

CABINET MEMBERS REPORT TO COUNCIL

November 2022

COUNCILLOR WENDY FREDERICKS - CABINET MEMBER FOR HOUSING AND BENEFITS

1 Progress on Portfolio Matters.

Benefits

The Benefits Service has recently recruited to a number of posts to provide additional resource to processing, Cost of Living work streams, Housing Benefit Reviews, and energy rebate schemes.

The roles are;

- 1 x Benefit Officer – Permanent
- 3 x Local Government Apprentices (Business Support) (18 month contract)
- 2 x Local Government Apprentice (Benefits Officer) (18 month contract)
- 2 x Benefit Officers (12 month contract)
- 2 x Financial Inclusion Officer (12 month contract)

Under the **Household Support Fund** (round 2), we have now distributed funding to 482 pension age households through Post Office Payout. Each household received a payment of £185 through a Post Office PayOut voucher. 91% of households cashed in their voucher. We will be supporting households who didn't cash in their voucher to ensure they still receive the funding to help them with the increase in the cost of living.

We also launched an online application form to allow households to apply for cost of living support through the Household Support - Emergency fund. We provided support to a further 53 households through financial assistance with food, energy or other essentials.

Our overall position at the end of the scheme is shown below:

Table 2: Total Awards					
Item	Spend (£s)				
a) Total amount provided to vulnerable households	£ 110,462.19				
b) Administration Costs	12,273.58				
c) Total LA spend (a+b)	£ 122,735.77				

Table 3: Total Value of Awards split by Household Composition					
		a) Households with Children	b) Households with Pensioners	c) Other households	d) Total amount provided to vulnerable households (a+b+c)
Row 1	Spend (£s)	£ 16,477.19	£ 89,170.00	£ 4,815.00	£ 110,462.19
Row 2	Volumes	37	482	16	535

Table 4: Total Value of Awards Split by Category							
		a) Energy and Water	b) Food	c) Essentials linked to Energy and Water	d) Wider Essentials	e) Housing Costs	e) Total amount provided to vulnerable households (a+b+c+d+e)
Row 1	Spend (£s)	105815.28	2261.91	685	1700	0	110,462.19
Row 2	Volumes	522	9	2	2	0	535

Round 3 of the Household Support Fund started on 1st October 2022 and runs through to 31st March 2023. North Norfolk District Council has received £89,000 to allocate to our residents to support households with food, energy and essentials over the winter. We are currently working on our offer under round 3, and we will be provide further detail on this shortly.

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 £113k of the fund. This scheme ends on 30th November 2022.

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.

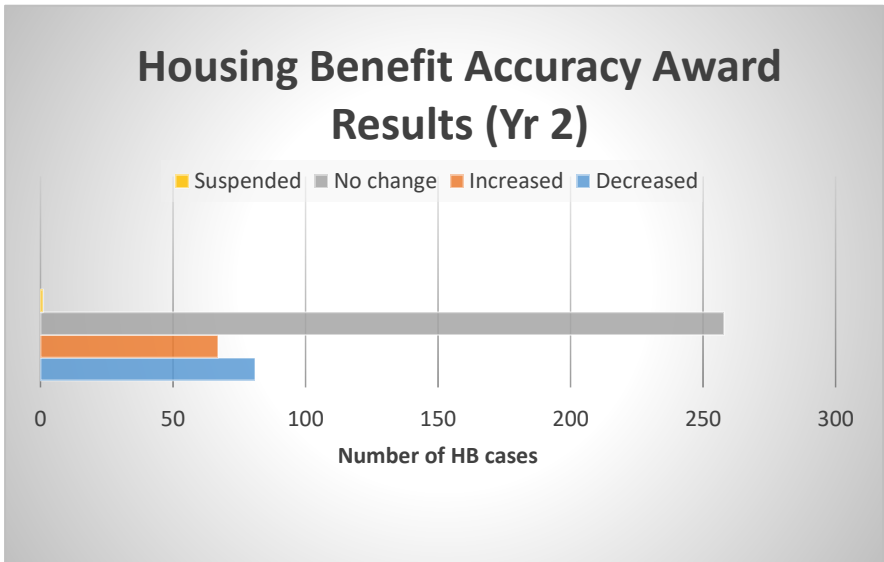
For 2022/23, North Norfolk has now been allocated funding of £103,037, and up to 31st October 2022 we have spent 77% of our allocation across 97 households and a further 151 applications have been refused as the circumstances of the household are outside the scope of the scheme. Where we have not been able to provide support through the DHP scheme, the team will consider other funding options and signpost the customer accordingly.

We have successfully launched a **Financial Inclusion Team** which is located within the Benefits Service. The team will be providing a valuable service to all of our residents in order to reduce financial exclusion across the district. They will be working with new and existing customers who require advice, support and monitoring across all areas of financial inclusion, including debt advice, welfare benefits advice and financial capability. The team will also be supporting tenancy sustainment by enabling customers to manage their financial commitments to be able to retain suitable accommodation and prevent homelessness where possible. Alongside the prevention of wider personal debts and income maximisation. We are in the process of setting up the referral process and further Comms will be published shortly.

We have now completed year 2 of the **Housing Benefit Award Accuracy** scheme. In year 2 we reviewed 407 Housing Benefit claims. The outcomes of the reviews are shown below:

Number of Housing Benefit cases	Outcome of review
81	Housing Benefit award decreased
67	Housing Benefit award increased

258	No change to Housing Benefit award
1	Housing Benefit suspended

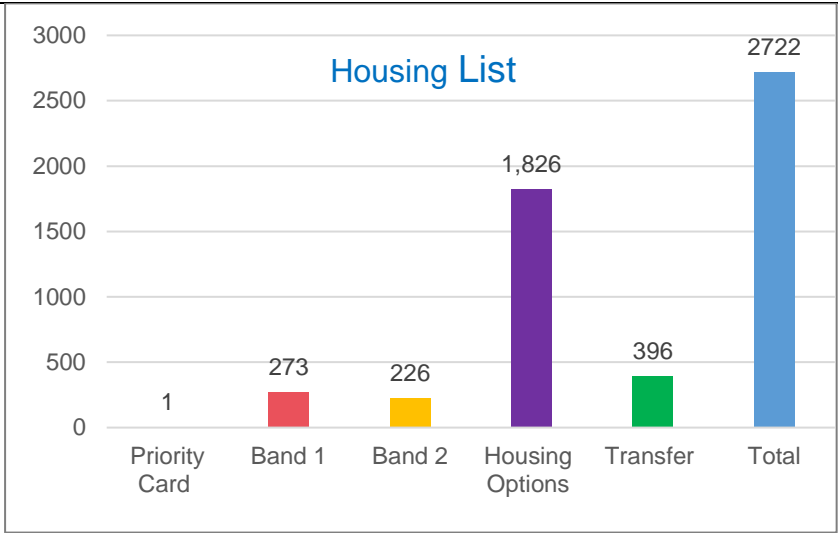


We are now launching year 3 of the scheme. This will involve the team reviewing over 500 Housing Benefit claims between October 2022 – January 2023. Working age customers will be asked to complete an online review form. Where the customer is not able to complete the review form online, or where they are of pensionable age, or vulnerable, our Business Support Officers will be scheduling appointments to complete the review form with them over the phone.

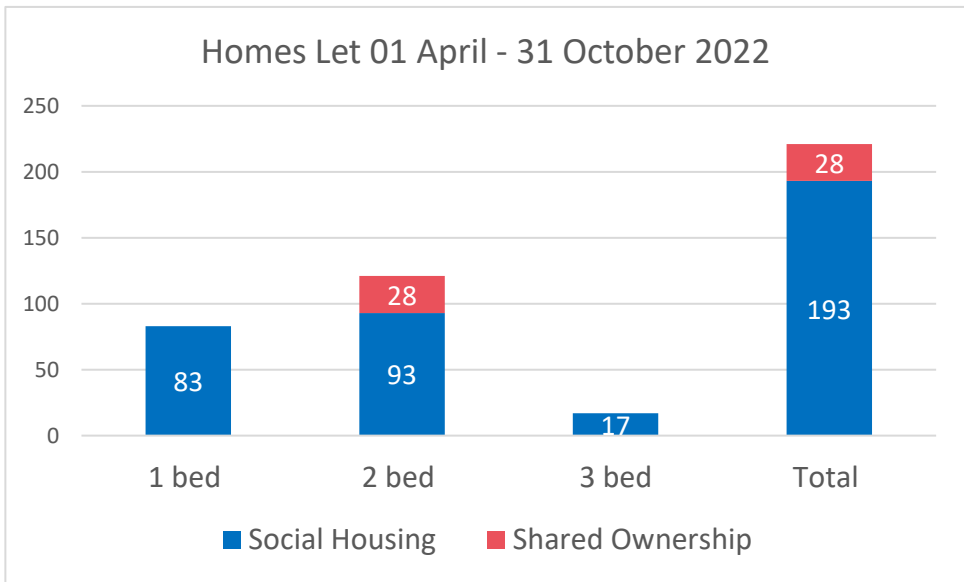
Housing Options and Homelessness Prevention

Your Choice Your Home

As at the 31 October 2022 there were **2772 households** on the housing list with 18% being on the Housing Register – this register contains those qualifying applicants who have the most urgent housing needs.



Housing List – Bedroom Need:							
	1 Bed	2 Bed	3 Bed	4 Bed	5 Bed	8 Bed	Total
Priority Card		1					1
Band 1	129	73	33	33	2	3	273
Band 2	91	50	40	43	1	1	226
Housing Options	1143	437	125	105		16	1826
Transfer	186	122	40	41	1	6	396
Total:	1549 (57%)	683 (24%)	238 (9%)	222 (8%)	4 (0.1%)	26 (0.9%)	2722



*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 – these properties were let outside of Your Choice Your Home.

Social Housing lets by banding and bedroom size							
	1 Bed	2 Bed	3 Bed	4 Bed	5 Bed	8 Bed	Total
Priority Card		6	1				7
Band 1	75	80	15				170
Band 2	2		1				3
Housing Options	5	4					9
Transfer	1	3					4
Total:	83	93	17				193

Allocations Review

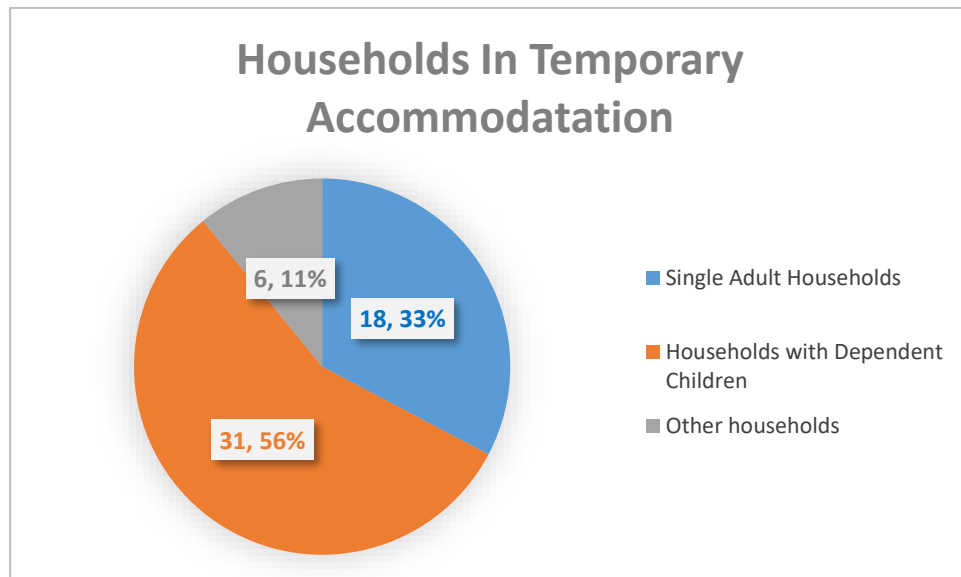
Our Allocations Scheme explains the rules, criteria and procedures that determine how we allocate social and affordable housing to households in North Norfolk. We last reviewed our scheme in 2018, since then the scheme has been updated to reflect changes in the law, and minor changes as allowed by the scheme.

Housing is a top priority for North Norfolk District Council - Our Corporate Plan 2019 to 2023, Housing Strategy, Homeless and Rough Sleeping Strategy and more recently our quality-of-life strategy all recognise that having a safe and secure home is one of the most important things in life.

To ensure that people have homes that meet their needs, giving priority to those in greatest need, and making the application process easier we are reviewing our scheme, this will be undertaken in several phases. The initial phase is looking at how the current scheme is working and identifying priority areas.

Temporary Accommodation

As at the 31 October 2022 there were 55 households in Temporary Accommodation:



* Other households includes couples and families with older Children.

There has been a significant rise not only the demand for temporary accommodation over the last few years but also in the difficulty in moving people on due to the lack of

available accommodation, due to the housing crisis and the overall environment. The following table demonstrates the increase in temporary accommodation numbers through a snapshot of five periods in time

31 October 2018	17
31 October 2019	27
31 October 2020	46
31 October 2021	42
31 October 2022	55

The figures for 2020 and 2021 reflect the additional measures put in place during the pandemic.

In order to minimise the levels of use of bed and breakfast type accommodation, we continue to actively seek opportunities to identify alternative solutions this includes increasing our own portfolio of accommodation. We have recently completed on a 2 bed property in Sheringham and have had an offer accepted on a 2 bed flat in Mundesley.

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 October 2022 we have had 7 (verified) and 3 (unverified) new reports of People sleeping Rough.

No. of clients	Outcome
0	Moved from NSAP to social housing
0	Voluntarily left NSAP
2	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 own accommodation
1	Moved to Reeves Court
1	Lost contact

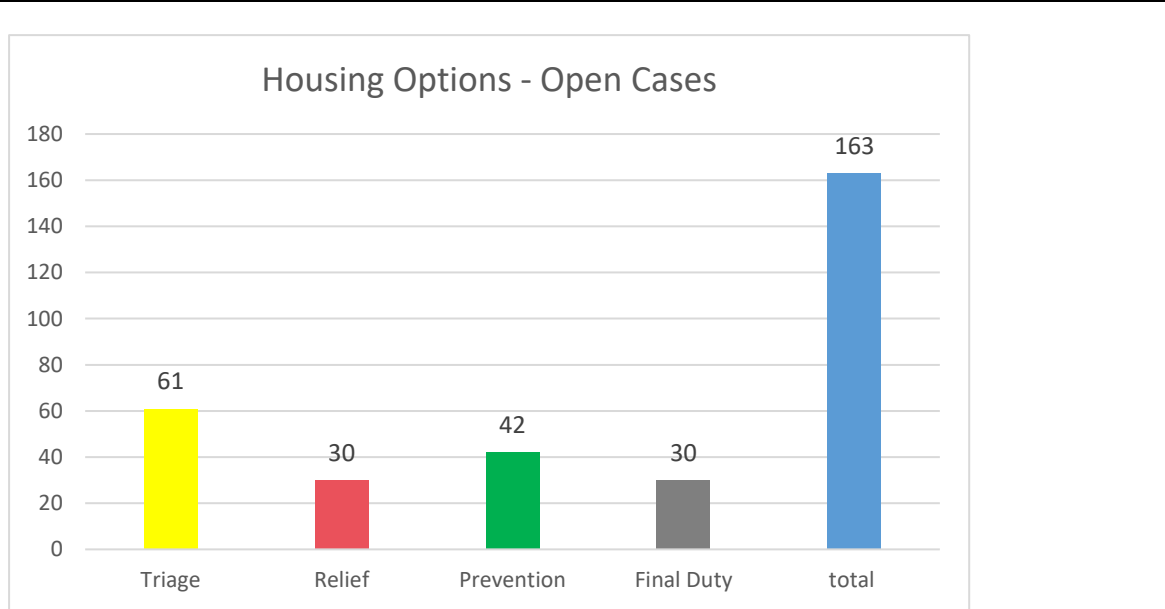
Homeless and Rough Sleeper Strategy

An operational review of the Homeless and Rough Strategy has been undertaken This looked at what has been achieved against the actions within the Strategy. The Strategy is due to be fully revised and updated by 2024 and consultation will be undertaken to help inform and shape the strategy going forward, including listening to people with experience of homelessness to help us shape our services and future strategy priorities. We will continue to focus on early intervention, homeless prevention and strengthening pathways and partnerships.

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.

Demand on the service remains high, at the end of October there were **163** open cases:



For the same period 389 cases were closed, the majority of these were Triage Cases (292) where applicants were provided with support and advice and/ or early intervention work was successful and prevented the loss of a tenancy.

For all other cases the following outcomes were achieved:

Prevention Cases Closed: 33

- Supported Housing: **3**
- Registered Provider Tenancy: **9**
- Private Rented Sector Tenancy: **15**
- Staying with family or Friends: **4**
- Owner-occupier: **1**
- Not Known: **1**

Relief Cases Closed: 37

- Contact Lost: **8**
- Local connection referral accepted by other LA: **1**
- Withdrew Application: **11**
- Supported Housing: **3**
- staying with friends:
- Private rented sector: **7**
- Registered Provider Tenancy: **7**

Rough Sleeper Cases: 2

- Registered Provider Tenancy: **1**
- **Temporary Accommodation: 1**

Decisions: 15

- Homeless + no priority need: **14**
- Not Homeless: **1**

Final Duties accepted: 10

- Private Rented Sector Tenancy: 1
- Registered Provider Tenancy: 9

Domestic Abuse

We have recently recruited to a number of posts within the Housing Options Team, including a Domestic Abuse Project Officer. This new fixed term post has been created to assist the housing service to achieve the Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (DAHA) accreditation, to promote good practice and to assist with raising awareness and improving the organisation's understanding and response to domestic abuse.

Between the 01 April and 30 October, we have had 24 new cases where applicants have told us that they are at risk or have previously experienced Domestic Abuse. Of these, 4 people have said that the reason they have lost or are losing their home is due to Domestic Abuse.

We continue to work with Norfolk County Council (NODA) to develop more effective mechanisms for recording data to ensure that we are able to understand the level of prevalence, demand and gaps in support/services

DLUCH visit by Homelessness Advisor

A homelessness advisor from the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) visited North Norfolk in September. The advisor had viewed the NSAP accommodation the loft, Sheringham, meeting both the customer and staff. The advisor had also met with the Housing Manager and Assistant Director. The initial feedback had been positive in terms of homelessness performance and prevention. Full feedback will be provided in due course.

Ukraine Household - Emerging Homelessness situation

We are supporting 8 Ukraine households with Housing due to placement breakdowns with the Host or Hosts not able to commit to providing a Home beyond the six months. 6 of the Households have an active homeless application and 2 households remain with their hosts whilst potential re-matches are explored.

Household Make Up (open cases)	
Single Adult	2
Couple	1
1 Adult 1 Child	1
2 Adults 2 Children	1
2 Adults 3 Children	1

Final Duty Outcome X 3
Private Rented Property found and financial assistance provided
Allocation of housing from the council's housing register.
Awaiting a rematch or alternative accommodation offer whilst in Temporary Accommodation.

With hosts facing increased pressure from the rising cost of living, and their circumstances changing we anticipate that we will see more homeless presentations.

Tenancy Sustainment

In September and October, the first of the targeted 3 day prevention workshops were held, These workshops cover all aspects of Money, Tenancies, Housing, Independent Living Skills Knowledge, Confidence and Resilience. The workshops are being delivered by Your Own Place and each session has had 7 delegates and feedback has been very positive.

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.

To date (end of October) the total grant spend is £50,637 with a further £71, 096 being approved.

Integrated Housing Adaptations Team

The team has received a total of 96 new contacts for September & October collectively, taking the year to date total contacts to 337. There continues to be a steady upward trajectory for new contacts month on month, when comparing the same period (Sept-Oct) for 2021 there was a total of 64 new contacts and year to date total contacts was 257.

Reducing wait times for assessments as the service as a whole remains a priority within the team, we now have four assessment officers processing new contacts and prioritising cases accordingly. Ensuring workflow is a priority and we are considering ways to manage the demand to prevent 'bottle necks' from occurring within the system.

A total of 24 cases were approved during the period from September-October with a value of approximately £229,982. This takes the total approved cases for the financial year to 106 with a total commitment of approximately £873,819.00

In addition, 25 grants were completed during September and taking October taking the total for the financial year to 75 completed adaptations with a total spend of approximately £768,211

The Home repairs pilot continues to receive and process existing referrals from IHAT, Social Prescribing, Energy Officer and Environmental Protection. To date we have

completed two cases, with a third nearing completion. We also have a further two cases with scheduled work.

We have successfully recruited a new 'Waiting Well Officer' to work alongside existing services. It is anticipated this role will further sign-post our vulnerable customers to existing services and grants that are currently available within the Council.

2 Forthcoming Activities and Developments.

3 Meetings attended