



Cabinet Member Report for Housing

Northampton Borough Council

20th January 2014

Disabled Facilities Grants

As I said I would in my last Cabinet Member report, I have reviewed the budget available to meet the high level of demand we are experiencing for disabled facilities grants. A thorough review of DFG policies, processes and procedures is now underway and will ensure an efficient, effective and proportionate response to the needs of our customers. I have also ensured that the same rigorous approach to DFGs will apply to the Aids and Adaptations processes when we adapt our own housing to meet the needs of our tenants. We want to make sure that we make the best use of all our adapted properties and will be looking to match tenants who need an aid or adaptation to a property where we've already undertaken the work. This may mean that some people have to wait a little longer for a new home but this is the right way to make sure we make the best use of all our housing stock.

Allocation Policy Refresh

The refreshed Housing Allocations policy went live on 1st December 2013. I will keep the policy under review to ensure it continues to meet the needs of individuals and families seeking social housing in Northampton.

Housing Stocks Options Review

The Housing Stock Options Review was successfully completed, with the decision to create an ALMO unanimously supported by Full Council on Monday 9th December. Tenants and employees involved were thanked for their commitment and significant contribution to the success of the project. The drive to improve Housing Services will continue and tenants will still be at the heart of the next stage of the process in the creation of the ALMO. Tenants will be encouraged, once again, to come forward to take part in the process and Tenant Panel meetings will start again in January 2014. It is intended that the ALMO will be in place by 5th January 2015.

Tenant Involvement

My commitment to putting tenants at the heart of our business will continue and we are broadening the range of opportunities we have for people to get involved in the development of the service. I am very pleased with the progress of the Service Improvement Panels and I want to thank those tenants who have given up their time to work with our officers on establishing the service standards they want, and have a right to expect, from us. I have asked officers to collate and codify the proposed Standards from each Service Improvement Panel and intend to have them introduced and operational early in the New Year.

Decent Homes Programme

Phase 2 of the Decent Homes Programme is working well with Lovell about to complete their tranche of homes and FHM preparing to complete theirs by the early summer. I am pleased with the quality of work from both contractors although, as with any large scale programme like this there will always be issues along the way. I am content that the commitments given to me so far by all the contractors will mean that we will make good progress with Phase 3 up to the end of the financial year and go into next year in a strong position to complete the Decent Homes programme in good time.

Rogue Landlords

On 3rd December 2013 the Borough Council put forward proposals to extend the local authority's powers to license landlords in the town. The changes give greater protection to tenants, as well as making landlords accountable for the effect their property and tenants have on the local area. This covers anti-social behaviour such as noise, putting too many refuse bags out or blocking up parking spaces in the street. It is an opportunity to set standards that protect tenants and neighbours by making more landlords responsible for the appearance of their property, stopping overcrowding of properties and making sure repairs work is completed. The new powers would be introduced in the Town Centre and areas where there is a high level of student accommodation in the north of the town. At the moment the Borough Council only has the power to license three-storey HMOs (house in multiple occupation). The proposed new scheme would see the same rules and standards applied to HMOs of all sizes in the area. The consultation on these proposals ends on 10th February.

Councillor Mary Markham
Cabinet Member for Housing