



## **Cabinet Member Report for Housing and Wellbeing**

### **Northampton Borough Council**

**Monday 14<sup>th</sup> January 2019**

#### **New council homes in Little Cross Street**

On 21<sup>st</sup> December 2018, the Leader of the Council and I visited Northampton Partnership Homes' latest development of 9 flats and 9 maisonettes in Little Cross Street.

These new council homes were officially opened by the Rt Hon Andrew Lewer MP, and we were all immensely impressed by the high quality of the homes and the amount of care and thought that has gone into their design, layout and construction.

#### **Investing in housing and regeneration**

During the next few weeks, Cabinet will consider three very important reports on housing.

On 16<sup>th</sup> January 2019, an update will be provided on the very exciting work that the Council, Northampton Partnership Homes (NPH) and Legal & General are undertaking to develop a scheme that will transform Belgrave House (a large, unattractive empty office block in the town centre) into a vibrant development of 120 apartments for key workers.

On 6<sup>th</sup> February 2019, approval will be sought for a Housing Regeneration Policy that sets out the principles and processes that the Council and Northampton Partnership Homes (NPH) will apply and follow when regeneration involves the demolition or major reconfiguration of homes and the works make it necessary for residents to move permanently out of their homes.

On 6<sup>th</sup> February 2019, approval will be sought for a comprehensive temporary accommodation action plan which builds on the Council's success in minimising the number of homeless households it places in Bed & Breakfast and out-of-borough accommodation and sets out, in detail, the measures it will introduce to reduce the use and cost of temporary accommodation.

#### **Northampton's Emergency Nightshelter**

I am delighted to report that 2018 was another very successful year for the Nightshelter.

During the year, 151 guests moved in and another 24 men were offered a place but managed to resolve their housing problems, so did not need to stay. 83% of referrals were accepted.

Of the 151 guests who moved in during the year, 84% were British, 28% had no income, 12% were in paid employment or receiving a pension and 60% were in receipt of benefits. Almost a quarter were part of a probation / youth offending programme, and one fifth were part of a drugs intervention programme. The guests' average age was 39; their average stay was 36 nights.

Between them, the guests spent a total of 4,469 nights in the Nightshelter during 2018. To enable the Nightshelter to open 12 hours a day, every night of the year, its fantastic team of volunteers donated (between them) a total of 6,630 hours of their spare time. On six nights a week, local faith and community groups also prepared delicious home cooked meals for the guests.

Two thirds of the people who have stayed in the Nightshelter (101 in 2018) have been helped to move on successfully into more settled housing. Although it is not suitable for everyone, the Nightshelter has proved particularly effective at helping even the most entrenched rough sleepers to come off the streets, establish new social circles and rebuild their lives.

### **Tackling, preventing and reducing rough sleeping**

Although the Nightshelter has significantly improved the health and wellbeing of hundreds of people who would otherwise have had to sleep rough in Northampton, much more needs to be done to tackle, prevent and reduce rough sleeping in the borough.

Discussions are taking place with specialist advisers in the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) with a view to securing additional funding, advice and support.

The MHCLG has expressed particular concern about the temporary encampments and makeshift shelters that have sprung up on the outskirts of Northampton, and the number of organisations that are putting people's lives at risk, and reducing people's life expectancy, by sustaining rough sleeping rather than doing everything possible to encourage people to leave the streets.

I am hopeful that, with the assistance of the MHCLG, we can recapture the energy, enthusiasm and appetite for joint working that local services and organisations showed during the development of 'TOGETHER we change lives' (our multi agency strategy) and that everyone will redouble their efforts to tackle this most urgent of issues.

### **Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP)**

SWEP is co-ordinated by the Housing & Wellbeing Service and complements the work of the Nightshelter, the Street Outreach Team and other local services and organisations.

Between 21 December 2018 and 31 March 2019, the All Nations Church in Kettering Road is operating a Winter Shelter that will provide overnight shelter for up to 11 homeless men and women, irrespective of the temperature. This will complement Northampton's Emergency Shelter (and the alternative emergency housing provided for women) which, at the time I am writing this report, are accommodating 18 men and one woman respectively.

Although there is no strict definition of what counts as 'severe weather', a Winter Shelter will normally operate when the temperature falls below freezing and is forecast (by the Met Office) to remain below freezing for a period of at least three consecutive nights.

When SWEP is activated, men and women who are sleeping rough in Northampton will be able to access the SWEP Winter Shelter (and have a meal and a safe, warm place to sleep) that will operate from the ground floor of Oasis House from 9.00pm until 7.00am.

Although the Housing & Wellbeing Team will be running the SWEP Winter Shelter (and providing overnight cover and Team Leaders for the evening and morning shifts) it is appealing for volunteers who can help out from 8.30pm – 11.30pm and from 6.00am – 8.30am.

To volunteer for the SWEP Winter Shelter, please visit: [www.northampton.gov.uk/swep](http://www.northampton.gov.uk/swep)

**Councillor Stephen Hibbert**  
**Cabinet Member for Housing and Wellbeing**