

STRONG & SUPPORTIVE COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE	Agenda Item No. 5
16 SEPTEMBER 2015	Public Report

Report of the Cabinet Member for Growth, Planning, Housing and Economic Development

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PORTFOLIO PROGRESS REPORT FROM THE CABINET MEMBER FOR GROWTH, PLANNING, HOUSING AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

1. PURPOSE

- 1.1 To provide Members with a progress report from the Cabinet Member for Growth, Planning, Housing and Economic Development.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 Members are asked to scrutinise this report, provide challenge where necessary and to suggest ideas and initiatives to support the continued delivery of priorities.

3. LINKS TO THE SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY STRATEGY

- 3.1 Providing affordable, warm, safe and secure housing is the cornerstone of a strong society. Whilst this principle supports the entire Sustainable Community Strategy, it most closely aligns with the priority to achieve strong & supportive communities.

4. BACKGROUND

- 4.1 The Council's Constitution sets out the responsibilities of the Cabinet Member, including:
- Homelessness, housing options and housing related support
 - Travellers sites

These responsibilities fall under the remit of the Strong & Supportive Communities Scrutiny Committee. Other responsibilities contained within the Constitution fall outside the remit of this Committee and are therefore not included in this report.

5. KEY ISSUES

5.1 Housing Programmes – Empty Homes

- 5.1.1 During 2014/2015 there has been an overall increase in the numbers of long-term empty homes to 549. The majority of these are privately owned properties and there is also a steady increase in those owned by companies and housing associations, in particular in new-build homes which are yet to sell. In June 2015 the number of long-term new-build empty properties went from 48 to 94.

- 5.1.2 The total number of properties being charged the empty homes premium (150% of council tax) is currently 116.

5.1.3 The total number of empty homes brought back into use with the intervention of the Empty Homes Officer between 1st April 2014 and the 31st March 2015 was 189.

5.1.4 Empty Dwelling Management Orders

The successful Empty Dwelling Management Order applied for during 2014 has seen a family move into the property after its refurbishment was completed in June of this year. This represents a positive solution to a problematic long term empty property which will continue to be under the control of the Council for a seven year lease period during which all the upfront refurbishment costs will be recouped from the rental income.

There are a further two applications for EDMOs pending with one due to be heard on the 4th September 2015. This city centre property was inherited by the current owner and has been empty for approximately 16 years. It has fallen into serious disrepair and there is a significant impact on the neighbours and community with its lack of upkeep. It is envisaged that due to the success rate of EDMOs and its ability to prompt action from the owner, it will become a valuable tool to use where it is feasible and justifiable to do so.

5.1.5 Empty Homes Partnership

The Homes & Communities Agency Empty Homes funding has now come to an end and so the partnership with Cross Keys Homes is no longer an available option for an empty home owner. Whilst in operation, the scheme saw the return to use of 7 long term empty properties, with a combined length of time being empty of approximately 35 years, with properties being bought or leased by Cross Keys Homes. These properties represented a significant proportion of the problematic properties in the City and provided credible solutions with the Council, Cross Keys Homes, the property owner and families in housing need all benefitting.

It is hoped that further central government funding streams, as well as other avenues may become available in the future to enable the Council to provide a financial incentive for owners of empty property to take action. However, financial incentives for owners may not always be the encouragement that is needed as many owners have already lost hundreds or thousands of pounds in rental/sale income by the time their property is brought to the attention of the Empty Homes Officer. The Council is continually seeking more innovative and imaginative ways of tackling the problems associated with empty property and returning it to use at the earliest opportunity.

5.1.6 Consulting with other Councils & Shared Service Arrangements

Structural changes across other Councils have had an impact on the Eastern Region Empty Homes Forum, which is chaired by Peterborough City Council's Empty Homes Officer. It is hoped that the Forum will continue to be a valuable platform, particularly for officers new in post, to share best practice, experience and advice.

The Council's Empty Homes Officer will also be taking on the responsibility of providing an empty homes service for Rutland County Council, through the shared service agreement. This will not only allow the officer to share ideas and best practice across the boundary, but also to use contacts and networks built up over the past four years to help with the reduction in empty properties in a broader area.

5.1.7 Council Tax Partnership

Over the next few months, the Empty Homes Officer is developing and implementing an automated system, through closer partnership working with Council Tax colleagues, whereby owners of empty properties are notified of certain milestones within their council tax account. The effect of this will aim to improve data accuracy and reliability between owner and service areas which will ensure that the numbers of empty properties being recorded is the true figure and the empty homes premium is not triggered in error because the property has been occupied but that occupancy has not been notified to the Council.

5.2 **Housing Programmes – Housing Related Support**

5.2.1 The Housing Related Support Programme continues to contribute to the funding of support staff in homeless hostels, floating outreach support and drop-in support services to vulnerable groups such as young people at risk, offenders or people at risk of offending, victims of domestic abuse, single homeless and homeless families, people with mental health illness and learning disabilities and those who are chronically excluded.

5.2.2 The new performance monitoring framework has now been embedded with providers reporting on a quarterly basis the number of people accessing the services, how long they stay and how they exit the services provided.

5.2.3 During 2014/2015 the figures show:

- 9 Accommodation based support services with a combined capacity of 260 bed spaces/units. 763 service users accommodated through the year (short stay, anything from 3 months to 2 years). 515 leavers from services through the year with 81.7% of leavers having a planned move / positive outcome. 428 leavers had their homelessness prevented as a result of the support/intervention
- Cross Keys Homes direct access hostels with a combined capacity of 75 bed spaces/units. 610 service users accommodated through the year (short stay usually up to 3 months). 535 leavers from services through the year with 84.7% of leavers having a planned move / positive outcome. 449 leavers had their homelessness prevented as a result of the support/intervention
- Floating Support: 2 housing related floating support services with a combined capacity of 40 units. 148 service users supported through the year (short stay, anything from 3 months to 2 years). 94 leavers from services through the year with 81.9% of leavers having a planned move / positive outcome. 75 leavers had their homelessness prevented as a result of the support/intervention.

5.2.4 Work is now progressing on a Supported Accommodation Pathway allowing the Council to track clients through the different services from point of entry, usually at the point of crisis, through supported accommodation and into independent living. This pathway will be piloted with single homeless clients and the Council is currently working with the services provided by Axiom Housing Association and the YMCA in order to develop this further. This will ensure a co-ordinated pathway through the most appropriate services for individual clients, to assist them to receive the skills to secure and maintain accommodation and prevent them becoming homeless.

5.3 **Housing Programmes – Heataborough**

The Housing Programmes Team continues to assist in the promotion and signposting into the Heataborough Project which is currently delivering external wall insulation to solid walled properties in the Operation Can Do area. The Council was successful in securing £3.9million of Department of Energy & Climate Change (DECC) Green Deal Communities Funding which will provide a grant of £6,000 per property towards the cost of external wall insulation. The recent withdrawal of Green Deal Finance has resulted in any costs in excess of the £6,000 grant needing to be met by the home owner (or landlord) either through cash or by private finance. Take up of this funding in this area has been slow and the project has recently been opened up to all solid walled properties city wide.

5.4 **Housing Programmes – Care and Repair**

5.4.1 The Care & Repair team continues to assist vulnerable, old and frail people including disabled adults and children to live in safe and warm homes. The Agency was recognised this year by being one of the eight local authorities being shortlisted for the “Best Council Team” category at the Municipal Journal Awards.

5.4.2 The significant impact a person’s housing has on their health and well-being is widely recognised. The range of adaptations, handyperson jobs, repairs, maintenance work and advice provided by Peterborough Care and Repair ensures that disabled, vulnerable and elderly residents are able to live independently in their own homes. Adaptation and repair work results in savings for Health & Social Care Services by preventing falls, accidents, reducing the need or extent of domiciliary care, preventing premature moves into residential care/hospital and assists/enables hospital release and care to be delivered at home.

5.4.3 In the last financial year the Care and Repair Team have responded to over 15,677 telephone calls and assisted over 7,500 clients, a 14% increase compared to last year. The Team have completed over 5,000 tangible interventions varying in cost from £0 to £50,000. These interventions included:

- 997 minor aids and adaptations, (grab rails, key safes, stair rails, small ramps, half steps etc.)
- 253 major disabled facility grant funded adaptations (bathroom adaptations, door widening, stair lifts, through floor lifts, kitchen adaptations, extensions etc.) to the total value £1.6 million
- 113 major repairs assistance grant funded projects (51% increase from 2013/14). The Repairs Assistance Grants programme tackles poor housing conditions of vulnerable, elderly and low income home owners. Agency surveyors identify hazards associated with risk of injury or adverse health conditions. Work tackles damp, cold, structural issues, electrical faults and includes an external wall insulation project for Park Homes occupied by low fixed income households likely to be in fuel poverty. The total value of repairs assistance is £1 million
- 53 central heating installations
- 3,676 Handyperson jobs, the majority for older people
- 63 Gas Safety funded interventions in the homes of disabled or older people on low incomes, funded through a £5,000 charitable grant
- 19 privately funded disabled adaptations
- 62 interventions funded by the Electrical Safety Council

- 5.4.4 Care & Repair also raised £76,000 of funding from private/charitable sources. For 2015/2016, the Agency has obtained £5,000 of further funding from the Electrical Safety Council, grants of £2,000 & £7,000 from the Gas Safety Council and a grant of £10,000 from Foundations Warm at Homes Funding.
- 5.4.5 Agency Caseworkers have carried out benefit entitlement checks on 365 grant applications and assisted 48 clients to increase their benefit income. The average income increase 2014/2015 was £4,500 pa per case. This equates to over £200,000 of additional income pa.
- 5.4.6 Diversification of the Agency led to them completing over 200 repairs, maintenance jobs and adaptation interventions (equating to £50,000) in Local Authority Children's Homes, Respite Care Homes, Local Authority and Independent Children's Centres, Nurseries and Schools. The costs of work compared to external quotations resulted in significant savings. The Agency also undertook a review of all the permanent Traveller pitches and maintained, repaired, updated and adapted the pitches as appropriate. This has equated to over £60,000 of works.
- 5.4.7 Looking ahead the Agency needs to act upon the challenges and opportunities presented by the Care Act by utilising all available grants & charitable funding to assist more vulnerable people. The agency needs to increase the income from external funding sources to help more vulnerable people and investigate where the Agency can assist further in respect of hospital discharge.
- 5.4.8 The Agency intends to work more closely with the voluntary sector and the Fire Service in order to develop complimentary services and to work with the Older Peoples Partnership Board to develop falls preventions work.
- 5.4.9 The Agency is developing a new digital system built on the Salesforce platform to meet the Agency's needs and to create a fully electronic grant application system. It will also fully utilise remote working to increase capacity even further.

5.5 **Housing Needs**

5.5.1 Housing Needs – Homelessness in Peterborough

The Housing Needs service continues to deliver a housing options approach when dealing with clients who approach the authority for assistance and will seek to prevent a household's homelessness wherever possible.

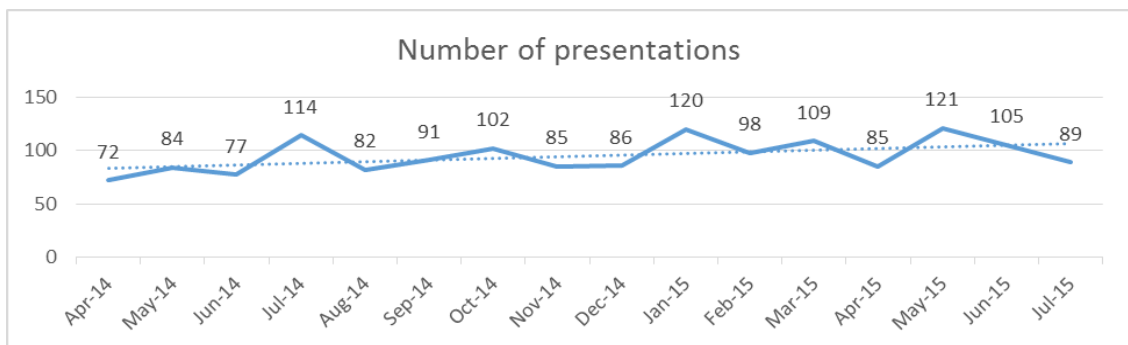
The number of clients contacting the service remains high. In the last financial year the service was contacted 22,698 times by clients for advice and assistance, of which 5,226 were seen face to face by an officer. There are a number of options when preventing homelessness and the service has been successful in a large number of cases, which may have otherwise resulted in the household becoming homeless and the council having to accommodate in temporary accommodation while seeking alternative accommodation. Some of these options include:

- Negotiating with householders/landlords to resolve issues which led to the threat of homelessness
- Liaising with the Housing Benefit team to resolve payment issues
- Taking steps to improve security in the home to allow victims of domestic abuse to remain in the home (Sanctuary Scheme)
- Offering mortgage/debt advice

- Supporting households to move to alternative affordable accommodation in the private sector

In 2014/15 Housing Needs accepted homelessness applications from 1,120 households. This is a slight increase on the previous year (1,095), but remains considerably less than 5 years ago (1,326). Of the 1,120 applications, 335 were accepted as 'statutory homeless' and owed a full housing duty compared to a high of 395 in 2009/10. This is in line with the national picture, which has seen slight increases in homelessness acceptances since 2010.

The graph below shows the number of homelessness presentations month by month from April 2014.



5.5.2 Housing Needs – Rent Deposit Scheme and Discretionary Housing Payments

Housing Needs continues to offer a Rent Deposit Scheme which enables persons to access an interest free loan to be used for the upfront costs associated with securing a property in the private rented sector.

This continues to be a successful option for the prevention and relief of homelessness and also increased access to permanent accommodation. In 2014/2015 a total of 180 households were assisted into private rented sector accommodation through this scheme totalling £79,799.

In addition Housing Needs have made use of the increased Discretionary Housing Payments fund (DHP) made available to all local authorities which has been used to support households who were in receipt of housing benefits and may be at risk of homelessness to move to alternative private sector accommodation by paying up front fees such as deposits, rent in advance and reasonable administration fees. In 2014/2015 200 households were assisted into private rented sector accommodation through this scheme totalling £202,670

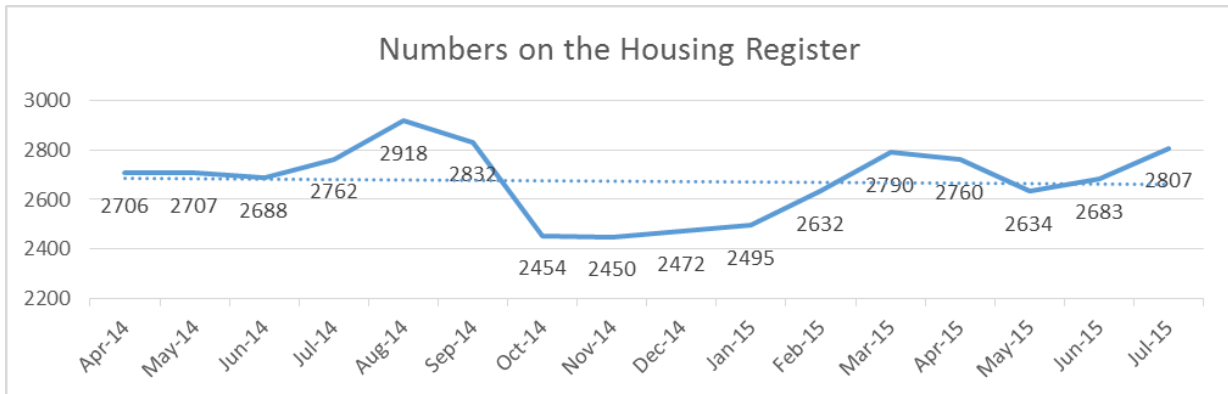
5.5.3 Housing Needs – The Peterborough Homes Scheme and Choice Based Lettings

The council continues to work in partnership with the 10 registered providers of social housing who have significant numbers of social housing in the city to allocate their properties through the Peterborough Homes Choice Based Lettings Scheme.

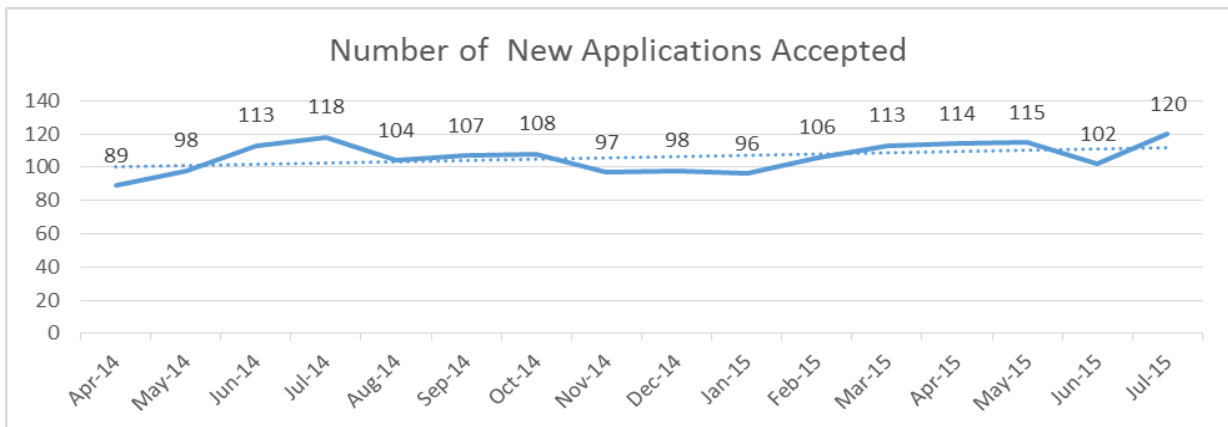
In 2014/2015 Housing Needs allocated 1,280 properties through the Peterborough Homes Choice Based Lettings Scheme.

In January 2013, Housing Needs implemented significant changes to the allocations policy, restricting entry to the register to those who are in the most urgent housing need.

These changes were detailed in last year's update and continue to be relevant. The graph below shows the numbers on the housing register month by month from April 2014.



While numbers on the Housing Register have remained relatively static Housing Needs still continue to receive a high number of applications to join the register, but many are unsuccessful. The graph below shows the number of new applications accepted onto the register month by month from April 2014.



5.5.4 Housing Needs – Rough Sleeping in Peterborough

Peterborough City Council has a rough sleeper outreach officer to assist individuals who find themselves sleeping rough after losing their accommodation. 2014/2015 has been a challenging year for the rough sleeper outreach officer. With the charity Peterborough Streets closing the Council has had to find alternative providers to support our efforts in ensuring that those who are rough sleeping are able to access support and advice to leave the streets. The number of known rough sleepers is currently 17. The table below shows the number of reported rough sleepers following the rough sleeper count submitted to the Department of Communities and Local Government.

Year	Number of rough sleepers
2014	17
2013	11
2012	12
2011	17
2010	21

5.5.5 Housing Needs – Single Person Homelessness

The Housing Needs service remains committed to supporting single homeless persons to prevent them from having to sleep rough. The Crisis Private Rented Sector Scheme, which is being managed by Axiom Housing Association since Peterborough Streets' closure, continues to support single persons to secure suitable accommodation in the private sector and offers support in the first months of their tenancy to support tenancy sustainment.

The No Second Night Out pilot has now drawn to a close and has been integrated into the daily work of Axiom's New Haven hostel and the Housing Needs team. Housing Needs will continue to utilise a crash bed based at the New Haven hostel to prevent single homeless individuals from having to spend any time on the streets, which serves as an ideal entry point for individuals to access the Crisis PRS Scheme.

Most recently there has been an apparent increase in street based activity, such as begging and rough sleeping, which Housing Needs continues to address as and when it arises. Unfortunately some of more recent arrivals to the streets of Peterborough have migrated from other cities and do not have connections with Peterborough so are unable to access services here. While Housing Needs continues to support rough sleepers by offering reconnections to the area from which they travelled many refuse our assistance as they are able to maintain their lifestyle from donations from members of the public. Housing Needs will continue to work with the Police and anti-social behaviour teams in order to address the issue with begging and rough sleeping in the city centre.

This year's cold weather provision will run from November 2015 and will offer support and accommodation overnight to those who are rough sleeping in order to minimise the possibility of loss of life due to adverse cold weather. The trigger for the cold weather provision to be activated is when the overnight temperature is forecast to be 0°C or below for three consecutive nights.

5.6 **Housing Enforcement**

5.6.1 The Housing Enforcement Team continues to tackle poor standards within the private rented sector in the City. Private renting continues to be the fastest growing housing sector with landlords continuing to maximise income by splitting accommodation and increasingly turning unsuitable buildings, such as commercial units, into makeshift accommodation. In some areas of the City over 40% of the housing stock is now privately rented and this upward trend looks set to continue.

5.6.2 During the past year the team has received 991 complaints about poor housing such as lack of heating and hot water, dangerous electrics, damp and mould, insecure properties, overcrowding, and insanitary conditions. Many landlords comply with requests for repairs to be carried out but there remains a number of landlords who do not provide safe, warm and decent accommodation to their tenants.

5.6.3 Officers have served 111 enforcement notices on landlords for a range of offences including:

- Renting out a property without a valid energy performance certificate
- Improvement notices to address unsafe living conditions (hazards)
- Overcrowding in properties
- Emergency repairs and emergency prohibition of accommodation

5.6.4 Most landlords comply with the notices served, but for those who do not the officers arrange for works to be carried out in default of the notice and the landlords face prosecution for non-compliance of the notices. In the past year 8 cases have led to the Council taking action against the landlord in this way.

5.6.5 One landlord was prosecuted for failure to comply with an improvement notice for a property that had been rented to a family for a number of years without any fixed heating. The landlord strongly objected to the notice which resulted not only in the work being carried out in default of the notice, as he didn't comply, but he was also prosecuted by the police for assault, threatening behaviour as well as the original housing offences.

5.6.6 Housing Enforcement – Improving Energy Efficiency

The Housing Enforcement Team has worked with the landlords in the central and east areas to encourage and promote the Heataborough scheme, using a combination of the EPC certificates that show low energy ratings and education of upcoming regulation changes around renting out energy inefficient properties. By the 1st April 2016, tenants will have a right to request consent for energy efficiency measures that may not be unreasonably refused by the landlord. By the 1st April 2018, all eligible properties will have to be improved to a minimum energy efficiency standard before being let to tenants, except where certain exemptions apply. This has resulted in the take up of solid wall insulation measures by a number of individual and portfolio holder landlords in this area of the City.

51 Fixed Penalty Notices were served on landlords for renting out properties without a valid Energy Performance Certificate in place. These were followed up with advice on the grant funding available and, where a category one hazard exists in relation to excess cold, the Fixed Penalty Notices could lead to Improvement Notices if landlords do not take the necessary actions to make their properties suitable, warm and energy efficient for their tenants.

5.6.7 Housing Enforcement – Selective Licensing

During the year work has been ongoing in relation to the introduction of Selective Licensing within the Central, Millfield, New England and Eastfield areas of the City. It is anticipated that the scheme will launch over the next few weeks, and this is subject to a separate report at this Committee meeting.

5.6.8 Housing Enforcement – Raising Awareness

The Housing Enforcement Team have again been appearing on the TV. This year they appeared in a Channel 5 series 'Nightmare Tenants and Slum Landlords'. The series was extremely popular bringing in Channel 5's highest viewing figures at over 5 million per episode. Channel 5 have approached the team to take part in the next series as they provided the strongest storylines for the show.

5.6.9 Housing Enforcement – Partnership Working

The team have been working closely with Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue Service, Police and the Planning Department on a number of cases where landlords have turned commercial property into living accommodation to rent out. This has involved joint visits to premises resulting in Prohibition Orders being served by both the Fire Service and Housing Enforcement followed up by action by the Planning Enforcement Team. A number of families have been displaced through these actions and referred into Housing

Needs for emergency accommodation and re-housing, or housing advice, subject to their eligibility.

5.6.10 Housing Enforcement – Tenancy Relations

The team continues to find some landlords who will readily evict tenants rather than carry out repairs. The role of the Tenancy Relations service has been split between the Housing Enforcement Team and officers within the Housing Needs Team. This allows for a wider range of officers to be able to advise both landlords and tenants on their rights and responsibilities and for every officer to be trained in dealing with the whole case, whether it is a tenant at threat of eviction because of a repairing request or a tenant approaching housing needs at threat of eviction from rent arrears. This also increases the availability of officers to attend site to prevent illegal evictions taking place.

During the last year the officers advised and assisted tenants and landlords on issues including disrepair, possession, deposit protection, security of tenure, rent arrears and unlawful eviction. There are currently 4 cases working their way through the court system, all in relation to illegal eviction.

5.6.11 Housing Enforcement – Mobile Home Parks

The introduction of the Mobile Homes Act 2013 allows the Council to charge owners of park home sites for the inspection and issuing of the Park Home licences. The team undertook a consultation into a proposed schedule of charges early in 2015. The fees policy was approved recently and will come into force in April 2016 when all Park Home owners will be required to apply for a new licence and submit site rules and regulations for approval by the Council.

6 IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 It is anticipated that the Scrutiny Committee will comment on and make recommendations relating to the updates provided in this report in order that delivery potential is maximised for the benefit of our communities.

7. CONSULTATION

- 7.1 N/A.

8. NEXT STEPS

- 8.1 Comments and recommendations made by the Scrutiny Committee will be considered as part of the ongoing development and delivery of specific business areas.

9. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Used to prepare this report, in accordance with the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985

- 9.1 N/A

10. APPENDICES

- 10.1 Appendix 1 – Case Studies.

Appendix 1 – Case Studies

Care & Repair – Multiple Interventions

Mr & Mrs E, in their sixties, approached Care & Repair for Handyperson Services as their toilet was blocked. The Handyperson contractor attended and reported back to Care and Repair about living conditions.

The Care & Repair Caseworker visited and made a referral for an Occupational Therapist Assessment for adaptations due to mobility issues. A Care & Repair Surveyor assessed for Repairs Assistance to remedy the health and safety issues in the home. The hazards identified were Food Safety due to condition of the kitchen, Entry By Intruders due to the condition of windows and doors, Excess Cold due to the inefficient heating system, and Electrical Hazards due to the age and condition of the electrical installation.

An overbath shower was installed under a Disabled Facility Grant but because the bathroom floor had to be removed a harmer drain was also fitted so a level access shower could be installed in the future.

The Surveyor also arranged a meeting at the property with the Tree Preservation Officer to give advice on some listed trees and Care & Repair arranged for the contractor and the wider family to de-clutter the house.

The outcome of a simple Handyperson request to fix a blocked toilet resulted in improved living conditions, wider family re-engagement with the grandchildren being happy and safe to visit their grandparents resulting in an overall improvement of mental and physical wellbeing. No ongoing care needs were identified.

Care & Repair – Maximising Income

Mr & Mrs G – referred into Care & Repair for disabled facility adaptations to provide a level access shower. They were in receipt of state pension and low rate Disability Living Allowance.

Care & Repair Caseworker carried out a benefit entitlement check and identified entitlement to:

- High Rate Disability Living Allowance – Care element
- High Rate Attendance Allowance
- Pension Credit
- Full rate Council Tax Support

Total increase in annual income was £16,806.

Prohibition Order (compliant landlord)

Miss B and her son lived in a fairly remote farm house right on the edge of the Peterborough. They had lived there in excess of 7 years and had contacted the council because her tenancy was changing and she wanted some advice about her repairing obligations.

A joint visit was undertaken by housing enforcement and the tenancy relations officer in 2014, the issue being that the cottage was rented from the tenant farmer who was retiring and the property owners were willing to give Miss B a new tenancy but it had repairing obligations in it which she couldn't undertake due to the condition of the property.

An inspection of the property revealed that it had severe damp, insufficient heating in some parts, draughty rotten windows. The kitchen and bathroom were constructed in a single brick coalhouse/toilet to the rear with no insulation, asbestos cladding to ceilings and walls, regular rat and mice infestations, and a makeshift kitchen.

Following discussions with the tenant it was agreed that the tenant would look for alternative accommodation herself with assistance of a rent deposit to enable her to secure a private rented property in an outlying village due to her family circumstances. She was keen not to disrupt her child's education and school pathway as he was due to start senior school. She also had horses that she kept on the land and wanted time to find alternative arrangements. A further, non-repairing, contract was negotiated for a year to allow the tenant the time she needed.

Regular contact was made with the tenant to assess her progress and once it became clear that she was going to be unable to secure private accommodation, due to her low income and lack of guarantor it was decided to serve a prohibition order and arrange for Miss B to go on the housing register for social housing. Discussions took place with the owners of the property to advise them that it would be prohibited from occupancy until substantial repairs had been carried out. Miss B had been served with a notice to quit by the landlord and negotiations were undertaken to, again, allow the time it would take for her to be re-housed.

The result now is that Miss B has secured a brand new housing association property, in easy access distance to her son's school and the owners are now about ready to undertake the complete refurbishment of the property in order that the prohibition can be lifted and they will then be free to rent it out again.

Improvement notice (non-compliant landlord)

A Council Officer had cause to inspect a property owned by Mr A after concerns were raised about the property's condition. The inspection revealed that the property was in a poor state of repair the most serious concerns being no fixed and controllable heating and an unsafe electrical installation. The tenants, as a result of the lack of heating, were forced to use plug in electric heaters which had resulted in a high energy bill and debt to the energy firm.

After failing to remedy the defects in the property informally Mr A was served with Statutory Notices that required him to undertake the works within a strict timescale. Mr A failed to comply with those notices which resulted in the local authority undertaking the works in default with the works totalling over £9,000. Mr A is liable for the outstanding debt as a result of the works.

During the course of the works being undertaken by the Council Mr A obstructed the investigating Council Officer and Contractors employed to undertake the works which resulted in further costs and delay. After seeking a warrant to enter the property and a Court Order to deter further obstruction, Peterborough Magistrates Court approved the works which recommenced and were eventually completed.

A further concerning development during the course of the investigation related to Mr A having made threats to kill the investigating council officer which involved an altercation in the street, contacting other Council staff members and an elected member of Peterborough City Council. After an investigation by Cambridgeshire Constabulary the Crown Prosecution Service charged Mr A with offences related to his threats. After originally pleading not guilty to those charges, on the day of the trial Mr A changed his plea to Guilty.

The landlord was fined £500 and ordered to pay costs of £850 after being convicted of offences relating to failing to make repairs to a rental property and attempting to obstruct council officers and contractors from carrying out their duties. He was also convicted of theft, sending offensive,

menacing messages, using threatening, abusive, insulting words and behaviour likely to cause harassment, alarm or distress. For this he received 120 hours community service, costs of £685 and had a restraining order against him for 2 years where he must not contact or attempt to contact the case officer.

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