively deliver our Community Safety Statutory responsibilities deliver on the priorities agreed within the Western Suffolk Community Safety Partnership (WSCSP) Action Plan.

What we plan to do next quarter:

- Continue to deliver the Stella Maris Action Plan with a focus on ensuring ECINS is rolled out to partners.
- Continue to work with our WSCSP partners to deliver its action plan including contributing to:
 - The Suffolk Hope Awards taking place in June, launched during National Hate Crime Awareness Week.
 - The development of a Countywide ASB Information Sharing Agreement.
 - Community engagement activity to increase awareness of WSCSP priority such as Prevent, Violence against Woman and Girls, Men and Boys.
 - Work with Voluntary Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) organisations to develop initiatives in targeted areas that support the partnership priorities and help them to access Community Safety Partnership funding.
 - Continue to support national campaigns, including National Stalking Awareness Week – 19 – 23 April.
 - Deliver Domestic Abuse training to teams and encourage staff to become Domestic Abuse (DA) Champions.

Communities

Objectives and progress



Objective 3 – To deliver a Community Grants Services that is inclusive and transparent, supports community participation & activity and works with Voluntary and Community Sector organisations to develop thriving communities

Progress:

Community Grants and S106 funded projects include - £11,700 towards toilet refurbishments at Bramford Scout Hut. Capital Grants projects include Haughley Ron Crascall Pavillion storage unit and car park, a new club house for Somersham Tennis Club and improvements at Ashfield Village Hall.

Revenue Grants - 19 applications have been received for 21/22 and have been assessed and meetings have been held with all applicants.

Locality Awards – Awards have been used to support community awards such as the Stowmarket Rickshaw Project, the reinstallation of a footbridge at Baylham through the River Gipping Trust, outdoor sports improvements at Woolpit, Needham Market and Rickinghall and Village Hall improvements at Offton & Willisham, Thurston and Henley.

What we plan to do next quarter:

Community Grants and S106 funded projects – Pipeline projects for 21/22 include energy efficiency improvements at the Coddensham Centre, a new Community Hall at Mendlesham Green and £25,000 towards outdoor space provision at the Oak Meadow Project in Combs. There are forthcoming play projects in Framsdon, Rattlesden and Barham. Upcoming S106 contributions include the John Peel Centre, Debenham Sports and Leisure Centre & Village Hall and Denham Village Hall.

Revenue Grants – Offer letters sent out and first quarter reporting and 'health check' meetings completed.

Locality Awards – Spend in 20/21 was 87.2% totalling £217,934, an increase in 19/20. Last year's spend will be published on the Councils website and the 21/22 awards launched in May/June.

Grants Review – work on this was paused but will restart again towards the end of Q1.



Mid Suffolk Wellbeing Headline Performance Indicators



5 (cumulative)

Schools supported to help young and vulnerable people to live well

1 new school joined the project, Abbots Hall School in Stowmarket. Schools have been contacted and asked to update data. Activity packs created for children. PE leads have met and are planning an activity event for July to take part in virtually at present but hoping face to face.



1



Outreach programme developed with Active Suffolk to support older people to live well

Active Wellbeing Project - delivered in Eye – 2 new referrals – totalling 27 for the project. New virtual Fit Villages project, Balance and Strength. Active Suffolk team delivered the Physical Activity champions training which will help sustain the initiatives set up after the project is completed. The team continue to support the GP Surgery as it reopens from Covid-19 and have produced an activity brochure for the general public and are starting to receive referrals from the social prescribing team.



28

Families engaged in Holiday Projects in Eye – February Half Term

Eye saw 28 families engage in the cooking experience over February Half Term. Due to weather and Covid-19 restrictions, it was not possible to deliver the activity programme but children were provided with activity packs to use at home.



22

Families engaged in Holiday Projects in Stowmarket – February Half Term

Stowmarket saw 22 families engage in the cooking experience over February Half Term. Due to weather and Covid restrictions, it was not possible to deliver the activity programme but children were provided with activity packs to use at home.



65

Home But Not Alone referrals made across both districts by the Communities Team during this period

50% of referrals were relating to access to food, with the remaining 50% being a fairly even split between requests for medication and asking for support due to poor mental health or struggling with social isolation.

Wellbeing

Objectives and progress



What we committed to do and our progress

Objective 1 – To develop the Councils first Wellbeing Strategy to ensure that we put the wellbeing of our communities at the heart of everything we do.

Progress:

A draft Wellbeing strategy was completed and shared with the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) late March for their observations and direction. As a result a number of changes and additions were suggested to ensure each of the outcomes will be achieved with a clear set of performance measures.

In the absence of a Wellbeing Strategy the Communities team has continued to support and deliver the following:

- A project plan has been developed to lead a programme on Youth Social Prescribing. If approved the Youth Social Prescribing Project will help young people to make connections with their communities, improve their wellbeing, to build positive and reliable relationships and to learn life skills for achieving their goals. A collaborative, place-based approach will ensure young people are enabled to access the support and activities they need, when and where they need them most.
- Postbox Project – ‘writing letters to tackle loneliness’ – Project has launched; 40 volunteers have signed up, training is complete and 20 referrals have been received. The first letter writing pairings have started.

Wellbeing

Objectives and progress



Objective 1 – To develop the Councils first Wellbeing Strategy to ensure that we put the wellbeing of our communities at the heart of everything we do.

What we plan to do next quarter:

- Focus will be given to completing Wellbeing Strategy and presenting it to Full Council at its meeting on 22nd July. Consultation on the final during May with the aim of sharing at a cabinet briefing at the end of May.

In the mean-time the Communities Team will continue to deliver and plan wellbeing projects and activity such as those listed below:

- Active Wellbeing in Eye, the social prescribing team will continue to support the rollout of a walks programme linking in with the local Eye Plodders walking group and the health walks with Onelife Suffolk and Thornham Estate walks.
- Active Schools work will continue with the schools and we will engage our leisure operator Sports and Leisure Management Limited (SLM) to ensure they develop and lead with much of this work going forward.
- Dementia: There are plans for a walking event in June linked to the GP surgery and also Everyone Active/SLM – the Dementia Action Alliance has purchased a set of lifelike animals and babies which are being lent out to people in Stowmarket living with Dementia. Plans are currently being drawn up for a host of events in May (Dementia Action week)
- Our Parks event will take place at the Recreation Ground in Stowmarket hosted by Stowmarket Parish Council. The pilot project is due to start in late April 2021 and continue until Oct 2021. In addition, Park Run/Great Run Local (GRL) events are now restarting with the event at Needham lakes and the GRL continuing at Walsham Le Willows.
- Continue to support the development of a revised Leisure, Sport and Active Participation Strategy. Councillor workshops have been arranged for the 27th and 28th April to share progress

Mid Suffolk Environment Headline Performance Indicators



483

New garden waste subscribers

Total subscriptions to date 16,598, there has been a continual increase in the number of subscribers throughout the year.



206

Incidents of fly tipping

This compares to 74 for the same period in 2019



10

Building Control visits in connection with dangerous structures

The building control team dealt with 10 instances of unsafe structures, ranging from unsafe walls, fences, doors, abandoned buildings and an out of hours call to assist emergency services with a road traffic collision.



14.05%

of recycling collected was identified as contaminated or too small to process (under 45mm)

Items included mainly glass, wet paper and bagged waste. This is an increase of 2.48% from Q3. (Data from Materials Recovery Facility input sample)



99%

of fly tips cleared in 48 hours

Fly tipping data relates to tips on public land only

Environment

Objectives and progress



Objective 1 – To achieve the Councils’ ambition to become carbon neutral by 2030, following the adoption of the Carbon Reduction Management Plan.

Progress:

- The transition of the waste fleet to Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil (HVO) fuel is progressing well. Funding has been obtained from Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) for installation of the fuel tanks and a contractor has been appointed. The procurement of a fuel supplier is underway with an anticipated implementation date of July 2021.
- A successful joint bid for £1.4m was made with Babergh to the Government's Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme. The funding will be used on measures towards ‘decarbonising’ the leisure centres and the Building Service Depot through the installation of heat pumps and/or renewables.
- Solar car port and battery storage/EV charging project progressing following March Cabinet approvals, we are pre-planning and tender for technology/installation partner.
- Agreement has been reached with Everyone Active to transfer leisure energy tariffs from blue to green certified low carbon tariffs.
- We have partnered with the Energy Saving Trust to identify suitable public car parks in which to expand the Council's network of electric vehicle charging points. Infrastructure constraints are being scoped with UK Power Networks before a bid for funding to the Government's Office of Zero Emission Vehicles (OZEV) grants scheme.

What we plan to do next quarter:

- Work towards implementation of the waste HVO project by July 2021
- Complete the scoping of decarbonisation works for the leisure centres and the Building Service Depot and tender for the works.
- Work with Vertas to secure the transition of the leisure centres to green energy tariffs.
- Complete scoping works for the electric vehicle charging points project and submit a bid for funding to OZEV.

Environment

Objectives and progress



Objective 2 – Improve the biodiversity of the district, consistent with the biodiversity pledge adopted by the Council

Progress:

- Our Biodiversity Action Plan highlights tree stock and condition surveying as a priority area for our Arboricultural Team. The ground-based survey of all the trees on our land will give us an accurate list of species, size and age of our tree population. Excess carbon dioxide is building up in our atmosphere, contributing to climate change. Trees absorb CO₂, removing and storing the carbon while releasing oxygen back into the air. In one year, an acre of mature trees absorbs the same amount of CO₂ produced when you drive your car 26,000 miles.
- Mapping work is underway of our public realm spaces, so that we have a clear understanding of land owned by the Councils, current wildlife corridors (including animals, plants and ecosystems); mapping will help identify suitable tree and hedge planting locations and where wildlife corridors need to be established, enhanced or protected.
- Application form completed and published for Town and Parish Councils to undertake tree and hedge planting.
- Phase 2 of the Design Council project has focused on user research to identify how people use their local green / open space and how people value it.

What we plan to do next quarter:

- We are commissioning a satellite survey. Satellite images combined with powerful computer processing will allow us to create a map which shows every tree over 3m tall in each ward across our districts.
- Parish and Town Councils identified as sites for trials of novel meadow and verge management techniques to be contacted, proposals to be worked up and agreed.

Environment

Objectives and progress

Sustainable environment for



Objective 3 – To promote a safe, healthy, and sustainable environment for our districts.

Progress:

- Working with our colleagues in Public Health to respond to the pandemic and support businesses in their preparations for re-opening as lockdown eases.
- Promoting the correct recycling of items within household recycling bins through leaflets and social media promotions working with the Suffolk Waste Partnership.
- There has been a significant increase in the incidents of fly-tipping this year. There are a number of possible Covid-19 related reasons:
 - Household Waste and Recycling Centres were initially closed and now operate on a booking system.
 - People spending more time at home and having 'clear-outs' of unwanted household belongings which in the past may have been donated to charity shops which have also been closed during the pandemic.
 - The number of people offering 'clearance service' via social media, may not all be authorised traders who are then not disposing of the waste in the correct way.
- The increase in fly-tipping has had a direct impact on the Public Realm operations team, regularly taking staff away from the winter works programme to carryout fly-tipping clearance activities.

What we plan to do next quarter:

- Hoping to be able to move towards more 'business as usual' activities. Focusing on our core areas of work in particular food safety and animal licensing inspections. High risk businesses which are overdue visits will be prioritised for visits whilst we continue to use remote methods of assessment for those that are lower risk to protect our staff and the general public.
- For 2021/22 we are focusing on reducing the amount of glass in recycling bins and encourage them to be recycled through the bottle bank scheme.
- A draft litter and fly tipping strategy is being created.

Mid Suffolk Housing Headline Performance Indicators



23

Households placed into
temporary
accommodation

There was a slight reduction in homelessness presentations during Q4, which is not surprising as we had seen quite an increase in Q3. We were also in a 'lockdown' situation, which meant the eviction ban was re-introduced.



15

New Affordable Homes
Acquired or Built

During 2020/21 we delivered an additional 23 units of affordable housing in Mid Suffolk. A mix of 2 and 3 bedroom properties, including some bungalows. Just under half of the properties purchased were in Stowmarket.



38

cases where homelessness has
successfully been prevented or
relieved

There was a small decrease from Q3 but overall there were many successful outcomes during 2020/21, which is incredible considering the pressures. The team continue to work diligently to prevent or relieve homelessness wherever possible.



44

Properties relet (not
temporary accommodation)

There was an increase in relets in Q4. This will be carefully monitored as a larger number of void properties can have an impact on void times, if we don't ensure sufficient capacity to carry out the repairs required.



25

average number of
days for VOID re-lets

Although an increase in void times between Q3 and Q4, overall voids performance within the target of 21 days. This is significant given three lockdowns, delays in materials, reduction in works due to social distancing and an increase in void properties. The cumulative void figure for the year is 21 days.

Housing

Objectives and progress



Objective 1 – Enabling delivery and provision of homes within the Districts.

Progress:

- Progress continues on our Council owned sites and direct delivery to provide more homes within the District.
 - Needham Market Middle School site (41 properties) – on site and progressing well and due to complete end of 2022 .
 - Middle School, Stowmarket (37 properties) progressing to getting this scheme on site in Q2 2021/22.
 - Paddock House, Eye (16 properties) progressing to get demolition contract in place in Q1 2021/22.
- BMSDC are currently on site with four developments which will deliver 79 affordable homes in the next two years, with a mix of social rent, affordable rent tenure and shared ownership (part buy/part rent).
- During Q4, a total of 58 housing specific applications were granted, which will deliver 483 homes in the District.

What we plan to do next quarter:

- Put in place a plan for the marketing and sale of shared ownership properties on S106 acquisitions and on sites which the Councils are delivering with our development partner Icen.
- Review the internal process for delivery from pre-planning to post- handover of properties to the Councils.
- Complete drafting of design guide and technical specification for new housing delivery.
- Progress towards a 5 year delivery pipeline - identifying gaps in delivery and potential opportunities.

Housing

Objectives and progress



Objective 2 – Reducing our carbon footprint, working towards specific actions within the Carbon Reduction Management Plan

Progress:

- Our Surveyors have completed a Level 5 Diploma in Retrofit Coordination and Risk Management. This will enable the evaluation of properties within our council stock, that are suitable for retrofit to be identified and planned by us rather than outsourcing which will reduce the time delay.
- In addition to the retrofit training, we have:
 - Embarked on a programme to collect up to date Energy Performance Data for every home in our stock.
 - Working with the Energy Saving Trust who have given us access to data (at an address level) for each council home. This data means we can deliver a programme of works that is tailored to every BMSDC owned home across the districts . In addition, it will provide the ability to determine area-based retrofit schemes, drive decarbonisation plans and assist with the application of grants in a much timelier fashion.
 - Our programme of fitting energy efficient heating continues and consistently evolves as technology improves.
 - Allocated a budget to energy measures for our homes, with £1m set aside for insulating solid wall properties and those that are hardest to treat.
- Engaged with architects who have completed designs for us to work to with our retrofitting programme at Harleston Corner. These designs will now be going out to a Quantity Surveyor to cost and plan in the works which we plan to start in Q1 2021/22.

What we plan to do next quarter:

- Develop a specification policy for all New Builds which will focus on the carbon footprint of not only the building but also the supply chain to ensure that all properties built by BMSDC going forward have the least impact possible. Due to the pandemic, this new specification piece of work was placed on hold. We will be taking up this again when lockdown restrictions are lifted. A target for this to be completed will be Q4 2021/22.

Central Suffolk Lettings growing success has continued throughout 2021. We have provided private rented homes for over 90 homeless households. 19 of these homes are as part of the new rent guarantee scheme – which offers tenant security alongside a comprehensive, professional lettings offer to private landlords.

Currently Central Suffolk Lettings are assisting 131 homeless households to secure private rented accommodation across the Districts.

Some highlights of 2021:

- Founded a Suffolk wide local authority private lettings forum with members from each local authority in Suffolk.
- Finalised the building of a mainstream service from a two-year pilot plan with one permanent member of staff, and two fixed term employees running the current project with plans to expand into the coming year.
- Three successful energy grants for private landlords secured through Private Sector
- Full tenant support service to 90 households
- Full compliment of staff working to ARLA accreditation

What our customers are saying:

*Eliza and *Rosa (14yrs) had to flee their home in fear of their own lives after Rosa fell victim to child exportation by a London gang – Rosa also had to leave her 18yr old brother behind. They moved into our temporary accommodation with few belongings but within weeks, Central Suffolk Lettings had found them a private rented property in a location that was safe to them. The property had three bedrooms so that Rosa could be reunited with her brother. Our service not only found the property, but we were able to support the family in changing their address and updating benefit agencies and arranged for all their belongings to be transferred from their previous property. The Social Care Worker said: *“I just wanted to say a huge thank you for your hard work and brilliant multi agency working in regard to Eliza and Rosa. The fresh start has been pivotal in the risks being reduced for Rosa and she is starting to feel safe again. Thank you again and it was really great working with you.”*

Kevin Berwick, a private landlord with a property on our Rent Guarantee Scheme: *“I commend you highly on your people skills, communication skills and integrity. I always feel you respect the interests of both landlord and tenant and are always on top of your brief. Any time I have emailed you, you have got back to me very quickly. I appreciate this a lot, especially as I no longer live in the UK. You have always managed to make time to respond to any of my queries, no matter how busy you were.”*

**Names have been changed*

Housing Case Study

Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils purchased a new build property and worked with Suffolk County Council's occupational therapy team to adapt the property to meet the specific needs of local family with a disabled daughter, providing a secure, long term home.

Several major adaptations were needed on the family home to ensure that their daughter could remain at home and live in an environment that met her requirements.

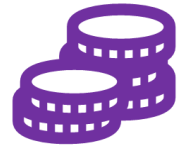
The home was provided through Babergh and Mid-Suffolk District Councils' Housing Assistance Policy, and a number of options were looked at by the housing team to find a solution that met the housing needs of the whole family.

The family who moved into their new home in February this year said: 'We would like to say a big thank you to all for purchasing the house for our daughter's needs, we are over the moon; One, you have all been there for us as a family to meet our needs for our daughter and two, for a superb bungalow it is amazing'



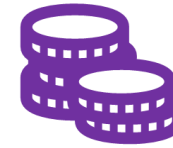
Mid Suffolk Economy

Headline Performance Indicators



Covid grant funding:

6,149 grants paid worth £29,810,736



£3,850,368

Local Restrictions Support Grant (LRSG) (Closed) (Addendum) Nov and Jan Lockdowns
1922 grants paid

£30,869

LRSG Closed (Tier 2 period) (closed Pubs)
Paid to 25 businesses

£238,785

LRSG Open (Tier 2)
262 grants paid

£45,411

LRSG (open) (Tier 2) discretionary element
39 grants paid

£45,000

Christmas Support Payment
Paid to 45 businesses

£1,354,829

Additional Restrictions Grant (discretionary grant for businesses affected by Nov and Jan Lockdowns and Tier 4 restrictions)
598 grants paid



95%

of business rates collected

This is 3.4% below target, impacted by the pandemic, with priority given to administrating the various grant schemes. Better than forecast during the year.

Economy

Objectives and progress



Objective 1 – Connected and Sustainable :To be one of the best-connected places in the East of England and be a testbed for new innovation in clean growth industries

Progress:

- Completion of the Regal Theatre redevelopment including regeneration of Ipswich Street car park and landscape.
- Site Development Plan drafted for Gateway 14 Enterprise Zone.
- Bid for Freeport status approved for Gateway 14.
- Project team set up to run Localised energy showcase event to be held in autumn 21. Venue confirmed as Wherstead Park.
- Continued work with Town and Parish Councils to support reopening of the High Street in line with Government guidance.
- Funding bid submitted to Nesta Challenge Fund to deliver an innovation pilot for listed buildings.
- Sustainable Travel Officer appointed to deliver on active travel projects, create new walking and cycling trails and deliver projects linked to our zero-carbon agenda.

What we plan to do next quarter:

- Work with Freeport East Board to support development of Outline and Full Business Case.
- Progress development of digital infrastructure strategy for rollout of ultrafast broadband and promotion of broadband vouchers to businesses.
- Develop specific sector intelligence for key sectors to inform investment and business support in Clean Growth.
- Develop costed pipeline of projects in conjunction with the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP).
- Work with Suffolk County Council to develop projects linked to Active Travel funding.
- Progress to next stage all capital projects/pipeline including securing deliver partner for solar carports.

Economy

Objectives and progress



Objective 2 – Innovative and Creative :We will become a growing area for Innovation, Enterprise and Creativity in the East

Progress:

- 3,114 business grants paid to businesses worth £5.45m in relation to national lockdowns and Tier 4 restrictions.
- Developed new discretionary policy for January lockdown to support businesses excluded from main grants programme.
- Supported the inaugural Artificial Intelligence (AI) Festival hosted by Innovation Labs and BT to showcase innovation and opportunities across the Districts.
- Innovation Network launched with first event focusing on support for innovative businesses from University of Essex, University of Suffolk and the Growth Hub.
- First Innovation Newsletter was published.
- Extended the Innovation Cluster Steering group and launched an Innovation Board covering both Districts with an extended board membership reflecting the new terms of reference.
- New Town Centre Business Liaison Officer has been appointed to support rollout of Virtual High Street to Stowmarket, Needham Market and Eye.
- Digital Skills programme brief published and Menta appointed as delivery partners to support businesses to maximise the opportunity of the Virtual High Street.

Economy

Objectives and progress



Objective 2 – Innovative and Creative :We will become a growing area for Innovation, Enterprise and Creativity in the East

What we plan to do next quarter:

- Develop policy for discretionary Restart grants.
- Launch “Shop local” programme to support independent retailers and businesses across the Districts.
- Launch extension of Virtual High Street programme to Stowmarket, Needham Market and Eye
- Launch of new innovation grants programme.
- Commence review of evidence base for the new Economic Strategy and launch Recovery Strategy.
- Development of an Inward Investment website to ensure the Districts are promoted to investors as a place to locate.
- Progress plans for a Centre of Excellence linked to Innovation Labs to showcase innovation in the region.
- Support plans for redevelopment of key employment/development sites including the creation of an Innovation Park at Gateway 14.
- Progress plans for a Stowmarket Centre of Excellence linked to Innovation Labs to showcase innovation in the region.

Economy

Objectives and progress



Objective 3 – Successful and Skilled :We will raise levels of aspiration and ambition in our districts and recognise and celebrate our success

Progress:

- On site works commence at Needham Lake Visitor Centre.
- Commission Menta to provide an updated workspace assessment post Covid-19.
- Support the Local Enterprise Partnership and Visit East of England to bid for Education and Skills Funding Agency funding for VENI project to raise skills levels across the visitor economy.
- Successful bid submitted for £90K to deliver Innovate Local project to support pilot workspace projects in town centres.

What we plan to do next quarter:

- Launch a “trade local” scheme to celebrate the innovation from our businesses during Covid-19 and maintain ongoing local business to business trade.
- Scope an innovation futures pilot with a local school.
- Development of workspace strategy and delivery plan across the District to ensure we have sufficient workspace.
- Commence delivery of Innovate Local programme through market stall space in Stowmarket.
- Continue to deliver Needham Lake construction project.
- Work with Network Rail to secure new access through Needham Station.
- Work with partners to bring forward masterplanning of Stowmarket Sports and Wellbeing hub.
- Secure Cabinet decision on Eye Innovation Hub.

Mid Suffolk Health of the Organisation

Headline Performance Indicators

Combined data for both Councils if not specified



4.06 *(cumulative)*

average no. of days
sickness per FTE

*This is an improvement on the
previous year when the total days
lost per fte reached 8.13 days*



530

Total number of days lost
to sickness

*Top 2 reasons for absence:
30% Mental Health
14% Hospital/Post-operative A reduction
of over 50% on the previous year*



120+

staff attended the Virtual
Wellbeing Programme

*10 virtual sessions delivered since April focusing on self-
awareness and responding to adversity. We plan
to deliver these continually throughout the next year.*



146,000

Mid Suffolk Twitter
impressions

*'impressions' are the number of
times a Twitter
user sees our Tweets*



392,200

Mid Suffolk Reach for
Facebook

*'reach' is the number of unique users
who had any content from our Facebook
page or about the page enter their screen*



306

Mid Suffolk Committee /
Council meeting views

Health of the Organisation

Objectives and progress



Objective 1 – Develop and implement a comprehensive 'People' Strategy that ensures we are a great organisation to work for, that our people are supported to learn and grow, energised and enabled to deliver our ambitions

Progress:

- Continue to develop our early careers programme and recently held our internship assessment days which proved a great success. We have offered places to 8 successful candidates who will join us on the programme across the Councils for the summer months.
- Working with the Suffolk Chamber of Commerce, we have agreed 7 placements via the Kickstart scheme and those people will work with us for 6 months to learn new skills.
- Carried out a Learning Needs Analysis and have produced our Learning and Development Plan for the next 12 months and as part of that, are currently trialling new on-line learning for some of our Health & Safety requirements.
- Developed our People Wellbeing Strategy and our plans for the next 12 months in order to support our people.
- Continue to support the delivery of the Accommodation and Agile Working Strategy.

What we plan to do next quarter:

- Review our people priorities as part of our strategy to ensure we support our people and line managers in the right way as we start to emerge from Covid-19.
- Carry out a Health and Wellbeing audit with a group of our employees.
- One of our apprentices has been nominated for Apprentice of the Year and we are supporting the Awards later in April as a key facilitator.
- Scoping out the work around resourcing and continuing to review our policies.

Health of the Organisation

Objectives and progress



Objective 2 – Provide robust effective management of the Councils finances, including our capital projects and contracts. We will use our resources in a sustainable way and prioritise based upon our Corporate Plan.

Progress:

- General Fund and Housing Revenue Account budgets approved for 2021/22.
- Quarterly financial monitoring for capital, revenue and reserves.
- Regular monitoring and projections of the financial impact of Covid-19.
- Designing a new business case pro forma to ensure relevant financial information is captured and reported for each project.
- Implemented cash management module within the finance system, facilitating automated bank reconciliations and cash allocation.
- Work is underway reviewing the Councils annual spend analysis to ensure we have contracts in place for all areas of significant spend and a complete contract register.

What we plan to do next quarter:

- Finalise and adopt the new business case proforma and more structured reporting for project spend.
- Work with Corporate Managers to review annual spend in their areas to ensure all contracts are in place and review their plans for pipeline spend.
- Scope out the work required to improve our Finance system.

Health of the Organisation

Objectives and progress



Objective 3 – Effective and efficient management of our property portfolio to make the best use of our assets.

Progress:

- The Strategic Asset Management Plan (SAMP) was adopted by both Councils in January 2021.
- Commissioned space planning and interior design consultants in March to advise on the next steps for reviewing our office accommodation at Endeavour House, with initial plans expected at the end of April for review and consultation as part of the work to deliver the accommodation and agile working strategy resulting from the opportunities presented by the emergency for new ways of working ensuring the best use of our accommodation in the future including a review of operational accommodation requirements e.g. Depots.
- Continue to work with tenants to agree leasing and rent repayment strategies for any rental arrears accrued as a consequence of Covid-19.

What we plan to do next quarter:

- Delivery against SAMP action plan particularly progress against high priority actions embedding a corporate approach to property.
- Endeavour House - Initial proposals and design development during May and June.
- Put a stakeholder engagement plan into place for each of the Phase 2 housing sites to ensure that local communities are kept informed/consulted on developments in their areas.
- Working with Mid Suffolk Growth to deliver the redevelopment of the former HQ site to deliver regeneration and income for the Council.