



## **Cabinet Member Report for Housing**

### **Northampton Borough Council**

**September 2015**

#### **Housing and Wellbeing Service**

We have now recruited a permanent Private Sector Housing Manager who has substantial housing regulatory experience, has introduced and managed HMO licensing schemes, and has an impressive track record of prosecuting rogue landlords. We have also recruited a permanent Housing Options and Advice Manager who is an accomplished problem solver who has an in-depth knowledge of the housing legislation and is especially adept at preventing homelessness. They will be part of the Housing & Wellbeing Senior Management Team and will join us later this month.

We have also recruited to a number of other posts which were vacant following the staffing review held earlier this year. In order to complete the team, a second round of recruitment is planned for September and October 2015.

#### **Community Wellbeing Company**

Officers from the Housing and Wellbeing Service have continued to work closely with the County Council, NBC's partners and other stakeholders to support and influence the development of the County Council's new company and operating model.

NCC has now published the results of its public consultation on what residents would like to see in relation to the delivery of wellbeing services in Northamptonshire. The results of the consultation can be found on the County Council's website.

On 24<sup>th</sup> September 2015, I will be Chairing a meeting of the Northampton Wellbeing Partnership (a group of around 50 organisations delivering housing, health and community wellbeing services in the borough) to explore how best to co-ordinate, integrate, develop and support services in Northampton.

#### **Northampton's new Housing Strategy**

Work has started on the development of a new, overarching Housing Strategy.

The 5 year, overarching Housing Strategy will be underpinned by a number of supporting strategies and policies, including a Private Rented Housing Strategy, Homelessness Strategy, Rough Sleepers Strategy, Older People's Housing Strategy and the Housing Allocations Policy.

On 27<sup>th</sup> September 2015, the Council will be holding a Housing Strategy Workshop, at Franklin Gardens, to provide a wide range of stakeholders with the opportunity to talk about the challenges and opportunities in Northampton and the future priorities.

Northampton's Housing Strategy 2016-21 is due to be published in March 2016.

### **Tackling Domestic Abuse**

As previously reported, the Government has provided an extra £434,276 to help strengthen and improve services that tackle domestic abuse in Northamptonshire.

The money designated for the refuge providers is for one year only and has been distributed to them. A sum of money was granted to fund work with all stakeholders including commissioners to develop a costed sustainable business model for the future. To this end, Officers have met with and engaged Professor Fotaki from Warwick Business School to lead on this work commencing in September 2015.

On 7<sup>th</sup> September 2015, NBC will host a Domestic Abuse Workshop (organised by the Housing and Wellbeing Service, the Police and NCC) which will be attended by representatives from the seven local housing authorities in Northamptonshire. The purpose of the Workshop is to encourage the other housing authorities to learn from, support and adopt the new approach that is being championed by NBC.

### **Landlords Forum**

On 28<sup>th</sup> July 2015, the Leader of the Council and I hosted a meeting of the Northampton Landlords Forum in the Guildhall.

More than 70 local landlords and letting agents attended the event, which also included displays from the Fire and Rescue Service, British Gas, Care and Repair, Community Safety, Environmental Services, Planning Services, Private Sector Housing and Housing Options and Advice.

The Landlords Forum received updates on the introduction of the Additional HMO Licensing Scheme and Article 4 Direction, and was briefed on the Council's plans to establish a not-for-profit social lettings agency in the town.

Future meetings events are planned for 20<sup>th</sup> October 2015 and 23<sup>rd</sup> February 2016.

### **Licensing of Houses in Multiple Occupation**

At the end of July 2015, the number of three storey Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) licensed under Northampton's Mandatory HMO Licensing Scheme reached 280, with a further 21 mandatory licence applications still being processed.

Since introducing its Additional HMO Licensing Scheme in November 2014, the Council has licensed a total of 268 two storey HMOs and is currently processing another 80 additional licence applications.

Officers are continuing to work closely with the Fire Service and other agencies to identify licensable HMOs, and have been asked to review the Council's HMO Licence Fee policy and recommend ways in which it can be amended to support the Council's objective of rewarding good, responsible landlords and penalising bad, non-compliant landlords, including those who have not licensed their HMOs on time.

Councillor Stephen Hibbert  
**Cabinet Member for Housing**