

NORTH LINCOLNSHIRE COUNCIL

PLACE SCRUTINY PANEL

20 September 2023

PRESENT: - Councillor J Kennedy (in the Chair)

Councillors S Swift (Vice-Chair) and P Vickers

The meeting was held in Room G01e, Church Square House, Scunthorpe.

160 **SUBSTITUTIONS** - There were no substitutions at the meeting.

161 **DECLARATIONS OF DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS AND PERSONAL OR PERSONAL AND PREJUDICIAL INTERESTS AND DECLARATIONS OF WHIPPING ARRANGEMENTS (IF ANY)** - There were no declarations of disclosable pecuniary interests and personal or personal and prejudicial interests.

No whip was declared.

162 **TO TAKE THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE PANEL HELD ON 12 JULY 2023 AND 19 JULY 2023 AS A CORRECT RECORD AND AUTHORISE THE CHAIR TO SIGN** - That the minutes of the proceedings of the meetings held on 12 July 2023 and 19 July 2023, having been printed and circulated amongst the members, be taken as read and correctly recorded and be signed by the Chair.

163 **PUBLIC SPEAKING REQUEST, IF ANY** - No public speaking requests had been received.

164 **ADDED ITEM REQUESTED BY COUNCILLOR L YEADON - HOUSES OF MULTIPLE OCCUPANCY** - The Chair informed the meeting that in accordance with the council's Constitution, Councillor L Yeadon had submitted an added item titled 'Houses of Multiple Occupancy' for consideration by the scrutiny panel. Consequently, Lisa Swainston, Assistant Director: Public Protection and Rachel Johnson, Head of Housing, Rehabilitation and Recovery were in attendance to answer members' question on the content of the added item.

Councillor Yeadon informed the meeting that the added item had been submitted in order to explore the effectiveness of what was being done locally to reduce the ever-increasing number of unlicensed Houses of Multiple Occupancy (HMOs) and to ensure that children in such HMOs were safe.

The Assistant Director stated that HMOs were only eligible for a mandatory license if they were evidenced to home five or more unrelated individuals/families. Homes of four or less and homes which may be overcrowded yet contain family and relations do not form part of the HMO

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licensing requirements.

Expected standards for housing (including small unlicensed HMOs) were set out and managed primarily through the Housing Act (2004). Part 1 of the Act – Housing Conditions and Part 2 - Houses in Multiple Occupation (Mandatory licensing). The Housing Act was supplemented by the Housing and Planning Act 2016, which introduced amendments to enable councils to impose civil penalty as an alternative to prosecution for specific offences.

Members heard that the council worked in collaboration with private landlords and had an active Landlords forum and a voluntary landlord housing scheme.

The Assistant Director informed members that in recognition that management of the private rented sector, particularly in Scunthorpe North required additional approaches, the council had amended the Civil Penalties Guidance 2023 (which was attached to the report as an appendix) and were preparing a business case to consider the need for selective licensing (which was also attached as an appendix).

Members listed as the Assistant Director stated that the council had several duties and responsibilities under housing legislation, including the requirement to set up and maintain a social housing allocations scheme under Part 6 of the Housing Act 1996. Since 2010 the council, in partnership with North East Lincolnshire Council had fulfilled this responsibility via the Home Choice Lincs (HCL) Choice Based Letting System.

Along with both local authorities a number of stock owning registered social landlords were also signed up the HCL partnership. These were Longhurst Group, Lincolnshire Housing Partnership, Ongo Homes, Sanctuary Housing Association and The Guinness Partnership.

The Home Choice Lincs Board recently undertook a procurement exercise and in August 2023 had appointed Campbell Tickell consultants to undertake a strategic review of the Northern Lincolnshire Choice Based Housing Allocations System 'Home Choice Lincs'. It was anticipated that feedback presentation be delivered to the HCL board by 30 November 2023 and a final report to be submitted by 31 January 2024.

The council's Housing Advice and Homelessness Team had a portfolio of temporary accommodation properties (approx. 100 across North Lincolnshire) which included private rented properties, leased direct and managed by the council.

To conclude, the Assistant Director explained the council's robust safeguarding processes, to protect every tenant (adult and child) which would be enacted should a concern be raised. This included proactive identification and partnership approaches for example: Child Criminal Exploitation, Child Sexual Exploitation, Child Slavery, etc.

Following the verbal presentation by the Assistant Director and Head of

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Housing, Rehabilitation and Recovery, the Chair facilitated a discussion on Houses of Multiple Occupancy.

Resolved – (a) That the report be noted, and (b) that the Assistant Director: Public Protection and Head of Housing, Recovery and Rehabilitation be thanked for their attendance, verbal presentation and for answering members' questions.

165 **ANY OTHER ITEMS THAT THE CHAIRMAN DECIDES ARE URGENT BY REASON OF SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES THAT MUST BE SPECIFIED -**
There was no urgent business for consideration at the meeting.