



Cabinet Member Report for Housing

Northampton Borough Council

8th December 2014

Northampton Partnership Homes

The setting up of Northampton Partnership Homes (NPH) is continuing in readiness for the launch on 5th January 2015. The Council has now approved the Management Agreement and other key documents, which set out how the arrangements between the two organisations will work, at the Cabinet meeting on 12th November. These documents have been sent to the Homes and Communities Agency which is the Government department responsible for agreeing to the creation of the ALMO.

The Council held its last Tenants' Conference on 25th and 26th November, to allow tenants and leaseholders to find out more about the arrangements for the set-up, ask questions and give feedback on service issues.

All tenants received newsletters in October from both the Council and the Independent Tenants' Advisor, providing details of what contact details and arrangements will change from 5th January 2015. A full programme of communications has been planned to ensure that tenants, other customers and partner organisations are aware of the changed arrangements.

Although NPH will have its own phone number and website address, customers will continue to use the One Stop Shop for all housing enquiries made in person. This will ensure that customers can continue to benefit from the shared partnership working arrangements already put in place with other organisations.

Additional HMO licensing

Since the scheme came into effect on the 3rd November 2014, 206 new additional licensing applications have been received. We are simultaneously reviewing our lists of suspected premises to match with applications received and 967 addresses have been identified to date that will require follow up to confirm their status as licensable. The fire service has been working closely with us on this and Council officers are continuing to identify licensable HMOs. We are also continuing our communications exercises so landlords know that they must have a license and can expect to be referred for prosecution if they do not make an application.

In order to meet the immediate demand we have taken steps to increase our resources to manage the influx of licences applications. This has meant a new investment in administrative resources to meet the data entry and the necessary checks required. We are also taking on more enforcement staff so more licensable HMOs are identified and dealt with under the licensing scheme.

Out of 256 known mandatory HMOs, 226 are compliant. A small number of landlords are in contact with the Council but have been slow in providing the necessary information to enable the licence to be made. There are a number of landlords who have not yet applied for licensing, and we are reviewing the circumstances with a view to bring about compliance, if appropriate through prosecution.

To further assist with the licensing of HMOs, on the 12th November 2014 Cabinet approved the Housing in Multiple Occupation Interim Planning Statement. The new Statement will provide clear guidance to landlords and will help in the determination of applications.

Empty Homes Programme

I am pleased to report that there has been good progress on the Empty Homes Programme over the last few months. I visited two of the four properties which are currently on site, 49-53 Abington Street which is a conversion from office space to six 1-bed and 2-bed flats and 5 Spencer Parade which is also creating six flats for use under the Empty Homes Programme. There are currently two residential properties on site and a number still in the pipeline. The project is running well with good quality units being produced under the scheme.

Councillor Mary Markham
Cabinet Member for Housing