

**Appendix 2**

**EXECUTIVE RESPONSE: Scrutiny Review of Housing – Private Rented Sector**

<b>Recommendation 1 Rent with Confidence</b>		
<p>a) That Cabinet approve in principle the draft ‘Rent with Confidence’ (RwC) campaign (appendix 1) 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>		
<b>Comment</b>	<b>Timescale/progress so far</b>	<b>Officer Responsible</b>
a) RwC proposals are only in very draft form and the detail needs to be worked up and consulted on.	Consultation with the Landlord Steering Group has begun with regards to the draft RwC proposals. Aim to introduce RwC from October 14	Lesley Williams
b) The resourcing of the RwC confidence proposals will be 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.	As above.	Chris Hale

<b>Recommendation 2      Review the PRS Enforcement Procedure</b>		
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.		
<b>Comment</b>	<b>Timescale/progress so far</b>	<b>Officer Responsible</b>
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.	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.	Lesley Williams

<b>Recommendation 3      Additional Licensing of Houses of Multiple Occupation (HMOs)</b>		
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.		
<b>Comment</b>	<b>Timescale/progress so far</b>	<b>Officer Responsible</b>
There is a lot of challenge about “blanket” licensing policies i.e. City wide from the NLA and employees will 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.	Initial scoping has been carried out, and Officers are continually finding evidence to support the case. We 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.	Lesley Williams

<b>Recommendation 4                      More Selective Licensing in Inner City Areas</b>		
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.		
<b>Comment</b>	<b>Timescale/progress so far</b>	<b>Officer Responsible</b>
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 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.	Ongoing In addition, the all Saints scheme is nearly half way through and a review will be completed at the three year point. An exit strategy and resilience proposal may be brought before Cabinet nearer to the end of the scheme for consideration	Lesley Williams
<b>Recommendation 5                      Regulation of Letting Agencies</b>		
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.		
<b>Comment</b>	<b>Timescale/progress so far</b>	<b>Officer Responsible</b>
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)	Ongoing	Lesley Williams

<b>Recommendation 6 Parliamentary consultation papers</b>		
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		
<b>Comment</b>	<b>Timescale/progress so far</b>	<b>Officer Responsible</b>
The PSH team give an undertaking to respond to all further correspondence and consultation relating to the PRS	Ongoing as required	Lesley Williams

<b>Recommendation 7 Establishment of a Housing Steering Group</b>		
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.		
<b>Comment</b>	<b>Timescale/progress so far</b>	<b>Officer Responsible</b>
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	Chris Hale

<b>Recommendation 8                      Review of the current Private Leasing Scheme</b>		
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.		
<b>Comment</b>	<b>Timescale/progress so far</b>	<b>Officer Responsible</b>
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	Lesley Williams

<b>Recommendation 9                      Universal Credit (UC) rent adjustment period</b>		
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.		
<b>Comment</b>	<b>Timescale/progress so far</b>	<b>Officer Responsible</b>
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.	On going	Chris Hale

<b>Recommendation 10 Homelessness Prevention Team funding</b>		
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.		
<b>Comment</b>	<b>Timescale/progress so far</b>	<b>Officer Responsible</b>
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.	Ongoing	Chris Hale

<b>Recommendation 11 Other Funding Sources to Improve the PRS</b>		
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.		
<b>Comment</b>	<b>Timescale/progress so far</b>	<b>Officer Responsible</b>
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 of having a stronger and vibrant private rented housing offer.	On going	Chris Hale

<b>Recommendation 12                  Displacement of Homeless people</b>		
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.		
<b>Comment</b>	<b>Timescale/progress so far</b>	<b>Officer Responsible</b>
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.	December 2014	Anthony Walker