

CABINET MEMBERS REPORT TO COUNCIL

September 2022

COUNCILLOR WENDY FREDERICKS - CABINET MEMBER FOR HOUSING AND BENEFITS

1 April to 31 August 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.

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 66 Home Upgrade Grant applications have been received since March '22 and 32 have so far been approved, totaling £71k of grant works. For further information on grants: <https://www.north-norfolk.gov.uk/news/2022/april/warm-homes-grant-available-after-successful-bid/>

Housing Options and Homelessness Prevention

Your Choice Your Home

As at the 31 August 2022 there were **2687 households** on the housing waiting list of whom **507** were on the Housing Register (highest priority) broken down as follows:

- Priority Card x 1
- Band 1 x 279

- Band 2 x **230**

69% (**1,858**) 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
Priority Card	1	-	-	-	-	-	1
Band 1	145	65	37	26	2	4	279
Band 2	93	47	38	50	1	1	230
Housing Options	1145	461	127	108	2	15	1858
Transfer	149	89	35	40	1	5	319
Total:	1533	662	237	224	6	25	2687

Homes Let

01 Apr 2022 to 31 August 2022:

- **139** 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.*

	1 Bed	2 Bed	3 Bed	4 Bed	5 Bed	8 Bed	Total
Social Housing	55	72	12	-	-	-	139
Shared Ownership		28		-	-	-	28
Total:	55	100	12	-	-	-	167

Temporary Accommodation

As of 31 August 2022, there were **46** households in Temporary Accommodation, of which:

5 (11%) were other households (e.g., couples with no Children)

15 (33%) were single adult households

26 (56%) were households with children

In order to minimise the levels of use of bed and breakfast we continue to actively seek opportunities to increase our own portfolio of homes for use as temporary Accommodation.

we are due to complete on a 2-bed house in Sheringham which will be used as emergency temporary accommodation. Being able to offer good quality temporary accommodation within the Centre of the district has been difficult to achieve and will make a huge difference to the families we are working with. We are also undertaking extensive renovations to a 3-bed bungalow in North Walsham, this will add an adapted property to our portfolio of suitable temporary accommodation. Once purchase/works are complete on both properties, we will have a portfolio of 18 properties to use as an alternative to Bed and Breakfasts.

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. Between 01 April 22 and 31 August 2022 we have had 13 new RS cases –

No. of clients	Outcome
1	Moved from NSAP to social housing
1	Voluntarily left NSAP
3	Rough sleeper moved to social housing or NSAP (had been in Reeves Court)
1	Living with family – offered Reeves Court but declined
3	Reports received but unable to contact to verify
1	Declined all offers of support
1	Sourced his own accommodation
1	Moved to Reeves Court
1	Lost contact

During this quarter we have successfully recruited into 3 new posts, 2 internal candidates (complex health care officer & tenancy sustainment officer) were successful and have now been in post since 1st September as Pathways, Prevention & Sustainment Officers, this new role also saw an increase in their pay grade from a 9 to an 8 which reflects the complexity of their role. We are currently in the process of recruiting for a 3 member into this team. We have also recruited a Living Well Officer whose responsibility is to support families living in temporary accommodation.

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 August 2022, there were **116** live open cases:

- Prevention duty accepted: **33**
- Relief Duty accepted: **39**
- Decisions: **1**
- Final Duty: **16**
- Triage (mixture of new cases, rough sleepers, clients being supported through out-reach): **27**

For the same period **282** cases were closed, the majority of these were Triage Cases (222) where applicants were provided with support and advice. For all other cases the following outcomes were achieved:

Prevention Cases Closed:**18**

- Supported Housing: **3**
- Registered Provider Tenancy: **6**

- Private Rented Sector Tenancy: **7**
- Staying with family or Friends: **2**

Relief Cases Closed: **25**

- Activities were attempted to secure accommodation but unsuccessful: 15
- Supported Housing: 3
- staying with friends:
- Private rented sector: 4
- Registered Provider Tenancy: 3

Decisions: **9**

- Homeless and no priority need

Final Duties accepted: **6**

- Registered Provider Tenancy: **5**
- Fully Duty Accepted and ongoing outreach is being provided: **1**

Funding

The government has announced allocations for the first multi-year funding for the Rough Sleeping Initiative (RSI 2022- 25) to provide local councils with long-term funding to support those sleeping rough or at risk of rough sleeping. Our bid has been successful in securing £482,163.

Additionally in August we responded to the Government consultation which was seeking the views on the Governments approach to the funding for the Homelessness Prevention Grant provided to all local housing authorities in England, with the aim of determining new funding allocations based on current pressures for local authorities and enhancing data collection and assurance of how the grant is used. This applies to grant funding for 2023/24 onwards.

Domestic Abuse

We are continuing to review how we strengthen our approach to Domestic Abuse, to help develop our services we seeking to recruit on a one-year fixed term contract a Domestic Abuse Project Officer to support the Housing Options Team will develop, manage, deliver and review activity relating to Domestic Abuse in order to ensure progress against DAHA Accreditation.

Benefits

Under the **Household Support Fund** (round 2), we have now distributed funding to 482 pension age households through Post Office Pay-out. Each household will receive a payment of £185 which can be collected by simply taking their letter which contains a barcode, along with one piece of ID to any Post Office branch within one month. We will be monitoring the number of vouchers cashed and pro-actively supporting households with this.

We have now launched an online application form to allow households to apply for cost-of-living support through the Household Support – Emergency fund. We have £22,382 of funding which much be spent by 30th September 2022.

Further information on the Household Support Fund and the application process can be found here [Home | Household Support Fund \(north-norfolk.gov.uk\)](https://www.north-norfolk.gov.uk)

Round 3 of the Household Support Fund commences on 1st October and we are now having discussions across People Services and with Norfolk County Council on what this will look like. We do not know at this stage what amount of funding will be devolved to districts.

We are continuing to make payments under the **Energy Rebate (Discretionary) Scheme**. The funding of £226,350 is being targeted at low-income households across the district to help with the rising cost of household bills. So far, we have distributed £81,720 of the fund. All letters inviting eligible households to claim the payment will have been issued by 30th September. We will also be launching an online application form to invite people to apply for support with energy costs who are not liable for Council Tax but still incur utility costs, such as people living in Houses of Multiple Occupation.

We continue to administer **Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP)** 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 £100,945 and up to 31st August 2022, we have spent 73% of our allocation across 91 households and a further 105 applications have been refused as the circumstances of the household are outside the scope of the scheme. Where we have not been able to provide support through the DHP scheme, the team will consider other funding options and signpost the customer accordingly.

Our work on reviewing the Council Tax Support (CTS) scheme for 2023/24 is moving forward. We have now been provided with two example CTS scheme models which we are now reviewing. The next stage will be to set up a working party and commence a public consultation.

We have recently advertised for 10 posts across the service. These are;

- 1 x Benefit Officer – permanent
- 4 x Local Government Apprentices (Business Support) (18 months)
- 3 x Local Government Apprentices (Benefits Officer) (18 months)
- 1 x Welfare & Benefit Advice Officer (12 months)
- 1 x Financial Inclusion Officer (12 months)

We took part in the Recruitment Day held at the Council Offices on 25th August, and we saw a pleasing number of people attend the event. We have received a high application response rate to the posts and interviews are taking place over the next two weeks.

Integrated Housing Adaptations Team

The team has received **241** new contacts year to date resulting in 95 recommendations for adaptations. There are still issues with contractor capacity and lengthy lead times, however this is being improved with the Flagship partnership. There is a lot of demand in the system, assessments are being completed quickly but an increase in the number of referrals coming into the service is increasing wait times for assessments. Increased demand has also led to increased wait times for schedules, this situation is being closely monitored and it is anticipated the Flagship partnership will continue to reduce the wait times for schedules. A further 18 cases were approved for July with a value of approximately £142,000, 17 cases were approved for August with a value of £113,108.27. This takes the total approved cases for the financial year to 82 with a total commitment of approximately £642,391.71.

In addition, 9 grants were completed in July and 16 grants in August taking the total for the financial year to 50 with a total spend of approximately £521,163

End to end time scales continue to be a primary focus for the team and we remain committed to reducing these. Changes to the DFG process are demonstrating a positive impact on targets with timescales for each stage showing a marked improvement.

2021-22 Average days between							
Initial contact date & triage	Triage & assessment date	Assessment & D (OT 2 date	D(OT)2 date & schedule	Schedule date & Approval	Approval date & start on site	Start on site date to completion	Case starts to case finish
24	94.3	22.8	137.7	68.6	116.1	34.3	497.7

2022-23 YTD Average days between							
Initial contact date & triage	Triage & assessment date	Assessment & D(OT)2 date	D(OT)2 date & schedule	Schedule date & Approval	Approval date & start on site	Start on site date to completion	Case starts to case finish
13.3	53.4	18.8	129.8	37.3	77.7	16.3	346.7

The Home repairs pilot has got underway with cases being referred into the scheme from IHAT, Social Prescribing, Energy Officer and Environmental Protection. To date we have received 11 referrals and have taken forward 6 of these to contractor site inspections. We have received quotations back for 2 cases and have approved these works. At the time of writing one case has approved work currently underway and the other is scheduled to begin week commencing 05/09/22 with a combined estimated spend of approximately £10,000.

We have welcomed a new Housing Adaptations Officer to the team, this brings the total assessing officers to 4. It is anticipated that the additional resource will help to reduce the wait times for assessments and improve efficiency within the service.

2 Forthcoming Activities and Developments.

3 Meetings attended