

CABINET MEMBERS REPORT TO COUNCIL

December 2023

COUNCILLOR WENDY FREDERICKS – PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR HOUSING & PEOPLE SERVICES

For the Period up to 30 November 2023

1 Progress on Portfolio Matters.

Benefits

Universal Credit (UC) managed migration

The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) have now approved their migration plans for 2024/25. They will be notifying the remaining applicable households of the need to move to UC during this period, which includes residual tax credits cases (including those on both Employment Support Allowance and tax credits and Housing Benefit), all cases on Income Support and Jobseeker's Allowance (Income Based) and those combined with Housing Benefit and Housing Benefit only cases (except those Housing Benefit only customers living in Supported or Temporary Accommodation).

They plan to undertake the issuing of Migration Notices to Working Age benefit claimants sequentially starting with Income Support (April–June), Employment Support Allowance with Child tax credits (July – September) and Jobseekers Allowance (September). If a Housing Benefit customer is receiving one of these benefits, they will receive a Migration Notice from the DWP. From April the DWP will also invite tax credits with Housing Benefit and then Housing Benefit (only) customers to move onto UC.

To support Housing Benefit (HB) customers with the transition from HB to UC, we have set up a webpage providing important information on the process, where to get support, and how to calculate entitlement to UC.

We are also working closely with local job centres, and we will be identifying affected households to ensure they transition to UC smoothly.

Discretionary Housing Payments

We continue to administer Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP) to support tenancy sustainment, homelessness, 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 2023/24, North Norfolk has been allocated funding of £103,037, and up to 30th November 2023 we have spent 73.62% of our allocation across 84 households. A further total of 153 applications (141 households) 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.

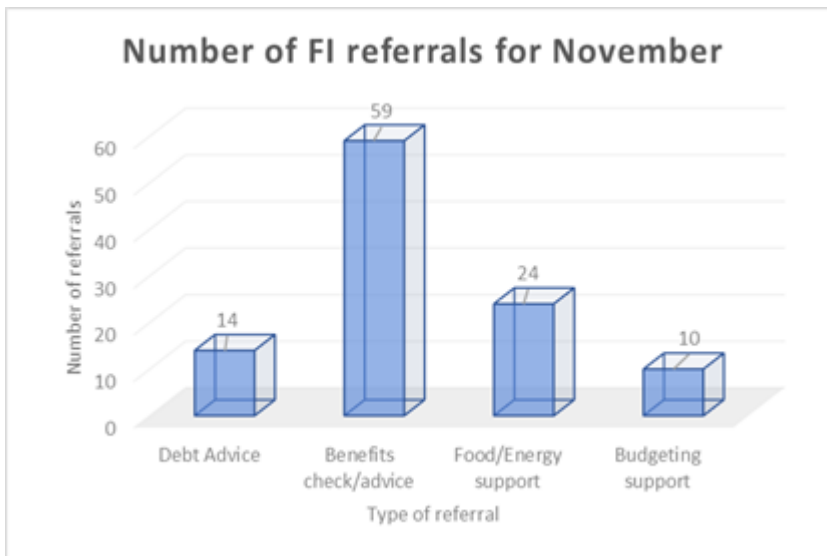
A breakdown of how the expenditure has been allocated across the 82 households can be seen below

Single Working Age Households		Couple Pension Age Households	
Number of successful applications	51	Number of successful applications	1
Rent Arrears	£3,033.11	Rent Arrears	£700.00
Rent Deposit/Moving Costs	£210.00	Rent Deposit/Moving Costs	£0.00
Ongoing Rent Shortfall	£45,971.77	Ongoing Rent Shortfall	£0.00
Sub Total Expenditure	£49,214.88	Sub Total Expenditure	£700.00
Single Pension Age Households		Family Working Age Households	
Number of successful applications	7	Number of successful applications	22
Rent Arrears	£0.00	Rent Arrears	£800.00
Rent Deposit/Moving Costs	£0.00	Rent Deposit/Moving Costs	£1,095.00
Ongoing Rent Shortfall	£2,559.76	Ongoing Rent Shortfall	£19,899.19
Sub Total Expenditure	£2,559.76	Sub Total Expenditure	£21,794.19
Couple Working Age Households		Family Pension Age Households	
Number of successful applications	3	Number of successful applications	0
Rent Arrears	£0.00	Rent Arrears	£0.00
Rent Deposit/Moving Costs	£0.00	Rent Deposit/Moving Costs	£0.00
Ongoing Rent Shortfall	£1,583.90	Ongoing Rent Shortfall	£0.00
Sub Total Expenditure	£1,583.90	Sub Total Expenditure	£0.00
		Total Expenditure	£75,852.73

We are continuing to use data insights to proactively target low-income households who have rent arrears, rent shortfalls, or who are at risk of homelessness.

Financial Inclusion

During November the Financial Inclusion Team received 107 referrals. Most referrals (55%) were received from residents requiring support with income maximisation through welfare benefits, grants, and other income support related schemes. A further 22% of referrals were from residents requiring support with food and energy.



From 1st November, we are working with Citizens Advice (CA) who are handling referrals into the Financial Inclusion Team around debt advice. The CA will be supporting the client on face-to-face basis where possible at the council offices.

Housing Benefit Speed of Processing

Our unpublished data for Housing Benefit Speed of Processing for November is 12 days for New Claims (local target 20 days) and 14 days for changes in circumstances (local target 14 days). We are continuing to review our processing times by reviewing best practice and procedures.

Housing Options and Homelessness Prevention

Your Choice Your Home

As at the 30 November there were **2475** households on the housing list with **562** (23%) being on the Housing Register – this register contains those qualifying applicants who have the most urgent housing needs.

	Housing List by Bedroom Need				Homes Let by Property Size 01 April to 31 October 2023			
	Housing Register	Housing Options	Transfer	Total	Housing Register	Housing Options	Transfer	Total
1 Bed	254	966	189	1409	62	3	4	69
2 Bed	126	371	97	594	68	2	3	73
3 Bed	87	103	39	229	11	0	1	12
4 Bed	88	87	43	218	1	0	0	1
5 Bed +	7	12	6	25	0	0	0	0
Total	562	1539	374	2475	142	5	8	155

Lettings in the last month slightly increased due to the completion/handover of 7 new Victory homes in Southrepps, these new homes attracted over 1,248 bids.

The overall number of lettings has decreased by 33% when compared to the same period in 2022 and we continue to see an increased need for family homes. Over 30% of the total homes had a minimum age requirement.

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.

Approaches to the service remain high and between 01 April to 31 October 2023 we have opened 736 new cases. Each case represents a household who has contacted us as they have some sort of housing need, and we are still seeing an increase in homeless households (Relief cases) presenting to the Local Authority.

As at the 30 November 2023, there were 195 open cases. 141 households were initially assessed as threatened with or were homeless, of these 63 were households with children.

The three most common triggers of homelessness during the period were:

- The loss of a private tenancy
- Households no longer being able to stay with families and friends
- Domestic abuse

Temporary Accommodation

As at the 30 November 2023 there were 66 households in Temporary Accommodation.

- 30(45%) Family Households have dependent Children

- 34 (52%) Single Adult Households
- 2 (3%) Other Households (includes couples and households with older children)

These figures show a snapshot figure of the number of households in Temporary Accommodation as at 30 November 2023 and represent an overall increase of 16% from the same date in 2022.

The number of Households with dependent children has also increased by **13%** compared to November 2022. Included in the 30 family households, there are 66 dependent children.

Rough Sleeping

The nationwide annual rough sleeper count compiled by government take places every year with the most recent one being undertaken by North Norfolk District Council on the 29 November 2023. People sleeping rough were defined as those sleeping or about to bed down in open air locations and other places including tents and makeshift shelters. The snapshot can take place on a single date chosen by the local authority between 1 October to 30 November. The snapshot recorded only those people seen or thought to be sleeping rough on a single night and highlights that the number of rough sleepers in North Norfolk has consistently reduced since 2018, when there were 9 people sleeping rough. In 2021 this was more than halved down to 3, and in 2023 there was just 1-person rough sleeping.

2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
9	10	7	3	3	1

Annual Snapshot figures

During the month we have activated our Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP) and helped 9 people who were sleeping rough access emergency accommodation.

Housing Strategy

Local Authority Housing Fund

In the first round of funding government offered the Council up to £1,245,210 to provide 11 additional affordable homes in the district by December 2023 – initially to house Ukrainian and Afghan refugee households. Cabinet (on 6/3/23) agreed to accept the money and work with the Flagship Housing Group to deliver the 11 homes. We have identified 11 suitable properties and offers have been made and accepted on all 11. The Council will own one (purchase now complete) and Flagship will own the remaining 10.

The Council has accepted a further £560,000 of funding to provide four further homes. Three will initially house Afghan refugee households. The fourth will provide a home to house a homeless household. The Council has offers accepted on four properties and we expect all sales to complete by January 2024.

Long-term all 15 homes would be available to households on the Council's housing list, either as temporary accommodation for homeless households or as a long-term affordable home.

New Affordable Homes

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 20+ developments which will, subject to approvals, yield 350+ new Affordable Homes in the next few years. Nutrient Neutrality is a delaying factor for many sites. Officers have worked with Broadland Housing Association to get in-principle support from Homes England (the government's funding agency for affordable housing) to fund a package of five Exception sites in North Norfolk to be delivered over the next 2-3 years.

We anticipate completion of 27 affordable homes in 2023/24.

Grant for Energy Efficiency Improvement Works

North Norfolk District Council (NNDC) is part of the Norfolk Warm Homes Consortium of five Norfolk districts.

The consortium has been successful in a bid for £3,933,000 to improve the energy efficiency of 'off-gas' homes. Eligibility criteria for future grants has been simplified and will include any home within the most deprived areas in the UK (measured by the Government's Index of Multiple Deprivation income deciles 1-3) if privately owned or privately rented, provided the Energy Performance Certificate is rated D-G and the households has no more than £100k in savings. This will open up the grant to many more eligible households – across Norfolk there are 603 postcode areas covering 2,600 properties we believe meet the criteria and 23% of these are in North Norfolk.

The Council's Energy Officer working with Norfolk Warm Homes has been promoting the scheme in the Stalham area. The local community; Town Council, shop-keepers, schools, etc. have been very supportive and as a result Norfolk Warm Homes has had over 80 applications (as at 06/12/23). We plan to replicate this approach in other parts of the district in the New Year.

Integrated Housing Adaptations Team (IHAT)

Work has begun to roll out discretionary grants – the team have received a significant number of enquiries and referrals since October, and are now processing these, with work already underway on some projects.

The Disabled Facilities Grant webpage, how this is accessed and the information that is available to customers is being reviewed with an aim to improve the level of information available to customers who would like to 'self-serve' and simplify the ways in which customers can self-refer directly into IHAT for both DFG and a select few discretionary grants.

Disabled Facilities Grant

New contacts	46
YTD total Contacts	410
Total approved grants	13

Total approved grants value	£115,187.39
YTD Approval value	£815,529.27
Completed adaptations	5
Total spend for period	£38,340.76
YTD Completed cases	95
YTD Spend	£870,615.45

Discretionary Grants

New referrals	16
Completed grants	0
Completed grant value	0
YTD Spend	0

Community Connectors

On November 10th, the Government Chief Medical Officer released his annual report, 'Health in an ageing Society'. Both the North Norfolk Health and Wellbeing Partnership Older peoples group, and the Community Connector team received mentions.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/chief-medical-officers-annual-report-2023-health-in-an-ageing-society>

The Community Connectors, alongside their regular presence at community groups, warm spaces and other events, attended two sessions with the WOW bus, Recovery College's 10th anniversary event, Healthier North Walsham's Dementia Fair, a Town Council drop in session, markets and a Christmas light up event.

<https://www.poppylandradi.co.uk/shows/community-connectors> shows recorded covering the following topics:

- The Vault, Stalham
- Community Gyms

Social Prescribing

For November 2023, the statistical highlights are as follows:

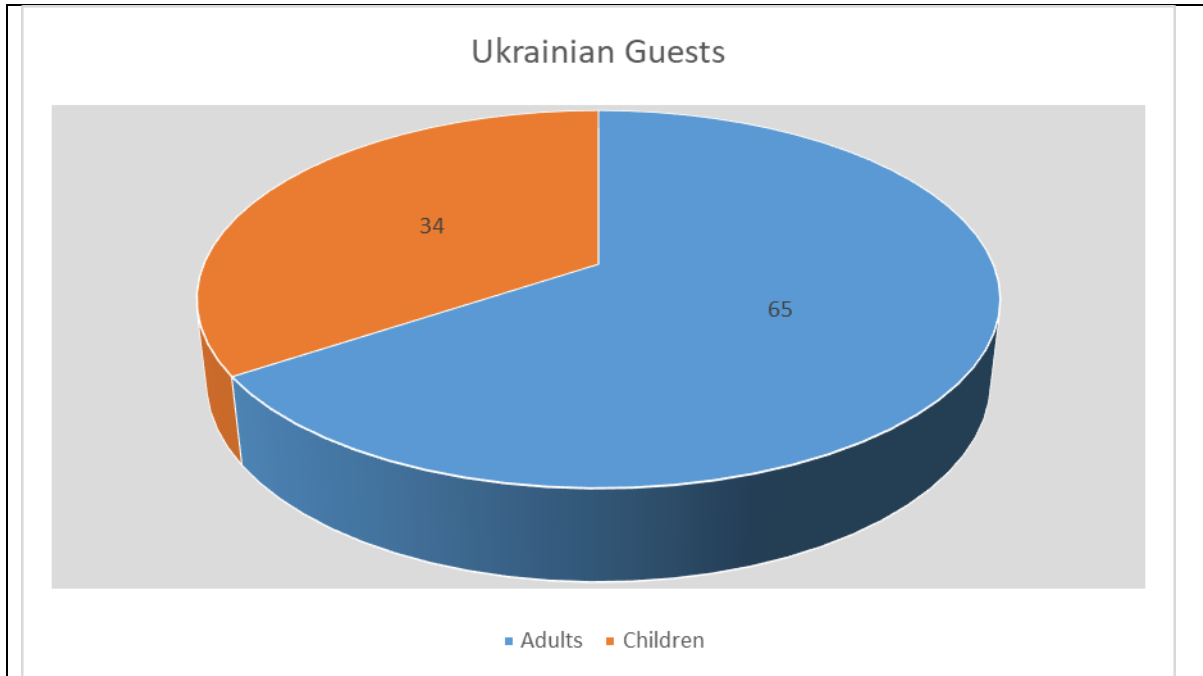
- **63** Referrals into Social Prescribing identifying **111** concerns
- **97** Active cases within the team
- **968** Referrals dealt with since Jan 2023
- **1655** concerns by residents supported since Jan 2023

The most prolific issues raised at the Early Help Hub have been financial abuse of vulnerable residents and hoarding cases with housing association tenants.

In addition to the regular Hub meetings, two professional meetings have been held in the last month to address complex cases.

Homes for Ukraine (H4U)

There are currently ninety-nine Ukrainian guests being supported in the North Norfolk, of which sixty-five are adults and thirty-four are under the age of eighteen.



There are thirty-five hosts, of which two are hosting two separate families/un-related single guests.

Two families are currently in NNDC temporary accommodation.

Grants

Sustainable Communities Fund: The panel met on the 4th of December 2023. Seven Applications were presented, of which three (totalling £10,579.00) were approved, and the remaining four were deferred pending further information (totalling £42,020.71).

Arts and Culture Fund: The panel met on the 27th of November 2023. Three applications were approved (totalling £7,700.00) and one was deferred pending further information (totalling £3435.00).

Community Transport Fund: The panel met on the 27th of November. Two applications were approved, totalling £40,000.00.

2 Forthcoming Activities and Developments.

3 Meetings attended

- Mundesley Parish Council Full Council
- “ “ “ Parking Meeting
- Community Lead Housing RSN
- Integrated Care Board Meeting at NNDC
- Seminar Rural Health and Care RSN
- North Walsham High School Awards Presentation Evening

- Dementia Awareness Fayre
- Shell Liaison Meeting
- Cabinet
- Business Planning
- Cabinet Pre-Agenda
- Portfolio holder catchup Housing
- Portfolio holder catchup Peoples' Services
- Bidwells Consultation Briefing
- North Walsham Development Briefing
- North Norfolk Health and Wellbeing Partnership – Chair
- North Norfolk Headway Collaboration Meeting
- Leeds Building Society Meeting