
Meeting	Decision Session - Executive Member for Housing and Safer Neighbourhoods
Date	16 December 2015
Present	Councillor Carr
In Attendance	Councillor Boyce

21. Declarations of Interest

At this point in the meeting, the Executive Member was asked to declare any personal, prejudicial or pecuniary interests he may have in the business on the agenda. None were declared.

22. Minutes

Resolved: That the minutes of the Decision Session of the Executive Member for Housing and Safer Neighbourhoods held on 16 November 2015 be approved and signed by the Executive Member as a correct record.

23. Public Participation

It was reported that Councillor Boyce, Shadow Labour Member for Housing and Safer Neighbourhoods, had registered to speak on agenda item 4 (Amendments to the Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO) licensing programme) and item 5 (Proposed Changes to the Tenancy Agreement). It was agreed that she would make her comments during consideration of each item.

24. Amendments to the Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO) Licensing Programme

The Executive Member considered a report which informed him about the third, five year cycle of Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO) licensing programme, The report asked him to agree to adopt a new license condition to improve the management and competency of the licence holder by ensuring that all licence holders received adequate training and attended a one-day professional development course which had been recognised by the council. The report also asked him

to approve amendments to the licence process to ensure that it was better streamlined.

The Housing Standards and Adaptations Manager explained the proposed changes. She advised that the proposed new condition requiring training would address the lack of knowledge of some landlords and ensure all landlords had the required up to date knowledge and skills needed to operate an HMO. The proposed changes to the licence process, including the introduction of penalties and incentives, would encourage all landlords to provide all required information and at the correct time so that licences could be issued for the full period. During consultation it had been suggested that online training could be offered as an alternative to attending a training course and this option was being currently being developed.

The Executive Member felt there had been a reasonable response to the consultation and noted the comments made. He agreed that the proposed training would ensure that all landlords had the required level of knowledge. He expressed his full support for the recommendations presented in the report.

Councillor Boyce, Shadow Executive Member, expressed the view that she would have preferred for this report to have been considered at the same time as the review of the Article 4 Direction and the Private Sector Housing Strategy. She acknowledged that, while some HMOs were well managed, others were not and welcomed the proposed new condition with regard to training which she hoped would ensure that all HMOs were, in future, well managed.

Resolved: That option 1 be agreed and it be noted:

- (i) that the council would be starting its new 5 year phase of Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO) licensing mandatory conditions in 2016
- (ii) that a new licence condition relating to training be introduced and
- (iii) that the licence process be amended as set out in the report including the introduction of penalties and incentives to ensure that licences are issued for the full period.

Reason: To improve the sector by ensuring that Houses of Multiple Occupation in York meet the necessary physical standards and are well managed.

25. Proposed Changes to the Tenancy Agreement

The Executive Member considered a report which sought approval to consult on proposed changes to the existing tenancy agreement for all existing and future tenants.

The Head of Housing Services explained that the tenancy agreement had been reviewed in January 2015 however the amendments (the main one being the reduction in the number of times a tenancy could be succeeded) had not been implemented at the time as the consultation period would have coincided with purdah due to the elections last May. A number of further changes were now proposed including the use of flexible tenancy start dates, a 52 week rent collection year and the introduction of the requirement for formal permission to keep pets. Officers advised that if agreement was given, they would go out to consultation with tenants in January 2016 (and not December as stated at paragraph 6 of the report). After tenants views had been collated, the Executive Member would receive a further report in February detailing the proposed changes.

The Executive Member acknowledged that the proposed change with regard to pets would not prevent a tenant from keeping a pet but would require them to write to the council to seek permission to keep one. He noted that this would mean that where tenancy problems occurred as a result of keeping a pet, the council would then be able to take the appropriate action.

Councillor Boyce, Shadow Executive Member, expressed her overall support for the proposed changes. With regard to keeping pets, she stated that she did not want anything to put people off keeping pets which evidence showed was beneficial to a person's social and mental health, or for the changes to result in more unwanted pets. She asked that she could be involved in the consultation as well as animal welfare organisations and asked that consideration was given to including a clause in the agreement for keeping a pet which required pets to be micro chipped and neutered if appropriate in order that unwanted litters did not end up in animal shelters.

The Executive Member noted the concerns expressed regarding animal welfare and asked officers to tighten the consultation to take this into account.

Resolved: That option 2 be agreed, to allow consultation on the changes already agreed to the Tenancy Agreement and the proposed introduction of flexible tenancy start dates, a 52 week rent collection year and the introduction of the requirement to obtain formal permission to keep pets.

Reason: To allow a full consultation with all council tenants on the proposed changes to the tenancy agreement and for this to inform the final changes to be implemented from April 2016.

26. Approval of the updated Allocations Policy for City of York Councils Gypsy Roma and Travellers Sites

The Executive Member considered a report which sought his approval of an updated Allocations Policy in order to allocate pitches across the Council's three Gypsy Roma and Travellers sites fairly and consistently.

Officers explained the need to update the policy to reflect the changes to North Yorkshire Home Choice (NYHC) policy as much as possible to ensure fairness to all concerned and ensure a consistent process for dealing with allocation of places. They provided clarification regarding the current circumstances of the 18 households on the waiting list for its three sites.

The Executive Member expressed his support for the updated allocations policy.

Resolved: That Option 1 be approved and the updated draft pitch allocations policy for City of York Council Gypsy Roma and Traveller sites and application form be implemented forthwith.

Reason: To ensure the council has an up to date policy which reflects the North Yorkshire Home Choice policy and meets the council's requirements regarding equalities. Approval of this policy will enable the council to allocate pitches to ensure the travelling community are treated in a fair and equal manner.

Councillor D Carr, Executive Member

[The meeting started at 3.00 pm and finished at 3.30 pm].