

Babergh and Mid Suffolk Housing Annual Report

2021/22



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Welcome

The last year has been one of the most challenging yet for all of us. At the start of 2021 we were all still living with significant disruption and restrictions due to the global pandemic. The year has also shown us, that the one thing we can be sure of is change, and there are many challenges ahead for us all.

On the topic of change, the Government has introduced the Social Housing White Paper and the Charter for Social Housing Residents reforming how social housing providers ensure they are accountable to both the Regulator and you, our tenants.

We have been working behind the scenes to make sure that we are in the best position possible, to embrace the changes ahead. This year's annual report has been themed around the seven chapters of the Charter for Social Housing Residents, which are:

- **To be safe in your home**
- **Know how we are performing**
- **Have your complaints dealt with promptly and fairly**
- **Be treated with respect**
- **Have your voice heard**
- **Have a good quality home and neighbourhood to live in**
- **To be supported to take your first step to ownership**

With change and uncertainty facing us all, we are doing all we can to ensure that we continue to deliver excellent services and offer support to all of our customers. We would also like to take this opportunity to thank you, our tenants and our resident volunteers, for your patience and understanding during this last year.



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J.F. Osborne'.

Cllr Jan Osborne
Portfolio Holder for Housing
Babergh



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Lavinia Hardingham'.

Cllr Lavinia Hardingham
Portfolio Holder for Housing
Mid Suffolk

Chapter 1 - To be safe in your home

Keeping you safe in your home is a top priority for us.

During 2021/22, we:

- Carried out 628 quarterly inspections on our communal areas to ensure that they comply with health and safety, working to ensure they are free from hazards.
- Carried out 775 fire alarm tests and 905 water tests at our 21 sheltered schemes across the districts – keeping over 500 residents safe.
- Carried out 11,836 repairs on your homes

We have approximately 3,900 gas heating systems across both districts. We work hard to ensure that we carry out statutory safety checks on these appliances every year.

In February 2021, we appointed Aaron Services to carry out the repairs and servicing of gas systems, oil systems, air source heat pumps, electrical systems, and solar photovoltaics in your home.

This has meant that we have had to review the way our records are monitored and stored and are working to ensure that we can accurately and confidently report on our performance in this area.



Please remember, if we contact you to carry out a safety check or repair on your home, then please do let us have access. Our staff and contractors will always show ID before requiring access to your home.

Chapter 1 - To be safe in your home

What do we have planned?

Building Services have started a full review to ensure that we are providing the very best service we can and ensuring that we are compliant with the regulations in the Building Safety Bill.

We are committed to the fight against climate change and the cost of living, and ambitious in our desire to go above and beyond targeting 'Excellence' in everything we do.

To meet this ambition, we need to fully understand where we are and where we are going.

We are always looking to improve our services and are currently collecting information from internal and external sources to understand our starting point for the journey ahead.



Something to report?

If you have a repair to report, or see something that you think needs our attention, please get in touch:

Website:

- www.babergh.gov.uk/housing/council-housing/report-or-request-a-repair/
- www.midsuffolk.gov.uk/housing/council-housing/report-or-request-a-repair/
- Telephone: 0300 123 4000 (option 4)

Chapter 2 - To know how your landlord is performing

How we spend your rent:

During 2021/22 it cost on average £4,882.06 per property to manage and maintain your home and tenancy. Below is a breakdown of how £1 of your rent is spent



Amount of rent collected:	£33,140,032.56
Split by authority: Babergh	£17,558,393.26
Mid Suffolk	£15,581,639.30

Chapter 2 - To know how your landlord is performing

How satisfied are you with our services?

At the end of March 2022, we carried out a Tenant Satisfaction Survey to understand how satisfied our tenants are with the services we provide as their landlord, and to help us understand what we can do better.

655 tenants were randomly selected and were asked questions, which will be used by the Regulator of Social Housing to measure satisfaction and landlord performance from next year.

Here is a quick overview of what you told us:

70% are satisfied with the overall service we provide

55% are satisfied with our overall repairs and maintenance service

56% are satisfied that we make a positive contribution to neighbourhoods

68% are satisfied that we are easy to deal with

77% are satisfied that we treat you fairly and with respect

You will see from the results that there are areas where we need to do better, so we have developed an action plan to address these areas first.

All our tenants will be asked to take part in a Satisfaction Survey each year ensuring everyone has the chance to have their say, if we have up to date contact details.

We want to focus on the areas that are important to you and have a better understanding of area where we need to improve.

To find out more, visit our website:

www.midsuffolk.gov.uk/housing/council-housing/about-us/our-performance/
www.babergh.gov.uk/housing/council-housing/about-us/our-performance/

Chapter 2 - To know how your landlord is performing

What's next?

We are launching three new surveys so we can gain a better picture of how we are performing.

Each month will be surveying several tenants that have recently reported and received a repair, recently moved into one of our homes, or raised an Anti-Social Behaviour complaint with us.

The surveys will ensure we know how satisfied our tenants are with our services and allow us to act quickly to put things right. Results will be published so tenants can see how we are performing.

Keeping you informed

In March 2021, we launched our monthly MyHome Bulletin e-letter to keep tenants informed of what is happening in the service.

The bulletin currently goes out to around **4,500 tenants**.

If you are not yet receiving it and would like to, please email: **myhome-noreply@babermidsuffolk.gov.uk** to be added to the distribution list.

Homes and Housing Strategy - outcomes and what's next

We have also reviewed and refreshed our Homes and Housing Strategy to ensure that it meets the changes and challenges we face, since it was launched in 2019 and sets out our vision that residents should have somewhere affordable to live and call home.

Since the strategy launched, we have completed 52 actions out of 93 and begun work on 37.

To read more, visit our website: Homes and Housing Strategy



Chapter 3 - To have your complaints dealt with promptly and fairly

Compliments, comments, and complaints help us to improve the service we provide.

We received 403 formal complaints during 2021/22, up from 323 in 2020/21.

Most of the complaints were about our repairs and property maintenance services.

The risks associated with going into people's homes during the pandemic caused a significant backlog of repairs and maintenance issues.

However, our teams have continued to work hard to improve the situation and deliver a high-quality service to our tenants.

We have remained focused on improving the way we handle complaints and our response times – 56% of complaints received a full response within 10 working days, compared to 59% in 2020/21.

If you're not happy about a service you receive from us, we want to hear from you.

You can make a complaint by:

- on our website at:
www.babergh.gov.uk/the-council/compliments-comments-and-complaints/
www.midsuffolk.gov.uk/the-council/compliments-comments-and-complaints/
- Via our social media sites
- Twitter: @BaberghDistrict @MidSuffolk
- Facebook: @BaberghDistrict
@midsuffolkdistrictcouncil

If you wish to submit a complaint via social media, please let us know it's for the attention of compliments, comments and complaints.

Chapter 3 - To have your complaints dealt with promptly and fairly

If you chose to submit a complaint by post you can do so by a letter addressed to:

**Compliments/Comments and Complaints,
Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils,
8 Russell Road,
Ipswich,
Suffolk,
IP1 2BX**

If you send a complaint via post, please include your contact information and allow up to 10 working days to receive an acknowledgement.

- By calling **0300 1234 000** and selecting **option 7**.

From the moment your complaint is submitted, we have ten working days to provide a full response to you.

In April 2022 we launched our new Complaint Policy which was developed in line with the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code.

What can you expect once you have submitted a complaint?

- We will deal with your complaint in a professional, confidential, and fair manner
- We will let you know who is investigating your complaint and tell you what will happen next.
- We will respond to your complaint in the timescale described below and keep you as updated as possible throughout the process.
- If we make a mistake, we will apologise and put things right where we can. We will learn from your feedback and use it to improve services and publish public annual reports to show the lessons learnt and improvements made.



Chapter 4 - To be treated with respect

Our Customer Charter ensures we put our customers first. Whenever customers contact us, we will:

- Be open, honest, professional, compassionate and fair
- Respect them and their privacy
- Communicate in clear, jargon free language
- Treat them as individuals, with their needs and circumstances in mind
- Take pride and passion in the services we deliver for our communities
- Use a digital approach, while giving you a choice about how to contact us.

How to log a compliment:

If you have received excellent service from us, we would love to hear from you, please share your experience with us:

- on our website at: <https://www.babergh.gov.uk/the-council/compliments-comments-and-complaints/>
- Via our social media sites
- Twitter: @BaberghDistrict @MidSuffolk
- Facebook: @BaberghDistrict @midsuffolkdistrictcouncil

If you wish to submit a compliment via social media, please let us know it's for the attention of compliments, comments and complaints.

- You can also submit your compliment by letter addressed to:

**Compliments/Comments and Complaints,
Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils,
8 Russell Road,
Ipswich,
Suffolk,
IP1 2BX**

What's next?

As part of the continued development of our staff, we will be carrying out stigma and stereotyping in social housing awareness campaigns. This will help to ensure that our service provision is fair and accessible way to all our customers, whilst treating them fairly, with dignity and respect.

We would love to hear your experiences of being a tenant with Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils - let us know by emailing us at:

tenant.engagement@baberghmidsuffolk.gov.uk

Chapter 5 - To have your voice heard by your landlord

In June 2021 we started working with the Tenant Participation Advisory Service (TPAS), to conduct a full review of our tenant engagement structure and advise us on what we can do help you, help us. We are now working on implementing their recommendations.

We have now appointed a new Tenant Engagement Coordinator and are continuing to develop our Housing Transformation Team.

We have been focussed on the upcoming changes to the way social housing is regulated and want to ensure we are in the best place possible to deliver a truly tenant led landlord service, as well as transforming our services digitally so we meet all our customers future needs.

In July 2021, we consulted with our sheltered residents, and received 357 responses which is approximately 85% of our sheltered housing residents. The findings will help us to look at how we deliver services now and in the future.

We carried out interviews with Tenant Board members, to help us understand what drives them to work with us and to understand how we can create even more opportunities for our tenants to have their say.

We consulted with 75 of our Tenant Sounding Board members on our New Homes Design Guide, asking them what they felt was important when developing new homes and communities.

Members of our Tenant Board were also involved in the recruitment process and interview panels for two new Housing managers.

399 of our residents gave their views and helped to shape our Housing Revenue Account Business Plan.



Chapter 5 - To have your voice heard by your landlord

What next?

In November 2022 we launched our Tenant Engagement Strategy, which has been developed with responses to our Tenant Engagement Strategy survey, our Tenant Board, councillors, and key staff.

The strategy will make it clear what our ambitions are as a landlord to encourage tenants to get more involved in the running of their homes and communities.

It will also give tenants the opportunity to influence the way we do things and hold us to account on our performance.

Want to influence the way we do things?

We are always keen to hear from you, especially if you have an interest in your local community and want to make a difference.

Just send us an email on: tenant.engagement@baberghmidsuffolk.gov.uk for an informal chat.



Babergh Tenant Engagement Strategy

**Mid Suffolk Tenant Engagement
Strategy**

Chapter 6 - To have a good quality home and neighbourhood to live in

We want to be a landlord that provides good quality homes and neighbourhoods that people are proud to live in.

This year, we:

Supported 560 tenants with anti-social behaviour cases (split by authority 261 Babergh and 299 Mid Suffolk – ensuring they felt safe and happy in their neighbourhoods

- Supported 21 people affected by domestic abuse
- Received 159 Pet approval applications and
- Launched a new damp and mould process to respond quickly when we are informed about issues in our properties
- Built 121 new homes in our Districts

New blueprint for the future of social housing

We have approved a blueprint for the future of social housing. It will ensure that our new Housing Revenue Account (HRA) 30-year business plan is our blueprint for the future of social housing.

It aims to ensure that our tenants have good quality and sustainable homes, in safe neighbourhoods and sets out the councils' long-term priorities, plans and actions for council housing.

We maintain more than **7,745 council properties** for tenants. However, demand continues to outstrip social housing availability. There are a further 1,379 households on the waiting list.

The business plan outlines how **we will invest more than £30 million in improving existing homes**, to ensure they are energy efficient.

The plan also supports our commitment to tackle climate change, as well as deliver new homes that provide good quality, affordable social housing for residents across the districts.

The HRA business plan sets out seven key priorities for the next five years follow the link to find out more about:

- Tackling and adapting to climate change
- Developing new council housing
- Investing in current homes
- Involving tenants in the running of the housing service
- Improving services for tenants
- Improving the neighbourhoods that we manage
- Implementing digital transformation

Babergh HRA business plan

Mid Suffolk HRA business plan

Chapter 7 - To be supported to take your first step to ownership

In 2021/22:

- **45 homes** were purchased by our tenants using their Right to Buy
- We developed **33 homes** for shared ownership

If you currently rent your property from the council, you may be able to buy your property at discounted price. More information can be found on our website:

Babergh District Council: www.babergh.gov.uk/housing/council-housing/right-to-buy

Mid Suffolk District Council: www.midsuffolk.gov.uk/housing/council-housing/right-to-buy

Alternatively, if you are interested in Shared Ownership, you will first need to register interest on the Help to Buy Agent website. The relevant website which covers Babergh and Mid Suffolk can be found below:

www.helptobuyagent3.org.uk

Shared Ownership properties are marketed through mainstream property websites and specialist shared ownership websites and are subject to affordability and financial checks.

Keeping in touch

All our tenants have a right to expect good quality services, to be treated fairly and courteously, to receive a reply within a reasonable time and have promises kept.

If for any reason you feel we have let you down, you can let us know about it.

You can contact us in the following ways:

- **Go to our website:** www.babergh.gov.uk or www.midsuffolk.gov.uk and click on **Contact Us** at the top right of the main screen.
- **Email us:** feedback@baberghmidsuffolk.gov.uk
- **Call us:** Customer Access Team on **0300 123 4000** and select option 3 for Housing
- **Visit us:** at one of our Customer Access Points in Ipswich Street, Stowmarket or Sudbury Library, by appointment only. Call **0300 123 4000** to make an appointment.
- **Write to us:**

Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils
Endeavour House
8 Russell Road
Ipswich IP1 2BX



If you have a repair to report, please complete the form on the website or call us on:

0300 123 4000.

