

CABINET MEMBERS REPORT TO COUNCIL

January 2022

COUNCILLOR WENDY FREDERICKS - CABINET MEMBER FOR HOUSING AND BENEFITS

For the period to January 2021

1 Progress on Portfolio Matters.

Housing

Temporary Housing

As at 31 January 2022 there were **47** households in Temporary Accommodation, this includes the 10 new & former rough sleepers currently accommodated as follows:

- 3 x Protect & Vaccinate (P&V)
- 3 x Reeves Court
- 4 X Former Rough Sleepers: NSAP (Next Steps Accommodation Programme)

When current purchases/works are complete the Council will have a portfolio of 16 homes for use as temporary accommodation – five units of move-on accommodation for rough sleepers and 11 homes as alternatives to bed and breakfast for homeless households. Fourteen of the 16 homes are in use and the remaining two will be in use by the end of March. One of the purchased units requires works to bring it into use as a fully wheelchair accessible home – a badly needed gap in TA. The final 16th unit is the one funded by the Rough Sleepers Accommodation Programme (see below).

Five of the 16 homes have been part funded by the government:

- Next Steps Accommodation Programme - £140,000 grant towards four homes for use by ex-rough-sleepers. All four homes are now in use.
- Rough Sleepers Accommodation Programme - £35,000 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 the successful contractor aims to complete works by February 2022.

Purchase of homes to be used for temporary accommodation has also been possible as Cabinet agreed to the repurposing of £500k Disabled Facilities Grant budget (in March 2021) to purchase accessible temporary accommodation units and £640k of Housing Reserves (in October 2021) to purchase family temporary accommodation homes.

New Affordable Homes

We project that housing associations will provide 165 new affordable homes in 2021/22. We project 69 affordable rent and 96 shared ownership. These figures allow for the conversion of two shared ownership homes to affordable rent on a site in Little Snoring. As at the end of January 154 of these homes have been delivered (four subject to confirmation).

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.

We have appointed an Energy Officer who will start with us in March. The Energy Officer will identify suitable properties and support owner-occupiers and landlords with applications for improvement works. Our aim is to ensure we maximize take-up for North Norfolk residents.

Land Owners Event

On 16th March the Housing Strategy team will run a 'Webinar' for land owners, land agents and Parish/Town Councillors. The webinar will explain the process for land owners wishing to sell land for affordable housing. Our aim is to encourage land owners with suitable sites to offer these for affordable housing development.

This is a pilot and if successful is an event we will run again. We have sent out invites to 40+ land owners, agents and Parish/Town Councils.

Housing Options Team

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

Your Choice Your Home

As at 31 Jan 2022 there were **2658** households on the housing list of whom:

- **448** were on the Housing Register (highest priority) broken down as follows:
- Priority Card x **2**
- Band 1 x **256**
- Band 2 x **190**

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

QTR 3 01 Oct 2021 to 31 Dec 2021: **70** Households have secured social housing

Homelessness & Rough Sleeping

20 December 2022 – DLUHC instructed all authorities under the Protect & Vaccinate to bring in Rough Sleepers. NNDC at the 20 Dec 2021 had 8 Rough Sleepers through this programme we have brought in 5 –with 3 still rough sleeping and continue to refuse to come in.

3 x Entrenched rough sleepers

3 x Protect & Vaccinate (P&V)

3 x Rough Sleeper in Reeves Court

4 x Former Rough Sleepers accommodated in the NSAP properties

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

As 10 February 2022, there were 167 active live cases:

- Final Duties accepted: 39

- Prevention duty accepted: 34
- Relief Duty accepted: 45
- Decisions 1
- Reviews: 3
- Triage (mixture of new cases, rough sleepers, clients being supported): 45

Domestic Abuse

We are developing a Housing Options - Domestic Abuse Strategy/protocol. This strategy/protocol will outline our approach to assist and support any person experiencing, or threatened with, domestic abuse. The document will underpin the changes within the new Domestic Abuse Act and the introduction of the County Wide 'Support in Safe Accommodation Strategy' adopted for Norfolk and recently obtained approval in cabinet.

As a service we are also looking at achieving DAHA accreditation, which is a scheme open to housing associations, Local Authority housing teams, and homelessness providers across the UK to help them improve their response to domestic abuse.

We have completed a review and in the process of updating relevant pages on our website including informing and signposting people to the new Norfolk Integrated Domestic Abuse Service (NIDAS) which went live on the 3rd January 2022 and provides support and help for those experiencing domestic abuse.

Benefits

Household Support Fund

Since November, we have distributed £85k supporting 181 households to meet immediate needs and to help those struggling to afford food, energy and water bills, and other related essentials this winter. Applications to the fund are being invited through the council's web form and pro-active work is being carried out across People Services to identify eligible cases. [Home | Household Support Fund \(north-norfolk.gov.uk\)](http://www.norfolk.gov.uk)

We have £30k left in the fund to distribute up to 31st March 2022. We have provided a breakdown of the expenditure below.

	Food (£)	Fuel (£)	Water/Sewage (£)	Wider essentials linked to energy & water (£)	Wider essentials (£)
Households with children	400	19,650	4,361	249	9,145
Households without children	1,100	37,041	3,095	0	10,179
Total	1,500	56,691	7,456	249	19,324

We have paused the online application whilst we finalise outstanding applications and complete our pro-active enquiries. Once we know our latest position on expenditure committed and if we have funding available, we will be able to re-open the process.

[New Advice & Support web page](#)

We have created a new Advice & Support page for residents to easily access information around finance, housing, health and wellbeing. [Home | Advice and support \(north-norfolk.gov.uk\)](#) We will be publicising this page on the NNDC home page and across People Services pages.

[Housing Benefit \(HB\) Award Accuracy](#)

The Benefits Service have started a new initiative through the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) called Housing Benefit (HB) Award Accuracy. The Housing Delivery Division at the DWP will be working with authorities to further improve the accuracy of HB awards. Paying the right amount of benefit, at the right time, to the right person, is already a high priority for us but the indicator has been designed to support authorities in benchmarking and best practice.

Under the initiative we will be expected to identify a set volume of unreported changes in circumstances through targeted activities such as Full Case Reviews (FCRs).

The HB Award Accuracy Indicator is calculated by comparing the actual value of weekly reductions processed by us to the expected value of weekly reductions the DWP believe we should be making, based on a range of claim characteristics which estimate the risk of the claim having a change of circumstances. Performance will differ across LAs based on their HB caseload composition and it takes account of variations in regional rent levels and claimants who move to Universal Credit (UC).

We have now started to invite claimants to complete a review through our online form. [Home | Reviewing your benefit claim \(north-norfolk.gov.uk\)](#)

[Test & Trace Support Payment \(TTSP\)](#)

We have seen a high number of Test & Trace Support Payment (TTSP) applications over January. The table here shows the number of applications received over the last quarter.

Month	Received	Approved	Rejected	Pending	Outstanding
October 2021	59	39	20	0	0
November 2021	82	51	31	0	0
December 2021	128	66	57	5	0
January 2022	305	102	93	25	85

The current average response time to process TTSP applications and to make the payment into the applicant's bank account is 21 days. Please note some applications are processed within a quicker response time. We are prioritising applications for applicants who are in financial hardship or in need of immediate support.

Some applications are not received until after the applicant is out of their isolation period. An application can be made up to 42 days after the start of their isolation period. This is delaying processing times as it is more difficult to contact the customer and or employers for evidence that is required (as set out in the guidance by DHSC) to make a decision on their applications. Further information on TTSP can be found here [Home | Test and trace support payment \(north-norfolk.gov.uk\)](#)

Integrated Housing Adaptations Team (IHAT)

The team has received 350 new contacts year to date resulting in 200 recommendations for adaptations. There is a lot of demand in the system, assessments are being completed relatively quickly but a backlog of cases needing schedules of work has built up but this is now reducing. A further 3 grants were approved in January with a value of approximately £32,000 taking the total approved for the financial year to 66 with a total commitment of approximately £729,000. 61 grants have been completed to the end of January with a total spend of approximately £736,000 (this includes interim payments for some jobs which have started on site but not yet completed).

2 Forthcoming Activities and Developments.

3 Meetings attended