

# **CABINET MEMBERS REPORT TO COUNCIL**

**22 June 2022**

## **COUNCILLOR WENDY FREDERICKS - CABINET MEMBER FOR HOUSING AND BENEFITS**

For the period April to June 2022

### **1 Progress on Portfolio Matters.**

#### **Housing Strategy**

##### New Affordable Homes

Housing associations provided 160 new affordable homes in 2021/22 - 64 affordable rent and 96 shared ownership. Our development pipeline for 2022/23 is unfortunately a lot smaller. We anticipate 52 affordable homes during the current financial year. The reduction is due to:

- a) Being at the end of the current local plan with few sites left able to provide s106 affordable homes.
- b) A large site in Stalham which will provide 101 affordable homes including 61 extra care flats is delayed due to the impact of Nutrient Neutrality.

We have a healthy pipeline of affordable homes on exceptions housing sites which will deliver from 2023/24 onward although some sites awaiting planning permission may face delays as a result of Nutrient Neutrality.

##### Grant for Energy Efficiency Improvement Works

North Norfolk District Council (NNDC) as part of the Norfolk Warm Homes Consortium of five Norfolk districts has been successful in a bid for £3.85 million of government grant to provide energy efficiency improvement works to homes occupied by low-income households. The funding is part of the government's sustainable warmth programme.

Our new Energy Officer started with us in March and has been promoting the scheme via the press, Parish and Town Councils and with meetings with voluntary groups and landlords. To date Norfolk Warm Homes has sent out 117 application forms to people likely to be eligible following an initial telephone assessment. So far 14 applications have been approved. For further information on grants:  
<https://www.north-norfolk.gov.uk/news/2022/april/warm-homes-grant-available-after-successful-bid/>

## Benefits

In July 2021, we opted into the **Housing Benefit Award Accuracy initiative**. The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) would like to continue working with local authorities (LAs) to tackle fraud and error. The initiative is funded by the DWP and is designed to support LAs undertaking specific, mandatory activities to proactively identify unreported changes and make sure that the right amount of benefit is paid to the right person, at the right time. Year 2 of the initiative ended on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022, but we have until 17<sup>th</sup> June 2022 to make final amendments to Housing Benefit claims. We have issued all 408 reviews as required. The results from the reviews have so far found 14% of cases having a reduced entitlement to Housing Benefit, 13% of cases having an increase to entitlement, and 52% seeing no change to their entitlement. The remaining 21% of cases are either awaiting assessment or awaiting for the review form to be returned. Year 3 of the initiative started on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2022, where we are required to review a further 529 cases.

On behalf of People Services, Benefits have created a **Discretionary Hardship & Support Grant** which will deliver a provision for discretionary financial support to help people deal with emergencies, resettle, or remain living in the community, and to ease exceptional pressures on households. The objective of this scheme will be to provide support to meet the immediate needs of residents who are facing crisis or – in the case of vulnerable residents who (for example) have previously been homeless, are victims of Domestic Abuse, or are leaving institutional care – who require practical support to move into or stay in the community. The policy has been approved by Cabinet on 6<sup>th</sup> June and will be going through to Full Council for approval on 22<sup>nd</sup> June.

In response to the rising cost of household bills in 2022-23, driven by increasing energy bills, the government rolled out the **Energy Rebate Scheme** in April 2022, whereby households in Council Tax bands A-D have been granted a one-off payment of £150. As part of this scheme the government recognises that billing authorities may also wish to provide support to other energy bill payers who are not eligible under the terms of the mandatory scheme, and to provide carefully targeted 'top-up' payments to the most vulnerable households. North Norfolk District Council has received funding of £226,350 under the discretionary scheme. The Council Tax Energy Rebate (Discretionary) Scheme 2022/23 which provides the eligibility criteria and approach to administering the payments in line with government guidance and legislation was approved by cabinet on 6<sup>th</sup> June and will be going through to Full Council for approval on 22<sup>nd</sup> June. Once the policy has been approved, we will be making payments to residents under the discretionary scheme.

On 23 March 2022, the government announced in the Spring Statement that the **Household Support Fund (HSF)** would be extended from 1 April 2022 to 30 September 2022. As previously, the fund will be made available to County Councils and Unitary Authorities in England to support those most in need. North Norfolk District Council has been allocated £100,354 by Norfolk County Council and an emergency fund of £22,382. We are in the process of modelling the scheme and will be in touch with residents directly who we believe will benefit most.

On 26<sup>th</sup> May 2022, the Chancellor announced the Household Support Fund would be extended to cover the period from October 2022 to March 2023. The DWP will be providing additional guidance to local authorities to ensure the support is targeted towards those who need it most.

### **Chancellor's statement on additional cost of living support to householders**

In addition to the extension of the Household Support Fund, The Chancellor's statement to the House of Commons also provided additional support measures to households through other means to help with the cost-of-living crisis and increased energy bills mainly funded through a new temporary Energy Profits Levy on oil and gas firms.

Payments made under each of the measures will not be treated as either income or capital in means tested benefit claims. Local Authorities will also have to ensure they are disregarded in any council tax support claims.

Unlike the previous measures announced on 3 February 2022 which directed the support through the council tax system, providing a one off £150 to all householders living in properties in bands A to D, these new measures provide a combination of universal and targeted financial support measures including:

- universal support to all energy paying householders
- additional support to those on means tested and certain other benefits
- funding to local authorities to provide additional discretionary support to residents (HSF)

Other than the HSF, the additional cost of living support will be delivered by the DWP, HMRC, and domestic energy companies. Full details can be found here [Cost of living support](#)

## **Housing**

### Temporary Housing

As of 31 May 2022, there were **49** households in Temporary Accommodation.

In order to minimise the levels of use of bed and breakfast we continue to actively seek opportunities to increase our own portfolio and continue to develop good relationships with our private sector landlords, this included NNDC being represented at the Eastern Region landlords Forum in May.

### Your Choice Your Home

As at the 31 May 2022 there were **2524 households** on the housing waiting list of whom **484** were on the Housing Register (highest priority) broken down as follows:

- Priority Card x **2**
- Band 1 x **278**
- Band 2 x **204**

68% (**1,726**) of applicants are on the Housing Options waiting list and 12% (**314**) are on the transfer list.

### Bedroom Need

	1 Bed	2 Bed	3 Bed	4 Bed	5 Bed	8 Bed	Total
Priority Card		2					2
Band 1	135	79	36	23	1	5	279
Band 2	79	43	37	44		3	206
Housing Options	1089	407	110	106	1	11	1724
Transfer	146	88	37	38	2	2	313
Total:	1449	619	220	211	4	21	2524

### Homes Let

In total between 01 April and 31 May 2022 there has been **81** homes let:

- Social Housing Homes: 54
- Shared Ownership Homes: 27

### Homelessness & Rough Sleeping

We continue to support **3** entrenched Rough Sleepers. Currently we have 5 new RS within the month on May 1 has refused the offer of accommodation, 2 are being accommodated at Reeves Court & 2 are being picked up under the homeless legislation.

### Households Assessed and Duty Owed

The Housing Options team provide support all clients that approach the service. This includes assessing housing needs and providing advice on the next whether someone is homeless or in situations where there is a risk that someone will become homeless within 56 days.

As 31 May 2022, there were **69** live open cases:

- Final Duties accepted: 0
- Prevention duty accepted: **20**
- Relief Duty accepted: 23
- Decisions **1**
- Reviews: 0
- Triage (mixture of new cases, rough sleepers, clients being supported): **25**

For the same period **79** cases were closed, the majority of these were Triage Cases (69) where applicants were provided with support and advice. For Prevention and relief cases the following outcomes were achieved:

- Prevention Cases Closed: **5**
  - Negotiation/mediation/advocacy work to prevent eviction/repossession
  - Helped to secure accommodation found by applicant

- Accommodation secured
- Discretionary Housing Payment to reduce rent shortfall
- Supported housing provided
  
- Relief Cases Closed: **5**
  - Negotiation/mediation work to secure return to family or friend
  - Activities were attempted to secure accommodation but unsuccessful due to non-Engagement
  - Supported housing provided
  - Negotiation/mediation work to secure return to family or friend
  - Helped to secure accommodation found by applicant

### Domestic Abuse

Work has commenced towards Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (DAHA) accreditation for the Housing Service. Membership submitted and Meeting with DAHA regional lead in June to outline process.

Housing Officers are attending training in June which is being delivered by Shelter which explores housing problems associated with domestic abuse and will provide an overview of the legal, and housing options available to support clients, the impact of the Homelessness Reduction Act and the Domestic Abuse Act 2021.

We are currently supporting NODA (Norfolk Office of Data & Analytics) with the collection Domestic Abuse data for North Norfolk for the last Financial Year 2021/22. The information which is being collected county wide will help identify where there are any gaps in service provision and provide insight into the number of people who are victims-survivors of Domestic Abuse.

## **Integrated Housing Adaptations Team**

### Disabled Facilities Grants

IHAT budget allocation for 2022/23 has remained fixed at £1.35 million with the IHAT also having the 2021/22 underspend rolled forward. Referrals into the service continue to demonstrate a steady upward trend, with May receiving a record 50 new contacts.

Customer waiting times continue to be a main priority within the team and recent changes to existing processes and procedures are starting to demonstrate reduced end to end timescales with DFG delivery for a number of customers. Furthermore the partnership with Flagship which went live on 1st April 2022 is also demonstrating a positive impact on customer wait times and overall DFG applications that are approved.

Completed DFG adaptations within the service have also showed a marked increase with 10 adaptations being completed within the month of May. It is anticipated that

the number of completed adaptations will continue to increase further as Flagship cases have DFGs approved and proposed work begins.

## **2      Forthcoming Activities and Developments.**

Cabinet Meeting  
Working with landowners to deliver affordable homes  
Business Planning  
Full Council  
Member Briefing - Nutrient Neutrality

## **3      Meetings attended**

Cabinet Meetings  
Business Planning  
PPBHWP  
Group briefings  
Portfolio Holder briefings  
Wave Trust 70/30 meeting  
North Norfolk Sustainable Communities Fund Panel  
Registered Housing Provider meeting  
Local Network CYP with Asthma  
Beam meeting  
Shared Prosperity Fund Briefing  
Norfolk Citizens' Advice meeting  
Overview and Scrutiny

### **Events attended**

Jubilee celebrations invited by Mundesley Parish Council