

CABINET MEMBERS REPORT TO COUNCIL

16 November 2017

COUNCILLOR ADRIAN LAWRENCE - CABINET MEMBER FOR HOUSING & COMMUNITY

For the period 21 September 2017 to 6 November 2017

Progress on Portfolio Matters.

Home Choice

Figures for October 2017 are as follows

984 applications – 185 high, 277 medium, 522 low.

231 new applications/change in circumstances received by Home choice online

47 rehoused

Housing

A Private Rented Sector Forum was held on 19th October 2017. Private landlords and lettings agents were able to attend to hear about issues related to private rented housing, legislation and changes

Attendees had the opportunity to meet representatives from Department of Work and Pensions, Fire and Rescue Service, Norfolk Training Standards, National Landlords Association, Eastern Landlords Association, Aran Services as well as the Council's Housing Teams.

The focus of the meeting was on

- minimum energy efficiency requirements for new lettings from April 2018
- potential funding for energy efficiency improvements through ECO schemes
- the introduction of Universal Credit planned in Kings Lynn and West Norfolk in 2018
- new and potential legislative changes related to tackling poor standards, management of the sector, extending HMO licensing

29 landlords/lettings agents attended the forum.

Feedback from attendees was very positive. There was support for future forum meetings especially when there were changes or new legislation. There was also interest in updates by newsletter or e mail.

A new housing support service for vulnerable young people

A new housing support 'outreach service' for vulnerable 16 – 24 year olds will be launched in the Borough in December. Specialist staff from the charity Benjamin Foundation will visit young people in their accommodation to make sure things stay on track with managing money and other life skills. The service will provide support for those in temporary accommodation, moving from supported housing accommodation or those facing crisis within their existing accommodation. The service commissioned jointly by the Borough Council with Public Health will run for 3 years. Public Health have provided £10,000pa for 3 years (total £30K) which will fund 12 hours per week, per year. Benjamin Foundation have added an additional 6 hours per week to this to create an 18 hour post. The Borough Council will direct the service to those it identifies through its homelessness prevention activities as being in most need. The services have been commissioned to be flexible and adaptable to changes in the issues faced by this group.

Children's Services have been approached to see if they would also like to support the new service.

Care and Repair

Jo Russell and Martin Sands did a presentation to Council on 21st September regarding the DFG (Disabled Facility Grant) spend and the Handyperson service, as we wanted Council to be aware of the current spend and continued demand on the service. They highlighted the beneficial work we have been doing with the hospital and community health teams in training them on adaptations and also on creating a new streamlined pathway for referrals to reduce waiting times to be assessed as well as improving the overall client experience once in the system.

A brief summary of the figures and statistics that were presented to Council on the 21st are as follows:-

Planned DFG capital budget for 17/18 - £2,150,000

Current forecast spend on this budget for major adaptations as of Sept 2017 is £1,900,000

Waiting list for assessment – 137

New enquiries for major adaptations – on average 80 per month

Waiting time for an assessment and grant – on average 3 months

Challenges – managing demand with current resources (staff and capital budget) and meeting performance indicators given the level of demand.

Councillors asked a number of questions around demand and capital budget.

Handyperson figures:-

Quarter 1 (April-June) – 170 prevention/minor adaptation and equipment jobs
85 jobs awaiting scheduling and demand for the service is increasing with
general promotion and marketing.

Care and Repair also undertake a DFG service in Fenland and Breckland.

Meetings Attended

Full Council

Cabinet sifting

Cabinet

E&C

Private Sector Rented Housing Forum

LAHC

Meetings with Officers

Portfolio Meetings