

To: City Executive Board

Date: 14 July 2016

Report of: Housing Panel (Panel of the Scrutiny Committee)

Title of Report: Private Sector Housing Policy

Summary and Recommendations

Purpose of report: To present the recommendations of the Housing Panel on the Private Sector Housing Policy

Scrutiny Lead Member: Councillor David Henwood

Executive lead member:

Councillor Bob Price, Board Member for Corporate Strategy & Economic Development;

Councillor Alex Hollingsworth, Board Member for Planning & Regulatory

Recommendation of the Housing Panel to the City Executive Board:

That the City Executive Board states whether it agrees or disagrees with the recommendation set out in the body of this report.

Introduction

1. The Housing Panel pre-scrutinised the Private Sector Housing Policy (post-consultation) at its meeting on 7 July 2016. The Panel would like to thank Councillor Bob Price, Ian Wright and Mike Browning for attending the meeting and answering questions.

Summary and recommendation

2. The Board Member for Corporate Strategy & Economic Development introduced the report. He said that the consultation feedback had generally been positive but only 17% percent of respondents had been landlords, so there was a need to proceed with care. Respondents had generally supported the Councils aims which included focusing on energy efficiency, reducing carbon emissions, food poverty and beds in sheds. This report would set the strategic framework for

future interventions in the private rented sector. Legal advice would be sought prior to the development of a selective licensing scheme, which would be subject to a public consultation and at least two further reports to the City Executive Board. The intention was that the scheme would be self-funding and reflect the range of conditions in the private rented sector.

3. The Panel asked a number of questions including about the scale and risks around the roll-out of a selective licensing scheme, and how good landlords would be encouraged and rewarded. The Panel heard that the preference was for selective licensing to be rolled-out city-wide because all but three wards could already be considered to have a high proportion of privately rented properties. However, approval from DCLG will be required for such a scheme. There was a need to get good landlords onside from the beginning and fee structures would be set to encourage good practices, as with the licensing of Houses in Multiple Occupations (HMOs), while robust enforcement action provided a deterrent.
4. The Panel also asked about the illegal subdivision of HMOs and issues around Airbnb properties. The Panel heard that these were complex issues and that action had already been taken regarding a landlord who had illegally subdivided properties in an attempt to avoid HMO licensing. The Environmental Health Service Manager explained the circumstances in which these might be properties of interest to his team, for example if an Airbnb property was advertised with breakfast included.
5. The Panel questioned measures to improve energy ratings and the possible use of social prescribing to improve housing conditions. The Panel heard that it was now a legal requirement for landlords to provide an Energy Performance Certificate and the Council was targeting the poorest performing properties. Social prescribing had been tried in other areas and a housing and health cost calculator had been developed and is being used but there was a need to convince health partners such as the local Clinical Commissioning Group to invest in prevention. The Board Member said that closer working between health and housing formed part of the Council's devolution proposal and the new development at Barton Park had been awarded with Healthy City status.
6. The Panel considered the consultation methodology and questioned the locations and outcomes of road show events, the use of social media and whether feedback was provided to respondents. The Panel heard that the choice of locations was based on findings from a previous consultation. The Panel noted that future consultations on specific schemes were likely to attract a bigger response than the overarching Policy document. The Panel commented that they would like to see road show events at other locations and the use of local newsletters to advertise consultations and provide feedback to communities. The Panel suggest that future consultations exercises should be carefully designed and that members should have an opportunity to contribute suggestions.

Recommendation 1 – That careful thought is given to future public consultations on private sector housing interventions and that members are specifically invited to comment on the range and style of any consultations.

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