

**CABINET MEMBERS REPORT TO COUNCIL**

**24 January 2019**

**COUNCILLOR ADRIAN LAWRENCE  
CABINET MEMBER FOR HOUSING & COMMUNITY**

For the period 29 November 2018 to 24 January 2019

**Progress on Portfolio Matters.**

**Home Choice**

There were 145 new applications/change of circumstances received in December.

There are 1068 live applications

189 high  
316 medium  
562 low

28 housed

**Community Led Housing scheme, Sheep Field, Hunstanton**

There will be a community consultation event of our community led housing initiative in Hunstanton this month (Hunstanton Town Hall 31 January 2019 2pm - 8pm). After some early consultation an alternative access route via Waveney Road and a Victory Housing scheme. Plans will be available to view.

As you may recall The Sheep Field, a borough council-owned piece of land behind Tesco in Hunstanton, has been identified as the site for an innovative new community-led housing development. The development will feature approximately 30 new homes. These homes will offer predominantly a range of low cost home ownership options and some affordable rented homes. The affordable homes will be available through various schemes including part-buy, part-rent options. By offering low-cost home ownership, this scheme could help people in the local area get on the housing ladder.

Visit our webpage [www.west-norfolk.gov.uk/sheepfieldhousing](http://www.west-norfolk.gov.uk/sheepfieldhousing) for more information and to register your interest.

## **The Human Habitation Act**

The private member's bill sponsored by Karen Buck MP passed for Royal Assent on the 20 December and comes into force after 20th March 2019 as the Homes (Fitness for Human Habitation) Act 2018 for new tenancies in England. Existing tenancies and secure tenancies will be under the new rules after 12 months. This may well prove to be of significance for the private sector and corrects an anomaly in the legislation that has previously meant that landlords were unlikely to suffer financial liability unless someone had actually come to harm as a consequence of a property defect. Landlords have hitherto only usually faced a civil action where they failed to carry out a repair in a reasonable time.

The previous position could potentially leave out a whole host of defects that may have been present in the property but were not as consequence of 'disrepair'. Landlords may well find themselves challenged by a tenant for allowing a property to be rented out with identifiable hazards present or for allowing it to become so. This brings the civil legislation into line with the requirements of the Housing Act 2004, which enables the Council to require the landlord to make sure that any hazards present are remediated or face prosecution or a penalty charge. Both Acts now rely on a system of assessment called the Housing Health and Safety Rating System and it is likely that the activities of the council in identifying these hazards in rented properties may lead tenants to seek compensation from their landlord through the courts.

## **Landlords Forum**

The Housing Standards and Housing Options teams attended the Private Rented Housing Forum in November.

DWP provided an update on Universal credit. Housing Standards presented the details of the HMO licensing changes and gave information on the Warm Homes Fund – grant funding for first time gas central heating. A discussion took place on 'county lines' activity, where gangs involved in drug crime and child exploitation operate in rented properties.

The landlords provided good feedback on the variety of important issues discussed including Universal Credit.

## **Meetings Attended and Meetings Scheduled**

Cabinet Sifting  
Cabinet  
Meetings with Officers  
Portfolio meeting