

ECONOMY SCRUTINY PANEL

DATE	9 March 2021
REPORT OF	Assistant Director - Housing, Highways and Transport.
SUBJECT	Housing Strategy Action Plan – Update and focus on empty homes and social housing
STATUS	Open

CONTRIBUTION TO OUR AIMS

The delivery of the Housing Strategy Action Plan and associated action plans play a key role in building Stronger Communities. The plans will support the Council's work to contribute towards all people in North East Lincolnshire having somewhere to call home, where they feel safe and secure, and can enjoy good health and wellbeing. Delivery also supports the regeneration of our borough.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This cover report introduces two requested updates; empty homes (appendix 1) and social housing (appendix 2).

RECOMMENDATIONS

The panel is asked to receive the briefing notes.

1. BACKGROUND AND ISSUES

The panel received a previous report on the empty homes strategy (July 2020) and had requested updates on empty homes and social housing.

2. RISKS AND OPPORTUNITIES

There are none arising from this report. Any actions which the council may undertake as a result of recommendations made by scrutiny will be the subject of further reports, which will include risk assessment(s) by the author(s) concerned.

3. REPUTATION AND COMMUNICATIONS CONSIDERATIONS

This requested report demonstrates the breath of matters considered by scrutiny.

4. FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

There are no financial considerations included within this report, beyond scrutiny's enhanced role in monitoring delivery of the council's budget and medium-term financial plan

5. CLIMATE CHANGE AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

The council's housing strategy supports improving the quality of housing stock, eliminating waste and recognising the economic and social benefits of a high-quality environment.

6. MONITORING COMMENTS

In the opinion of the author, this report does not contain recommended changes to policy or resources (people, finance or physical assets). As a result, no monitoring comments have been sought from the Council's Monitoring Officer (Chief Legal Officer), Section 151 Officer (Director of Finance) or Strategic Workforce Lead.

7. WARD IMPLICATIONS

Potentially impacts on all wards.

8. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Empty Homes Strategy - Economy Scrutiny Panel 7 July 2020

9. CONTACT OFFICER(S)

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**Mark Nearney
Assistant Director
Housing, Highways and Transport**

Briefing Note

Empty Property Strategy Update – Economy Scrutiny 9th March 2021

The purpose of this briefing note is to provide an update and reassurance to Scrutiny Panel on the actions and progress made to deliver NEL's Empty Property Strategy.

1. Background

In July 2020, Cabinet approved the Empty Property Strategy, detailing how the Council and its partners will work to bring empty properties back into use.

Since adopting the strategy, the Council, and its partner ENGIE, have worked in challenging and restrictive circumstances, due to COVID 19, to implement the strategy action plan.

There are currently in excess of 2000 empty properties within North East Lincolnshire. Within these figures there approximately 502 properties which have been empty for more than 2 years and of these, 148 properties have been empty for over 5 years.

The Empty Property Team assess the top 100 longest empty properties and are targeting those that adversely impact on the neighbourhood, using the various options within the strategy.

The contractual target for ENGIE, agreed in 2017, is to bring 40 units per year back into use. However, Engie endeavour to achieve as many units as possible. As of the 1st Feb 2021, 35 had been brought back into use with a pipeline to reach 43 this year. However, it's not just about numbers, it's also about the type of unit is also important, Hence the team review the top 100 longest empty units and cross reference against the condition any anti-social behaviour and potential council tax debt issues that may exist.

Reducing the number of empty properties in the Borough is challenging due to the minimal financial assistance available for landlords to bring properties back into use. COVID - 19 has also presented several challenges to the team, as lockdown has affected some investors, discouraging them from purchasing properties due to the uncertain economic climate. Investors have also expressed concern over obtaining finance and/or a reliable supply chain for materials/trade personnel, to acquire and refurbish properties, especially during the first lockdown.

2.0 Progress to date

2.1 NELC Empty Property Working Group – This group has been established with representatives from Council Tax, Home Options, Debt Recovery, Environmental, Planning, Building Control and the ASB teams, who come together formed, to assist and add value in delivering the Empty Property Strategy, supporting Engie. The group targets empty units, particularly problematic long term empty properties to look at ways they can work together to bring them back into use.

Recent successful actions include;

- Following a review by the Housing Enforcement Team on a property in Cleethorpes, the Empty Homes Officer worked with the family of the property and developers on the approved list which resulted in a change of ownership. This was facilitated through actively assisting with viewings which brought about the successful purchase. The empty property was refurbished and brought back into use in September 2020.
- Through partnership working, an enforced sale of a property has been facilitated which has also resulted in recovery of around £8000 in council tax arrears.
- The empty property officer and the environmental protection team worked together on joint approach targeting specific properties particularly with fly tipping issues and liaise to determine the best course of enforcement action to take. An example of this includes a property on Hainton Avenue. The EH Teams worked with owner to improve the front appearances, we also looked into financial options which remain ongoing. The Community Protection team subsequently has gone down their enforcement route to clear the fly tipping at the rear of the property.

2.2 The Empty Property Hub meets formally every quarter and brings together registered providers and charities, with the sole purpose of identifying and working together to bring empty homes back into use.

To date the work has supported local charities, including the YMCA, Women's Aid and Doorstep to purchase 6 empty properties. This has resulted in providing additional quality housing for vulnerable members of the community, creating a sustainable pathway for residents enabling them to live independently, with the right short-term support, as well as stimulating the local economy and improving the look and feel of neighbourhoods.

Both the Empty Property Team and Empty Property Hub have provided structure and governance in delivering the Empty property Strategy and enabled NELC and ENGIE to optimise performance in reducing empty properties in the Borough. This collaborative working is making a difference but, with any service, staffing resource is key and this work is extremely resource intensive.

2.3 Providing suitable housing for those in need - The empty property teamwork with charities and registered providers to source empty properties that meet the local housing need. Targeting residents waiting for social housing is also discussed as we look to utilise the DFG budget and marry up an empty property, with DFG funding, housing and meeting the individuals or family needs.

2.4 Empty Property Leasing Scheme - The team are developing an Empty Property Leasing Scheme which should allow the authority to take possession of empty

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properties, either voluntarily or on a mandatory basis from the owner, supported by housing legislation. The scheme is currently being reviewed by NEL officers, it is our intention that the properties will be let by the Council to house homeless households and reduce the pressure of budgets created by using temporary Bed and Breakfast accommodation.

2.5 Community Housing – East Marsh United, supported by NELC, will shortly be taking over their third property. The group have actively worked to enhance their neighbourhood and have targeted long term problematic properties. All 3 properties had been empty for a combined total of 22 years. We are keen to support and expand this scheme further.

2.6 Council Tax Pilot Scheme - The Council Tax Team have piloted a scheme, putting leaflets inside council tax letters sent to owners of empty properties, giving details of a local housing charity, should the current owner wish to lease or sell their property. There has been a positive response and the team are now assisting the charity to bring additional properties back into use. The Hub are now looking at ways of extending the project, to include more charities/housing providers.

2.7 Properties in Probate – The Empty Homes Team have entered into a partnership with a tracing agency to tackle properties that are in probate where the owners cannot be found. This has already proved to be successful, with the company identifying lost family members of a property which has resulted in the family taking ownership and engaging an agent to grant probate of the property, which will allow it to be sold. This particular property has been empty for 13 years. We estimate 72 properties have been in probate for between 1 and 5 years with 5 properties stuck in probate with no owner/responsible person coming forward.

In another case, the agent has also traced the family of the owner of a property which has been empty for over 10 years. The property was causing damp to a neighbouring property. The agents have now cleared fly tipping from the gardens and are in the process of completing the legal paperwork for the family.

2.8 Implementation of the Housing Assistance Strategy – Energy Repayment Loans are now available for Landlords of empty properties – this work is in its early days, so it is too early to evaluate its impact. NELC will continue to promote the scheme where possible.

2.9 Database to Prioritise Case Loads – NELC has approved a decision to re-procure a joint system for Enforcement. The procurement for a new system is ongoing which will allow a more streamlined approach by Spring 2022 whilst officers are working onsite, this will improve joint working and help target problematic empty properties.

2.10 Looked After Children - The Empty Property Team have identified several properties for consideration to house looked after children. An Accommodation Strategy for NELC, led by NELC's Asset Team will coordinate and understand the property needs of the Council as a collective, which will provide efficiencies, reduce waste and potential duplication.

2.11 Providing additional Housing for those most in need – We have been successful in our bid and have now been awarded funding by MHCLG to purchase properties to lease to homeless/rough sleepers, and also funding to ensure there is the right support to help clients to settle, giving them time and a space where they can tackle some of the issues causing them to become homeless, as well as easing them into a long-term tenancy and independent living. Many charities are unwilling to take on the more complex and challenging cases, even more so during COVID19, which has led the Council to purchase and manage their own housing stock.

Three properties have been identified which will provide 6 separate households accommodation, one property has now been purchased and about to be refurbished.

2.12 Working with developers – The Empty Property Team, work pro-actively with investors and developers. There are currently 86 investors on the approved list. The Housing team hold open days to speak with investors and attract additional investors to the area. Unfortunately, due to COVID 19 these have been paused, but officers still stay in contact with the more active investors.

2.13 Working with Registered Providers - We contact and communication with Registered Providers around their asset disposal policy and try and intervene where we have a viable option. Ultimately, RPs are standalone organisations.

3.0 Proposed/Ongoing Actions

3.1 Support for owners of Derelict and Commercial Property – We work with the Environment Agency and Planning colleagues to develop an approach to support owners of Commercial Property to overcome any potential barriers preventing redevelopment and change of use.

3.2 Guidance on Converting Residential Properties into HMO's – This work has been delayed due to the impact of COVID 19. We anticipate that this action will be completed by December 2021. This stream of work will provide guidance to potential investors and developers to ensure that they comply with the necessary legislation.

3.3 Domestic Living over Commercial Units/Shops – Linking in with Regeneration colleagues, we are investigating options around contributing towards the regeneration of our Town Centres to bring into use accommodation over shops and increase inward investment.

4.0 Gateway Scheme

4.1 Working with designated officers from Community Protection, this scheme targets properties located on Cleethorpes Road / Grimsby Road to improve the visual appearance impact on the neighbourhood. By working with the owners, the scheme

is encouraging them to look at bringing the properties back into use and a change from office into residential.

5.0 Performance

5.1 At the time of writing this report, the Empty Property Team has currently brought back into use 35 properties, which can be broken down into the following wards:

5.2 Heneage Ward

A total of six properties have been brought back into use, all through advice, guidance and assistance by Housing Team. This may include signposting and providing landlords with information on planning, building control and HMOs. The length that the properties have been empty ranges from 3 months up to 14 years. Two of these properties have been empty for 13 and 14 years and were purchased and refurbished by a charity, which assists vulnerable adults.

5.3 Sidney Sussex Ward

A total of six properties have been brought back into use through advice and assistance. The length of time these properties have been empty range from 4 to 12 months.

5.4 West Marsh Ward

A total of six properties have been brought back into use, all through advice and guidance. The length of time being empty ranges from 2 months to 12 years. The property which was empty for 12 years was purchased by a developer who will house vulnerable people.

5.5 East Marsh Ward

A total of 13 empty properties have been brought back into use in the East Marsh. The team worked very closely with a developer who brought a number of properties back into use. The length of time these properties were empty ranges from 3 months to 4 years. Two of the properties brought back into use were converted into HMOs.

The Council are currently working with Historic England, funding a project to explore feasible options to deliver numbers 5 & 7 Eleanor Street, and the Former Art College. Over the last few years, the properties have significantly deteriorated. Since then, the Council have tried to work with the owner of all three buildings, securing the site perimeter on a number of occasions, and during 2020, carrying out works to secure the front façade of the Art College. The report is expected to be completed by April 2021.

5.6 Park Ward

Two properties have been brought back into use within Park Ward. The length of time these have been empty range from 10 months to 2-years, property which was empty for 2 years was refurbished as a Mandatory licensable HMO.

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5.7 Yarborough Ward

One property has been brought back into use in this ward. The property had been empty for 2 years and 3 months and previously occupied by a vulnerable person who had mental health issues including hoarding. The Team supported the tenant to be moved into sheltered accommodation and advertised the property through the investors list.

5.8 Croft Baker Ward

One property has been brought back into use in this ward. The property had been empty for 2 years and 5 months and the Council had previously attended the property due to extensive anti-social behaviour. The Empty Homes Team assisted by sourcing a change of ownership through the developers list.

5.9 West Marsh

The Empty Homes Team have proactively worked with the previous owners of Freshney House to support and secure the change of ownership of the property. The Empty Homes Team working with Community Protection have assisted the new owners by installing CCTV cameras to tackle fly tipping and criminal damage. The new owners are providing 29 low-cost units.

Over the last few years, Freshney House has been the source of fly tipping and anti-social behaviour. The team worked with the leaseholders, to bring about a sale, which has led to the property being refurbished. Freshney House comprises independent flats.

Mark Nearney
Assistant Director Housing, Highways and Transport

Briefing Note

Social Housing Update – Economy Scrutiny Panel 9th March 2021

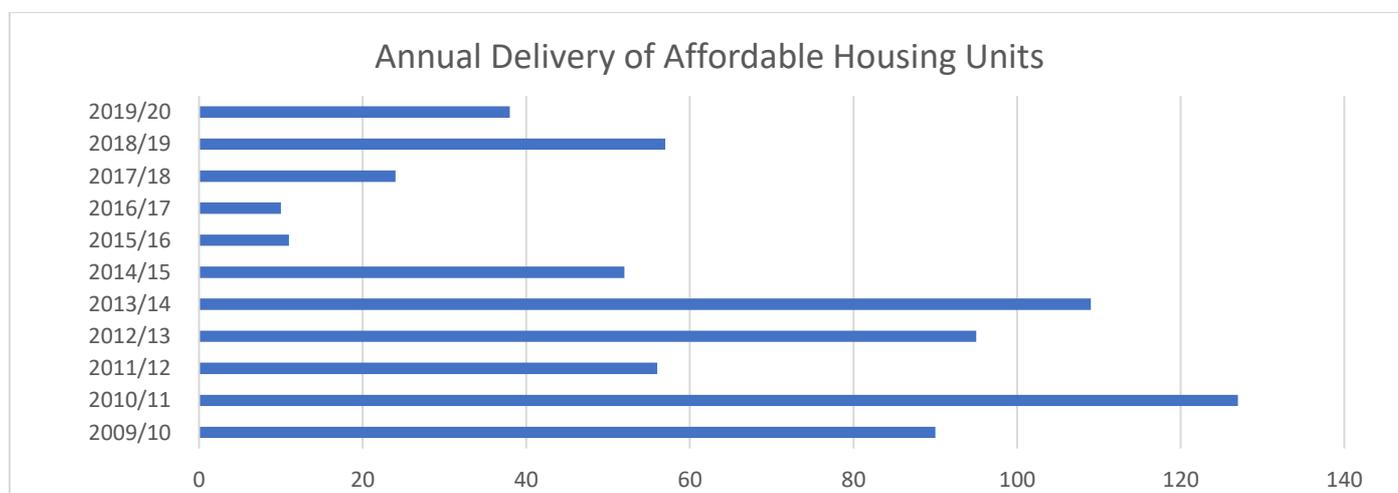
1. MEASURES TO INCREASE HOUSING STOCK TO MEET LOCAL NEED

There are pressures on the existing Social Housing stock in North East Lincolnshire (NEL) from an unmet need for additional Social Housing and Specialist Housing, which should be met through new developments. However, the NEL area generates low rental incomes for reinvestment in new development so the viability of development of new Social Housing stock is challenging and cannot easily be achieved without financial support, the main source of which is grant funding, provided to Registered Providers of Social Housing (RPs) through the Affordable Housing Program via Homes England.

Added to this is the need for land for Affordable Housing development as only one of the three main registered providers, with stock in NEL, own developable land: Lincolnshire Housing Partnership - formerly Shoreline which was formed for the Council's Voluntary Stock Transfer.

The NELC Affordable Housing Forum meets quarterly, to discuss Affordable Housing (delivery and its management) to maximise all opportunities for Affordable Housing development through partnership working. Attendees include representatives from, Homes England, Lincolnshire Housing Partnership, Longhurst and Guinness, among smaller housing providers.

Provision of additional Social Housing is dependent on Registered Providers' own developments with support from Affordable Housing Grant Funding, and developer contributions in accordance with s.106 planning requirements. Many aspects of development for example, finances, policy changes and the housing market can impact upon the delivery of new Affordable Housing. Over the last 10 years numbers for Affordable Housing delivery have fluctuated, relying heavily on a buoyant housing market, giving developer the confidence to build out sites, which include section 106 homes. This falls below the required number to support meeting need.



2. COUNCIL ACTIVITIES

NELC's Housing team are currently exploring the merits of becoming a Registered Provider of Social Housing (RP) and Homes England Investment Partner. This could potentially enable the Council to access Affordable Homes grant funding to support increased delivery of Social Housing and Specialist & Supported housing, to meet local housing needs.

Becoming an RP could build upon the small number of properties being purchased with Ministry of Housing and Local Government Rough Sleeper Accommodation Programme (RSAP) funding, to provide specialist, supported housing for rough sleepers with complex support needs, which can range from mental health and/or drug and alcohol issues. This programme takes forward the positive lessons learnt during the pandemic, when the Council successfully brought "Everyone In", after the government announced in March 2020, that all rough sleepers should be housed. There is also an opportunity for the Council, through RP status, to potentially support the aims of the Empty Property Strategy, acquiring and refurbishing empty properties, to provide accommodation for those in housing need, as well as being supported by Voluntary Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE). The Council is also investigating the option of launching its Private Sector Leasing scheme, bringing empty properties back into use. This will enable the Home Options Team to offer accommodation from a preventative approach, reducing the need for emergency, temporary accommodation. The Home Options Team can then provide support and accommodation to those who lose accommodation due to budgeting/debt/rent arrears in a variety of locations, which will ensure continuity of schooling and family/community support.

The Council has recently developed its first residential new build scheme, providing 15 x one bed bespoke flats as specialist accommodation for CCG Adult Service users with learning disabilities. The Council has retained ownership of the scheme and leased the property to a specialist Registered Provider to manage the scheme and CCG commissioned a Care & Support provider to provide 24/7 support. There are early discussions about the need for similar schemes and, if the Council gains RP status, they would be in a position to draw down Affordable Housing grant funding to support their own investment in development of new Council Assets which will provide future revenue to the Council.

The Council is also working with the CCG to support and enable the delivery of Extra Care Schemes in accordance with the CCG Extra Care Strategy. There is a recognised need for further Extra Care apartments, Western and Matthew Humberstone sites have been identified for Extra Care schemes. This provides a potential opportunity for the Council to enable the development of these schemes to meet the identified future need.

3. STRATEGIC HOUSING MARKET ASSESSMENT

The Council is required to update the Strategic Housing Market Needs Assessment (SHMNA), and the Housing Strategy calls for the Authority to develop and submit for approval a Housing Needs Assessment to thoroughly understand the level and type of housing need in the borough. This assessment has been put on hold until the upcoming Planning White Paper has been published, as this will provide new guidance on how to assess housing needs and how to present the data within the report. Currently, the only way that the Council can assess housing need, is to analyse the Council's own Housing Register, which the Council hold and maintain through the Home Choice Lincs (HCL) waiting list. This currently highlights a significant unmet need for social housing in NEL, down to the type and size of dwelling required.

The SHMNA is also needed to supply data and details to inform the Affordable Housing policy statement. A Supplementary Planning Document to the Local Plan (SPD) is in progress, which will provide clear guidance to how we deliver affordable housing locally, to meet need. A policy for spending s.106 Affordable Housing Commuted Sum contributions has been approved by Cabinet and adopted. This policy enables the Council to show what priorities the Council will spend offsite affordable housing contributions, how to apply and the decision-making process.

4. HOUSING NEED & RISK FROM IMPACT FROM COVID ON THE LEVELS

We are aware that the need for Social Housing is constant and increasing as shown by the number of households registered on Home Choice Lincs (HCL)

At any given time on HCL there are more than 3000 active applications for a home in NEL (HCL data Qtr 3 2020/21)

During Quarter 3 2020/21, 250 households were rehomed through Home Choice Lincs. 70 households were rehoused from Band One.

Within NEL, we have approximately 10,000 homes that are classed as social housing. The main RPs within NEL include Lincolnshire Housing Partnership, Longhurst Group and The Guinness Partnership.

The housing register in Northern Lincolnshire is managed by Home Choice Lincs (HCL) which is a Partnership of North and North East Lincolnshire Councils, Lincolnshire Housing Partnership, Longhurst Group, Ongo Homes, The Guinness Partnership and Sanctuary Group. Properties are advertised each week on the website which identifies the landlord, location, size, rent and other features of the property to help decide which properties they would like to bid for. The customer then 'bids' or registers their interest in the property, and it is allocated to the person who finishes highest on the shortlist, based on the priority banding and length of time waiting.

Households apply online and each application is assessed and placed into a Band.

5. BANDING IN HCL

Eligibility for each band is described below;

Band 1 – Urgent Priority

- Those people the Council has a statutory duty to house, for example those without a home, through eviction. This does not include those who are intentionally homeless.
- People who need to move on urgent medical grounds, for example those who are unable to be discharged from hospital, because they have no suitable accommodation.
- People leaving supported housing as part of a plan to re-integrate them back into the community, or those who need to move to receive support and care.
- People serving in the regular or reserve forces, suffering from a serious injury, illness or disability which is attributable (wholly or partly) to the person's service whose current home is no longer accessible to them.
- Those at risk in their current home.

Band 2 – High Priority

- People living in overcrowded conditions who are 2 or more bedrooms short of requirements.

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- Those owed duty but assessed as not in priority need, for as long as that duty is owed to the applicant.
- People not in priority need but threatened with homelessness.
- Those owed a duty but not considered to be in priority need, for as long as that duty is owed to the applicant; and the Authority are satisfied there is no reasonable prospect of the current accommodation continuing to be available for at least 6 months.
- People who need to move due to a high medical need.
- Social housing tenants of the partner landlords that are under-occupying a house by 1 or more bedrooms and are wishing to down-size to a smaller property.
- People living in an adapted property where the adaptations are no longer required by any member of the household.

Band 3 - Medium priority

- People who need to relocate
- People with shared childcare
- People who are 1 bedroom short of requirements
- Intentionally homeless households
- People occupying insanitary housing or otherwise living in unsatisfactory housing conditions.

Band 4 – Low Priority

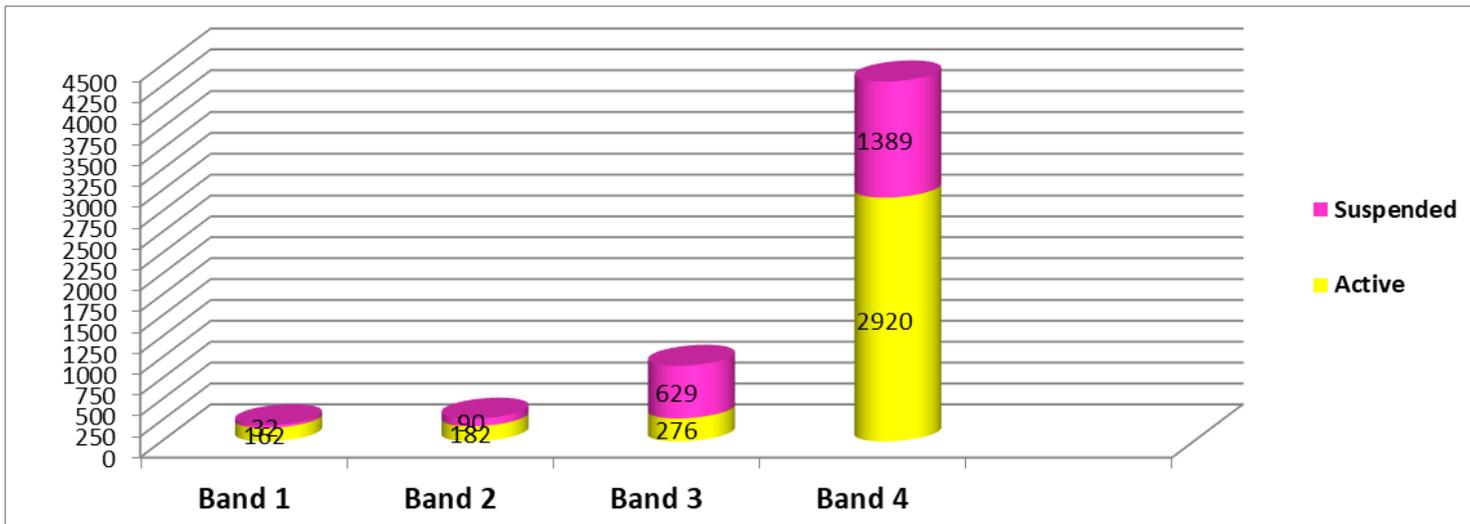
- People assessed as having no identified housing need or only a low level of need. For example, a person whose current home is adequate to meet their basic needs.
- Any applicant who is a homeowner or has an asset of significant value pending determination of their ability to resolve their own housing needs.

6. SUSPENDING APPLICATIONS

There are a significant number of households that are suspended from the Housing Register, the most common reason for suspension being historical rent arrears owed to current and previous landlords, with a high number of households applying for transfers being suspended from the HCL register for current and previous arrears. NELC are currently reviewing the joint HCL policy and are working closely with the Social Landlords to ensure preventative services are in place to support those in tenancies, ensuring they do not need to move.

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Graph showing numbers suspended by Band:



A dedicated working group has also been established, with Adult Services, Engie and the CCG to ensure the DFG budget is being fully optimised and includes innovative solutions, offering RPs the opportunity to convert some housing stock into more viable and specialised adapted assets, especially for their lower demand accommodation, that may be stood.

7. LOCKDOWN IMPLICATIONS/TRENDS

Year	Number of households suspended in HCL
2020/21	119
2019/20	111
2018/19	46
2017/18	48
2016/17	43

There is a risk that the numbers applying for social housing could significantly increase when the Government’s restriction on evictions ends in March 2021 and when the Furlough Scheme is withdrawn. In NEL, in June 2020 17,200 people were supported through the Corona Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) and 3,600 through the Self-Employed Income Support Scheme (SEIS). This is highly likely to have increased over time as the Government support schemes have been

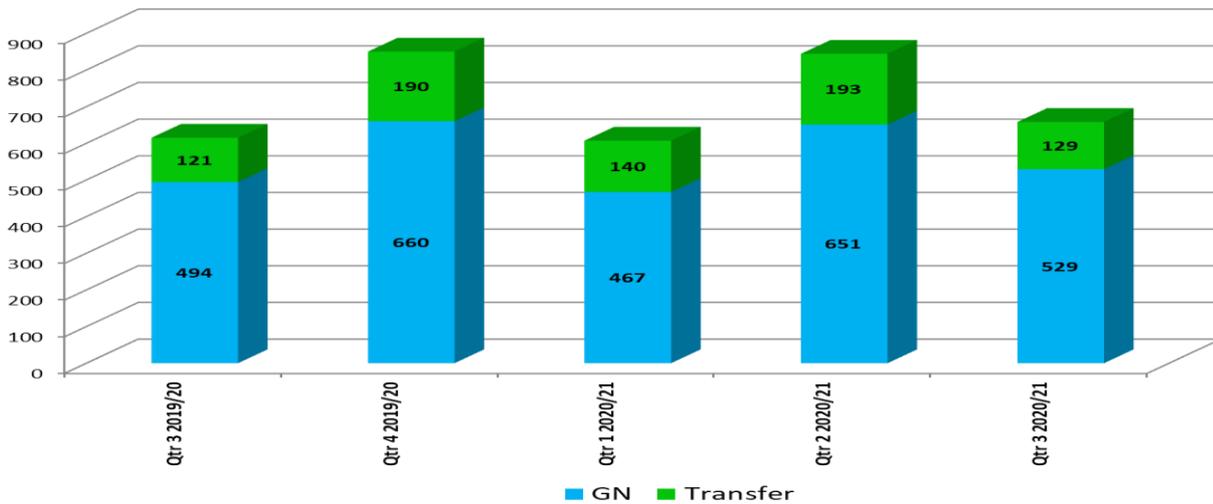
extended.

The adjacent table, showing **Number of households suspended in HCL**, could also highlight, RPs reducing their own exposure to financial risk, as well as mirroring the possibility of more residents suffering from low income and poor levels of employment due to COVID-19 -19.

Following the period of restrictions on moving to a new home during the first Lockdown, which reduced applications and sign ups to new properties/tenancies, there has been a slight increase in applications over the last 2 quarters. Those that have applied are mainly in higher need or are experiencing affordability issues. This is being monitored to identify any trends which are likely to significantly increase demand upon the Council’s Housing Services, particularly the Home Choice Lincs Team and the Homelessness Prevention Team.

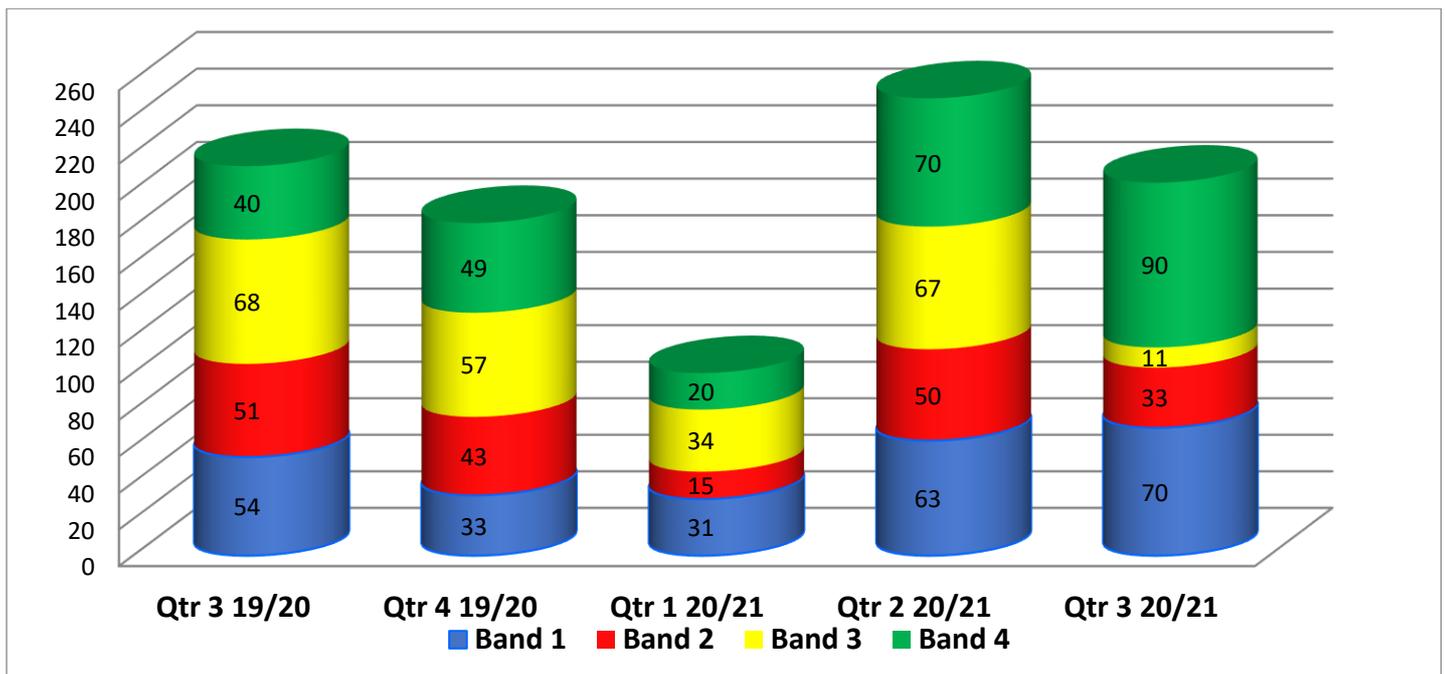
Briefing Note

Graph showing Affordable Housing Delivery



Of those existing households on the housing register and new applicants, there has been a significant increase in the number being housed since the impact of the first Lockdown (during quarter 1 - 2020/21), as shown in the table below. Reasons for this increase are being monitored to identify if this trend continues and the cause.

Graph showing Numbers of households housed according to banding:



Whilst the effect of COVID-19 on households in the local area cannot be fully understood as yet, it is likely that a significant number of local households will encounter financial difficulties when the Government's pandemic support is removed. In anticipation of this the Housing Team are monitoring trends in approaches to all of the Council's Housing Services, along with collating data from the local Benefits team and National sources, to monitor the risk of increased pressures to existing resources through the impact upon demand for the Housing related services provided.

Home Options Team have outlined a specific action plan, to assist those in housing difficulty post lockdown to minimise evictions and the threat of homelessness. As stated, we are not aware of the volume of evictions, due post the lifting of COVID restrictions. During the pandemic, the Council have sent several communications to landlords and more widely to the public, asking to contact us as early as possible, in the hope that we can save some tenancies before it is too late. However, it is likely that many landlords/residents will not contact us until it is too late.

8. ACTION PLAN SUMMARY – POST LOCKDOWN

1. NELC has a protocol set up with Citizens Advice to refer cases who approach under notice or at risk of eviction to the service. A trained Specialist Housing and Debt worker is currently based in Open Door, to reach out to the most vulnerable groups.
2. We are recommissioning housing related support with an expected improvement in partnership working, and we intend to position a homelessness prevention support worker in the team to actively work with families in their homes.
3. We have reiterated the Duty on Public Bodies to refer cases to the Service who are at risk of homelessness, and it is important to stress that our service is open to people at risk of mortgage repossession as well as tenancies.
4. We are working closely with Children's social care to ensure that housing is considered at an earlier stage in safeguarding cases, so we do not have to use temporary accommodation so often.
5. The Rapid Rehousing project, funded by the government Rough Sleeper Initiative, supports rough sleepers to access social housing by providing extensive support during the first 12 months of their tenancy. After 12 months, if successful, the housing provider takes on the tenant by providing a tenancy agreement. It is planned that this project will be extended to include troubled families, providing intensive support to stop the recurring homelessness patterns. This will have a positive impact on the welfare and safeguarding of children by providing a social tenancy.
6. We have representation on the community recovery group and have raised the profile of the service, ensured our referral link has been as widely publicised as possible in statutory and VCSE sectors.
7. We are acquiring and leasing more properties to ensure we do not have to rely on guesthouses so often, but the team are braced for a rise in cases and need to work hard to prevent those who approach from losing their tenancy, as moving them on to alternative housing is made more difficult once they have built up rent arrears, and there is massive disruption to schooling, family support links etc.

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8. There is a renewed focus from Government to assist families whilst at the same time they are still funding rough sleeper services. During 2020/21 we secured £521,750 additional rough sleeper funding and are pre-allocated the same amount for 21/22.
9. We are also keen to introduce a rent guarantee scheme, where we act as guarantor for families who have had difficulties but worked with our Service to resolve these and enable them to access tenancies with social and private landlords.
10. The service is keen to use external grants to support housing projects that will be sustainable, providing long term solutions to remove the need for expensive bed and breakfast accommodation, providing temporary housing owned or managed by the authority. The current review of Housing Related Support will also address shortfalls in current provision and provide income generation through supported housing projects.

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Assistant Director - Housing, Highways and Transport