

**RECOMMENDATION FROM THE HEALTHY, SAFE, CLEAN AND GREEN COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD ON 18<sup>TH</sup> JANUARY 2016**

**0711. UPDATE ON HOMES IN MULTIPLE OCCUPATION**

The Environmental Health Manager explained that numbers of Homes in Multiple Occupation (HMO's) were on the increase. The main increase was in Shirebrook with a few in Langwith Junction and South Normanton.

Following the presentation to Council, more quality intelligence was being received which enabled the Department to better investigate reports. The Police had been very helpful and had passed on details of 20 addresses that were suspected of being HMO's. A meeting had been arranged with the Police and Fire Service to discuss ways of partnership working. It sometimes helped to have a uniformed Police Officer accompany the Environmental Health Officer (EHO) in order to gain access. The Chief Executive Officer had been in contact with the Fire Prevention Service and this was another area in which partnership working and sharing resources could be explored.

The status of HMO's was moving quickly and there was a lot of intelligence coming forward. As the demand for single bed accommodation increased, due to Welfare Reforms, the number of small HMO's without the need for a licence was set to increase. There was a need to work closely with Community Safety, as they often gained intelligence from other sources. Planning Permissions applied for could also give clues as to the whereabouts of HMO's. The advantage of working in partnership with other bodies was that there was the ability to utilise their resources, e.g. Police interpreters.

Members expressed concerns that the department should not take on work that should be done by other bodies and the Environmental Health Manager noted that the legislation that the EHO's worked under, meant that the inspections could only be carried out by them. Working in partnership with other bodies would help the department prioritise inspections in order of need.

A question was asked regarding the involvement of CAN Rangers and it was noted that whilst they were invaluable in terms of intelligence gathering and initiatives, inspections and risk rating needed to be carried out by the EHO's.

Members asked whether consideration could be given to increasing the Council Tax banding for HMO's without penalising good landlords and the Environmental Health

Manager felt that this could be looked at if it was possible. An example of a good landlord had been publicised as a response to a complaint received.

The Environmental Health Officer also informed Members that the Government was currently carrying out a consultation exercise on HMO's and proposals to extend the scope of mandatory Licensing. A response had been sent by the Environmental Health Manager which included comments that to extend Mandatory Licensing would be an increased burden on Local Authorities which could not be delivered with existing resources. In addition to this there are already provisions for dealing with problem HMOs, but it is difficult to know where the HMOs are, particularly as the definitions between Environmental Health, Planning and Council tax differ.

The Chair thanked the Environmental Health Manager for the update.

Moved by Councillor T. Munro and seconded by Councillor H.J. Gilmour

**RESOLVED** that the Executive be asked to investigate the possibility of increasing the Council Tax Bands for Homes in Multiple Occupation.