
Meeting	Decision Session - Executive Member for Housing, Planning and Safer Communities
Date	19 July 2023
Present	Councillor Pavlovic
In Attendance	Becky Eades, Head of Planning and Development Services Rob Harrison, Principal Development Management Officer

1. Declarations of Interest (10:01)

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 stated that as a ward Councillor, he had previously raised some of the cases listed in agenda item 4.

2. Minutes (10:02)

Resolved: That the minutes of the previous meeting held on 16 March 2023 be approved and then signed as a correct record by the Executive Member.

3. Public Participation (10:02)

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

Councillor Dave Merrett spoke on agenda item 4 - Planning Enforcement Cases Update. He spoke on the increased number of short-term holiday lets and houses in multiple occupation in the Guildhall ward and their negative impacts, such as housing affordability. He requested that Officers look at both of those issues holistically and commented on the need for further resources to tackle them.

Councillor Mark Warters also spoke on agenda item 4 and requested that enforcement cases be reported to the ward Councillors or to the planning committee. He then criticised the Council's discretionary enforcement powers and their approach to unlawful houses in multiple occupations. He

concluded by requesting an update on the progress of the December 2021 full Council motion to reduce the number of houses in multiple occupations.

4. Planning Enforcement Cases Update (10:14)

The Executive Member considered a report which provided an update on planning enforcement cases and the progress of the work within the enforcement team.

The Principal Development Management Officer presented the report and provided a summary of the complexity of the work of the enforcement team and explained that breaches of planning control were dealt with in order of priority and that enforcement action should only be taken where the Council was satisfied it was 'expedient' to do so. He also stated that the enforcement team had a number of ways of enforcing planning breaches and noted that:

- Between 31 May 2022 and 1 June 2023, the Council received 984 new planning enforcement investigations and 7 Enforcement Notices were served.
- 679 cases were closed and a total of 722 investigations remained open.

The Officer concluded by explaining that the key challenge for the enforcement team over the next 12 months would be the investigation of the considerable number of House in Multiple Occupation (HMO) cases due to changes in licensing requirements. He then noted that 574 HMO investigations had been opened and 150 had been closed.

In response to questions from the Executive Member, the Head of Planning and Development Services and the Principal Development Management Officer explained that:

- The enforcement team follows up on any unlawful HMOs after a reasonable time to ensure compliance and could serve notices thereafter.
- A new system alerting complainants every three months on the progress of an enforcement case was recently introduced by the Council.
- Prosecutions of cases were rare as the team tried to avoid them and find a resolution instead.
- Enforcement of short-term holiday lets was difficult due to a lack of legislation and planning guidance.

They concluded by explaining that the enforcement team was a reactive service and they needed members of the public to raise complaints so that they could be investigated.

The Executive Member and Officers then discussed the summary of enforcement notices served between 2018-23 as detailed in annex 1. The Executive Member then;

Resolved:

- i. That the contents of the report be noted.

Reason: To ensure that the Executive Member is aware of the work currently being undertaken in Planning Enforcement.

Councillor Pavlovic, Executive Member

[The meeting started at 10:01am and finished at 11:05am].