

4CABINET MEMBERS REPORT TO COUNCIL

9 July 2020

COUNCILLOR ADRIAN LAWRENCE - CABINET MEMBER FOR HOUSING

For the period March to June 2020

Progress on Portfolio Matters.

Home Choice figures for May

There were 912 live applications

3 Emergency

140 High

284 Medium

485 Low

There were 158 applications/ Change in circumstances
and 15 lets

Long Term Empty Homes

These are properties that have been empty for a period of 6 months or longer

April 1st 1100 LTEHs which is 1.49% of houses in the Borough

May 1st 1040 LTEHs which is 1.40% of houses in the Borough

June 1st 1098 LTEHs which is 1.48% of houses in the Borough

June 2020

Rough Sleeping & Homelessness Covid 19

Background

When the crisis was first announced, the efforts of the housing team were initially focussed on the night shelter to ensure those using it wouldn't revert to rough sleeping.

A plan was implemented at short notice with paired down numbers and a focus on resettlement of those using the shelter.

Within a few days the plan had to change as it was clear that social distancing measures could not be complied with in dormitory accommodation. A Herculean effort began to relocate everyone either using the shelter or those rough sleeping. Since then temporary hotel accommodation has been used. We have accommodated 31 rough sleepers under the everyone in initiative since March 2020.

These swift actions were met praise from the MHCLG, They have been sharing our approach/model with other authorities as good practice

Resettlement options

The housing team are working tirelessly to resettle everyone in temporary hotel accommodation by 30th June. To date actions include;

- Working with existing supported accommodation provider Sanctuary Housing to identify people in 24/7 supported accommodation that are ready to move into move accommodation with floating support.
- Working with Freebridge Community Housing and Broadland Housing Association to secure properties that can be used as temporary move-on accommodation on a shared living basis i.e., 3-bedroom house would have three people sharing.
- Working with Purfleet and other support providers Sanctuary and Homegroup to provide ongoing floating support to those in move-on accommodation on an interim basis.
- Engaging with Norfolk County Council as the welfare authority to see how these additional ongoing support costs can be met.
- Engaging with Norfolk County Council as the welfare authority to seek to secure a sustainable housing related support model going forward.
- Engaging with Broadland Housing and Freebridge Community Housing to consider more sustainable medium- to long-term accommodation options.
- Continuing to liaise with MHCLG and ensure any funding opportunities are maximised.

Medium-longer term ie within next 12-18ths

- Working closely with partner landlords to develop a medium to longer term plan. Options currently being considered are;
 - Bringing empty buildings back into use including office/retail conversions
 - Modular units
 - Private sector leasing scheme
 - RPs acquiring open market properties that are available in short to medium term.
 - Housing First model to accommodate people with complex needs

We will seek to access some of the £433m announced by MHCLG a few weeks ago with the above projects. We await further guidance from MHCLG but seek to prepare bids in readiness.

Rough Sleeper Funding

There has been a further announcement from Government this week of a further £105m to help with homelessness and rough sleepers in response to Covid 19. We are still waiting to hear how this will be accessed or allocated. Officers have a call with MHCLG next week and we hope to receive further information on this fund. The letter also sets out temporary measures that are in place regarding people with no recourse. Although temporary as in only 3

months these measures are welcomed.

Moratorium on evictions

In March Government announced a suspension of social and private rent evictions until June. This has recently been extended until August 2020. At the end of this period Landlords and tenants are expected to work together to come up with affordable repayment plans for anyone with rent arrears. This is an area that we continue to monitor closely as there is potential for significant increased homelessness with the social and economic impact of Covid-19

LGA Guidance

The Local Government Association (LGA) recently released some helpful guidance on options available to sourcing accommodation and support solutions for the various client groups.

<https://localpartnerships.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Rough-sleeper-accommodation-guidance-final.pdf>

Meetings Attended

Full Council
Cabinet
Cabinet sifting
Cabinet Briefings
14+ COVID meetings/Briefings via Teams
Officer Teams meetings
Various phone conversations/updates with Officers
Zoom meetings
YouTube viewings