

North Somerset Council

REPORT TO THE ADULT SERVICES AND HOUSING POLICY AND SCRUTINY PANEL

DATE OF MEETING: 23RD NOVEMBER 2017

SUBJECT OF REPORT: REVIEW OF CONDITIONS IN THE PRIVATE RENTED SECTOR

TOWN OR PARISH: ALL

OFFICER/MEMBER PRESENTING: HOWARD EVANS

KEY DECISION: YES

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. To note the comprehensive review of conditions in the Private Rented Sector and the report produced for consultation
2. To consider the consultation report (Appendix) and submit comments through the Councils consultation portal as appropriate.

1. SUMMARY OF REPORT

A comprehensive review of the private rented sector has been undertaken and a report produced for consultation which sets out options considered with a recommendation on the way forward.

Before a final decision is taken on a new way of working a period of consultation is scheduled with stakeholders and other interested parties.

2. POLICY

The consultation report contributes to the aims contained in the Housing Strategy and fulfils statutory obligation under the Housing Act 2004.

3. DETAILS

At the meeting of 21 June 2016 the Executive approved the designation of part of the area comprising Central and Hillside wards in Weston super Mare as a selective licensing scheme under the provisions of the Housing Act 2004. This required all privately rented homes in the area, unless exempted, to be licensed. Subsequently however in preparation for the implementation of the scheme some local landlords and a number of tenants expressed concern about the potential impact of the scheme and the landlords suggested a number of alternatives which they believed could achieve the objective of improving housing conditions. In the light of this it was agreed that the scheme designation should be revoked to enable a further review of housing conditions in the private rented sector to be

undertaken to identify and progress options to deliver the prime objective of improving housing conditions in the private rented sector.

This comprehensive review has now been completed and the report (Appendix) outlines the findings with recommendations on the way forward.

Key information for the report was obtained from an updated Stock Condition Report which confirmed there is a high concentration of poor housing conditions in some Weston super Mare wards (Central, Hillside, Milton and Uphill) and recommended some targeted action was needed to bring about any significant improvement.

In reviewing the housing conditions additional sources of data e.g. historic complaints were analysed and mapped which confirmed the existing processes can only result in limited improvements unless there were significant increases in resources but given the uncertain financial climate this is unlikely.

Approaches adopted in other parts of the country are discussed, current and new powers available have been reviewed to carefully consider the opportunities and options which have been fully evaluated recommending an area based approach targeted in a defined location.

Before a final decision is taken on a new way of working a period of consultation is scheduled with stakeholders and other interested parties.

The Stock Condition Report has provided comprehensive information on the condition of private sector housing and a new Private Sector Housing Delivery Plan will be drafted for separate consultation but the review document of the private rented sector will be incorporated into the plan.

4. CONSULTATION

A formal consultation process will commence following this decision with stakeholders and other interested parties through the Councils consultation portal. The report will be presented to the Adult Services and Housing Policy and Scrutiny Panel on 23rd November 2017

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications associated with the consultation exercise.

Costs

N/A

Funding

N/A

6. LEGAL POWERS AND IMPLICATIONS

The Housing Act 2004 requires a local housing authority to keep the housing conditions in their area under review and the report fulfils (in part) the Councils obligations under the legislation.

7. RISK MANAGEMENT

There are no identified risks to the Council for undertaking this consultation; the key objective is to improve housing conditions in the private rented sector. A further evaluation of risks will be undertaken on conclusion of the consultation.

8. EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

Equality Impact Assessment completed and reviewed and approved by Corporate Equalities Group. No equality implications identified.

9. CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS

None

10. OPTIONS CONSIDERED

A full option appraisal has been carried out as part of the review and is included in the report.

AUTHOR

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BACKGROUND PAPERS

Director Decision - Private Sector Housing Stock Condition Survey (Reference number: 16-17 P&C 77)

<http://www.n-somerset.gov.uk/my-council/councillors/decisions/director-decisions/2017-director-decisions/march-2017-director-decisions/>