

SCRUTINY PANEL A

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

on Thursday, 14th October, 2021 at 7.00 pm

Present: Councillor Caroline Wilkinson in the Chair;

Councillors Trevor Locke, Lauren Mitchell and
Warren Nuttall.

Apologies for Absence: Councillors Jim Blagden, Dave Shaw and
David Walters.

Officers Present: Lynn Cain, Mike Joy and Shane Wright.

SA.4 Declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary or Personal Interests and/or Non-Registrable Interests

No declarations of interest were made.

SA.5 Minutes

RESOLVED

that the minutes of the meeting of the Panel held on 15 July 2021, be
received and approved as a correct record.

SA.6 Scrutiny Review: Tenancy Support

The Chairman welcomed everyone present to the meeting and reminded the Panel that an Informal Working Group meeting had been held on 14 September 2021, whereby Members had been presented with detailed information on the Selective Licensing Scheme via a presentation given by the Service Manager for Strategic Housing & Lettings, Phil Warrington and the Environmental Health Team Leader, Stacy White.

A copy of the presentation was shown again to Members during the Panel's discussions.

The Scrutiny Research Officer drew Members' attention to the original objections for setting up the Selective Licensing Scheme pilot in 2016 which had been established to tackle unprofessional landlords and their inadequate maintenance and management of rental properties in the designated areas of New Cross, Sutton and Stanton Hill.

Following the end of the initial pilot scheme after 5 years in operation, it was agreed that a Selective Licensing Scheme (SLS) review be undertaken by the Strategic Housing team to ascertain if the scheme remained fit for purpose and would continue to raise housing standards whilst providing benefits to the Council and its residents seeking accommodation through the private sector.

The SLS review was now almost complete, and officers were intending to submit a report to Cabinet on 7 December 2021 outlining the review's evaluations, outcomes and subsequent recommendations.

In the context of the Panel's ongoing review of tenancy support it had been previously agreed that sight of the report, prior to its submission to Cabinet, would be extremely useful to enable Members to submit their views/responses to the SLS review alongside the report. It would be the Panel's opportunity to inform and influence Cabinet's considerations and to request the inclusion of any specific caveats, checks and balances for management of the new scheme, should it be subsequently approved.

As the timeline for considering the draft report prior to its submission to Cabinet in December was limited, it was suggested that another Informal Working Group be convened at short notice to consider the document once it became available. The Panel concurred that this was a good idea and requested that the Service Manager for Strategic Housing & Lettings and the Portfolio Holder to Council and Social Housing also be invited to the meeting to contribute to any ensuing discussions.

Expanding on the possible outcome of the SLS review and whether the scheme would be renewed for a further 5 years, Members discussed the fact that rents had increased under the original scheme mainly as a result of landlords passing on the initial licensing fee to the tenants. This trend was indeed worrying and would need to be mitigated against in any revamped scheme going forward.

It was also acknowledged that many improvement grants and funding initiatives were available to landlords to upgrade their properties but many still seemed to fall short of maintaining their rentals at a decent standard.

To conclude Members expressed their desire to see the draft Cabinet report as soon as practicably possible and reiterated that they would welcome the chance to influence any housing scheme that would improve the lives of Ashfield residents in some way.

RESOLVED that

- a) the Service Manager for Strategic Housing & Lettings be requested to release the Cabinet report in relation to the Selective Licensing Scheme Review to Panel Members for consideration as soon as practicably possible;
- b) as a result of a) above and upon release of the Cabinet report, the Scrutiny Research Officer convene an Informal Scrutiny Working Group meeting to enable Members to consider its proposals and recommendations as part of the 10 week consultation period;
- c) an invite to the Informal Working Group meeting, once arranged, be extended to the Portfolio Holder for Council and Social Housing and the Service Manager for Strategic Housing & Lettings, to enable them to contribute to the discussion as so required.

The meeting closed at 7.37 pm

Chairman.