

# **CABINET MEMBERS REPORT TO COUNCIL**

**July 2022**

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

1 April to 30 June 2022

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

### **Housing Strategy**

#### **New Affordable Homes**

The forecast number of new affordable homes to be built in 2022/23 is significantly lower than the numbers achieved in the last few years as a result of fewer sites available and the delay caused by Nutrient Neutrality. We anticipate 52 affordable homes during the current financial year; however, we have a healthy affordable housing schemes pipeline, many of which are Rural Exception Housing Sites at various points in the development process. There are a total of 18 developments which will or could, subject to approvals, yield 354 new Affordable Homes in the next few years.

Currently, with planning permission and due to start on site this year, are developments at Hindringham, Warham, Walcott, Sheringham and Northrepps - which will deliver a total of 69 new units.

Nutrient Neutrality has had a direct impact on a number of sites which have been submitted for planning. These are at Corpusty, Stalham, Catfield and Roughton which could deliver 145 units (including a 61-unit Extra Care scheme at Stalham) once the mitigation matters are resolved. A development at Happisburgh currently at planning submission stage will deliver a further 9 units.

Positive public consultations have been held at Salthouse, West Beckham and Swanton Novers where planning applications are due to be submitted shortly and will, subject to approval, deliver 18 units. A further public consultation at Colby and Banningham will take place in July and is hoped to deliver a further 6 units. Recent discussion with Blakeney and Bacton Parish Councils has met with a positive response where a public consultation will be held hopefully in the next few months and could result in upwards of 57 new units for the villages.

A number of earlier stage developments being discussed with developer Registered Providers could yield a further 50 units.

#### **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 through several routes: a "Your money matters" spread in North Norfolk News, a video published on all NNDC social media and our website, a leaflet sent to all parish councils, followed by attendance at many parish council and other public meetings, and an article in the Council's Outlook magazine.

To date 60 Home Upgrade Grant applications have been received since March '22 and 22 have so far been approved, totaling £33k of grant works. The grants approved will deliver 2 x storage heat pumps, 10 x cavity wall insulations, 16 x loft insulations, 4 x external wall insulations and 1 x windows/door replacement. For further information on grants: <https://www.north-norfolk.gov.uk/news/2022/april/warm-homes-grant-available-after-successful-bid/>

### **Repairs Grant**

As part of the Housing Strategy we identified a need to help low-income households with repairs to enable them to remain in their homes. The Council has made a successful bid to the North Norfolk Health and Wellbeing Partnership for £50,000 to run a pilot scheme to run to March 2023. The IHAT will administer the pilot scheme and will work with Property Servies. We will take referrals from internal teams and external partner organisations. If the pilot is successful, we will seek funding to extend the scheme into 2023/24 and beyond.

### **Your Choice Your Home**

As at the 30 June 2022 there were **2575 households** on the housing waiting list of whom **485** were on the Housing Register (highest priority) broken down as follows:

- Priority Card x **1**
- Band 1 x **261**
- Band 2 x **223**

68% (**1,771**) of applicants are on the Housing Options waiting list and 12% (**319**) are on the transfer list.

### **Bedroom Need**

	1 Bed	2 Bed	3 Bed	4 Bed	5 Bed	8 Bed	Total
<b>Priority Card</b>	-	1	-	-	-	-	<b>1</b>
<b>Band 1</b>	128	66	39	23	1	4	<b>261</b>
<b>Band 2</b>	91	46	38	45		3	<b>223</b>
<b>Housing Options</b>	1,111	419	118	109	1	13	<b>1,771</b>
<b>Transfer</b>	148	90	36	39	2	4	<b>319</b>
<b>Total:</b>	<b>1478</b>	<b>622</b>	<b>231</b>	<b>216</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>2575</b>

## **Homes Let**

QTR 1 01 Apr 2022 to 30 June 2022:

- 80 Households have secured social housing
- 28 Households have secured \*Shared Ownership.

\*During QTR 1 Meadow Walk an Extra Care living development (housing 21) for people over the age of 55 in Fakenham was completed.

## **Temporary Accommodation**

At the end of Quarter 1 (30<sup>th</sup> June 2022), there were **42** households in Temporary Accommodation, of which:

**3** (7%) were other households (e.g., couples with no Children)

**15** (36%) were single adult households

**24** (57%) were households with children

The number of households with children being housed in temporary accommodation has risen, contributing factors include an increase in the number of people fleeing Domestic Abuse and an increase in Assured Short Hold Tenancies ending. To provide direct support to these households we have recruited a Living Well Officer on a 1-year fixed term contract (using Homelessness Prevention Grant). The focus of the role is to provide hands-on support to families, empowering them to address various challenges and reducing problems and risks. The role will work closely with the Early Help Hub/Social Services and make necessary referrals through to support providers for example NIDAS.

Our five units of move on accommodation for former rough sleepers or those at risk of rough sleeping are all being used. Works to the conversion of a property in Sheringham, which was being used as storage, have been completed and our first tenant moved into the property in July. Accommodation is let to the occupant via a non-secure tenancy for up to two years, which offers tenants the security of knowing that they can make it their home and begin to rebuild their lives and plan for the future. Wraparound support is provided by members of our Accommodation and Support Team. Support is individual to the person's needs and includes helping tenants engage and access support from external agencies with mental health, substance misuse, financial and other life skills needed for independent living.

We have also negotiated with St Vincent DePaul (SVP) church and now have access to both single and family accommodation in Cromer. Cromer is an area that has been very difficult to secure suitable self-contained T/A accommodation, especially peak holiday season.

## **Homelessness & Rough Sleeping**

We continue to support **3** entrenched Rough Sleepers.

Whilst it is not always possible to locate rough sleepers, we respond to reports from the community and via Street Link to quickly identify and verify rough sleepers and help the most vulnerable access the services they need. Within Quarter 1 we verified 5 new Rough Sleepers, 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**

Our Housing Options Service offers advice to anyone who has a housing problem, and offers support and assistance if someone is homeless, or threatened with homelessness, within the next 56 days.

At the end of Quarter1, there were **88** live open cases:

- Prevention duty accepted: **25**
- Relief Duty accepted: **38**
- Decisions **2**
- Reviews: **0**
- Triage (mixture of new cases, rough sleepers, clients being supported through out-reach): **23**

For the same period **147** cases were closed, the majority of these were Triage Cases (127) where applicants were provided with support and advice. For all other cases the following outcomes were achieved:

Prevention Cases Closed: **8**

- Supported Housing: **1**
- Registered Provider Tenancy: **4**
- Private Rented Sector Tenancy: **2**
- Staying with family: **1**

Relief Cases Closed: **7**

- Activities were attempted to secure accommodation but unsuccessful due to non-Engagement: **1**
- Supported Housing: **1**
- staying with friends: **1**
- Private rented sector: **2**
- Other: **2** (cases were closed but subsequently re-opened due to a change in circumstances)

Decisions: **4**

- No Duty owed and no accommodation provided: **4**

Final Duties accepted: **1**

- Fully Duty Accepted and ongoing outreach is being provided.

### **Domestic Abuse**

Work has commenced towards Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (DAHA) accreditation for the Housing Service. We are in the process of creating both a strategic and operational project group,

Housing Officers have attended training in June which was delivered by Shelter which explores housing problems associated with domestic abuse and provided 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. Additionally Housing Staff have attended a briefing to discuss the requirements of the county wide Domestic Abuse Housing Protocol which is an agreement between the County Council, local housing authorities, registered providers and domestic abuse service providers in order to support those accessing housing services as a result of domestic abuse. This includes at the point of seeking support, fleeing a relationship or when moving on from safe accommodation.

### **Tenancy Sustainment**

We support first-time tenants, rough sleepers and those with arrears with the tools to help them successfully sustain their tenancies. This has been delivered through working with Your Own Place CIC to deliver Tenancy and independent living skills (TILS+) through a series of face to face and digital workshops. Between August 2021 and March 2022, 27 referrals have been made for individuals to attend a tenancy and Independent Living Skills Plus (TILS+) workshop. These workshops help people to sustain their tenancies by drawing out their skills, confidence, resilience, knowledge and life experiences. For 2022/23 we are looking to explore how we can support more individuals during this cost-of-living crisis and are joining up with the DWP, Benefits, Social Prescribing team to identify different referral pathways.

### **Integrated Housing Adaptations Team**

IHAT continue to make progress with reducing client wait times, increasing client contact throughout the process and reducing overall end to end timescales.

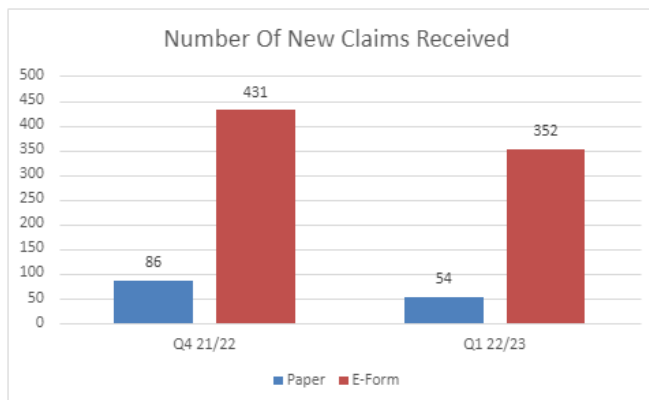
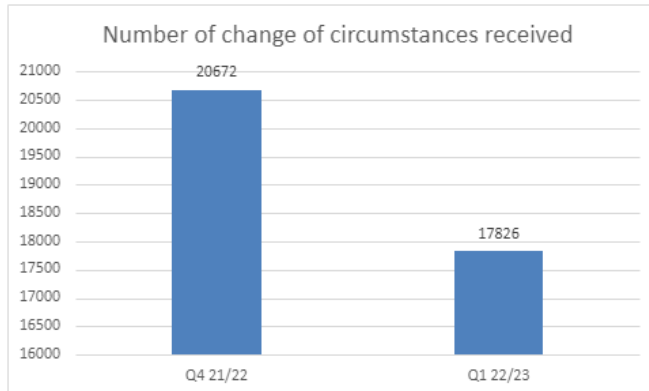
There continues to be an upward trend in the number of DFG approved cases 47 in the first quarter of 22/23 compared to 27 in 21/22. The number of adaptations completed is currently the same for both years at 21. The new partnership arrangement with Flagship Housing continues to have a positive impact on DFG applications in terms of approvals and also have now completed a number of adaptations which are due to be signed off by IHAT imminently and will increase the completions figures in the coming months.

The value of approvals in the first quarter of 22/23 is £348,686 compared to £224,367 in 21/22. Spend is slightly down on 21/22 at £217,036 compared to £237,123. Enquires are slightly up of 21/22 at 128 compared to 121.

The team has made a successful bid to the Community Transformation Fund administered by the North Locality Place Board to deliver the 'Waiting well' project, to promote the DFG alongside looking at how customer's needs might be best met in the short and long term. We will be recruiting for this role over the next couple of weeks and looking to roll the project out as soon as possible.

## Benefits

For the period 1<sup>st</sup> April to 30<sup>th</sup> June (Q1), the Benefits team received 18,232 work items compared to 21,189 in the previous quarter (Q4). Work during Q4 increased due to annual rent increases, changes to Universal Credit awards following the removal of the £20 uplift, and an Employment Support Allowance re-assessment exercise carried out by the DWP.



Workloads are expected to increase over the next quarter due to tax credit renewals, seasonal work changes, self-employed annual income reviews, and further rent increases.

The Benefits team are leading on the administration of the **Household Support Fund**. Working with the Early Help & Prevention Team we will be distributing funding of £90,318 to potentially vulnerable older residents in the district. Using provisional figures whilst we set up the fund, we are estimating to target 491 households with a payment of approx. £180 per household. There will also be an emergency fund of £22,382 which will be used to support households in need of immediate support with essentials linked to food, water, and energy.

The Benefits team are also leading on the **Energy Rebate (Discretionary) Scheme**. The scheme policy has been agreed and work is underway to start making payments to households eligible for a payment under the scheme. The funding of £226,350 will be targeted at low-income households across the district to help with the rising cost of household bills.

We are continuing to administer **Discretionary Housing Payments** to support tenancy sustainment and to support people to stay within the community. Cases are worked on as a panel which includes officers from the Benefits team and Housing

Options. For 2022/23, North Norfolk has been allocated funding of £110,945. So far this year we have spent 62% of our allocation across 94 households and a further 69 applications have been refused as the circumstances of the household are outside the scope of the scheme.

We have started to review the **Council Tax Support (CTS) scheme for 2023/24**. CTS provides an ongoing financial support to households on low incomes. Councils have the flexibility to design their own schemes and with the steep rise to the cost of living, we want to ensure our scheme continues to be cost effective to administer and continues to be effective in targeting households that are falling into poverty. The review will involve modelling the impact assessment of changes to the scheme, member consultation, and public consultation. Work is underway around modelling the scheme and the end-to-end process is likely to finish in late Autumn.

We will be using data analytics to provide us with powerful insights into how individual households are impacted by welfare changes and the cost-of-living crisis. We will use the data to pro-actively target at risk households to tackle problem debt, rent arrears, maximise income, prevent homelessness, and to also understand current and future demand on our services.

We are in the process of setting up a new Financial Inclusion Team which will be located within the Benefits Service. The team will consist of a Financial Inclusion Officer and a Welfare & Debt Advisor. Their focus will be to reduce financial exclusion across the district offering debt advice, welfare advice, and support tenancy sustainment. These posts are being funded from Homelessness Prevention Grant.

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**2      Forthcoming Activities and Developments.**

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**3      Meetings attended**

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