

Meeting	Corporate and Scrutiny Management Policy and Scrutiny Committee (Calling In)
Date	9 May 2016
Present	Councillors Levene (Chair), Fenton, Flinders, Galvin (Vice-Chair), Gates, Lisle, Reid, Williams and D'Agorne (Substitute for Councillor Kramm)
In attendance	Councillor Boyce Councillor Carr Councillor Craghill Councillor Cuthbertson
Apologies	Councillor Kramm

11. Declarations of Interest

Members were asked to declare any personal interests not included on the Register of Interests, any prejudicial interests or any disclosable pecuniary interests which they might have in respect of business on the agenda. No additional interests were declared.

12. Public Participation

It was reported that there had been no registrations to speak at the meeting under the Council's Public Participation Scheme.

13. Minutes

Resolved: That the minutes of the meeting held on 12 October 2015 be approved as a correct record and then signed by the Chair subject to minute 7 being amended to read "*Councillor Flinders declared a personal interest as First Group operates train services on railway infrastructure owned by his employer*".

14. **Called-in Item Pre-Decision: Private Sector Housing Strategy**

Members received a report which presented an update on the work to revise the Private Sector Housing Strategy.

In accordance with the arrangements for pre-decision scrutiny call-in, three Members (Councillors Boyce, N Barnes and Flinders) had called in the intended decision in relation to the Private Sector Housing Strategy for the following reasons:

- (i) To provide input on addressing the efficacy of the current voluntary accreditation scheme;
- (ii) To establish ways in which the council can improve on a lack of available data on the quality of private sector housing stock;
- (iii) To consider how the strategy ties in with the planning system.

Councillor Boyce spoke on behalf of the Call-in Members. She stated that although they broadly supported the strategy they were asking for further consideration to be given to the following issues in order to enhance the policy:

- Referring to objective 2 in the strategy, Members' attention was drawn to the problems caused when Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) were poorly managed. Consideration should be given to extending the current licensing rules for HMOs and for this to be included within the Strategy and Action Plan.
- Referring to the consultation on standards that had previously been reported to Cabinet, Councillor Boyce commented on the poor response from hard to reach members of the community. There was a need to ensure that data in respect of housing was comprehensive in order to make informed decisions on issues such as thresholds. If the data on HMOs was improved, the Article 4 Directive could be managed more effectively.
- The use of more proactive language in the strategy to demonstrate that the Council was determined to take action where standards were dangerous.

- There had been low engagement with the voluntary YorProperty accreditation scheme and hence there needed to be mandatory licensing of all HMOs.

Councillor Boyce also drew Members' attention to the findings of the Building Research Establishment (BRE) survey and stressed the importance of improving the quality of housing. She stated that she was pleased to note that the council had responded to the Government consultation that had taken place on extending mandatory licensing of HMOs and related reforms.

The Executive Member for Housing and Safer Neighbourhoods stated that he supported the comments made by Councillor Boyce. He commented on the significant increase in the number of student lettings in the city, which could cause problems because of the transient nature of this population. The Executive Member stated that there was a need to give further consideration to the extending of licensing and to the Article 4 Directive.

Officers gave an update on the development of the strategy. They stated that it was anticipated that legislation would be introduced in respect of HMOs and it was understood that this would broaden the definition of a mandatory licensing of HMOs.

Members' attention was drawn to research which confirmed the links between poor health and housing issues. It was now possible to plot this data on a ward basis. The Executive Member for Housing and Safer Neighbourhoods informed Members that, although the report primarily focussed on links between housing and physical health, this work needed to be further developed to consider the impact on mental health. Members were informed of a regional Health and Housing Conference which would be taking place at the university on 13 June 2016.

Members suggested that the strategy should also take account of the following issues:

- Whilst the previous approach in respect of HMOs had been on their concentration and spread, there now needed to be a focus on the quality of the accommodation they provided and the wider health impacts.
- It was appropriate for the strategy to focus on the category 1 issues but it was also important to consider less

immediate concerns such as damp or appearance of the property.

- The strategy should use more proactive language regarding the licensing of HMOs.
- Consideration needed to be given as to how issues in respect of the quality of private sector rented family housing could also be addressed.
- Referring to the objective in the Action Plan to reduce the number of long-term empty homes, in particular above shops, it was important to recognise that previous efforts to increase the housing stock by utilising upper floors over city centre shops had not always delivered the results that were sought.
- Whilst it was pleasing to note that the Government was intending to legislate in respect of HMOs, this may not be imminent and hence the Council should progress the strategy without delay. Consideration should also be given as to whether there was an opportunity for the Council to influence the legislation.
- More work needed to be done to ensure that the targets within the Action Plan were ambitious, smart and measurable.
- The strategy needed to make clear how it would make landlords aware of any planned changes and the timescales for doing so.
- More detail needed to be included in the strategy in respect of energy efficiency.
- There was an acknowledgement that the accuracy of data had been an issue and hence Members welcomed actions to address this matter. The bringing together of data sets in respect of planning and licensing would bring benefits.
- Concerns were expressed that the YorProperty accreditation scheme was only voluntary and hence not all landlords participated.

On behalf of the Call-in Members, Councillor Boyce stated that she was pleased that there had been a consensus regarding the issues raised. This recognised the impact of poor quality housing on quality of life.

Resolved: (i) That the draft strategy and action plan be noted.

- (ii) That it be requested that the comments of the Call-In Committee be taken into account when the draft Housing Strategy was considered by the Executive.

Reason: To provide scrutiny's views on the ongoing work to revise the Private Sector Housing Strategy.

Cllr D Levene, Chair

[The meeting started at 5.30 pm and finished at 6.10 pm].