

## **CABINET MEMBERS REPORT TO COUNCIL**

**28 April 2016**

### **COUNCILLOR ADRIAN LAWRENCE - CABINET MEMBER FOR HOUSING AND COMMUNITY**

For the period 24 March to 19 April 2016

#### **Progress on Portfolio Matters.**

##### **Home Choice**

The number on the register at the end of March 2016 was 1,614. A decrease of 44 on the number at the end of February 2016.

68 applicants were housed into Housing Association accommodation during March.

The data transfer from Open Housing was taken at the beginning of March and new applicants have only recently been able to apply on-line using the new system. This accounts for the seeming decrease in numbers on the register and is likely to be the case for a few weeks until the numbers build up again.

West Norfolk Homechoice is now in its 12<sup>th</sup> year of operation. A lot of changes have happened in those years and the latest is developing the online service available.

West Norfolk Homechoice is a partnership of 13 Housing Associations and is administered by BCKLWN Council. It is a choice based lettings scheme where applicants on the Housing Register are able to 'bid' for vacant Housing Association homes each week.

By the end of 2013, 93% of all bids were being received via the Homechoice website and since 2014 all bidding for properties has been done online. Property photos were introduced later that year.

From March 2016 we have introduced online applications for housing applicants too.

There is also a new look website with differences in how properties are presented for people on the Housing Register together with additional information such as links to mapping.

The next step is for more housing advice to be available online and for new systems to be used within the housing options team.

As well as increased access to information and applications on the internet outside office hours, the new methods of working will allow people to update changes in their circumstances online. This can be done via smartphones as well as PCs, laptops and other devices

For those not able to access the internet at home, computers are available at the Council's offices in King's Lynn, Downham Market and Hunstanton. Staff can also guide and aid the public in the completion of online forms.

### **Custom Build Register**

The Custom Build Register went live on 1<sup>st</sup> April and can be accessed via the Custom and Self-Build page on the website (<http://www.west-norfolk.gov.uk/default.aspx?page=28047> ). The register operates in partnership with South Norfolk Council, Breckland and The Broads Authority. We currently have 4 individuals on the register and work will start on actively promoting the register shortly.

### **Meetings attended**

Cabinet  
Freebridge Community Housing  
Discovery Centre  
Planning  
Full Council  
Meetings with Officers