

CITY & COUNTY OF CARDIFF

DINAS A SIR CAERDYDD

COMMUNITY AND ADULT SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

8 JUNE 2016

BRIEFING REPORT – Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO) Additional Licensing Schemes: Update Report

Purpose of Report

1. The Community & Adult Services Scrutiny Committee held a Call In on 7 October 2015 regarding the re-declaration of the additional licensing scheme in Cathays Ward. Following this meeting, Members amended their 2015/16 work programme to include an update on HMO additional licensing schemes in Cathays and Plasnewydd.
2. The Update Report, which has been prepared by Housing Enforcement officers, is attached at **Appendix A** and states:
 - a. Between 2010-2015, 510 HMOs were licensed in Cathays using mandatory powers and an additional 1,664 HMOs were licensed using the additional licensing scheme, resulting in:
 - i. 467 HMOs improved means of escape in case of fire
 - ii. 372 HMOs upgraded kitchen, bathroom and toilet facilities
 - iii. 249 HMOs made secure against burglary
 - iv. 217 HMOs improved affordable warmth and energy efficiency
 - v. 1,030 hazards identified during Housing Health and Safety rating system inspections removed.
 - b. Between 2010-2015, 81% reduction in burglary in the top 5 streets and downward trends for noise complaints and pest control complaints.
 - c. Between 2010-2015, 831 landlords with properties in Cardiff accredited by Landlord Accreditation Wales, largely due to incentives via Additional Licensing Scheme.

3. Since the Cathays additional licensing scheme recommenced on 1 January 2016, 547 HMOs are licensed in Cathays using mandatory powers and an additional 1,710 HMOs are licensed using the additional licensing scheme.
4. With regard to the Plasnewydd additional licensing scheme, which was introduced in November 2014, the report shows that 277 HMOs are licensed in Plasnewydd using mandatory powers and an additional 375 HMOs are licensed using the additional licensing scheme. A further 310 HMOs are being checked regarding the additional licensing scheme.
5. The report highlights the challenges which have faced service delivery, at points 3.1 and 3.2, referencing the re-structuring required by the establishment of the Shared Regulatory Services, the turnover in staff and the need to train staff new to HMO licensing. The report goes on to state that staff are being recruited and trained to provide support to the HMO licensing function.
6. The report states the next steps being taken, referencing a door to door survey to be carried out in Plasnewydd, to the South of Albany Road, in September 2016, and to publicise prosecutions for failure to licence, to encourage voluntary compliance by landlords.
7. The report references that there has been a recalculation of HMO licensing fees following an activity based costing exercise. The new fee structure allows for a discount of £150 for landlords who are re-licensing HMOs first licensed during 2010/11 and where properties are fully compliant with HMO standards.
8. As the report is for information only, no Cabinet Members or officers will be present at Committee for this item.

Financial Implications

9. There are no direct financial implications arising from this report. However, financial implications may arise if and when the matters under review are implemented with or without any modifications.

Legal Implications

10. The Scrutiny Committee is empowered to enquire, consider, review and recommend but not to make policy decisions. As the recommendations in this report are to consider and review matters there are no direct legal implications. However, legal implications may arise if and when the matters under review are implemented with or without any modifications. Any report with recommendations for decision that goes to Cabinet/Council will set out any legal implications arising from those recommendations. All decisions taken by or on behalf of the Council must (a) be within the legal powers of the Council; (b) comply with any procedural requirement imposed by law; (c) be within the powers of the body or person exercising powers on behalf of the Council; (d) be undertaken in accordance with the procedural requirements imposed by the Council e.g. Scrutiny Procedure Rules; (e) be fully and properly informed; (f) be properly motivated; (g) be taken having regard to the Council's fiduciary duty to its taxpayers; and (h) be reasonable and proper in all the circumstances.

RECOMMENDATION

The Committee is recommended to note the update report and consider the future scrutiny of this item.

DAVID MARR

Interim Monitoring Officer

1 June 2016