

Meeting	Decision Session - Executive Member for Housing, Planning and Safer Communities
Date	20 September 2023
Present	Councillor Pavlovic
Officers in Attendance	Michael Jones, Head of Housing Delivery and Asset Management Anthony Dean, Healthy and Sustainable Homes Manager

5. Declarations of Interest (10:03)

The Executive Member was asked to declare, at this point in the meeting, any disclosable pecuniary interests, or other registerable interests he might have in the respect of business on the agenda, if he had not already done so in advance on the Register of Interests. The Executive Member did not declare any interests but mentioned that the additional House in Multiple Occupation licensing scheme was in operation in his ward.

6. Minutes (10:03)

Resolved: That the minutes of the previous meeting held on 19 July 2023 be approved and then signed as a correct record by the Executive Member.

7. Public Participation (10:04)

It was reported that there had been two registrations to speak at the meeting under the Council's Public Participation Scheme.

Gwen Swinburn spoke on the House in Multiple Occupation (HMO) register, stating that it should be on an open data spreadsheet and asked for full access to it. She explained that the Council's HMO register lacked detail and compared it to the registers of other local authorities. She concluded by asking the Executive Member why the register was not available to view at West Offices and why there was no online searchable database available.

Denise Craghill spoke on behalf of the Green Party on agenda item 4 – Justice for Tenants and Private Rented Sector Enforcement. She welcomed the proposal and explained that the arrangement would encourage and provide an incentive for tenants in HMOs to report issues to the Council. She encouraged the Executive Member to approve the

recommendation before suggesting that licencing could be extended to the wider rented sector, for example on short-term holiday lets.

8. Justice for Tenants and Private Rented Sector Enforcement (10:11)

The Executive Member considered a report which provided an update on the Additional Licensing Programme for Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO) and outlined an opportunity to further support residents who lived in a licensable HMO through the not-for-profit organisation, Justice for Tenants (JFT).

The Healthy and Sustainable Homes Manager outlined the report stating that the Council was proposing a partnership with JFT, which provided advice and support to private sector tenants by assisting with rent repayment applications or providing a representation service. He explained that JFT would pay the Tribunal fees on behalf of those they represent and a success fee would later be recovered. He concluded by noting that this partnership will help the Council identify unlicensed premises and would provide tenants with a financial incentive to report landlords.

In response to questions from the Executive Member, the Officer noted that:

- The partnership could be implemented fairly quickly as the Council were in the process of finalising the terms.
- There have been meetings with resident and landlord associations and they expressed the desire for further enforcement. Both universities also supported the partnership.
- HMO licensing and planning applications were sent to all the relevant Officers in both departments to ensure up-to-date information.
- The Council had a legal obligation to issue a licence once an application was received and conditions could then be placed. This could mean that a property was licenced but not have planning permission, which would then fall to planning Officers to manage.
- Officers would examine how the HMO register was publicised and have been actively asking residents to report problems and identify any HMOs to the Council.

The Executive Member then asked that Officers communicate the details of the JFT scheme to residents and landlords once it was in place. It was then;

Resolved:

- i. That the creation of a partnership with Justice for Tenants (JFT), who could provide support and advice to private residential be supported, including applying for rent repayment orders, through the signing of a Service Level Agreement and Data Sharing Agreement between the Council and JFT.
- ii. That authority be delegated to the Director of Housing Economy and (and their delegated officers), in consultation with the Director of Governance (and their delegated officers), to negotiate the provisions, and conclude the entry into the proposed Service Level Agreement and Data Sharing Agreement with JFT.

Reason: The proposed partnership will assist the Council in bringing private sector properties, and in particular properties which are subject to additional HMO licensing requirements, into compliance with legislation by encouraging tenants to report properties which are non-compliant to the Healthy and Sustainable Homes team to investigate and take appropriate action to resolve.

Councillor Pavlovic, Executive Member

[The meeting started at 10.03 am and finished at 10.26 am].