

Appendix 1

EXECUTIVE RESPONSE: Scrutiny Review of Housing – Private Rented Sector

Recommendation 1 Rent with Confidence		
<p>a) That Cabinet approve in principle the draft 'Rent with Confidence' (RwC) campaign as a positive way forward to encourage a more professional private rented sector and allow potential tenants to exercise choice when selecting property and a reliable landlord or agent, and ask employees to consult in greater detail.</p> <p>b) That consideration is given to the future resources required to move forward with the 'Rent with Confidence' (RwC) campaign and agree the need to implement RwC when resources become available for effective enforcement to help drive improvement in PRS housing in the City.</p>		
Comment	Timescale/progress so far	Officer Responsible
a) RwC proposals are only in very draft form and the detail needs to be worked up and consulted on.	<p>Consultation with the Landlord Steering Group has begun with regards to the draft RwC proposals.</p> <p>Aim to introduce RwC from October 14</p> <p>This is now being done as part of the wider public health outcomes and the reconfiguration of housing services. The level of service demand has meant that progress has been limited within existing resources (as anticipated); however funding has been established and the proposals are being developed. RwC will commence from April 2016 as part of a package of measures to improve standards in the PRS and improve health outcomes for PRS residents.</p>	Lesley Williams
b) The resourcing of the RwC confidence proposals will be	The principles regarding changes to the	Chris Hale

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considered as part of the approach to the delivery of services to improve the private rented sector. It is likely this will require a reconfiguration of existing priorities and partnerships. This will be considered as part of the delivery of wider housing services.	configuration of the Private Sector Housing Service to proactively engage with the Private Rented sector and deliver the rent with confidence strategy have been considered by the Improving the City Housing Offer Board. This is likely to involve the reconfiguration of existing services away from a reactive service dealing with complaints regarding housing conditions to a service proactively promoting and facilitating an improved private sector offer. This will be actioned to support the RWC strategy implementation outlined above.	
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Recommendation 2 Review the PRS Enforcement Procedure

That a review of PRS enforcement procedure is carried out with the aspiration to strengthen the processes, make them fairer across the range of landlords, to improve the quality of accommodation in the city, to promote processes and to identify where resources need to be re-aligned or strengthened.

Comment	Timescale/progress so far	Officer Responsible
The aim is to ensure that the enforcement policy is clear and fair towards all landlords by allowing employees to target persistently bad landlords sooner and by charging them earlier.	<p>New proposals are being considered in partnership with the Landlord Steering Group and National Landlord Association (NLA)/Registered Landlord Association (RLA) representatives. Cabinet will be required to formally adopt any changes; this will be complete by October 2014.</p> <p>This is part completed, and Officers are waiting for further statutory guidance around prevention of retaliatory eviction (due October 2015) which will need to be incorporated into the enforcement policy. Once this has been incorporated the consultation and approval process can be undertaken and the new policy implemented. Anticipated completion by January 2016.</p>	Lesley Williams

Recommendation 3 Additional Licensing of Houses of Multiple Occupation (HMOs)

That Cabinet approves Additional Licensing as a mechanism to licence and regulate all Houses of Multiple Occupation (HMOs) locally and across the city as an alternative and more cost effective way of addressing problems with HMOs.

Comment	Timescale/progress so far	Officer Responsible
There is a lot of challenge about “blanket” licensing policies i.e. City wide from the NLA and employees will	Initial scoping has been carried out, and Officers are continually finding evidence to support the case. We	Lesley Williams

take this into account when consulting on proposals to additionally licence all HMOs. These proposals will not be welcomed by landlords; however providing the scheme aims to tackle to worst offenders and is fair and transparent. Any proposals to introduce licensing schemes over and above the mandatory requirements must be supported by appropriate evidence including the potential outcomes to be achieved.	have begun to consult with some landlords and the proposal to Additionally Licence forms part of the wider RWC proposals. The Council has the opportunity for independent, free research to be undertaken by a Master of Science (MSC) student from University of Birmingham (June – September 14). A full consultation will run with a proposed implementation of April 15 if the evidence is supported and Cabinet then approve of the designation. There are insufficient resources available to carry out this work to date. In addition, new legislation around Selective Licensing has been implemented to curtail blanket schemes. The Government has recently indicated a clamp-down on rogue landlords through the Immigration Bill, and there are indications that Government will address HMO licensing as part of that initiative. In addition, Planning Officers are looking again at Article 4 with a view to restrict numbers of new HMOs. New timescales for consultation on Additional Licensing will be developed as part of the wider RWC proposals.	
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Recommendation 4 More Selective Licensing in Inner City Areas		
That Cabinet gives consideration to tackling problems associated with poor housing standards and overcrowding in inner areas of the City, and to consider the use of Selective Licensing, such as the All Saints Selective Licensing scheme, in other priority areas as identified by the Police and the Housing Standards Team, providing the case for licensing is fully made in line with legislative guidance.		
Comment	Timescale/progress so far	Officer Responsible
Selective Licensing powers are always under review in order to tackle problematic areas of the City. Park Village, Blakenhall, Pennfields and Whitmore Reans remain in	Ongoing In addition, the All Saints scheme is nearly half way through and a review will be completed at the three year	Lesley Williams

focus as areas of concern for the Council and its partners (i.e. the Police). As with Additional Licensing any proposals to introduce licensing schemes over and above the mandatory requirements must be supported by appropriate evidence including the potential outcomes to be achieved.	<p>point. An exit strategy and resilience proposal may be brought before Cabinet nearer to the end of the scheme for consideration.</p> <p>An audit of the scheme will be carried out by January 2016 with a view to ending the scheme or continuing for a further 5 years. Whilst there have been notable improvements in the All Saints area especially around anti-social behaviour, many landlords are still not compliant with scheme requirements around property management.</p> <p>Further use of Selective Licensing is being considered for Park Village and Hawkesford Crescent and proposals for new schemes are being developed.</p>	
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Recommendation 5 Regulation of Letting Agencies		
That Cabinet recommend to the Local Government Association that there is a need to regulate letting agencies and to highlight the need to the Housing Minister, Shadow Housing Minister and Parliamentary Select Committee.		
Comment	Timescale/progress so far	Officer Responsible
This is a matter of national policy debate and the Council will continue to provide evidence to support this debate wherever practicable. In addition, Trading Standards continue to work with Letting Agents on contractual matters, and the RWC proposals could easily be extended to incorporate a rating of Letting Agents (though the detail is to be further explored)	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Legislation for Letting Agent Redress is in place and Officers have been working with trading Standards to ensure that Letting Agents are signed up to Redress Schemes (and implementing fines where this is not the case). Further work needs to be done around fees and transparency and this work is on-going.</p>	Lesley Williams

Recommendation 6 Parliamentary consultation papers
That Cabinet note that a response has been submitted to the parliamentary consultation paper relating to property standards in the PRS and

the need to consider a reformed approach, taking into account the evidence and findings of this review with regard		
Comment	Timescale/progress so far	Officer Responsible
The PSH team give an undertaking to respond to all further correspondence and consultation relating to the PRS	Ongoing as required Offers are working with DCLG and the Home Office on the Right to Rent pilot and subsequent roll-out. Wolverhampton is an active member of the Landlord Consultation Panel, and respond to any PRS consultations as required.	Lesley Williams

Recommendation 7 Establishment of a Housing Steering Group		
That a steering group is established to monitor and review all housing matters, which would give a holistic view of Housing and an early indication of pressures in the city.		
Comment	Timescale/progress so far	Officer Responsible
Wolverhampton has a Housing Executive Board (HEB) and Housing Operational Group (HOG) with Task and Finish Groups considering specific work areas as part of its approved governance arrangements. It is proposed that the issues raised in this review will inform the work programme of both the HEB and HOG.	Ongoing as part of the governance and development and delivery of the city Housing Strategy Rent with Confidence proposals form part of the work programme for the Improving the City Housing Offer Board. Recommendation 1 comment (b) above outlines the progress.	Chris Hale

Recommendation 8 Review of the current Private Leasing Scheme

That a review of the current Private Sector Leasing (PSL) Scheme is carried out in light of rising demand for PRS housing in the city and consider financial incentives, such as Homes and Communities Agency funding, for encouraging landlords with empty properties to join the scheme.

Comment	Timescale/progress so far	Officer Responsible
It is intended that the existing PSL is reviewed including the engagement of wider participants to consider the market drivers for owners of properties who may wish to make use of the service. Opportunities may exist to consider other more commercially viable services tailored to owner's requirements.	By April 2015 Work is on-going with Wolverhampton Homes on how the scheme can be expanded to provide additional accommodation through PSL.	Lesley Williams

Recommendation 9 Universal Credit (UC) rent adjustment period

That Cabinet and Welfare Reform Programme Board agree that the Council and Wolverhampton Homes work together with landlords to keep people in their homes during the introduction of Universal Credit.

Comment	Timescale/progress so far	Officer Responsible
The agreed work programme with Housing Managing Agents is to continue to work to assist tenants to maintain their tenants, and there has been and continues to be a particular emphasis on providing support to households adversely impacted by welfare reforms. Housing Allocations policies and investment programmes consider welfare reform impacts as part of the option appraisal processes.	The Council's housing managing agents continue to work proactively with households which will be impacted through the welfare reforms including the introduction of Universal Credit. Action focusses on being "money smart" and preparing for impending changes. The Housing Options and Outreach Teams provide support for people experiencing housing insecurity to assist them in remaining in the existing tenancy, if possible, through supporting them to manage the impact of changes to the welfare system, including the	Chris Hale

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	impending introduction of Universal Credit.	
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Recommendation 10 Homelessness Prevention Team funding

That Cabinet note that DCLG funding for the Housing Options Homelessness Prevention Team ends March 2015 and give consideration of funding options for a five year period to embed changes to benefits.

Comment	Timescale/progress so far	Officer Responsible
The specific Homelessness Prevention Grant from DCLG is currently subject to single year allocation. Work will be undertaken to review the services across housing options and the wider housing service to reduce any impact of any reduction or loss of this Grant. The Council will continue to provide sound evidence base to DCLG to demonstrate the cost effectiveness of prevention work on homelessness and the wider impacts on the City.	The Homeless Prevention Grant has been confirmed for 2015/16 with the Council providing evidence to central government of the impact of the funding on preventing homelessness. Engagement with Housing Options Services forms part of the Corporate Plan reporting. The Council will continue to make the case for sustaining the level of prevention funding provided through government grant.	Chris Hale

Recommendation 11 Other Funding Sources to Improve the PRS

That Cabinet give consideration to other funding sources to improve Private Rented Sector Housing in Wolverhampton in relation to the impact of poor housing on children, educational attainment and anti-social behaviour, and that Cabinet further consider the wider impact that not meeting decent home standards has on the most vulnerable residents, mental and environmental health issues, overcrowding, the impact on communities and the financial burden of these implications on the Council.

Comment	Timescale/progress so far	Officer Responsible
Employees will continue to work across all partnerships to maximise the impact of private sector housing interventions to the wider outcomes for individuals and the city as a whole and bid for funding both from within the Council and external sources to maximise the impact. The evidence base of the impact of intervention will continue to be strengthened and used to demonstrate the wider impacts and benefits to the city	The reconfiguration of the housing services (recommendation 1 comment (b) above) to promote of a responsible private rented sector through the rent with confidence strategy will enable residents utilising the sector to have a wider housing choice of accommodation which meets better housing standards and experience housing management	Chris Hale

of having a stronger and vibrant private rented housing offer.	which supports their health safety and wellbeing. This will also enable other services and partners to access and promote appropriate private sector housing solutions safeguarding their customers well being. This will be delivered in accordance with the RwC implementation timetable	
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Recommendation 12 Displacement of Homeless people

That Cabinet note that displacement of homeless people was raised as a concern by the Review Group. More evidence is needed to establish the number of cases and the impact on the City more statistical evidence and data.

Comment	Timescale/progress so far	Officer Responsible
Employees will consider how further evidence can be provided demonstrating the wider impact of work to prevent homelessness and the impact of the threat of homelessness on residents.	<p>December 2014</p> <p>In 2014/15 end of Assured Shorthold Tenancy (AST - the most common way of ending a tenancy) had become the highest reason for homelessness applications; 323 homeless applicants or 23% of all homeless applicants.</p> <p>Over the last two years the numbers of households who are homeless due to end of AST has increased by over 100 each of the previous years.</p> <p>This has meant that the level of prevention in relation to working with this client group will have to increase to understand the reasons behind why the notices are being served, how to engage with landlords to prevent notices being served, how to work with tenants at risk of</p>	Anthony Walker

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	homelessness and finally what advice and information is needed for landlords and tenants.	
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