

## **CABINET MEMBERS REPORT TO COUNCIL**

**23 September 2020**

### **COUNCILLOR ANDREW BROWN - CABINET MEMBER FOR PLANNING & HOUSING**

For the period June 2020 to September 2020

#### **1 Progress on Portfolio Matters (Housing elements).**

##### **Business as usual activity**

##### Temporary Housing

The Council has an urgent need for temporary housing and has used an existing budget to buy four properties for use as temporary housing, Cabinet has also recently supported the refurbishment of a Council owned property in Wicken Green to be used as temporary accommodation – bringing the total to seven homes. These homes reduce the cost of providing temporary housing; the alternative being more expensive and less suitable bed and breakfast accommodation. A bid has been submitted for government funding under its Next Steps Accommodation Programme (which follows on from the “Everyone In” initiative aimed at getting rough sleepers accommodated to reduce Covid19 risks). NNDC has submitted a bid for £125k government funding to help purchase four further units of accommodation to be used as a temporary/move-on accommodation for rough sleepers. We hope to hear if our bid has been successful imminently, and if it is a report will be taken to Cabinet seeking further resources to implement the scheme.

##### Section 157 sales and enquiries

There have been a very high number of sales (or at least enquires) in the last few months involving homes with a Section 157 restriction. This restriction requires that many ex-Council homes sold under the Right-To-Buy can only be sold on to someone who has lived or worked in Norfolk for the preceding three years and that the home is used as a primary residence (i.e. not a second home). The aim of this restriction is to keep a pool of relatively affordable homes to buy for local people. The Council intends to work with estate agents to ensure this restriction is better understood and publicised to prospective purchasers, in order both to better achieve the objective and help prevent wasted time on behalf of all parties involved.

##### Extra Care Housing

The construction of Housing 21's Fakenham Extra Care Housing scheme is progressing well. The sales and letting launch for the 66 flats (36 shared-ownership, 30 rented) will begin from mid-November.

##### Housing Strategy – 2020 – 2023

The key themes for the Housing Strategy are set out in the 'Homes for Local People' element of the Corporate Plan. The Strategic Housing Team is preparing a report on the context/ profile of housing in the District and proposals for member engagement in development of the detailed strategy.

#### Emerging Local Plan

The Housing team are working closely with the Planning Policy team to ensure the emerging Local Plan reflects housing need in the District and helps deliver as many affordable homes as possible.

#### **Covid 19 related activity**

#### Environmental Protection Team

As COVID 19 restrictions have eased, the team have seen the number of housing condition complaints increase. However, it is notable that requests for assistance in the summer months often *decrease* due to the warm dry weather and then increase in Autumn and Winter due to higher precipitation levels and lower temperatures.

Currently, housing enforcement officers continue to only undertake home visits where essential (i.e. dwellings where there is a high likelihood of significant harm occurring) and where social distancing can be applied. As such, the number of home visits required during recent months has been low (this is fortunate, as redeployment cut team numbers by 50%) which has allowed officers to focus on historical complaints and other cases (including 'filthy and verminous' premises, dangerous structures, Houses in Multiple Occupation etc.).

#### IHAT

The integrated housing adaptations team are now able to progress more adaptations cases. All contractors are now back working, but this has resulted in significant backlogs and many are experiencing difficulties in getting some materials and supplies. Some customers are still reluctant to go ahead with adaptations and are delaying work, but most are now happy to proceed.

All assessments are initially telephone-based, a view is taken as to whether a visit is required to clarify issues prior to recommendations being made. All schedules are being produced based on information provided by third parties and visits as yet have not been needed to progress any cases.

#### Housing Options

At the start of lockdown, in accordance with Government advice, the team focused on accommodating rough sleepers and homeless households. The team continue to support rough sleepers and those at risk of homelessness or rough sleeping. With the agreement of partner Registered Providers the team temporarily halted the choice based lettings scheme. This has now been reviewed and the partners have all agreed to a partial reopening of 'Your Choice Your Home'. This means that 1 in 3 vacancies will be considered as a direct let and this will give the team the ability to consider clients that the authority is working with under the homelessness legislation and rough sleepers. The remaining 2 out of 3 lets will be advertised through Your Choice Your Home.

### Housing Enabling

Work in this area continues in spite of lockdown, working with partner Registered Providers to assess local housing need, identify suitable housing sites and work with partners, landowners and colleagues in Planning to help deliver affordable homes. In Northrepps, Broadland Housing Association held a virtual consultation event with local residents about their proposed exceptions housing scheme in the village. The event was well received. Planning applications have recently been submitted for Exception schemes in Hindringham and Walcott.

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

The result of our bid for Next Steps Funding is awaited (See section 1 for further detail).

## **3 Meetings attended**

## **3 Performance Information**

### **Affordable Homes**

The projected number of affordable homes to be delivered in 2020/21 is 262 – the highest number for many years. This figure includes some large schemes (H21's Extra Care scheme – 66 flats; Flagship's Laundry Loke development – 43 homes; S106 homes at Hempstead Road, Holt – 35 homes). Some of these developments are due to complete towards the end of 2020/21 so some may slip into 2021/22. By the end of August, 23 new affordable homes had been delivered so far this year.

### **Environmental Protection Team**

Statistics from April 01 2020 to August 31 2020:

- Number of housing condition complaints received: 23
- Number of those complaints resulting in inspections: 4
- Number of those dwellings inspected with category 1 hazards: 2
- Number of dwellings made decent (including cases where initial complaint was made before 01 April 2020): 7

## **Housing Options Team**

### Housing List and Properties Let

As at 31st Aug there were 2,902 households on the housing list of which 395 were in the housing register, broken down as follows: 1 x Priority Card, 238 x Band 1 and 156 x Band 2.

Between 1 Apr 2020 – 31 Aug 2020 there were 96 affordable home lets (in 2019/20 the team let 304 homes).

### Homelessness

Temporary accommodation – as at 31 Aug 2020: 59 clients were in TA (by 11 Sep 2020 this had gone down to 47)

Live Cases: as at 11 September 2020:

- Final Duties accepted: 23
- Prevention duty accepted: 23
- Relief Duty accepted: 38
- Triage (mixture of new cases, rough sleepers, being supported): 60

Rough Sleepers

- Currently still being accommodated: 10
- Currently rough sleeping: 7

## **IHAT (Integrated Housing Adaptations Team)**

The team has a budget for 2020/21 of £1,194,000 and also has £404,000 budget for work approved in 2019/20 and carried forward into 2020/21.

Up to the end of August:

- Recommendations for adaptations received – 67
- Cases approved – 41
- Cases completed – 20
- Grant approved - £3358k
- Grant spent - £165k

