

## **Report to Wells T C 8<sup>th</sup> Jan 2024**

### **from PGF District Council for Wells and Holkham**

**8<sup>th</sup> Jan 2024**

### **Housing crisis in North Norfolk**

**Date published: 20th December 2023**

North Norfolk District Council has today sent an open letter to Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities the Rt Hon Michael Gove calling for urgent action from Government to help ease the local housing crisis.

The letter from Leader of the Council Cllr Tim Adams spells out the seriousness of the situation regarding homelessness and the alarming rise to the cost of temporary accommodation provision in North Norfolk.

Homelessness has increased by 40 per cent in North Norfolk over the course of the last three years, reflecting similar pressures in District and Borough Councils throughout England.

This number continued to increase and between April 1 and October 31 this year, 228 households had been assessed as threatened with homelessness or already homeless.

If the Council places a household in nightly paid accommodation costing £700 per week, it is currently only able to claim £98 of that cost back.

The net cost of the Council meeting its statutory requirement to provide temporary accommodation has consequently risen from £713k in 2022-23 to a projected figure of £1m in 2023-24.

In a move supported by leaders of all parties at the recent Full Council meeting on November 22, the letter calls on the Minister to urgently consider the following measures:

- Local Housing Allowance to be urgently increased to realistic levels for North Norfolk. In line with private rental amounts.

*(Councillors note that since agreeing the Motion, the government has committed to increasing the Local Housing Allowance Rate in April 2024. However, there is no commitment beyond 2024 and greater certainty is needed for longer-term. Also there is no increase in the amount of Local Housing Allowance the Council can claim for providing temporary housing in nightly paid accommodation. The Council has to make up the shortfall and this is placing a significant strain on the Council's budget.)*

- Central Government policy to support Councils to buy land for affordable housing developments based on current use, as per established Local Plans, rather than on “hope value”, by reforming the Land Compensation Act 1961.
- National Planning policy amendments, so that house-builders are pro-actively encouraged to incorporate the provision of ‘truly affordable’ homes in their development projects, supporting Local Authorities to challenge the reneging of these duties on ‘viability assessment’ grounds.

**Cllr. Tim Adams commented:**

“We are heartened that this letter has received cross-party support across the Council with unanimous support of Councillors, reflecting the outcome of the Eastbourne Virtual Housing Summit in October attended by 158 Councils.

“This demonstrates the scale of this challenge nationwide, and the impacts facing numerous families currently, which is also leaving local government finances in a precarious position.”

**North Norfolk housing crisis: Some key facts (correct as of 18 December 2023)**



There are 2,488 households on the Council’s housing list.



572 of these are in urgent need because of:

- being homeless or threatened with homelessness (182)
- living in insanitary, overcrowded or otherwise unsatisfactory housing (154)
- a need to move on medical or welfare grounds (including disability) (236)



There are 65 homeless households in temporary housing provided by the Council.



There have been 226 Affordable Housing lettings across the district in the last twelve months. Less than one let for every 10 households on the Housing list. 116 lets have been to homeless households.



Housing Associations provide all the affordable housing in the district with the demand for this far outstripping supply. The Council owns 23 homes which are used to provide temporary housing for homeless households.



The Council has a legal duty under Part 7 of the Housing Act to accommodate certain homeless clients.



The Council has too few homes to meet all of the need for temporary housing and the Council has to house some people in nightly paid accommodation. The government meets only a small part of the cost of the hotels.



The net cost to the Council in 2022/23 was £713,000 - the expected net cost to the Council in 2023/24 is approximately £1m.



## **Public toilet facilities have been graded Diamond by the [Loo of the Year Awards Scheme for 2023](#)**

The Council is pleased that both Stearman's Yard (Wells) and Queen's Road (Fakenham) Car Park public toilet facilities have been graded Diamond by the [Loo of the Year Awards Scheme](#) for 2023.

The Stearman's Yard Car Park in Wells-next-the-Sea toilet facilities were completed in December 2022 and are complete with male and female toilets, two gender-neutral toilets with 24-hour access, Changing Places facilities, disabled access toilets and baby changing toilets.

### **Toilets at Stearman's Yard, Wells**

The Queen's Road Car Park facilities were completed in spring 2023 and are both water and energy-efficient, with male and female facilities, a gender-neutral room, a family room and accessible toilets with Changing Places facilities inside.

### **Toilets at Queens Road, Fakenham**

The Loo of the Year Awards is run and owned independently and has been running since 1987. The competition has focused on highlighting, recognising and rewarding the best washrooms throughout the UK and Ireland.

All toilet facilities entered into the awards will receive either a Silver, Gold, Platinum or Diamond grade. Diamond and Platinum-graded facilities will be considered for National and Overall Awards selection.

### **Cllr. Tim Adams, Leader of the Council said:**

"we are pleased that further investments in our public conveniences have once again been recognised by Loo Of The Year.

Our commitment to delivering new and improved facilities to support local shopping centres and the tourism economy continues with work to commence next at Albert Street in Holt."

The Council regards the provision of high-quality public conveniences as a key service underpinning the District's tourism offering as well as town centre economies.