

Babergh Housing Annual Report

2022/23



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Welcome

Hello and welcome to our Tenant Annual Report. This report outlines some of the key facts and figures from the financial year, 1st April 2022-31st March 2023.

We have themed the report on the current Tenant Satisfaction Measures that we will be reporting to the Social Housing Regulator at the end of the 2023-2024 financial year.

You will see in each Chapter that we have published our satisfaction scores. 721 tenants were randomly selected to give their views on our services. These scores are important in showing us where we need to focus our efforts in improving our services to you. At the end of 2022/23, 62% of tenants surveyed were satisfied with the overall services we provide as their landlord.

We are developing an improvement plan that sets out our short, medium, and long-term actions to improve satisfaction across all our services. We will shortly be setting ourselves some realistic but stretching targets which will be set against

how others are performing in the Housing Sector. The plans can be found on our website:

www.babergh.gov.uk/tenant-feedback-and-performance

We will be publishing quarterly updates so that we are transparent and accountable, and together with our Tenant Board, will be monitoring the delivery of the proposed improvements and actions monthly.

Over the last year, we have continued to work hard to ensure that tenants remain at the heart of Babergh's housing service. You will see examples of what we have achieved throughout this report.

Towards the end of this report, you will see that the Social Housing Regulator has launched their consultation on some new Consumer Standards which all landlords will be required to evidence that they are compliant with. This will bring huge change for us next year – see chapter 9 for further information.



Cllr Jessie Carter
Cabinet Member for Housing

Chapter 1 - Maintaining building safety

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

This year, we:

- Carried out **433** 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 **157** fire alarm tests and **309** water tests at our **8** sheltered schemes across the district – keeping over **500** residents safe.
- Appointed Signix in December 2022 to carry out carbon monoxide detection installations and upgrade smoke/heat detection to our stock. As of 31st March, we have **2,759** systems installed.

You told us:

Tenant satisfaction that we provide a well-maintained home.

2022-23 score	61%
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Tenant satisfaction that we provide a safe home.

2022-23 score	68%
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As of 31st March, we carried out the following checks to ensure our homes remain safe:

	Babergh
Percentage of homes for which all required gas safety checks have been carried out	98%
Percentage of homes with a satisfactory Electrical Installation Condition Report (EICR) up to five years old	96%
Percentage of homes for which all required fire risk assessments have been carried out	100%
Percentage of homes for which all required asbestos management surveys or re-inspections have been carried out	100%
Percentage of homes for which all required legionella risk assessments have been carried out	100%
Percentage of homes for which all required communal passenger lift safety checks have been carried out	100%

As your landlord, we must carry out health and safety checks on your home. In November 2022, we made a referral to the Regulator of Social Housing after we undertook a review and found issues with our health and safety compliance.

This resulted in a Regulatory Notice. The Regulator is monitoring us until it is assured sustainable, long-term improvements are embedded.

We have been meeting monthly with the Regulator to ensure we are moving in the right direction. So far, we have:

- Recruited a specialist to support us in making sure our new contracts offer best value for our tenants and meet our requirements
- Ensuring we have more robust data and systems across all health and safety areas, helping us to manage our properties better.

- Reduction in outstanding health and safety checks

- Relocated the damp and mould work to the Compliance Team and working with a special contractor so urgent cases can be actioned promptly.

- Completed a review of our Compliance Team and started a restructure to ensure we have the right people with the right skills in place.

We are continuing to engage fully with the Regulator, and we continue to work on plans to deliver full compliance.



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.

Looking forward

Heating and electrical services

You may notice we are using different contractors to deliver our heating and electrical services and repairs.

This change is part of our transformation work to ensure we are providing the best possible repair and maintenance services to you, our tenants.

Temporary contractors Baileys Heating Company (BHC) and Signix who have significant experience in delivering these services, will be taking on the work for the next 12 months, ahead of permanent contractors being appointed.

We want to reassure you that these steps, which are one of a number of actions we have taken in the last year, will help ensure we are providing you with the best possible service in the future.

Providing the best in Compliance

We are in the process of ensuring we have the right skills, knowledge and resources within our Compliance Team to ensure we are providing safe and compliant homes for all our tenants.

Using new technology

We are also introducing a new digital inspection tool called Photo Book to enable us to keep track of our communal area inspections and follow on works, such as flat block safety inspections, and will be looking at using this tool in other areas of housing management to help keep our tenants' homes and neighbourhoods safe and in a good condition.



Chapter 2 - Keeping properties in good repair

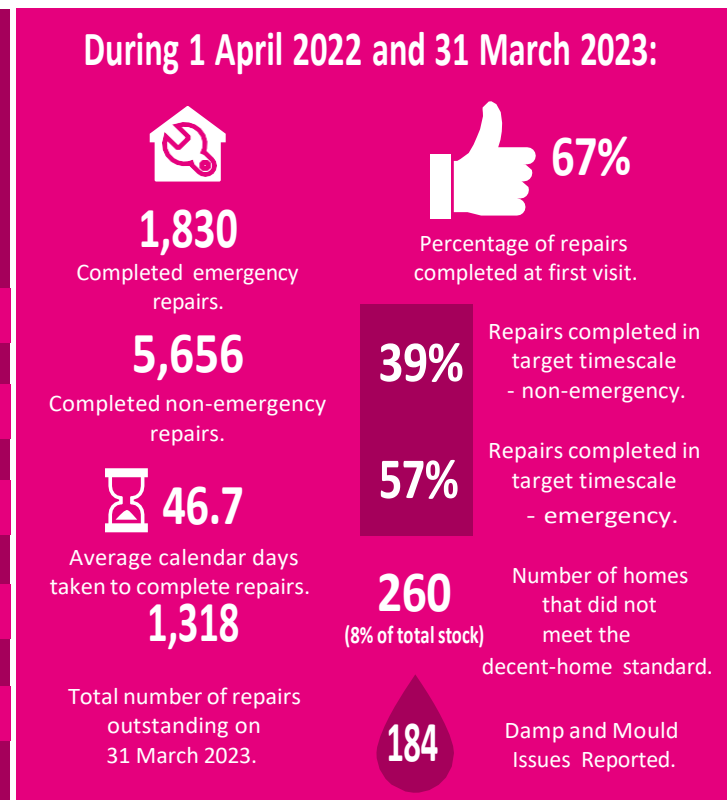
We know our performance in the way we repair and maintain your home needs to improve. This is why we are carrying out a review of the whole service. We want to provide the very best service for our tenants, whilst providing homes that are safe and well-maintained.

You told us:

Tenant satisfaction with repairs services in last 12 months.



repair.



Looking forward

Damp and Mould response

We have changed the way we deal with reports of damp and mould so that we can improve how quickly we address reported issues. We've appointed a specialist contractor, ZapCarbon, to undertake surveys and carry out repair and treatment works.

To ensure that we tackle any damp and mould issues early, we have begun asking tenants who complete our quarterly tenant satisfaction survey if they have any damp or mould in their home. If they answer yes, then contact is made to address the issue.

Improving our empty homes standard

We are in the process of developing a new void standard which will improve the quality of our properties when let.

We are developing our mobile pre and post inspection process to ensure consistency

of quality and working to provide better information for new tenants on details relating to their new home.

Planned maintenance

We continue with improvements in kitchen and bathrooms, roofing, adaptations, our decorating programme and property insulation works. We want to ensure we provide the best service, using money in the best way, and will shortly be procuring new contracts to secure designated contractors to undertake future planned works.

Something to report

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

www.babergh.gov.uk/request-a-repair-or-a-change-to-your-home

Telephone: 0300 123 4000 and select option 4.



Chapter 3 - To know how your landlord is performing

We have launched our Housing Performance Dashboards for tenants.

These help you to understand how we are performing with matters that are important to you and your home.

The dashboards have been put together on areas that you told us wanted us to report on in a tenant survey carried out in January 2023.

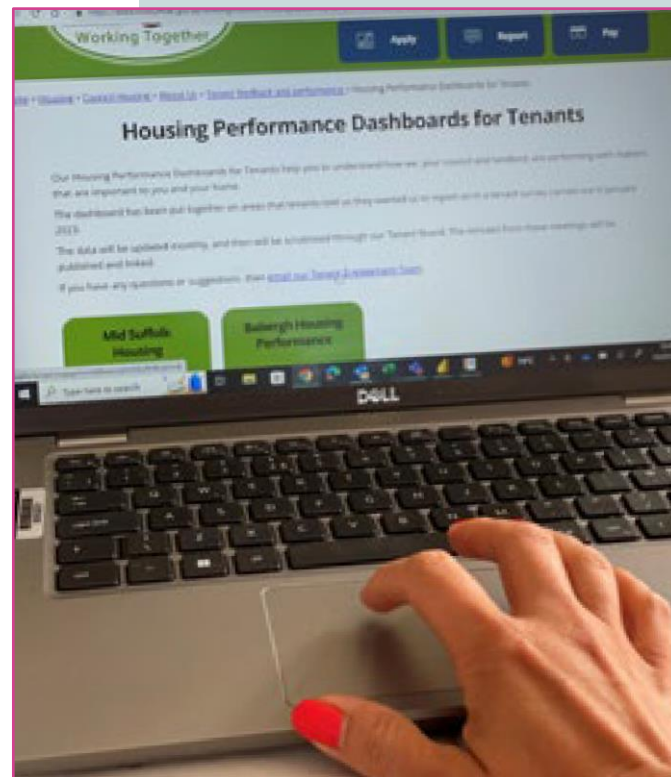
The dashboards are updated on our websites monthly, and we publicise these through our tenant e-newsletter, My Home Bulletin.

If you don't receive this, sign up now by emailing:

myhome-noreply@baberghmidsuffolk.gov.uk

To view the dashboard, or to provide us with feedback on what performance information you would like to see, visit our website:

www.babergh.gov.uk/housing-performance-reports-and-plans



Tenant Satisfaction with our services

How satisfied are you with our services?

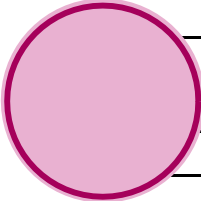
In September 2022, we launched four new tenant satisfaction surveys to gain insight from tenants on how they feel about the services we provide.

As well as our quarterly perception survey, we carry out three transactional surveys each month. The surveys ask tenants for their views on:

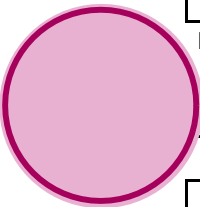
- their recent repair
- their move to one of our homes
- their experiences of our handling of an anti-social behaviour case

We have asked **410** tenants from across the two districts for their views in 2022/23.

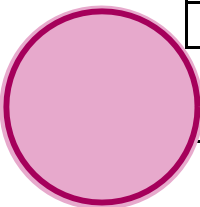
Here is a quick overview of the satisfaction results:



REPAIRS	%
Ease of reporting	82%
Appointment kept	91%
Easy to deal with?	73%
Quality of work	92%
Kept informed	76%



NEW LETTING	%
Information and advice given before move	89%
Kept informed throughout process	75%
Easy to deal with?	85%
Condition of home	59%
Outstanding repairs on move in	52%



ASB	%
Ease of reporting	74%
Kept informed	47%
Easy to deal with?	56%
Dealt with in reasonable time	53%
Satisfaction with final outcome	43%

As with all the feedback we receive, we use this to understand what we can do to improve services for all our tenants and want to thank everyone of you who has taken the time to participate. To find out more about the surveys and results, visit our website:

www.babergh.gov.uk/tenant-feedback-and-performance

Housing Policies and Procedures

Policies and procedures that need to be accessed by tenants can now be found all in one place on the newly created Policies and Procedures page of our website. These documents sit at the heart of what we all do – they provide clarity and transparency for all our residents.

Documents listed so far include our compensation policy, our damp and mould policy and pets policy.

To find out more, visit our website:

www.babergh.gov.uk/housing-policies-and-procedures

Looking forward

Tenant Board

Did you know we have a Tenant Board who meet monthly to scrutinise our performance and hold us to account on what we have said we will do?

The board is there to ensure the tenant voice is heard in all that we do. We are in the process of strengthening our board, ensuring that it is representative of our tenants and has the skills to be able to provide you with assurance around all things performance related.

Want to find out more, email: tenant.engagement@babermidsuffolk.gov.uk

Improving tenant satisfaction

We are in the process of developing a detailed action plan which sets out what we will be doing in the short, medium and long term to increase tenant satisfaction across all our services.

The action plan will be made available on our websites, so tenants can monitor our progress. The Tenant Board will also scrutinise our work and help us identify things that are going well and where we need to focus our attention.

We have committed to holding two Improvement Days each year where staff and tenants will come together to look at the action plan and come up with new ideas.

Consumer standards – next steps

We will be looking at the consultation by the Regulator on the Consumer Standards (see Chapter 9 for more details) and what we need to do to be ready for the proposed new standards in 2024 and beyond.

Chapter 4 - Effective handling of complaints

You told us:

Tenant satisfaction with our complaint handling.

2022-23 score

26%

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

Across both Babergh and Mid Suffolk District councils, we have received **572** formal complaints this year, up from **403** in 2021/22. Most of the complaints were about our repairs and maintenance services.

The councils have remained focused on improving the way we handle complaints and our response times – **57%** of complaints received a full response within **10** working days, compared to **56%** in 2021/22.

We have set ourselves an ambitious target of **90%** by March 2024, and continue to promote how to make a complaint through our e-bulletin tenant newsletter,

so that tenants can easily inform us when things aren't going well.

We also promoted the Housing Ombudsman's Complaints campaign 'Make it Right' through our e-bulletins.

Looking forward

We recognise that we can do better with our complaint handling, and we are committed to significantly improving our responsiveness.

We are conducting an internal review to look at what we can do improve our response times and reduce the number of complaints we receive.

Our managers will be attending a Complaints Handling Training Course, and this will be held at least annually to ensure we offer the very best complaints service for our tenants.

Our Complaints Taskforce, made up of staff and tenants, continues to meet quarterly to look at complaint themes

and trends and to identify learning from the complaints we received.

You can see the figures, themes, and actions from the Task Force on our website:

www.babergh.gov.uk/our-complaint-task-force

The main theme of our complaints for 2022/23 was about poor communication and we are currently working to ensure we have the right processes and systems in place to provide you with the updates you require in an efficient way.

Need to make a compliment, comment, or complaint?

Please see the back cover for details on how to contact us.

Chapter 5 - Respectful and helpful engagement

We want you to have a voice on how we deliver your housing services. We are always looking for tenants and leaseholders to work with us, to help improve our services for all residents.

You told us:

Tenant satisfaction that we listen to views and act upon them.

2022-23 score

48%

Tenant satisfaction that we keep tenants informed.

2022-23 score

61%

Tenant satisfaction that we treat tenants fairly and with respect.

2022-23 score

66%

Our highlights for 2022/23:

- Recruited two full-time Tenant Engagement Co-Ordinators
- Launched our new **Tenant Engagement Strategy and Action Plan** - this has been developed with responses to our Tenant Engagement Strategy survey, our Tenant Board, councillors, and key staff.

The strategy sets out 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.

- **660** tenants took part in various consultation groups which helped us to produce our downsizing policy, our Tenant Engagement Strategy, Tenant Performance Dashboards and also approved our Tenancy Policy and our Housing Design Guide which informs our new developments.
- Established a process so that any tenant who completes a satisfaction survey and requests a call back, or makes a comment that needs action, is contacted to follow that up. So far, **828** comments have been made through surveys that we have processed.



Looking forward

Tenant stigma

Following numerous conversations with tenants, we are developing an internal campaign to address the stigma that tenants can face due to living in social housing.

So far, we have carried out a survey of tenants who told us, through our Tenant Satisfaction Measures, that they didn't feel we treated them fairly or with respect.

The results from this along with 'myth-busting' information will be used to form training for existing and new staff.

Tenants Approved stamp launched

We have produced a 'Tenants Approved' stamp that will be added to documents, such as policies or strategies that have been produced with input from tenants.

Work carried out on the new tenant dashboards, our tenancy policy and helping tenants to downsize are just some

of the things we've involved tenants in recently.

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 to find out more.



Chapter 6 - Responsible neighbourhood management

You told us:

Tenant satisfaction that we make a positive contribution to neighbourhood.

2022-23 score	54%
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Tenant satisfaction with our approach to handling Anti-Social Behaviour.

2022-23 score	51%
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Tenant satisfaction that we keep communal areas clean and well-maintained.

2022-23 score	60%
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We want to be a landlord that provides good quality homes and neighbourhoods that people are proud to live in.

This year, we:

- Supported **188** tenants with anti-social behaviour cases – ensuring they felt safe and happy in their neighbourhoods.
- Supported **115** people affected by domestic abuse.
- Received **105** pet approval applications - 94 approved).
- Built **33** new homes in our District

We have begun holding Community Action Days in areas where you have told us there are issues such as fly tipping, overgrown weeds or other issues.

These events have allowed us to work with residents to improve the overall appearance of their neighbourhood and given us the opportunity to speak to our tenants to find out what they would like to improve about their neighbourhoods.

Areas have been identified where we have received high levels of dissatisfaction in the Tenant Satisfaction Survey. So far, we have completed three across Babergh resulting in great team-building exercises, co-working opportunities with our Councils Public Realm Team and significantly neater neighbourhoods.

Debbie, a resident who lives in the Stowmarket area said:

"I would just like to say what a fantastic job the volunteers did the other day on the clear up around the community. I was asked previously by letter if I had any items that I wanted to get rid of. To be honest this was a great idea and helped me out tremendously. I managed to clear a lot of unwanted items out my garage to make room for me to put my car in."

"The volunteers were extremely helpful too especially when I asked them to help me with the bulky items. No job was too small for them as they were all happy to help in anything I asked."

Looking forward

Greater Places

We will be working with neighbourhood staff, councillors, and residents to identify areas within our communities that could benefit from the Greater Places Fund.

The fund can be used to pay for any improvement works to any asset owned by the Housing Revenue Account.

We are on the lookout for potential improvement projects and actively encouraging ALL council staff, councillors, and residents to come to us with any ideas.

We will be encouraging projects which are sustainable and/or eco-friendly.

Neighbourhood Champions

Our new Neighbourhood Champions role will recognise those who go the extra mile to look after their local area,

by offering them support to make even more of a difference.

The Neighbourhood Champion's will be the eyes and ears of their community and will feedback and work with relevant teams around issues affecting residents in their local areas. We are excited to work collaboratively with the Neighbourhood Champions to ensure our communities are safe, tidy, and well maintained.

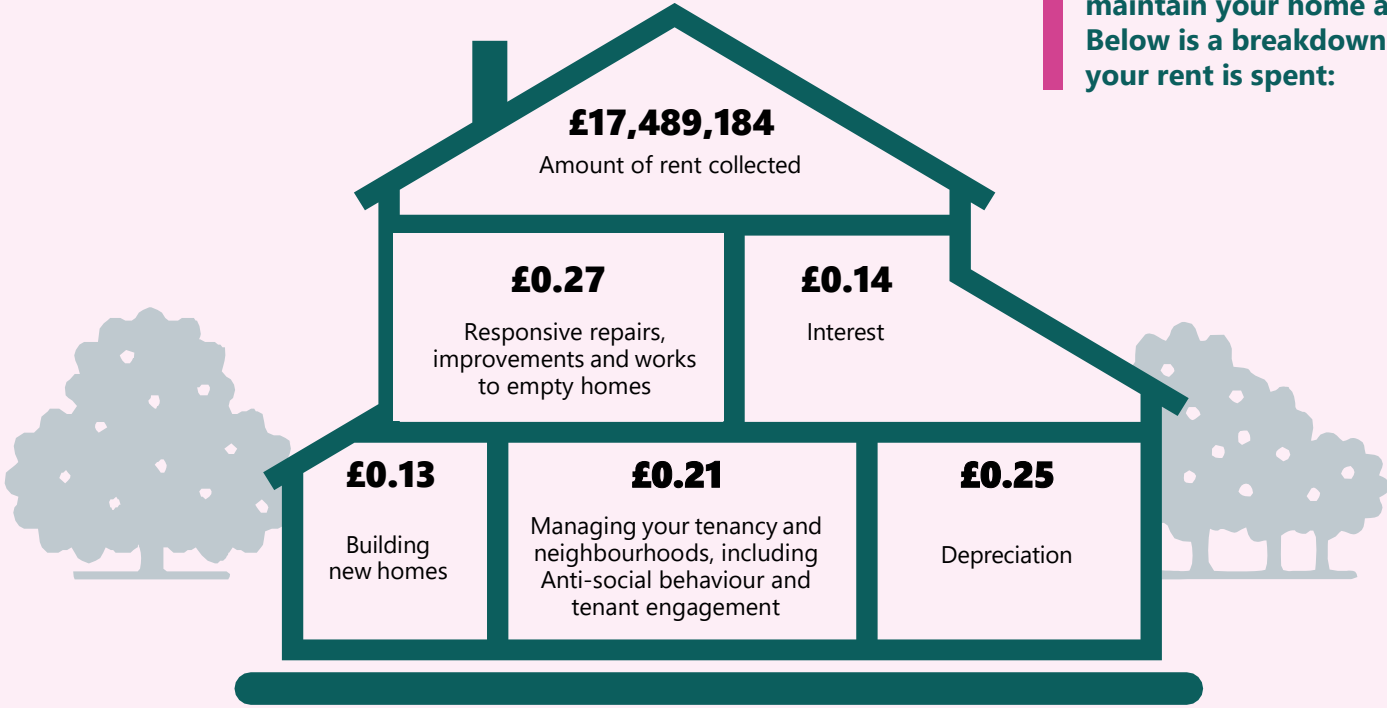
We are officially recruiting for the Neighbourhood Champion Role and would love to hear from you if you would like to be involved. For further information please email:

tenant.engagement@baberghmidsuffolk.gov.uk



Chapter 7 - How we spend your rent

During 2022/23 it cost on average £5,598 per property to manage and maintain your home and tenancy. Below is a breakdown of how £1 of your rent is spent:



Chapter 8 - Keeping you informed

We have continued our monthly e-bulletins and communicated and engaged with tenants on social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter.

- **4,924** tenants receive the e-bulletin
- Published more than **60** issues of our e-bulletin and other standalone communications concerning updates to our services

Our Contact Centre continues to operate for Babergh and Mid Suffolk tenants.

During 2022/23,

- **47,062** calls were made to us*
- **36,672** total calls answered by us*
- **9,423** services requests made online
- **638** tenants have an active My Home portal account

*Total for Babergh and Mid Suffolk.

Looking forward

We will be launching a new website in the Autumn which is designed to make it easy for all residents to carryout online transactions with us.

We will be using our e-bulletin to target our communications better such as neighbourhood news.



Chapter 9 - Consultation on the consumer standards

The Social Housing Regulator is consulting on their proposals on standards Landlords must meet so tenants live in safe, quality homes, have choice and protection, and can hold landlords to account.

There are four standards focus on:



Good and safe homes - Safety and Quality Standard



Good relationships with tenants – Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standard



Safe and well-kept neighbourhoods – Neighbourhood and Community Standard



Renting homes to tenants – Tenancy Standard

From April 2024, landlords will have to show the Regulator and tenants that they are meeting the standards.

You can read more about the standards and find out how to send your views on the Government website. <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/consultation-on-the-consumer-standards>

Answers need to be back to the Regulator by 17 October 2023.



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 and click on **Contact Us** at the top right of the main screen.
- **Email us:** feedback@baberghmidsuffolk.gov.uk
- **Call us:** **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