

Scoping Report – Private Rented Sector Housing Topic Review

Is there more that can be done to address poor housing conditions and reduce housing-related anti-social behaviour in the private rented sector?

Background

At the Commission's first meeting of this municipal year the Board received presentations from all of the senior officers in the Planning, Housing and Leisure service areas, and identified priority areas for scrutiny for the work programme over the forthcoming year.

The Board received a report on 'Private Sector Housing - Standards and Issues Related to Rented Properties' at its meeting on 24 July 2014 to brief Members on the work that was currently taking place on improving housing conditions in the private rented sector and licensing of private landlords. The Board resolved that they may be able to 'Support the Housing Standards Team in the development of the targeted approach to bad landlords and research to determine whether discretionary licensing powers can be applied in certain parts of the city, through the identified topic review on private rented sector housing issues.'

The Board will be working alongside the Neighbourhoods O&S Board to feed into their topic review on Anti-Social Behaviour in Normanton, and relevant data will be shared between the two reviews.

Aims and Objectives of the Review

Aim of the review

- To provide clear recommendations to Cabinet on solutions that may assist to achieve the review objectives.

The objectives of the review are to:

- Improve housing conditions for private rented sector tenants.
- Reduce anti-social behaviour caused by letting and housing-related issues such as:
 - Overcrowding,
 - insufficient waste storage,
 - incorrect use of waste disposal,
 - littering and fly-tipping,
 - noise disturbance, and
 - low level criminal activity.

Proposed methodology

The review will be carried out in two stages in line with the Neighbourhoods O&S Board topic review.

Stage 1

The first stage will be to collate data and form a 'problem profile' on the condition of housing in the private rented sector, and a record of anti-social behaviour potentially attributable to private rented housing.

Stage 1 will include:

- Identification of the number of dwellings in the housing rented sector.
- The number of properties which are likely to have category 1 and category 2 hazards.
- The number of referrals coming in regarding poor conditions.
- The number of referrals dealt with per annum.
- The time it takes for a referral to be dealt with from receipt to resolution.
- The collection of anecdotal evidence to support the awareness of problems and issues in the private rented sector.
- Collation of data recording Environmental Health issues potentially attributable to private rented housing over the last 12 months.
- The number of registered HMOs.
- Collation of detail on current and proposed schemes delivered by the Housing Standards Team, including budget costs and timescales.
- Number of properties with overcrowding issues.
- Details of any work that has already been done and has been shown to either work or not work; such as educational work on recycling.
- Planning and enforcement issues (letting boards).
- Data and supporting information from the Partnership's and Communities Team.

Background and supporting information will be provided to members on:

- The Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) and Category 1 and 2 Hazards
- Shelter Report (Asserting Authority: Calling time on Rogue Landlords 2011)
- Derby's 2006 Private Sector Housing Condition Survey.
- HMOs licensing.
- Results of the unlicensed HMO survey.
- Policies and procedures relating to housing conditions, HMOS, the HHSRS and other landlord licensing schemes.
- Information on budgets and resources for the Housing Standards Team.
- The Town and Country Planning Act - excerpt of Regulations regarding property advertising boards.

Stage one will culminate in a presentation to members detailing the evidence collection we have done and summarising the lessons we have learnt from this. Members and Officers will then identify what further evidence we need to collate to enable a full review of evidence and call for witnesses in stage 2.

Stage 2

Evidence will be collated from other officers within the authority and other local authorities and organisations where applicable, and this will be considered by the Board. The Board will also consider research done on similar reviews.

Once members have had a chance to process the evidence collated, key witnesses will be called to help the Board identify any recommendations to help achieve the review objectives.

Witnesses

Possible witnesses include:

- Cabinet Members for Housing and Advice; Planning, Environment and Public Protection; and Neighbourhoods and Streetpride.
- Strategic Director for Neighbourhoods
- Service Director for Younger Adults and Housing, Environment and Regulatory Services, and Safer and Stronger Communities.
- Heads of Service and lead officers
- Housing Inspectors
- Street Wardens
- Community representatives/Community leaders
- PCSOs/Police Officers
- Neighbourhood Managers
- Ward Councillors
- Private Sector Landlords

Timing and Timescales for the Review

September 18 2012	Board to approve/amend scope of topic review
October-November 2012	Stage 1 - Data collection and information gathering.
November 13 2012	Stage 1 – summary report to Board. Agree further work to be done on collecting data and evidence.
November-December 2012	Stage 2 – Collection of data and evidence. Arrange and complete witness interview sessions. Make recommendations.
January 2013	Write up review.
January 29 2013	Draft Topic Review report and recommendations to Board. Sign off report prior to March Council Cabinet.
4 March 2013	Council Cabinet

CH September 2012