

**ASH Panel Housing Steering Group:** Cllrs Ruth Jacobs (chair), Reyna Knight, David Jolley, Richard Tucker, Deborah Yamanaka

**Re: Proposals arising from the review and consultation on housing conditions in the private rented sector (PRS) in North Somerset**

**RECOMMENDATION TO THE DEPUTY LEADER OF THE COUNCIL & EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR PLANNING, HIGHWAYS, TRANSPORT, HOUSING & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT:**

**Recommendation:**

On behalf of the ASH Scrutiny Panel, the Panel steering group supports and recommends the implementation of the following proposal:

- to target improving poor housing conditions in the Private Rented sector in the area of Weston-super-Mare set out in the Review report (appendix 1 page 36) using the Area Action approach set out in the Review report.

However, in supporting the proposal for “regular reviews” of the effectiveness of the new scheme and the Action Area boundary, the Panel also recommends that:

- the first review should be undertaken no later than 12 months after the commencement of inspections;
- that serious consideration be given to the implementation of Targeted Selective/Additional licencing scheme(s) should on-going reviews of the proposed approach clearly prove it to be unsuccessful; and
- that the steering group/ASH Panel consider the findings from the review(s) of the Action Area approach.

**Details:**

The Steering Group met with the Head of Housing and Strategy, The Private Sector Housing Service Leader, and The Private Sector Rented Housing Team Manager to hear and discuss the options considered in the PRS Review, the rationales underpinning the preferred options and the outcomes from the public consultation (Appendix 2).

On balance, Members agreed that they preferred the Action Area approach as they felt this was the more practicable solution bearing in mind resource limitations and the acknowledged need to focus those resources where they would be most effective. The Area Action approach would allow officers to prioritise inspections on properties that were not accredited or where intelligence from the accreditation schemes (eg complaints) directed them.

On the other hand, a licencing scheme would involve significant administration costs, would require landlords of properties that met all relevant standards to pay a licencing fee and would involve a universal inspection regime throughout the defined Action Area, diluting the effective use of resources as they would not be targeted on the homes where they were most needed.

In addition, unlike the Area Action approach, the cost of implementing a licencing scheme could inevitably be passed on to tenants.

In relation to the size of the area to be targeted Members supported the area as set out in the Review report (Page 36 Appendix A) as if the size of the area were increased it would create a risk that the poorest properties would not be targeted whilst if the size of the area were reduced it would risk poor properties being excluded from the area and not improved.

Members agreed, however, that the implementation of the Area Action approach including the area boundary needed to be kept closely under review to check that it was successful and ensure that other options are considered, including Selective/Additional licensing scheme(s), if it were found to be unsuccessful

### **Ruth Jacobs (Housing Steering Group Chairman)**

**N.B. Please note that the steering groups were set up partly to address the impact that fewer meetings would have on the Panel's ability to conduct its business. It was agreed that steering groups could make recommendations on behalf of the Panel (with the caveat that such recommendations must be shared by email with all Members of the ASH Panel for comment prior to submission to the decision taker). Although steering group recommendations do not carry the same weight as a full Panel recommendation, these particular recommendations are issued with the full expectation that they will be retrospectively endorsed by the Panel at its next full Panel meeting on 29<sup>th</sup> March 2018.**