

Councillor Petrina Lees – Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder – Housing, Communities, Youth and Health

Housing Management:

The Housing Management Team is continuing to phone elderly tenants and those with a disability to carry out welfare checks. Over 1,000 welfare check calls have so far been made by the team and referrals made for support services to be linked in where required.

Calls are being made to tenants who are newly on Universal Credit to check upon their welfare and to see if they require any advice or assistance especially as a number of these are first time claimants of Universal Credit. The team are also phoning those tenants in rent arrears to check upon their welfare and see if they require any welfare benefits advice or debt counselling or even whether they require a food parcel via the food bank.

Following the Government's announcement this week to lift restrictions on people moving house, the letting of Council properties will re-commence. Vacant properties will be advertised from next week and people waiting to move into their homes since before lockdown have been contacted to advise them they can now make plans to move. There will continue to be some delays in getting void properties turned round as most properties could not be cleared during lockdown. There are currently 45 void properties that could not be let during lockdown.

Sheltered Housing:

The Sheltered Housing Team are supporting 370 sheltered tenants not only with welfare calls and emergency responses but also by doing shopping and collecting prescriptions.

All of the Council's 730 lifeline users have been contacted by phone to check on their welfare. Letters have also been sent to all customers informing them of potential bogus callers as this appeared to be an issue at the beginning of the lockdown.

The team are continuing to respond to any call outs or Lifeline equipment failure and are also installing new lifelines if these are required for emergency circumstances.

Homelessness:

The Housing Options Team have dealt with 106 homeless approaches, during working hours and out of hours since lockdown began and are currently managing 54 homeless applications, with 17 people placed in temporary accommodation.

Development:

Two new housing developments in Newport and Great Dunmow, consisting of 8 new council houses, have been completed. The tenants moved into their new homes a week before lockdown.

The re-development of Hatherly Court in Saffron Walden is progressing. Contactors are now back on site and building work has re-commenced.

Following discussions with the Contractor work on another development site in Little Dunmow re-commenced this week.

The housing department received planning permission to build 12 new council houses in Great Chesterford at the Council's first planning Zoom meeting.

Officers are currently working on developing the new HRA business plan and investigating 3 new sites for development. Pre planning application advice is being sought.

Private Sector Housing:

The Council is continuing to investigate poor housing conditions and is doing its utmost to ensure that landlords fulfil their legal obligations, but this must be balanced against the risk of infection or spread of the virus.

In response to the outbreak the Environmental Health service have issued summary guidance leaflets for tenants and landlords and for those living in Houses of Multiple Occupation.

Community Response Hub:

The Community Response Hub (consisting of UDC's Communities Team, the Council for Voluntary Services and Volunteer Uttlesford), has taken over 1200 calls and responded to over 1100 emails. 270 volunteers are registered with the Hub and the team is continuing to link volunteers to those who need support.

Up until the beginning of May the Hub has been able to help over 350 people with their shopping, almost 850 people with collecting their prescriptions, and over 300 people by offering a befriending service.

Last week the Hub contacted a further 160 high risk residents to offer help and support as part of the nationwide 'Operation Shield'. It continues to link in with partners such as the West Essex Clinical Commissioning Group and doctor surgeries to ensure no-one is missed.