



Cabinet Member Report for Housing and Wellbeing

Northampton Borough Council

22nd July 2019

Working together to tackle rough sleeping

No-one comes off the streets due to the sole work of just one organisation – it is always a partnership between different agencies which makes a difference.

In a Joint Statement issued on 20 June, the Council, the Northampton Hope Centre and Churches Together in Northampton pledged to work more collaboratively with one another to tackle rough sleeping in Northampton.

The move follows months of work with Homeless Link and the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government which have helped the three organisations to address and resolve the tensions which, until now, have hampered their efforts to help rough sleepers.

As a result of this new approach, there will be an updated Rough Sleeping Strategy (which will be co-produced with the voluntary and community sector) and a Single Homelessness Forum (which will meet quarterly and have an independent Chair) and we will use the extra rough sleeping funding that Northampton is receiving to build collaborative approaches.

Utilising the rough sleeping funding

In my last report, I explained that the Council had made a successful bid for Rough Sleeping Initiative (RSI) funding and been awarded £215,600 to fund five posts for 12 months:

- A Rough Sleepers Co-ordinator;
- A Housing Transitions Officer (Prisons and Approved Premises);
- Two Street Outreach Workers; and
- A Mental Health Outreach Worker

To make the recruitment process as inclusive as possible, representatives of local services and organisations (including the Hope Centre, the National Probation Service and Northamptonshire Healthcare Foundation Trust) were included in the interview panels. All posts have been filled.

I am delighted to report that the Council has also made a successful bid for Rapid Rehousing Pathway (RRP) funding and been awarded £265,400 to fund another six posts for 12 months:

- **Four Rough Sleeper Navigators** – to act as a single point of contact for rough sleepers who have complex needs and/or a history of prolonged or repeat homelessness, improving their health and wellbeing and, by assisting their recovery, ensuring that they are better equipped to sustain their accommodation and their independence; and
- **Two Tenancy Sustainment Officers** – to provide rough sleepers with a personalised resettlement and support service that will persuade private landlords and social landlords to let their accommodation to rough sleepers when they might not otherwise have done so.

It has been agreed that the Tenancy Sustainment Officers will be employed by NAASH (a local homelessness charity) and Northampton Partnership Homes, and they will both work proactively with private landlords and social landlords to maximise rough sleepers' access to housing.

Expanding and restructuring the Housing Options and Advice Service

Formal consultation on the proposed restructure commenced on 4th July.

The proposed changes to the staffing structure of the Housing Options and Advice Service will provide additional management capacity, establish a single homelessness pathway and create specialist advisory roles within a multi-disciplinary homelessness reduction team. The recruitment of a dedicated temporary accommodation team will free up the social lettings agency to focus on its core purpose of improving residents' access to private rented housing.

The new staffing structure and the extra investment in Officers will improve the performance and effectiveness of the Service, support the implementation of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, increase the number of households that are prevented from becoming homeless, and reduce rough sleeping and the use and cost of temporary accommodation.

To assist everyone's understanding of what is expected of each role within the new Service – and how they will work with others to meet the objectives of the Council and its partners – a new Job Description has been produced for every post in the new staffing structure.

Reducing the use and cost of temporary accommodation

In April, the Cabinet approved a 14-point Temporary Accommodation Action Plan to reduce the use and cost of temporary accommodation.

A multi-disciplinary Implementation Group (comprising representatives from Housing, NPH, Finance and Revenues & Benefits) meets fortnightly to monitor progress and identify ways of accelerating and sustaining the improvements.

Although the number of households in temporary accommodation remains stubbornly high, good progress has been made in negotiating tenancy renewals with private landlords, averting parental and family evictions and increasing the number of housing allocations to homeless households in the Emergency Band of the Housing Register.

It is hoped that progress will accelerate when the proposed restructure of the Housing Options & Advice Service is fully implemented.

Northampton Partnership Homes (NPH)

Marking 100 years since the Addison Act 1919

The Addison Act provided local authorities with the subsidies they needed to build hundreds of thousands of 'homes fit for heroes' in the aftermath of the First World War.

To mark the 100th anniversary of the Addison Act, NPH will plant 100 trees and has organised a schools competition to design what a council house might look like in 100 years' time. It has organised the official opening of two housing schemes and the planting of a commemorative tree at Cottarville where council homes were first let 100 years ago.

The official opening, by the Rt Hon Andrea Leadsom MP, of Centenary House on Friday, 5th July was a great success. Originally called Overslade House, this scheme has been expanded and completely transformed to provide 40 high quality family apartments. A time capsule, containing a number of Northampton facts and articles (including historical details of Overslade House) was buried as part of the ceremony.

On 31st July (the official anniversary of the Addison Act), Andrew Lewer MP will be opening a new housing development of 5 council homes in Northbrook / Eastfield Road.

Providing new homes for adults with additional support needs

NPH is working closely with the Borough Council and County Council to provide adults with additional support needs with the specialist housing they need to live independently.

Planning applications have been submitted for two schemes: a scheme of 20 apartments at Moray Lodge for adults with acquired brain injury and mental health problems, and a scheme of 8 bungalows at Billing Brook Road, Thorplands for adults with autism.

Building new council homes

NPH's new build programme continues apace and, including the new homes at Centenary House, 147 new council homes have been built to date, 90 new homes are on site and in the process of being built and 72 new homes have been granted planning permission, are in contract and are about to commence on site. Planning consent is currently being sought for another 352 new homes in the immediate pipeline.

Most recently, planning consent has been granted for the construction of new council homes in the following locations:

- Abington – 2 homes
- Briar Hill – 10 homes
- Collingtree - 21 homes
- Delapre and Far Cotton – 7 homes
- Eastfield – 5 homes
- Goldings and Overstone Lodge – 1 home
- Kings Heath – 30 homes
- Kingsthorpe – 4 homes
- Lakeview – 2 homes
- Lings – 6 homes
- Lumbertubs – 4 homes
- Thorplands – 17 homes.
- Wootton – 2 homes

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