



Cabinet Member Report for Housing and Wellbeing

Northampton Borough Council

16th September 2019

Keeping rough sleepers safe this winter

In my last report, I described the way in which the Council and local services and organisations are working together to tackle, prevent and reduce rough sleeping in the borough.

Following a successful multi agency workshop in July, a further event is planned for 1 October when participants will review the current rough sleeping strategy and agree on future priorities.

Next month, the Single Homelessness Forum will consider a wide range of issues, including the rough sleeping strategy, the annual rough sleepers count, the Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP), the establishment of an 'alternative giving' scheme and a public petition calling on the Council to establish a 'safe area' for rough sleepers in the town centre.

One of the things I would like the Single Homelessness Forum to consider is the merits and feasibility of changing the criteria that is used to determine when SWEP is triggered. If there is support from the faith and community groups and we can attract enough volunteers, I would like SWEP to be activated whenever the Met Office is forecasting that the 'feels like' temperature (taking into account windchill) will be 0°C or below for at least three consecutive nights.

When I made an urgent appeal for Councillors to help the Housing and Wellbeing Service to run Northampton's Winter Shelter in March this year, only two Councillors stepped forward and helped out for one session each. I do hope that, this winter, more Councillors will volunteer.

Implementing the restructure of the Housing Advice & Options Service

Since my last report, we have completed the consultation on a restructure that is designed to improve the 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.

The new Housing Advice and Options Manager joined us on 1 August and the second of his 3 Managers (the Single Homelessness Pathway Manager) is due to join us on 14 October.

All government-funded, fixed-term rough sleeping roles have now been recruited to, and the process of filling all of the other roles in the Housing Advice & Options Service has now started.

Considering an Additional HMO Licensing Scheme

On 16 October, the Cabinet will consider the results of a comprehensive 10 week consultation exercise that has been carried out in relation to the proposed designation of an Additional HMO licensing scheme. If approved, the new scheme is likely to come into effect on 1 February 2020.

Improving the hospital discharge scheme

Following a successful pilot scheme in Kettering, Northampton General Hospital (NGH) has agreed to provide South Northamptonshire Council with 12 months' funding to employ a full-time Hospital Outreach Worker who will be based in NGH and Berrywood Hospital and will work proactively with Northamptonshire County Council and the local housing authorities in Northampton, Daventry and South Northamptonshire in order to facilitate patients' safe and timely discharge from hospital.

As Northampton is already operating a successful hospital discharge scheme ('Homeless 2 Home'), the Council is working closely with South Northamptonshire Council to ensure that the Hospital Outreach Worker and Northampton's Housing Transitions Officer (Hospital Discharge) complement one another, avoid duplication and achieve positive outcomes.

Northampton Partnership Homes (NPH)

Northamptonshire County Council projects

NPH is now managing Eleanor Lodge and planning applications have now been submitted to deliver the two new build schemes at Moray Lodge and Billing Brook Road, Thorplands.

Designs for the two new build schemes have been completed and NPH has agreed that 'Modern Methods of Construction' (MMC) will be employed, using Structured Insulated Panels (SIPs) that are constructed in a factory. This will speed up the delivery of the project.

Marking 100 years since the Addison Act 1919

On 31 July, Andrew Lewer MP opened a housing development of 5 new council homes at Northbrook/Eastfield Road. A commemorative tree was also planted at Cotterville where council houses were built in 1918 and first let, one hundred years ago, in 1919.

Council House New Build Programme

Last month, planning approval was granted for 'The Roof Gardens', the demolition of Berkeley House and St Mary's Court and the construction of a new build scheme of 124 homes. Cabinet approval will now be sought for NPH to proceed with the regeneration of the site.

NPH is currently building new homes on the former garage sites in Kings Heath, Delapre, Lings, Eastfield and Lakeview. Permission has been granted for a further 76 properties on former garage sites which are at demolition stage, with construction due to start in Autumn 2019.

Planning applications have also been submitted for a further 214 homes across a number of sites, including 126 resulting from the proposed conversion and extension of Belgrave House (a former office block) in Northampton Town Centre.

Planned Investment Programme

Scoping and detailed consultation are taking place with the residents of the Briar Hill, Southfields and Goldings neighbourhoods in relation to the 2020/21 investment programme. Works are due to commence in April 2020.

Councillor Stephen Hibbert
Cabinet Member for Housing and Wellbeing