

CABINET MEMBERS REPORT TO COUNCIL

17 November 2021

COUNCILLOR WENDY FREDERICKS - CABINET MEMBER FOR HOUSING & BENEFITS

For the period – October to November 2021

1 Progress on Portfolio Matters.

Benefits

[Test & Trace Support Payment](#)

We are continuing to see a higher number of Test & Trace Support Payment applications. The table here shows the number of applications received since January 2021.

Month received	Number of standard applications	Number of discretionary applications	Number of local discretionary applications
January 2021	62	52	0
February 2021	12	18	0
March 2021	8	5	0
April 2021	1	1	0
May 2021	2	2	0
June 2021	7	7	0
July 2021	60	40	3
August 2021	40	43	0
September 2021	32	24	1
October 2021	36	22	1

The table here shows the total applications received since the scheme started on 28th September 2020. The DHSC scheme is due to end on 31st March 2022.

Scheme	Received	Approved	Rejected	Outstanding/Pending
Standard	312	147	161	4
Discretionary	267	116	145	6
Local Discretionary	5	5	0	0
Total	584	268	306	10

[Housing Benefit and Council Tax Support accessibility improvements](#)

The Benefits Team have been improving and modernising their accessibility options for customers contacting the service. Last year we implemented the Civica **online New Claim** form and we are now seeing more than 70% of new claims being submitted through this option. Last week we went live with the Civica **online change in circumstances** form which allows customers to report changes affecting their Housing Benefit and Council Tax Support. It also allows customers to upload evidence as part of the form submission. The form will reduce processing times, will encourage customers to report changes more quickly, and reduce overpayments from occurring.

We are currently testing the Civica online **Review Form**. The review form will support the Housing Benefit Award Initiative which is a scheme funded by the DWP to identify fraud and error in the benefits system. The review form will provide the customer with the current information used in the assessment for benefit, which they can check against to confirm if their circumstances are up to date.

All Civica online forms are intuitive, reference directly into the back office system, and the data is automatically loaded onto the Civica assessment system.

[Number of residents in receipt of Housing Benefit & Council Tax Support](#)

Date	Housing Benefit & Council Tax Support claimants	Council Tax Support only claimants	Housing Benefit only claimants	Total number of claimants
01/09/2021	3657	3772	395	7824
01/10/2021	3625	3762	391	7778
01/11/2021	3591	3780	389	7760

The number of people in receipt of Housing Benefit & Council Tax Support is starting to reduce as we start to see residents financial circumstances improve following the pandemic. We are also starting to see the number of Housing Benefit claims reduce as claimants migrate onto Universal Credit.

[Caseload outstanding as at 2nd November 2021](#)

Number of benefit cases outstanding to update has increased to 1628 partly due to the increase in Universal Credit notifications following the £20 uplift ending, and claimants ending their furloughed period.

Housing

Temporary Housing

There are currently **43** households in Temporary Accommodation, this includes the 7 rough sleepers currently accommodated as follows:

- 0 x Spot Purchase
- 3 x Reeves Court

- 4 X NSAP (Next Steps Accommodation Programme)

Following the Council's successful bid to secure £140,000 from the Government's Next Steps Accommodation Programme (NSAP) we have completed the purchase of four homes for single rough sleepers or people at a risk of rough sleeping, and all four are now occupied.

Cabinet have also agreed to the repurposing of £500k Disabled Facilities Grant budget (March 2021) to purchase accessible temporary accommodation units and £640k of Housing Reserves (October 2021) to purchase family temporary accommodation homes. The first of these further purchases has completed and the home (an ex-Flagship bungalow) is in use, meaning there are 12 council owned homes being used for temporary accommodation. Offers have been accepted on three further homes, to bring the total to 15.

The Council successfully bid for £35k from the government's Rough Sleepers Accommodation Programme (RSAP) as a contribution to the refurbishment of a one-bed self-contained flat for rough sleeper move-on housing. This project has now achieved planning permission and the works have been tendered and will start on site in November.

New Affordable Homes

We project that housing associations will provide 163 new affordable homes in 2021/22. These homes were due to be 71 affordable rent and 92 shared ownership, however, as a result of a Cabinet decision regarding use of Housing Reserves to convert shared ownership homes to affordable rent, the figures will now be 73 affordable rent and 91 shared ownership (with more conversion due to take place in 2022). So far 89 new affordable homes have been delivered in 2021/22

Housing Strategy

Full Council approved the new Housing Strategy at its meeting in July. Officers have begun work on the actions in the Housing Strategy action plan and reports on progress will be reported as actions complete.

Community Led Housing

We continue to provide support to existing and new community led housing groups – this year grant has been given to Stable Door (community led housing organisation in Sheringham) to help purchase an additional home and one new Community Land Trust has formed with the aim of providing affordable homes for local people.

Housing Options Team

The team continue to focus on supporting all clients that approach the service.

Your Choice Your Home

As at 31 Oct 2021 there were **2586** households on the housing list of whom:

- **402** were on the Housing Register (highest priority) broken down as follows:
- Priority Card x **5**

- Band 1 x **234**
- Band 2 x **163**

Breakdown as requested of need within Housing Register (1*, B1 & B2)

31-Oct-21

Count of Applicant Calculated Bedroom Need	Column Labels																		
	1	2	3	4	5	8	1 Total	2	2	3	4	8	2 Total	1*	1	2	3	1* Total	Grand Total
Row Labels	1	2	3	4	5	8	1 Total	2	2	3	4	8	2 Total	1*	1	2	3	1* Total	Grand Total
2 adults (including carer)		5					5		1				1						6
Access to children	1	1					2												2
Couple	25	1					26	6					6	1				1	33
Family 1 Child		41	3				44		20				20		1			1	65
Family 2 children under 10 years		10	5				15		6	2			8						23
Family 2 children, 1 child 10 or more years, both same sex				7			7			3			3						10
Family 2 children, 1 child 10 or more years, one of each sex				7			7			22			22			1		1	30
Family 3 children			1	15			16			3	30		33						49
Family 4 children				4			4				7		7						11
Family 5+ children						5	5					3	3						8
Other family			1	1	1	1	4		1	3			4						8
Single Person (blank)	99						99	56					56	2				2	157
Grand Total	125	58	24	20	1	6	234	62	28	33	37	3	163	3	1	1	5	402	

Lets

QTR 1 01 Apr 2021 to 30 June 2021 - **88** Households have secured social housing

QTR 2 01 Jul 2021 to 30 Sep 2021 - **97** Households have secured social housing

Homelessness

There is still a firm focus on Rough sleepers from MHCLG in that we are still reporting monthly stats in relation to rough sleepers within the district.

As at 31 October 2021 the authority is working with 12 Rough Sleepers.

5 x Rough sleeping within the district, of these 3 are entrenched

0 x Rough Sleepers currently being accommodated under Spot Purchase

3 x Rough Sleeper in Reeves Court

4 x Former Rough Sleepers accommodated in the NSAP properties

Following a recent discussion with MHCLG we are still focusing on finding solutions for our single clients to whom the authority is accommodating.

As at 31 October 2021, there were 154 active live cases:

- Final Duties accepted: 20
- Prevention duty accepted: 36
- Relief Duty accepted: 47
- Reviews: 2
- Triage (mixture of new cases, rough sleepers, clients being supported): 49

Integrated Housing Adaptations Team (IHAT)

The team has received 252 new contacts year to date resulting in 137 recommendations for adaptations. There are still issues with contractor capacity and some contractors have advised that they do not have capacity to provide quotes for works at the current time, this along with the increased complexity of jobs and shortage of materials is affecting completions. There is a lot of demand in the system, assessments are being completed relatively quickly but a backlog of cases needing schedules of work is building. This situation is being closely monitored. A further 2 grants were approved in October with a value of approximately £48,000 taking the total approved for the financial year to 45 with a total commitment of approximately £460,000. In addition 3 grants were completed in October taking the total for the financial year to 44 with a total spend of approximately £545,000 (this includes interim payments for some jobs which have started on site but not yet completed).

2 Forthcoming Activities and Developments.

3 Meetings attended

Cabinet Meetings
Business Planning Meetings
Portfolio Meetings
Portfolio and Director catchups
Planning Policy and Built Heritage Working Party
Flagship and Homes for Wells Meeting
Code of Conduct Training
Zero Budget Briefing
MPC Full Council
Mundesley Gun Emplacement Meeting
Mundesley Coastal Management Scheme Update
Team Planning Discussion Meeting

Civic Reception
Homes England Affordable Housing Grants Roadshow
Community Led Housing Event
Tackling Domestic Abuse Event
NNDC Coastal Forum