

BOROUGH COUNCIL OF KING'S LYNN & WEST NORFOLK**HOMELESSNESS & HOUSING DELIVERY TASK GROUP**

Minutes from the Meeting of the Homelessness & Housing Delivery Task Group held on Wednesday, 1st December, 2021 at 2.00 pm in the Council Chamber, Town Hall, Saturday Market Place, King's Lynn PE30 5DQ

PRESENT: Councillor Mrs S Collop (Chair)
Councillors Miss L Bambridge, A Bubb, S Collop and J Rust

1 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Bower and Morley.

2 **NOTES FROM PREVIOUS MEETING**

The notes of the meeting held on 6 September 2021 were agreed as a correct record.

3 **MATTERS ARISING**

There were no matters arising.

4 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

5 **URGENT BUSINESS**

There was no urgent business to report.

6 **MEMBERS ATTENDING UNDER STANDING ORDER 34**

There were no Members present under Standing Order 34.

7 **CHAIR'S CORRESPONDENCE**

There was no Chairman's correspondence to report.

8 **DRAFT TERMS OF REFERENCE**

This was deferred to the next meeting.

9

DRAFT SUPPORT IN SAFE ACCOMMODATION STRATEGY FOR NORFOLK - NORFOLK COUNTY COUNCIL

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The Housing Strategy Officer explained that the Support in Safe Accommodation Strategy for Norfolk was a draft strategy which had been produced by Norfolk County Council and was currently out for consultation. It followed the Domestic Abuse Bill, that had been introduced earlier this year. There was a requirement for upper tier authorities to produce a needs assessment and strategy in response to domestic abuse.

It was explained that the trends were showing an increase in domestic abuse and much of the strategy and assessment looked at ways to address that particularly in terms of suitable accommodation.

The Housing Strategy Officer outlined the key findings to the Task Group:

- The Strategy had identified that there was a lack of refuge accommodation across Norfolk and sought to address that by looking at new forms of accommodation across all districts. It also identified that the focus should not just be on refuge accommodation, as this did not suit all needs. NCC was currently developing an action plan around this, which would be available after the consultation.
- It also identified that there was a lack of accommodation across Norfolk for males fleeing from domestic abuse. Having male specific accommodation was lacking.
- It was recommended that statutory services needed do more in terms of joining up data and data collection needed to be strengthened.

It was explained that the Borough Council was waiting for the Strategy to be adopted. It would be included within the Homelessness & Rough Sleeper Strategy. This would set out what the Council's actions would be.

In response to a question regarding who was being consulted and whether this included local charities, the Housing Strategy Officer outlined the stakeholders who had been consulted and confirmed that this included charities. She added that Norfolk County Council had held a number of stakeholder events, as they had been preparing the draft, and all of the providers working in domestic abuse had been invited to those events.

The Housing Strategy Officer confirmed that the Portfolio Holder was aware of the strategy. She added that it was a County Strategy, and the Borough Council was feeding into the consultation process like everyone else. The requirement from the Bill published earlier this year was to have a draft strategy in place and submitted to Government by October, so there had been quite a short timeframe to

do a full needs assessment and strategy. County had produced that working with all partners and the Domestic Abuse Board that County were leading on, but it was very much recognised in the strategy, that this was an on-going piece of work. The Domestic Abuse Board had been formed and consisted of a number of local authorities, housing providers and charity organisations. The membership of that Board was wide reaching to ensure that the strategy was consistently looked at and strengthened wherever possible.

D Hall added that it was worth keeping in sight the political commitment to the strategy when it was finalised and, if there were actions for the Council, then it would be useful to get the Council's endorsement of the Strategy.

The Housing Strategy Officer explained that the Council had seen a significant increase in people coming forward seeking assistance from fleeing from domestic abuse. All of the Council's services at the moment were at capacity in relation to that. The Council was continually working on providing new accommodation and more would be available in the New Year.

The Assistant Director added that as part of the strategy further consideration would be given to providing other types of provision of accommodation.

In response to a question, the Assistant Director advised that if priority accommodation was needed, accommodation was secured but it was also more than just accommodation that was needed, for example having the right support services in place. It was highlighted that everybody's needs were different, and it was important to have a range of tools and options in place.

The Assistant Director explained to the Task Group the process of what would happen if someone refused refuge accommodation. It was explained that often people needed temporary accommodation and it was important to see what met that person's needs in terms of support.

10

NEWLY EMERGING CHALLENGES

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The Assistant Director provided an update to the Task Group on the following:

- High Support Needs
- Staffing in the care and support sector
- Non-UK Nationals

N Patton also provided an update on the Housing First units – 5 units had been delivered and occupied and the 6th unit was underway and

would be occupied imminently. She explained that Housing First provided intensive housing related support but also linked into wider support as well. The cohort of people who had been talked about often had mental health issues and did require specialist support by way of mental health and medical. Effectively what the Council was looking to do, if successful with some funding from the CCG, would be very similar to Housing First, but the support would be different with more from the mental health and health perspective as well and it was hoped it would also help with the reduction of hospital admissions.

There were also plans, subject to some government funding that might be forthcoming, to upscale the housing first as well as linking into the Strategy and Action Plan. However, Housing First did rely on intensive support and to recruit and retain those support workers was very challenging at the current time.

11 **EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC**

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AGREED: That under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act, 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Act.

12 **FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE**

The Housing Strategy Officer gave an update to the Task Group on financial assistance that had been received and how that money could be spent.

13 **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

To be agreed.

The meeting closed at 3.25 pm