

Housing Sub Committee

Monday, 26 July 2021

Present: Councillor A Newman (Chair)
Councillors L Darke, John Hunter, M Thirlaway, J Walker,
E Parker-Leonard, K Barrie, M Green, J Mole, S Phillips
and Westwater

HO1/21 Appointment of Substitute Members

There were no substitutes reported.

HO2/21 Declarations of Interest

There were no Declarations of Interest reported.

HO3/21 Minutes

Agreed that the minutes of the meeting held on 22 March 2021 be confirmed as a correct record.

HO4/21 End of the Ban on Evictions

The sub-committee received a presentation given by the Housing Services Manager and Housing Options Manager on the Lifting of the Eviction Ban in North Tyneside.

The sub-committee were informed that the Coronavirus Act 2020 had provided protection to social and private tenants by delaying when landlords could evict tenants.

Provisions in the Act increased the required notice period length landlords could provide to tenants when seeking possession and that between 29 August 2020 and 31 May 2021, with the exception of the most serious cases, landlords needed to give their tenants 6 months' notice before starting possession proceedings.

Legislation was in place up to the end of 31 May to ensure bailiffs did not serve eviction notices or carry out evictions until after the 1 June 2021.

North Tyneside had policies that supported its residents through the:

The North Tyneside Homelessness Prevention and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2019-2021 includes three priorities that work to prevent homelessness:

- Implementation and delivery of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017
- Meeting local housing need
- Supporting households to secure and sustain a home

The North Tyneside Letting Policy 2019 also aims to help people access secure, suitable, and affordable social sector homes within North Tyneside.

The sub-committee was informed that through 2020/21 vulnerable tenants were supported and assisted them to apply for:

- Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP) assisting 483 households at a total value of £344,721.32
- 141 households were supported through the hardship fund (£100k)
- No court enforcement action was taken during 2020 – 2021 for rent arrears or applications made to court.
- No evictions on the grounds of ASB

There were a number of challenges for supporting tenants in 2021/22, due to the £170k reduction of the Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP), the £100k Hardship fund no longer being available, the ending of the Government Furlough Scheme and the end of the uplift payments for Universal Credit uplift in September 2021.

To alleviate some of the impact to the loss in DHP funding the Authority had placed £30k from the Homeless Prevention fund.

It was emphasised that the authority would continue with its approach of tenancy sustainment by working with our tenants and our supporting internal and external partners, to understand reasons for arrears, with eviction process as the last option.

There was expected impact to private sector residents and the Housing team had developed a plan to support those most at risk of eviction and the sub-committee heard that in 2020/21 the Authority's Homeless Team received 74 presentations due to Section 21 Notices being served by private landlords and due to the eviction ban there were no Section 21 presentations in 2020-2021.

It also heard that since the 31st May when the government lifted the eviction ban, there had been 20 cases presented with Section 21 Notices served due to rent arrears.

The Housing Options team had developed a plan to support those most at risk of eviction:

- Use of the Private Landlord Officer to work with landlords to identify tenants at immediate risk
- Working closer with Registered Providers' s to identify tenants at immediate risk.
- Publicising service on social media and website to promote early contact from tenants who may need support from evictions.
- Modelling on DHP demand and prioritise use of funding to those at risk of evictions.
- Modelling the impact on each service by using possession data, unemployment/UC to forecast what the demand might be
- Developing a toolkit of support

A member requested how many evictions had been undertaken for the year prior to the Coronavirus Act 2020 ban on evictions. In response the Housing Services Manager stated the information would be provided.

A member asked if there was data in relation to the hidden homeless and who rely on friend

and family for accommodation and for the information to be circulated to the Sub-committee. In response the Housing Options Manager informed the sub-committee of the Everyone in Initiative to ensure everyone was provided accommodation during the Covid-19 pandemic and stated she would provide the necessary information.

Agreed that the presentation on the End of the Ban on Evictions be noted.

HO5/21 Work Programme 2021/22

The sub-committee received a report with potential topics for inclusion in the 2021/22 Housing Sub-Committee work programme.

Following discussions the sub-committee agreed that a sub-group be established to review Anti-Social Behaviour ASB and that the sub-group be limited to current members of the sub-committee and to comprise Councillors A Newman, M Green, John Hunter, M Thirlaway and K Barrie.

For items to be included into the work programme it was requested that the item relating to Affordable Housing should include information on new builds at Murton Gap and Killingworth Moor, with a further request that a definition be provided to what is an Affordable Home.

A member requested that there was a need to understand how Affordable Housing is reflected in the North Tyneside Local Plan.

The Chair suggested that a further update presentation on Affordable Housing should be placed on the work programme at the end of the current municipal year (March 2022).

In relation to the item Priorities of the Police and Crime Commissioner a member requested that the item be brought forward if possible and should come before the sub-committee earlier than January 2022 meeting.

A further Item for consideration for inclusion to the work programme was the support being provided to increase independent living, with the need to examine arrangements that allow people to stay in their homes, with particular reference to the understanding to the support for those with Mental Health issues.

A further request was made for the sub-committee to receive an update position of services since its in-sourcing of the housing, construction, repairs and maintenance services.

Agreed that (1) the Work Programme 2021/22 report be noted; and (2) to establish a sub-group to undertake an in-depth study into Anti-Social Behaviour.