

**RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL
MUNICIPAL YEAR 2013-2014**

**ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

10TH MARCH 2014

**REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF
LEGAL & DEMOCRATIC SERVICES**

Agenda Item No. 7

EXECUTIVE RESPONSE - HMO

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1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 The purpose of this report is to make Members aware of the response received from the Executive to the findings and recommendations of the Environmental Services Scrutiny - HMO Working Group.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 It is Recommended that:-

2.2 Members note the response received from the Executive

2.3 The Committee receives a further response on the remaining Working Group's recommendations, following implementation of effective regulation.

2.4 The Committee monitors progress in respect of the recommendations as appropriate.

3. BACKGROUND

3.1 The report of the Committee's HMO Scrutiny Working Group was agreed by Committee on the 1st July, 2013 and subsequently presented to Cabinet on the 23rd September, 2013. (The working Group's recommendations are outlined in Appendix A)

3.2 The response of the Executive to the Working Groups recommendations are attached as Appendix B.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

as amended by

LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

10th MARCH 2014

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF LEGAL AND DEMOCRATIC SERVICES

Item: Response of the Executive

Minute 5 Environmental Services Scrutiny Committee 1st July, 2013.

(Officer to Contact: Emma Coates, Scrutiny Support Officer – Telephone No. 01443 424098)

APPENDIX A

HMO SCRUTINY WORKING GROUP RECOMMENDATIONS AGREED AT THE ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE ON THE 1ST JULY, 2013.

To request that the following regulatory options be taken forward by the Executive and Welsh Government, where appropriate:

EFFECTIVE REGULATION

- a) That the Local Authority retain and extend the existing RCT HMO licensing scheme to include all types of HMOs, allowing consistency of approach and appropriate standards within all HMOs regardless of size and nature of tenure.
- b) That the Service Director, Public Health & Protection complete a detailed review of the evidence base for the introduction of selective licensing schemes in defined ward areas that are experiencing issues with poor housing quality, low housing demand and problems associated with anti social behaviour and that this evidence is presented to members for consideration.
- c) That the Service Director, Public Health & Protection complete a thorough review of the Councils licence fees and charges to ensure that the cost to the Council of administering housing based licensing scheme is recovered.

LANDLORD ENGAGEMENT

- d) That the Council fully supports the Welsh Governments implementation of a national landlord licensing scheme, ensuring that all landlords comply to a specific code of conduct.
- e) That the Service Director, Public Health & Protection explore the introduction of a Voluntary Property Accreditation Scheme within Rhondda Cynon Taf, which would assist with improving consumer confidence and property management within the private rented sector.
- f) That the Service Director, Public Health & Protection leads a review of the manner in which the Council currently engages and supports private sector landlords as business partners to ensure the sector is equipped to assist the Council in meeting future housing needs and the support of homelessness people.
- g) In addition to the specific recommendations outlined above regarding regulating of the private rented sector the group also put forward a further three general recommendations:-

GENERAL

- h) That the work of the Community Safety partnership's Anti Social Behaviour Unit is further promoted with details of the unit provided to all elected members and letting agencies.

- i) That the Welsh Government consider a 'repayment type loan/funding' to landlords to assist them in bringing properties up to a required minimum standard, which would benefit landlords, allow tenants to live in comfortable accommodation and assist the Council with its current housing situation.

- j) The Service Director, Planning should look at supplementary planning guidance on HMOs to allow for greater consideration of their impact to the local Community.

**County Borough Councillor Craig Middle
Cabinet Member for Social Justice**

Our Ref: 140123CM(L)GD.1

23rd January 2014

Councillor G Davies
Chair of Environmental Services Scrutiny Committee

Dear Councillor Davies

I would like express my thanks and that of the Cabinet to you and the other Members of the working group for the comprehensive and rigorous approach that has been taken to this important task. The effective regulation of houses in multiple occupation (HMOs) is necessary to ensure that both the safety of the tenants and the interests of the communities in which these properties are located are protected.

The working group also acknowledged the valuable role of the private rented sector and the benefits effective regulation can have for responsible landlords that manage their properties well while also ensuring that bad landlords are identified and controlled.

I understand that the working group sought the views of a wide range of stakeholders in undertaking this work and this is reflected in the detailed report that you presented to Cabinet on 23rd September 2013.

As you know the report was well received by the Cabinet, which resolved that the recommendations of the working group be given further consideration.

On 28th October 2013, Cabinet considered the recommendations of the working group that related to effective regulation in a report on the Licensing of Houses in Multiple Occupation in Rhondda Cynon Taf. The report proposed a new Additional Licensing Scheme that would extend the existing scheme to cover all types of houses in multiple occupation. This proposal was supported by Cabinet.

It was also resolved that a robust set of conditions would continue to be applied to licences issued under both the mandatory scheme and the new additional licensing scheme to further enhance the regulation of these properties. In addition a new fee structure will be imposed.

The Cabinet wanted these new provisions to be implemented as early as possible and resolved that the implementation of the new scheme be brought forward to the 1st April 2014. I understand that this work is progressing well and that the Council is on target for implementation of the scheme in April 2014.

The other recommendations of the working group will be taken forward by Officers once the main recommendations concerning effective regulation have been successfully implemented.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'C Middle'.

Councillor Craig Middle
Cabinet Member for Social Justice