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Form to be used for the Full Equalities Impact Assessment

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Service Area: Regulatory Services and Community Safety		Section: HMO Enforcement Team	Date of Initial assessment: 15 th January 2020	Key Person responsible for assessment: Gail Siddall	Date assessment commenced:		
Name of Policy to be assessed:			Introduction of a Selective Licensing Scheme for Oxford				
1. In what area are there concerns that the policy could have a differential impact			Race		Disability		Age
			Gender reassignment		Religion or Belief		Sexual Orientation
Other strategic/ equalities considerations			Safeguarding/ Welfare of Children and vulnerable adults		Mental Wellbeing/ Community Resilience		Homelessness Reduction
2. Background: Give the background information to the policy and the perceived problems with the policy which are the reason for the Impact			Oxford City Council maintains a reactive approach to improving the standards of properties in the Private Rented Sector (PRS). The council has worked on numerous other initiatives within the city to achieve, yet despite our efforts the PRS has the highest amount of significant hazards within properties. Through our Additional and Mandatory schemes for Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO) HMO property standards have been improved and as such the council is exploring expanding on these successes with the introduction of a Selective Licensing Scheme. Selective licensing is				

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<p>Assessment.</p>	<p>similar to our existing schemes but would have the scope expanded to include all properties in the PRS in any area we designate.</p> <p>As Oxford has one of the highest percentage of residents living in the PRS any changes have the potential to impact a large number people. Should landlords choose to remove properties from the PRS to avoid the scheme, or choose to carry on illegally this could potentially place vulnerable tenants and children at risk of living in poor accommodation.</p>
<p>3. Methodology and Sources of Data:</p> <p>The methods used to collect data and what sources of data</p>	<p>The data used to support the councils exploration of selective licensing has been drawn from existing internal data sources including property, council tax, electoral roll and service request information. This has been supplemented by freely available data from the ONS and energy performance data.</p> <p>Feedback received from the consultation has also been used to determine the policy.</p>
<p>4. Consultation</p> <p>This section should outline all the consultation that has taken place on the EIA. It should include the following.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why you carried out the consultation. • Details about how you went about it. • A summary of the replies you received from people you consulted. • An assessment of your proposed policy (or policy options) in the light of the 	<p>A statutory consultation exercise between 10th September 2020 and 31st December 2020 has taken place. The results and methodology and the Council's response are included in the main report.</p> <p>Following the comments received which have been considered, actions have been proposed to address issues raised and these include</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Simplifying the fee structure • Introducing an updated and streamlined application process. • Revising the discretionary licence conditions • Widening the acceptable accreditation schemes to beyond OCLAS • Providing templates for licence holders to assist them in communicating with tenants • Development of a communications plan for Property Licensing to include revision of webpages and a Private Sector Newsletter, to encourage both landlords and tenants to adopt good practice.

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<p>responses you received.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A statement of what you plan to do next 	
<p>5. Assessment of Impact: Provide details of the assessment of the policy on the six primary equality strands. There may have been other groups or individuals that you considered. Please also consider whether the policy, strategy or spending decisions could have an impact on safeguarding and / or the welfare of children and vulnerable adults</p>	<p>The main aim of a selective licensing scheme is to improve property management in the private rented sector, therefore there will be a direct impact on those residents accommodated within the sector. Selective licensing will bring about the following benefits :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protects vulnerable tenants by improving property/ living conditions in the sector. Proactive inspections by the council can also identify issues such as safeguarding/trafficking which would not be as easily identified if operating a reactive service. • Licence holders and those involved with the management of licence properties have to be “fit and proper” and suitable management arrangements need to be in place. This make landlords responsible for proactively managing their properties and will assist in raising standards. <p>People from different ethnic groups Property in the PRS is occupied by a diverse population. Such communities can be particularly affected by overcrowding, illegal accommodation, substandard conversions and poor management. Potential benefit: Selective Licensing would bring improved quality and safety of accommodation for BAME tenants living and assist in the identification and removal of landlords who cause negative impact to vulnerable BAME or new communities via substandard or illegal accommodation. This would also be a benefit to all compliant landlords as it would ensure all landlords are operating within the legislative framework.</p> <p>Children and Vulnerable Adults – the licensing scheme will have a positive benefit on the safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults as the fit and proper test will prevent persons managing or being a licence holder who has convictions for sexual offences, drugs, fraud etc</p> <p>Potential adverse impact: (a)Landlords In regulating hazards in privately rented properties, owners and agents who are regulated against may feel that they have been adversely impacted upon. However there are no other ways in which the service could be provided that would achieve these aims without adverse impact. Ultimately, when working within the legislative framework, people have a right to legal redress should they feel that a decision was unfairly/unlawfully taken; this can be via an appeal process or the Council’s Complaints system</p>

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	<p>The Council does not currently record the ethnicity of landlords on applications, however it is recognised that landlords were of South Asian (Indian and Pakistani) heritage form a significant part of the landlord community and will be affected by any adverse impacts as all landlords will be.</p> <p>(b)Tenants Concern has been raised that licensing could cause an increase in rents as a result of the increased landlord expenditure on the licence fee and the costs of complying with licensing conditions being passed onto the tenant. Overall, the additional cost of the licence fee to landlords is considered to be small as a proportion of rental income, especially across the term of the licence it should not equate to more than a few pounds per week for compliant landlords</p>
<p>6. Consideration of Measures:</p> <p>This section should explain in detail all the consideration of alternative approaches/mitigation of adverse impact of the policy</p>	<p>Alternatives to the introduction the scheme have been suggested during the consultation exercise. These suggestions have been considered and can be found in the main report. The majority of alternatives are based on increasing the use of the existing powers the Council already have in tackling poor conditions, this will rely upon tenants making complaints to the Council, it is the experience of the Council that tenants in the private sector do not do this.</p>
<p>6a. Monitoring Arrangements:</p> <p>Outline systems which will be put in place to monitor for adverse impact in the future and this should include all relevant timetables. In addition it could include a summary and assessment of your monitoring, making clear whether you found any evidence of discrimination.</p>	<p>The positive impact of the scheme - improved property conditions, safety, tenancy management, community relations and reduced ASB - can be continually improved via monitoring and enforcement action against non-compliant landlords</p> <p>Ongoing liaison and engagement directly with and with groups representing landlords, tenants and their component communities will be undertaken to ensure engagement with a broad range of stakeholders. Issues of communication and understanding in respect of learning from the existing licensing scheme and for any new scheme will be factored into operational delivery.</p> <p>It is felt that overall the benefits of selective licensing outweigh the potential disadvantages; it is believed will have a positive impact on the groups that live in the private sector , including vulnerable, low income or otherwise economically disadvantaged</p>

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7. Date reported and signed off by Cabinet:					
8. Conclusions: What are your conclusions drawn from the results in terms of the policy impact					
9. Are there implications for the Service Plans?	YES/NO	10. Date the Service Plans will be updated		11. Date copy sent to Equalities Lead Officer	
13. Date reported to Scrutiny and Cabinet		14. Date reported to Cabinet		12. The date the report on EqlA will be published	

Signed (completing officer) Gail Siddall

Signed (Lead Officer)

Please list the team members and service areas that were involved in this process:

Equalities Lead Officer
 Service Manager
 Legal Services Manager

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