



## Cabinet Member Report for Housing and Wellbeing

Northampton Borough Council

6<sup>th</sup> November 2017

### Northampton's Rough Sleepers Count

Preparations are well underway for November's Count and, with the help and support of dozens of volunteers, we will again be in a position to cover all of the Wards in the borough.

As this is the first Rough Sleepers Count we have organised since Northampton's Emergency Nightshelter opened its doors 9 months ago, the Count will assist our understanding of the reasons why people are sleeping rough in Northampton.

I am becoming increasingly concerned about the number of homeless people who have no local connection with Northampton but are being encouraged to come here by local homelessness charities and statutory organisations. This is undermining 'TOGETHER we change lives' (our multi-agency strategy for ending the need for people to sleep rough) and putting people's lives at risk.

### SWEP (Severe Weather Emergency Protocol)

Arrangements are in hand to provide homeless people with emergency shelter, in the Hope Centre, when the temperature is forecast to fall below freezing for at least 3 consecutive nights.

Although the Council will continue to co-ordinate SWEP and provide funding and volunteers, its priority is to ensure Northampton's Emergency Nightshelter remains fully staffed and operational.

The Hope Centre has agreed that, during the winter of 2017/18, it will host SWEP and take the lead in ensuring that everything runs smoothly on the nights that emergency shelter is required.

### Housing Advice for Students at University's Freshers Fair

On 25<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> September 2017, Environmental Health Officers from the Council's Housing Enforcement Team joined colleagues from the Northampton Student Landlord Network (NSLN) and the DASH Landlord Accreditation Scheme at the University of Northampton's Freshers Fair.

Along with the University of Northampton and the Students' Union, the 3 organisations are part of a Multi-Agency Student Housing Hub that the Council has set up to improve the quality of student housing, encourage good practice and identify landlords and letting agents who are operating licensable HMOs without a licence and /or renting out substandard and unsafe housing.

Over the next 12 months, members of the University's Multi-Agency Student Housing Hub are planning a series of co-ordinated campaigns that are designed to improve students' awareness of their housing rights and responsibilities and encourage them to seek help as soon as they need it.

### Northampton Landlord Forum

On 17<sup>th</sup> October 2017, Scott Richards (Community Protection Manager at the Northamptonshire Fire & Rescue Service) talked about Fire Risk Assessments and explained why it is essential that they are completed properly and are fit for purpose.

Linda Cobb (DASH Services Manager) provided the Forum with an overview of recent government announcements affecting the private rented sector and described the ways in which DASH is helping Northampton's landlords to provide good quality, well managed, profitable housing.

### **Homelessness Reduction Act 2017**

The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 increases local authorities' duties to prevent and relieve homelessness, and comes into effect in April 2018.

In January and February 2018, the Housing & Wellbeing Service will be holding a couple of half day workshops for local services and organisations, to talk about the Homelessness Reduction Act and agree on how everyone can work together to tackle, prevent and reduce homelessness in Northampton. Members will also be briefed on the Act's likely implications for the Council.

### **Northampton Partnership Homes**

Once every 2 years, Northampton Partnership Homes (NPH) carries out a "STAR" survey, on the Council's behalf, to capture the views of tenants and residents on the performance of their housing provider. This year's "STAR" survey has now been completed and, although we have yet to receive the full, detailed report from the consultants, we have received the first draft of the survey findings and are delighted to see that, since NPH has been managing and maintaining the housing stock, tenant and resident satisfaction has increased in every category.

I am delighted to report that Northampton Partnership Homes has won the "Best Procurement Consultancy Project of the Year" category in this year's CIPS (Chartered Institute of Purchasing and Supplies) awards for its procurement of a 10-year partnership contract to deliver investment works. The contract, based on open book accounting and clear cost visibility, is designed to deliver best value, cost savings and improved performance throughout the contract.

Planning applications are progressing for environmental improvements in Spring Boroughs and Kings Heath, and work is due to start soon on the construction of Lakeview House, a brand new 45-bedroom older persons' housing scheme that NPH is building for the Council.

As a result of the previously reported rent reduction of 'minus 1%' for 4 consecutive years, NPH has now completed a restructure to reflect the reduced budget and the efficiency savings that it has generated through changes to its ways of working. I welcome the Prime Minister's recent announcement that, starting in 2020, rents will be increased annually by 'CPI + 1%' for 5 years.

**Councillor Stephen Hibbert**  
**Cabinet Member for Housing and Wellbeing**