

SCRUTINY PANEL B

Meeting held in the Committee Room, Council Offices, Urban Road, Kirkby-in-Ashfield,

on Tuesday, 20th September, 2016 at 6.30 pm

Present: Councillor Helen Hollis in the Chair;

Councillors Lee Anderson, Chris Baron,
Helen Hollis, Lauren Mitchell (Vice-Chair),
Jason Zadrozny and Christine Quinn-Wilcox and
Jason Zadrozny (substitute for Rachel Madden).

Apologies for Absence: Councillors Rachel Madden, Cathy Mason and
Lachlan Morrison.

Officers Present: Jacqui Harvey, Mike Joy, Julie Robinson and
Pam Wharfe.

In Attendance: Councillor Paul Roberts.

SB.4 Declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary and Non Disclosable Pecuniary/Other Interests

There were no declarations of interest.

SB.5 Minutes

RESOLVED

that the minutes of the meeting of the Panel held on 6th July, 2016 be received and approved as a correct record.

SB.6 Selective Licensing Scheme

The Chairman reminded Panel Members that at the last meeting the Interim Service Director – Housing and the Senior Environmental Health Officer had outlined the concept of selective licensing and its objectives for raising the standard and management of privately rented properties within a designated area.

At that time a consultation exercise was underway in respect of a proposed Selective Licensing Scheme for two designated areas at Stanton Hill and Sutton Central, Sutton in Ashfield. Having taken advice from other local authorities it was agreed that the data would focus on crime and anti-social behaviour within the allocated areas.

The Interim Service Director – Housing reported that the public consultation was carried out with landlords, tenants and local business owners within the designated areas from 6th May to 29th July, 2016.

The exercise which was very comprehensive incorporated a variety of consultation methods including:-

- A dedicated webpage launch on 6th May, 2016 listing a proposal document and all ancillary advice and documentation was made available;
- An online questionnaire was set up for the 3 main stakeholder groups, landlords, tenants and businesses;
- A street level leaflet drop to all affected properties and local businesses was carried out on the 14th, 15th and 17th May, 2016;
- Officers attended a number of public drop in sessions to offer advice and provide information;
- A stakeholders pre-launch event was held on 14th April, 2016.

She briefly summarised the results of the online questionnaire exercise as follows:-

- 27 landlords responded, 16 of which were full responses and 11 partial responses;
- 6 tenants responded with 5 full responses and 1 partial response;
- 6 businesses responded with 3 full responses and 3 partial responses.

Members were further informed that from the responses received the following information was captured:-

- Out of the 16 full responses received from landlords, 3 were in agreement with the implementation of selective licensing, 6 were not and the remaining 7 did not answer this specific question;
- Of the 5 full responses received from tenants of the Stanton Hill and Sutton Central area 3 agreed with the implementation of selective licensing, 1 did not and 1 did not answer the question;
- Of the 3 business owners who responded 2 disagreed with the implementation of selective licensing and 1 did not answer the question.

The Interim Service Director – Housing was also pleased to report that a number of key stakeholders, including the Nottinghamshire Police Force and Fire and Rescue Service, had expressed their full support for the implementation of a selective licensing regime in the proposed areas.

To conclude, the Interim Service Director – Housing informed the Panel that at the Cabinet meeting scheduled for 22nd September, 2016 Members would be updated on the results of the statutory consultation and asked to consider the concept of a designated selective licensing scheme.

The Scrutiny Manager added that in light of the consultation feedback and other relevant information received relating to the proposed scheme, the Panel should now be in a position to formulate a set of recommendations to be presented to Cabinet for their consideration.

Members considered many aspects of the Scheme and in doing so discussed the following:-

- The requirement for landlords to obtain an Energy Performance Certificate (EPC);
- The proposed fee for a 5 year licence and discounts for accredited landlords;
- The importance of early discussions and engagement with Ward Members prior to any further roll out of the scheme;
- Broomhill area in Hucknall identified as a potential designated area for selective licensing;
- Breaches of conditions and the fines imposed;
- An update report to the Panel in 12 months time would be beneficial.

It was acknowledged by the Panel that the main priority for the Scheme was to endeavour to alleviate the poor living conditions that many vulnerable families endure due to unscrupulous public sector landlords. Members agree that the Selective Licensing Scheme therefore remained a viable proposal for the Authority and through the Scheme the Council would be able to act more proactively (instead of reactively) and encourage investment to the area. Furthermore, tenants would feel more secure and landlords could be offered ongoing support and advice.

RESOLVED

that the following recommendations be submitted to the Cabinet for consideration:-

- (a) Scrutiny Panel B supports the principles of the scheme in driving up standards of rented accommodation and reducing anti-social behaviour;
- (b) Ashfield District Council explore the possibility of carrying out Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) tests for landlords as part of our commercialisation drive;
- (c) any financial surplus generated (within the 6% designated as part of the scheme specifications) is added to the Members Environmental Improvements Budget to enable them to support improvement schemes in their own areas;
- (d) subject to the success of the pilot scheme, this be used as a template to replicate in other areas to drive improvements to rented accommodation, landlord responsibility and a reduction in anti-social behaviour;
- (e) Ward Members are consulted, engaged and kept informed on the selection of any sites and boundary lines for the further roll out of the scheme in the future;
- (f) the topic to come back to Scrutiny in approximately 12 months time.

The meeting closed at 7.04 pm

Chairman.

