

Babergh and Mid Suffolk Housing Annual Report

2020/21



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Welcome

The last year has been filled with challenges but we have continued to support our residents and our communities. We are extremely proud of the effective and compassionate way our staff have responded.

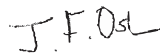
The Housing Team moved quickly to protect employees and residents while keeping essential services running throughout those early weeks of the pandemic.

Thanks to the professionalism and preparedness of our teams, we were able to adapt and mobilise our efforts, so we were able to keep supporting our residents and customers.

There may still be challenges ahead but we believe we have a great team in place to address them.

We would like to thank all our staff and you, our tenants, for all your support and understanding, particularly; since March 2020.




Cllr Jan Osborne
Portfolio Holder for Housing
Babergh




Cllr Lavinia Hardingham
Portfolio Holder for Housing
Mid Suffolk

Our Performance



We will now be publishing how our teams are performing, including tenant satisfaction results, on our website. This means you can see where we are performing well and what we are doing to address areas of concern.

www.babergh.gov.uk/council-housing-performance/

www.midsuffolk.gov.uk/council-housing-performance/

More than just a landlord during COVID

Our services, during this challenging year, have suffered some disruption. However, we have worked hard to keep this to an absolute minimum and keep our focus on supporting our tenants and delivering the best service possible within the COVID-19 guidelines.

Staff that needed to be on site to support residents were supported and equipped to do so safely.

For staff working from home, the introduction of Microsoft Teams across the council enabled them to work effectively with minimum disruption to services.

The way our Sheltered Housing Officers worked also changed.

To keep our residents safe, we moved to a moved to a telephone-based support

service, to ensure our residents were safe. We restricted visits to our schemes - only visiting to ensure safety checks were carried out, and to help reduce the risk of spreading the COVID-19 virus.

We had no major COVID outbreaks at any of our sheltered schemes

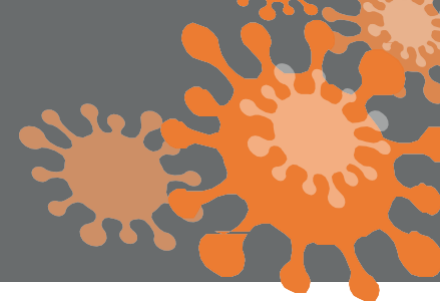
We introduced an increased cleaning regime to help protect residents from any outbreaks and to maintain the quality of our schemes.

Staff went over and above their normal duties to help residents with everyday activities, i.e. taking out rubbish, delivering post and doing bits of shopping and collecting magazines.

Some of our staff supported the Councils' response and helped to handle calls on the 'Home But Not Alone' phonenumber and delivering food parcels to those that were shielding and could not leave their homes.



During the height of the pandemic we:



- Supported **106** rough sleepers during the peaks of the pandemic.
- Allocated a total of **348** properties across both districts in the first lockdown by working hard to ensure properties were ready to let.
- Visited former rough sleepers who had recently moved, or were about to move to permanent accommodation. Support is therefore in place during the moving in stages and ongoing thereafter, for how ever long it is required.
- We carried out visits to ensure that individuals maintain their tenancies as the process of moving is extremely overwhelming.
- Assisted **561** households who were faced with financial difficulties by securing **310** food parcels, **120** furniture items and **£15,913** in charitable grants.
- Worked to support our hospitals, getting healthy people home by completing home adaptations quickly.
- Supported **352** tenants as they faced furlough, redundancy and financial uncertainty, helping to secure **£67,302** in benefit support.

Choice Based
Lettings housing
applications

2905
applications
received

348
homes
allocated

Putting things right

We received **323** formal complaints during 2020/21, up from **262** in 2019/20. The majority of the complaints were about our repairs and property maintenance services.

We remain focussed on our complaints handling, improving our response times - **59%** of complaints received a full response within 10 working days, compared to **25%** in 2019/20. **26%** of complaints were fully or partially upheld, down from **37%** in 2019/20.



323

complaints received



57%

of complaints responded
to on target



We take your complaints and concerns seriously and use them to help us improve our services. This year we have made the following changes based on your feedback:

**You
said**

**We
did**

You were unable to report non-emergency repairs during the Covid-19 lockdown

We switched to an emergency only response during all lockdowns to keep you and our staff safe. In March 2021 we re-opened non-emergency repairs reporting and are working hard to catch-up with all outstanding repairs.

We are introducing a new system for repairs jobs that improves the way appointments are booked and improving our attendance. Letting you know when your repair will be completed and make it easier to book follow up works, if needed.

We did not respond to repairs reports or call back requests

We didn't keep you updated on progress with Anti-social behaviour you reported

The Tenant Services Team have reviewed the process for investigating Anti Social Behaviour reports. The person who reported the problem will now be updated on the outcome of the investigation.

There was increase in Anti-Social Behaviour in some of our Temporary Accommodation units

During lockdown housing officers increased the frequency of visits to our Temporary Accommodation and we now have on site security arrangements at some of our units to help manage unwanted behaviour by residents.

Your Feedback



3,860

tenants receive our My Home
Bulletin via email

Feedback from all our tenants is important to us, it helps us see what we are doing right and most importantly, helps us to implement changes when we do something wrong.

We continue to work closely with the Tenant Board so they can scrutinise how we are doing. Their most recent scrutiny review was to look at our response to the pandemic. The Board has now identified some useful lessons for us to take action on.

During the year we also consulted with tenants about how we should focus our spending over the next 30 years. There has been some interesting feedback, and this will us shape our spending plans. The full results will be published in Autumn 2021.

In June, we surveyed a sample of tenants who had recently reported a housing repair. The responses told us that **60%** of tenants are satisfied or very satisfied with our service.

Areas that need improvement included:

- **Contacting you if we have to change your appointment**
- **Completing repairs at the first visit**
- **Making follow-up appointments for outstanding work**

During the last 12 months we have considered several projects that tackled the issues raised in the last Satisfaction of Tenants and Residents survey. For example, you told us that we weren't keeping you informed about things that might affect you as a tenant.

We have now introduced the My Home email Bulletin currently reaching nearly **60%** of tenants – we hope you see this as a step towards us doing better.

Safety in your home is important to us.

There are several safety checks that legally we must carry out.

The pandemic restrictions made these challenging to complete but we strived to make sure safety checks continued safely for our staff and our tenants.



▲ Click on the image above to see the steps we're taking to keep you safe.



Keeping you safe

We have approximately **3,900** gas heating systems across both districts. During the pandemic we dropped to around **93%** compliance. Since restrictions were lifted we have worked hard to get back up to **99%** compliance.

Due to lockdown, we had **7 properties** which did not have their Fire Risk Assessment completed by their anniversary date but we have now completed these and are **100% compliant** on fire risk assessments.

We were able to continue fire alarm, emergency lighting testing and legionella testing throughout.

Work to remove asbestos has now picked up again and our partners Armstrong York are working hard to complete jobs.

10,921

repairs completed



189

households helped to make adaptations to their homes



2417

Heating services carried out



56%

of repairs completed within target timescale



263

Window replacements

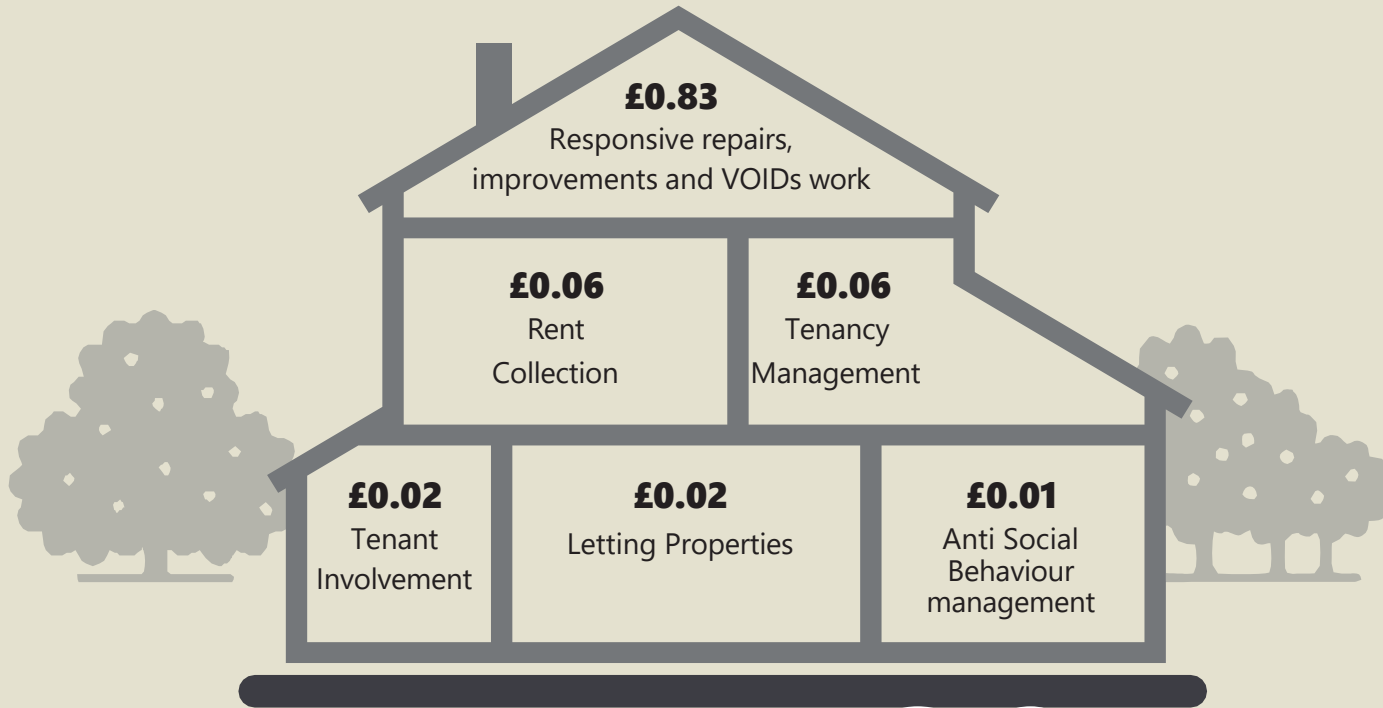


If we contact you to carry out a safety check or repair on your home, then please do let us have access. Our staff will always show ID before requiring access to your home.

How we spend your rent:

During 2020/21 it cost on average **£1385.95** per property to manage and maintain your home.

Below is a breakdown of how **£1** of your rent is spent



89

News homes were built or purchased



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

0300 123 4000.



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



SIGN UP

my  home

**our secure online tenant portal giving you
24/7 access to your tenancy information**

With My Home, you can:

- manage and update tenancy information
- contact your Housing Officer
- check your rent account
- make payments and set up Direct Debits

Babergh.gov.uk/myhome

Midsuffok.gov.uk/myhome

