



Cabinet Member Report for Housing

Northampton Borough Council

9th December 2013

Improvement Programme

The Administration has initiated a programme to identify areas for improvement and to ensure we are ready to respond to the many opportunities and challenges the Housing Department will need to deal with in the coming months and years. This includes making sure the department is run properly and staff are fully supported while we implement more effective senior management. On 15th and 19th November the Leader and I attended meetings with Housing staff to discuss the restructure of the department and how we will be providing housing services to tenants in future.

Housing Stocks Options Review – Tenants Conference

The latest stage in the Housing Stock Options process was outlined and explained to tenants and leaseholders at the Tenants' Conference on the 5th and 6th November. There were two sessions with presentations from the Programme Manager and the Independent Tenant Advisor. The sessions were very well attended and gave us an opportunity to update tenants and leaseholders

Homelessness

I am proud of the work being done by the Homelessness Team and we compare very well to other similar sized authorities in the East Midlands on how we deal with the issue. Our aim is always to get people into permanent accommodation as quickly as possible although individual circumstances often mean there can be delays. For example, we have two households that have been in bed and breakfast for more than six weeks. One of these was found to be intentionally homeless and required further investigation. They have subsequently found privately rented accommodation. The other has had and accepted an offer of council accommodation and, as the property was being renovated, the person chose to wait.

Disabled Facilities Grants

Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs) is a priority for this Administration and a legal requirement for this authority. There has been huge demand this year, which officers have responded to promptly, resulting in significant pressure on the funds allocated to DFGs. It has become clear to me, through the monitoring activity I undertake as the responsible Cabinet Member for this service area, that I need to review the budget available to meet the high level of demand we are experiencing. I have also asked officers to review policies, processes and procedures around DFGs to ensure an efficient, effective and proportionate response to the needs of our customers.

Allocation Policy

Earlier in the year I requested that the housing allocations policy to be reviewed to enable people working in Northampton to be rehoused without the need to be in a reasonable preference group, to take into account some of the impact the new size criteria has had on the allocation of larger accommodation and to ensure an appropriate response to the Armed Forces Community Covenant. The refreshed policy came into effect on 1st December 2013.

Councillor Mary Markham
Cabinet Member for Housing