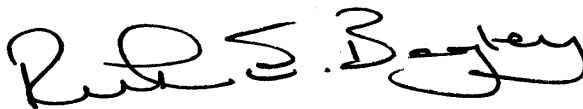


Date of issue: 7th May 2011

MEETING:	NEIGHBOURHOODS AND COMMUNITY SERVICES SCRUTINY PANEL (Councillors Buchanan, Frank, Dar, Minhas, Munawar, Plenty, Sohal, Strutton and A S Wright) – <i>Membership to be confirmed at the Overview and Scrutiny Committee 7th June 2011</i> <u>Slough Federation of Tenants & Residents (Non-Voting Co-Opted Members)</u> <i>Appointments to be confirmed</i>
DATE AND TIME:	THURSDAY, 16TH JUNE, 2011 AT 6.30 PM
VENUE:	COUNCIL CHAMBER, TOWN HALL, BATH ROAD, SLOUGH
DEMOCRATIC SERVICES OFFICER: (for all enquiries)	CLAIRE GRAY 01753 875120

NOTICE OF MEETING

You are requested to attend the above Meeting at the time and date indicated to deal with the business set out in the following agenda.



RUTH BAGLEY
Chief Executive

AGENDA

PART I

AGENDA
ITEM

REPORT TITLE

PAGE

WARD

Apologies for absence.

CONSTITUTIONAL MATTERS

1. Election of Chair
2. Election of Vice-Chair
3. Declarations of Interest
(Members are reminded of their duty to declare personal and personal prejudicial interests in matters coming before this meeting as set out in the local code of conduct).
4. Minutes of the Neighbourhoods and Renewal Scrutiny Panel held on 23rd March 2011 1 - 6 -
5. Minutes of the Community, Leisure and Environment meeting held on 24th March 2011 7 - 10 -

SCRUTINY ISSUES

6. Member Questions
(An opportunity for panel members to ask questions of the relevant Director / Assistant Director, relating to pertinent, topical issues affecting their Directorate – maximum of 10 minutes allocated.)
7. Ten Pin and Tennis Progress 11 - 16 All
8. Empty Homes: Housing Solutions - A Strategy for Slough 17 - 40 All
9. A Proposal to Implement Additional Homes in Multiple Occupation for Chalvey Ward 41 - 46 Chalvey
10. Food Standards Agency - Imported Food Control Unit 47 - 54 All

ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

11. Consideration of reports marked to be noted/for information -
(The panel will consider any reports marked to be noted/for information and determine whether future scrutiny is considered necessary –



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maximum of 5 minutes allocated.)

- | | | | |
|-----|--|---------|---|
| 12. | Forward Work Programme | 55 - 56 | - |
| 13. | Date of Next Meeting – 15 th September 2011 | | |

Press and Public

You are welcome to attend this meeting which is open to the press and public, as an observer. You will however be asked to leave before the Committee considers any items in the Part II agenda. Special facilities may be made available for disabled or non-English speaking persons. Please contact the Democratic Services Officer shown above for further details.

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Neighbourhoods and Renewal Scrutiny Panel – Meeting held on Wednesday, 23rd March, 2011.

Present:- Councillors Sohal (Chair), Abe (Arrived at 6.45 pm, Left at 7.45 pm), Dodds, Plimmer, Walsh and A S Wright (Left at 7.45 pm)

Co-opted Members present:- Barbara Goldstein and Glynys Higgins

Also present under Rule 30:- Councillors M S Mann

PART 1

39. Declarations of Interest

None were received.

40. Minutes of the Meeting held on 10th February 2011

The Minutes of the last meeting held on 10th February were approved as a correct record.

41. Housing Benefit and Wider Welfare Reforms

The Panel considered a report which outlined the agreed and proposed changes to Housing Benefit. The report provided information on the impact of these changes, in particular the effect on housing demand. The Head of Benefits advised that the removal of the allowance for five bed properties would affect 47 Slough households. The change from using average rent to using the 30th percentile rent for benefit purposes would have a significant impact on Slough due to the wide span of rents in the Borough. The Housing Needs Manager advised that housing demand had increased significantly over the past couple of years. Due to the pressure on housing in London there was a risk that Slough could lose control of local housing supply as local authorities could fulfil their housing duties by using private rental accommodation. The Council had looked at mitigating actions including an improved deposit guarantee scheme, offering monetary advice, securing a preferred supplier for housing the homeless and trying to reduce the number of empty properties. The Panel raised a number of queries including:-

- A Co-opted Member asked if homeless people would be placed in Bed and Breakfast accommodation. The Panel was advised that the Council hoped that the housing supply could be increased. A number of options were being explored including the possible introduction of council tax for empty properties.
- In response to a question regarding underoccupancy of houses. The tenant incentive scheme had worked for those in 2 and 3 bed properties but had not been successful in the larger properties and these would be specifically targeted in future to find out what measures would be needed for the residents to consider downsizing.
- Members expressed concern about the impact that the changes would have on families in the Borough. A Member proposed that the Panel write to the

Neighbourhoods and Renewal Scrutiny Panel - 23.03.11

secretary of state to draw their attention to the significant impact that the government's policy would have in places like Slough not just on housing but other Council services.

- The Panel was concerned about the use by London Borough's of satellite towns for housing and requested further information on the likely impact of this when more solid indications of the possible numbers were available.
- Further concerns were raised by the Panel regarding the Council's ability to ensure that housing benefit was paid directly to the landlord rather than to the tenant. Officers advised that recent changes to the housing benefit regulations may permit this. The Panel requested that the Cabinet endorse any changes to the current policy.
- A Member asked about the position of housing associations in Slough and was advised that all Slough housing associations would only rent properties through the Council but London boroughs may use privately rented properties.

Resolved: -

- (a) The Panel requested that officers take a report to a future Cabinet meeting to seek endorsement of changes to the Council's policy regarding payment of Housing Benefit to landlords as permitted under the changes in legislation and guidance from the DWP.
- (b) That an update report be brought to the Neighbourhoods and Communities Scrutiny Panel in approximately 6 months time.
- (c) That a letter be sent to the Secretaries of State for Communities and Local Government and for Work and Pensions expressing the Panel's Concern about the apparent lack of consideration of the long term impact of the housing benefit policies on the vulnerable people in Slough and to ask what mitigating measures will be in place to help this authority cope with the following issues:
 - 1) Increasing financial pressures caused by increased homelessness
 - 2) Increasing pressure on Slough Services – schools, health, transport caused by people being forced out of London
 - 3) Specific housing risks, including increased use of HMOs and forced homelessness.

42. Highway Engineering Programme of Works for 2011/12

The panel considered a report which outlined the proposed programme of works for 2011/12 to be carried out by the Council's Highways Engineering service. The Assistant Director, Transport and Planning advised that this was an annual report to highlight the planned works for carriageways, footways, streetlighting and public rights of way. It was noted that works were ranked by technical needs first and consultations with Councillors and residents had taken place. In the subsequent discussion Members raised a number of queries including:-

- A Member asked about ward walkabouts and whether these were carried out as they were completed throughout the year or were put on hold until next

Neighbourhoods and Renewal Scrutiny Panel - 23.03.11

year. It was noted that there was a separate budget to cover these and they were therefore not included in the programme of works.

- In response to a question it was confirmed that the roads on the reserve list were not currently funded. If any funding was made available from other means then this could be used to take the first roads of the reserve list which means the Highways department would not have to go back out to look at all roads again.
- It was noted that the recent funding for pothole repairs announced by the government was a similar amount as received last year but that this could only be used for potholes or small patches not total resurfacing.
- Members raised concerns regarding the condition of unadopted roads. However it was noted that the roads would need a considerable amount of work to improve and the Council would not adopt roads unless they were up to the standard of a Public Highway as they would be a considerable financial burden on the Council. In some instances appropriate parties had been approached to bring the highways up to an adoptable standard.

Members raised a number of issues regarding particular areas of work and in all instances it was agreed that the queries would be passed to the Head of Highways for response.

Resolved: - That the report be noted.

43. Introduction of Dog Control Orders

The Panel considered a report which proposed the implementation of a range of Dog Control Orders to enable effective enforcement in relation to dogs including the issuing of Fixed Penalty Notices and prosecution of those who fail to comply with the conditions of the orders. The Head of Neighbourhood Enforcement advised that the interests of dog owners needed to be balanced with those of the general population. The aim of the changes was to protect public health, make people feel safer and improve the environment. A statutory consultation would need to be carried out before the Dog Control Orders could be implemented.

The Panel was advised that there was a great deal of work being carried out at present to highlight the responsibilities of dog owners but it was extremely difficult to issue penalty notices as the perpetrators had to be caught in the act. At present only five fines for dog fouling had been issued. Community Safety Officers had received training on dealing with irresponsible dog owners and worked in teams in teams to target certain areas where dog fouling was a known problem.

The Panel raised some concerns regarding the proposed maximum number of dogs a single person could walk. The Panel felt that six would be fine depending upon the breed, size and temperament of the dogs but would be too many if they were larger or more aggressive dogs. The Head of Neighbourhood enforcement agreed to look into whether the regulations allowed for any flexibility when restricting the number of dogs a person could handle.

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A Member commented that the proposed increase in the fine for dog fouling was significant and asked whether this was in line with neighbouring authorities. It was confirmed that this was a national issue and some authorities were campaigning to have the maximum fine increased to £100. Dog fouling was a public health risk which justified the large fine.

Resolved: -

1. That the following recommendations to Cabinet be endorsed:
 - (a). The carrying out of statutory public consultation to introduce Dog Control Orders in order to tackle the following prescribed offences under Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005:
 - a) Failure to remove dog faeces (Borough wide Order);
 - b) Failure to keep a dog on a lead in specified locations;
 - c) Failure to put and keep a dog on a lead when directed by an Authorised Officer (Borough wide Order);
 - d) Permitting a dog to enter land from which dogs are excluded;
 - e) Limit the number of dogs under control of any person in a designated area (Borough wide Order).
 - (b) Adding the following as paragraph 85a, Part 3 to the Scheme of Officer Delegations for Assistant Director of Public Protection:

“Authority to amend and/or extend existing Dog Control Orders in consultation with the relevant Commissioner”.
 - (c) Increasing the current level of fine for dog fouling of £50 to £80 forthwith.
2. It be investigated whether the wording regarding point (e) above could be amended to take into consideration the particular/breed size of dogs involved and whether they were effectively managed before presenting to Cabinet.

44. Housing Futures - Provision of Housing Services Update Report

The Panel considered a report which detailed the progress in developing the new Housing Service by combining the former People 1st Housing Management teams with their former SBC strategic housing counterparts. The Assistant Director, Housing advised that this was the final report to Scrutiny as part of the Housing Futures project and it was exactly a year since Cabinet took the decision to bring the housing service back in house. The original consultation had received over 2000 responses and a number had commented upon the areas they felt needed improving and a number of workshops had been held in the autumn to pick up on an issues. In response to the points raised the service had been reconfigured to ensure that access to staff was more straightforward. The Panel was advised that the recruitment procedures were nearly completed with all but three posts filled.

A Co-opted Member raised a query regarding tenant engagement and the Assistant Director Housing advised that everything was on track to complete the training and interviewing of volunteers for the Customer Senate. There was no

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plan to begin before the new financial year and therefore nothing was expected to slip.

At the previous meeting Members requested that the employment issues highlighted in the previous report be considered by the Employment and Appeals Committee – as this had yet to take place the Panel reaffirmed the proposal.

Resolved –

- (a) The Panel thanked the Assistant Director, Housing and the Housing Team for their work to ensure the successful transition of the Housing.
- (b) The Scrutiny Panel reaffirmed the recommendation from the last meeting of the Panel that the employment provisions contained within the report be considered by the Employment and Appeals Committee:- in particular the selection process, how jobs had been reorganised and the process for transfer of staff)

45. Members Attendance Record

Resolved – That the Members' Attendance Record be noted.

46. Forward Work Programme

Resolved – That the Forward work programme be noted.

Chair

(Note: The Meeting opened at 6.30 pm and closed at 8.55 pm)

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Community, Leisure and Environment Scrutiny Panel – Meeting held on Thursday, 24th March, 2011.

Present:- Councillors A Wright (Vice-Chair, in the Chair), Chohan, M S Mann and Shine

Apologies for Absence:- Councillor Bal, Abe, Bains and Sohal

PART I

BOWLING AND TENNIS FACILITIES TOUR

Prior to the start of the meeting Panel Members took a tour of the ten pin bowling facility and the new tennis courts. Members were given the opportunity to ask representatives of Slough Community Leisure questions about the facilities.

79. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interests received.

80. Minutes of the meeting held on 26th January 2011

The minutes of the Joint Community, Leisure and Environment & Neighbourhoods and Renewal Scrutiny Panel held on 26th January 2011 were approved as a correct record.

81. Ten Pin and Tennis progress – to identify issues for future agenda item

The Assistant Director, Learning and Cultural Engagement advised the Panel that this was an opportunity for Scrutiny Members to have a look around the new facilities and to raise any issues that they would wish to be included in the report which was due to be considered by the Scrutiny Panel in June. It was noted that at this point there would be six months worth of data available on the ten pin bowling offer. Members were asked to raise issues to be addressed at the next meeting, these included:-

- The Financial Viability of the Ten Pin Bowling Centre in relation to the £100k annual income projection when the Centre was approved.
- The overall publicity strategy for the Centre as it was noted that at present the majority of publicity was by word of mouth. A Member suggested it would be good for more Councillors to visit as it was a very smart, modern and well run facility. The Marketing plan was
- Members were keen to find out how the Ten Pin facility had been marketed and suggested that it would be good to market special promotions to youth groups. The Marketing plan was seen as key to improving the Centre's fortunes.

Community, Leisure and Environment Scrutiny Panel - 24.03.11

- It was suggested that a cost comparison with other centres would be useful, especially with newly opened facilities. It was noted that it was originally intended that ten pin would be an income generating arm of Slough Community Leisure. In order to finance other initiatives such as free swimming.
- Members asked for details of the bar and cafe prices to be highlighted in the report, as it was implied that this may attract people into the Centre.
- A Member suggested that it would be useful if the report contained information on the profiles of users including the age groups and different communities using the centre.

Resolved – That a report be brought to the first meeting of the proposed joint scrutiny panel including those issues detailed above.

82. New Library and Cultural Centre

The Panel received a presentation which included details on the progress of the new central library and cultural centre. The new Centre was designed to improve access to library, learning, cultural and democratic e presentation included information about community participation in the project. Focus groups and workshops were asked for input into which services they wanted included in the new centre and the way in which they wanted these services provided. Focus groups were held with people who fell into a number of different categories including young people, high engaging adults, low/no engaging adults and older people. The Panel was requested to advise on the plans for further public engagement. The consultation had taken place over a two month period with one hour long focus groups and three hour long workshops in order to get an in-depth picture of how the public may use facilities. In the subsequent discussion Members raised a number of queries including:-

- The overall message from the community consultation was that the centre needed to have a stronger emphasis on fun. A Member asked what was meant by the term 'fun'. The Assistant Director advised that people wanted a facility that there was a sense of excitement about going to, where you go to enjoy yourself and the overall way in how the facility was presented.
- A Member asked about the range of learning facilities provided. It was noted that there would be formal classrooms, an IT suite, a 'wet room' for craft sessions and children's activities, the main library and arts facilities. The Centre would bring together services provided at the Thomas Grey Centre, library and the West Wing.
- In response to a question it was noted that the staff who would work in the new building and provide the courses were already in place. The new centre would provide a mixture of free and differently priced courses, for example new migrant course were funded on a free to use basis but interest courses would be charged for. Learning would be focused on employability.
- The cultural offer would mainly be focused on local interest groups and the Council would be engaging with these. The Panel was advised that there would be a community arts programme and also mixed usage with some professional programming and also use by local groups and

schools. The Council would be building up interest in the programme between now and 2013 in order to ensure that the facility would feel alive with activity.

- It was noted that with regarding the provision of democratic space in the facility the young people's group suggested a space that could be opened up to public debate.
- Many of the issues raised by the groups overlapped with each other. Overall people wanted to be involved with the development of the centre but it was understood that there would be some limitations on this. It was noted that promotion was very important to ensure that people felt valued and consulted and consequently proud of the new facility.
- A Member asked how the groups consulted were selected. The Assistant Director advised that this had been done by external experts in research using a specific sampling methodology to ensure a mix of those involved and not involved with existing provision.
- It was proposed that an Advisory Board would be established to run the centre which would contain a cross section of people and be able to engage the wider public. Members agreed that in principle these proposals seemed right but it was difficult to see how a larger number of people could be engaged and linked with the running of the centre. Members suggested that Slough look at how other local authorities were running learning and cultural provision. Overall the Panel agreed that the views expressed in the public engagement broadly met the needs of the design proposal.
- The Panel felt that it was important that the Council could be in tune with what the public wanted in terms of democratic provision. The allocation of resources and provision of services should be in-line with what the public required but needed to be considered within the budgetary context.

Resolved: -

- (a) That the progress made with the Library and Cultural Centre be noted.
- (b) That the principles for public engagement be endorsed and it be noted that there may be future issues regarding accountability and engagement of the wider public.

83. Forward Work Programme

That the Forward Work Programme be noted.

84. Members Attendance Record

That the Members' Attendance Record be noted.

Chair

(Note: The Meeting opened at 7.00 pm and closed at 8.20 pm)

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SLOUGH BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Neighbourhoods and Community Services Scrutiny Panel **DATE:** 16th June 2011

CONTACT OFFICER: Andrew Stevens, Assistant Director, Cultural and Skills
(for all enquires) (07531) 875507

WARD(S): All

PART I
FOR COMMENT AND CONSIDERATION

TEN PIN AND TENNIS PROGRESS

1. **Purpose of Report**

1.1 This report is to advise the Scrutiny Panel of the take up of the new ten pin and tennis offers, after the first six months of the service becoming operational.

2. **Recommendation(s)/Proposed Action**

2.1 The Panel is requested to note and comment on the report.

3. **Community Strategy Priorities**

- **Celebrating Diversity, Enabling inclusion**
- **Adding years to Life and Life to years**
- **Being Safe, Feeling Safe**
- **Prosperity for All**

3.1 The new ten pin and tennis facilities provide attractive, safe venues for the residents of Slough to participate more regularly in physical activity which in turn contributes towards improved quality of life and healthy lifestyles.

4. **Other Implications**

(a) **Financial**

Slough Community Leisure (SCL) has given an unconditional undertaking to reduce the management fee it receives from the Council by £65,000 per annum from 2012 as a result of the financial benefit that the Ten Pin Centre is budgeted to achieve. If this benefit is not fully realised at that point, SCL will support this saving with the use of surpluses from its non-Council managed facilities thus mitigating any direct financial risk to the Council.

(b) **Human Rights Act and Other Legal Implications**

There are no direct human rights or legal implications arising from this report.

(c) **Workforce**

There are no direct workforce implications arising from this report.

5. Background

5.1 The Community, Leisure and Environment Scrutiny Panel following their meeting on 24th March requested a follow up report detailing progress on the ten pin and tennis facilities based in Salt Hill Park.

5.2 Ten Pin

Slough Tennis Centre closed in May 2010 and work commenced immediately to convert the building into a modern ten pin bowling facility with 18 lanes and ancillary services. The £1.7m project was delivered within 1% of budget and 1 week ahead of schedule. The Centre opened to the public on 17th September 2010.

5.3 The Centre suffered three separate break-ins during the first six weeks of trading. These resulted in a significant loss of revenue, damage to the building and contents and ultimately the withdrawal of all gaming and arcade machines by the Centre's suppliers, whose machines were the target of each break-in. In addition as with any new venture staffing levels were set high in order to deliver the required service. With time and experience staffing and other operational systems are being tightened to reflect usage more accurately.

5.4 Performance

Financial - The table below sets out the financial summary of the performance of ten pin during the first 7 full months of trading.

	Surplus / Loss
October	£6,277
November	-£5,011
December	-£29,442
January	-£14,294
February	£14,633
March	-£2,961
April	-£4,851

5.5 November and December were very challenging months for the business, with income falling short significantly in both months. November income was further reduced by the removal of all gaming and arcade machines for a period of 3 weeks while a new supplier was identified, following the third break-in. December business was forecast to be significantly improved and close to achieving budget. However, the busiest weekend of the year, with income forecast to be around £20,000, coincided with heavy snowfall and income did not reach £1,500. February half term was one of the busiest trading weeks of the year for ten pin bowling and the centre performed well throughout the month.

5.6 SCL has committed a £65,000 per annum saving from the management fee from 2012 as a result of the financial benefit the ten pin centre is budgeted to achieve. If this benefit is not fully realised SCL will support this saving with the use of surpluses from its non-Council managed facilities, thus mitigating any risk to the Council.

5.7 **Usage** - The SCL business plan called for around 9,000 visits per month. In the first 6 months of opening the ten pin facility there have been 44,690 recorded visits, averaging 7,400 visits per month at present. For the same 6 months in 2009/10 the indoor tennis centre received 10,073 visits. Lane occupancy has now increased from 36% in September to 57% in April. Performance is therefore

still short of achieving projected targets, but SCL have informed the Council that with the pattern of increased usage they are assured of the centres ongoing potential to achieved set targets.

- 5.8 **Marketing** - The following table summarises the first phase of marketing activity during the pre-sale and first 6 months of trading in-line with the marketing action plan.

Banners	25
Newspaper Wraps	6
Leaflets – Newspaper Distribution	157,000
Billboards, Bus Stops, Phone Box Ads	18
Full Page Newspaper Adverts	13
Promo Girls and Adbikes	8
Leaflets	64,500
Radio Adverts	114
Bus Adverts	16
Large Posters (A0)	8
Corporate Brochure	1000
Databases	7
Emails Sent	29,153
Text Messages Sent	43,000

- 5.9 A total of £42,117 has been spent on marketing the new facility to date. SCL employs a specialist marketing agency to support its work. This agency is also employed by many other major leisure contractors and has an excellent reputation for establishing new leisure businesses. At the end of September 2010 a survey in the Town Centre showed that only 18% of those surveyed were aware of the new facility. This same survey was repeated in May 2011 and showed that general awareness has more than doubled to 43%.
- 5.10 A second phase of marketing is aimed at being more tactical and focuses on specific promotions and events and increasing data capture. Marketing is more and more moving to a digital format with less traditional marketing taking place. This is especially the case with younger target markets like those likely to regular visit ten pin. SCL has developed its digital marketing further than any other leisure contractor. The Absolutely Ten Pin Facebook page has around 550 followers who receive regular updates on news and promotions at the centre. In addition to this, SCL has captured over 1,500 mobile and email addresses that it regularly sends offers to. Opening and redemption rates have steadily increased and are now exceeding average rates for this type of marketing, sometimes achieving over 20% opening rates.
- 5.11 **Catering** - The food and beverage offer at ten pin has been well received. A conscious decision had been taken at the development of the project to offer a superior catering experience to other bowling and leisure venues. To that end, Ten Pin uses only award winning Exmoor burgers and makes its own homemade produce. A licensed Starbuck’s coffee service was introduced to further enhance the quality of the offer. Income from food and beverage has achieved its budgeted target despite the bowling usage being short of target. This demonstrates that customers are using the venue for the food and beverage service and that more bowlers than expected are eating and drinking while they play.

5.12 **Customer Feedback** – Ten pin has received considerable feedback since its opening, the vast majority of which has been hugely positive. There has been a consistent message that the venue is poorly signposted and particularly difficult to find for visitors from outside the local area.

5.13 A number of tasks have been identified to improve performance in the coming months reducing costs. These include:

- Reviewing staffing levels to become more flexible to meet demand
- Investigating alternative advertising methods to avoid difficulties with signage approval on Bath Road
- New midweek offers
- Outbound sales calls for corporate business
- Investigate membership offers including after-school memberships.

5.14 **Tennis**

The new tennis facilities in Salt Hill Park were formally opened on 10th April and were developed in partnership with the Lawn Tennis Association (LTA), Gary Drake Tennis (GDT) and Slough Community Leisure (SCL). The new facilities comprising eight re-surfaced, floodlit courts with a new club house facility are being operated by GDT who are offering a full tennis development programme for the local community at affordable rates.

5.15 The £220,000 project was funded through Section 106 contributions and grant funding from the Lawn Tennis Association. In addition we are currently working with the Lawn Tennis Association to identify revenue funding to enhance coaching programmes for young people and will be submitting a Sport England ‘Sportivate’ application for tennis development in schools, delivered by GDT.

5.16 **Performance** – The tennis facility is becoming increasingly busier as the weather continues to improve. Marketing has been aimed at the junior market working with the Schools Sports Partnership to promote the new facility and the development programme available, including holiday sport’s camps. No members of the former Slough Tennis Club, which was an unaffiliated club, have chosen to take up membership of the new facility. Slough Borough Council employees have also been offered the opportunity to use the courts at very competitive rates, including one to one coaching and cardio tennis sessions. During May these activities were free to all staff and will continue into June.

5.17 To date the following usage figures have been achieved in the first two months of operation:

Category	Target 2011/12	Actual to date
Membership		
➤ Adult	20	5
➤ Junior	20	9
➤ Mini’s	10	8
Coaching		
➤ Adult	30	15
➤ Juniors	120	65
Pay and Play average weekly court bookings	25 average based on usage throughout the year	12

5.18 The grant terms and conditions set by the LTA for the tennis court refurbishment scheme require the Council to report performance annually to their Board. The targets identified above are in line with similar schemes operating in the region. Initial indications show that the new facility is being well used by children and young people in particular. Pay and play figures are lower than expected but free tennis courts are still available in the borough, although the standard of facilities do not match those of Salt Hill.

7. **Conclusion**

7.1 The new ten pin and tennis developments have enhanced the leisure offer available to the residents of Slough demonstrating effective and improved use of the Council's assets. Whilst the first six months of performance of ten pin has not achieved the projected targets set out in the SCL business plan there are signs of increased usage each month. SCL have confirmed that the £65,000 annual saving to the management fee from the ten pin budget will be met even if projected income falls short of the targets identified in the business plan, mitigating all financial risk to the Council.

8. **Appendices attached**

8.1 None

9. **Background Papers**

9.1 None

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SLOUGH BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Neighbourhoods and Community Services Scrutiny Panel **DATE:** 16th June 2011

CONTACT OFFICER: Manju Dhar Private sector Housing
(For all Enquiries) (01753) 875251

WARD(S): All

PART I
FOR COMMENT AND CONSIDERATION

EMPTY HOMES: HOUSING SOLUTIONS - A STRATEGY FOR SLOUGH

1. **Purpose of Report**

The purpose of this report is to advise members on progress to date in dealing with empty homes in the private sector and to seek approval for a new strategy following on from the interim policy that was approved in March 2010

2. **Recommendation(s)/Proposed Action**

The Scrutiny Panel are requested to recommend to Cabinet that the Empty Homes: Housing solutions – A Strategy for Slough, as set out in Appendix A be approved.

3. **Community Strategy Priorities–**

By aiming to tackle empty homes and bring properties back into use the service is able to contribute to the Community Strategy Priorities:

- **Being Safe, Feeling Safe**
- **A Cleaner, Greener place to live, Work and Play**
- **Prosperity for All**

It contributes to the priorities by:

- maximising the supply of affordable housing and making best use of existing buildings
- Strengthening communities to make sure all of our neighbourhoods are safe, viable and attractive areas to live in
- Preventing homelessness and tackling housing needs
- Improving conditions in the public and private sectors

Empty homes represent a wasted resource within the Borough. They can deny potential homes to those in housing need. In addition they increase pressure for new development on Greenfield sites. If a property is empty it can attract vandals, squatters, drug users and arsonists. The gardens may be used for fly tipping and dumping of waste, which in turn attracts vermin.

By implementing the policy and guidance issued by the Government the Council is ensuring compliance with the law and so contributing to maintaining excellent governance within the Council to ensure that it is efficient, effective and economic in everything it does.

4. **Other Implications**

(a) **Financial**

Given Slough's relatively low level of empty homes, the strategy will recognise that empty homes are a lower priority than other private sector housing issues and must be tackled within existing financial and operational resources.

As part of our commitment to bringing empty homes back into use we have ensured that the grants and loans available for improving conditions in private housing are available to owners of empty homes in certain circumstances. Our budget for all grant assistance in 2011/12 is £120,000 with a maximum grant per property of £5,000. We have also made funding available through our Home Improvement Agency flexible Loan Scheme for low interest loans, £80,000 in 2011/12 and £120,000 in 2012/13.

Staff resources have also been committed to ensure the service continues to be successful and meets our new priorities. The staff allocation to the service includes:

- Enabling Officer – 0.2 post
- Housing Standards Officer – 0.2 post
- Continued support from community wardens in the monitoring and referral of empty homes.

As part of the Comprehensive Spending Review in October 2010 the Government announced plans to provide £100m to support housing associations to refurbish up to 3,000 homes for affordable rent for up to 10 years. The New Homes Bonus will provide match-funding for council tax receipts on new homes delivered and empty homes brought back into use for six years

Further details of the funding are awaited and the Government have also announced that bringing empty homes back into use will count as new supply for the New Homes Bonus, the incentive payment scheme proposed to encourage communities to support new development

An 'expression of interest' to the Homes and Communities Agency has been submitted confirming that Slough through the Flexible Home Improvement Loans Limited wishes to bid for funding in respect of the Affordable Homes Programme. Providers were required to submit a statement by the 3rd of May 2011.

(b) **Human Rights Act and Other Legal Implications**

The principal legislation governing this area of work is the Housing Act 2004. There are no Human Rights Act issues in this report.

(c) Risk Management

Recommendation	Risk/Threat/Opportunity	Mitigation(s)
Enforcement of Housing Act 2004 sections on Empty homes without a policy agreed at cabinet	Threats to council on poor procedures leaving opportunities for council to be challenged and as a result impacting on the reputation of the council	Have policy in place before taking legal proceeding for compulsory purchase

(d) Equalities Impact Assessment

Equalities Impact Assessment Initial Screening undertaken shows that there is no adverse impact on any section of the population.

5. **Supporting Information**

- 5.1 Empty homes in Slough represent a wasted resource. With 6,528 households on the housing register of which 972 are living in overcrowded conditions, the 249 empty homes in Slough that currently have an exemption from council tax appear to be a solution to meeting the needs of many local people.
- 5.2 Empty homes also incur costs for their owners and we understand that there are many reasons why owners keep a property empty. There are also a good many reasons for the council to work proactively with owners to bring empty homes back into use as quickly as possible, ideally to meet the needs of local people without a suitable home.
- 5.3 Reuse of empty homes is a Government priority. The use of existing homes to meet housing need also supports the Government commitment to improve value for money and to tackle climate change.
- 5.4 In the past in Slough we have focussed attention on empty homes in the private sector and those empty for long periods. Our first Empty Homes Policy approved in 2005 focussed on bringing empty private rented homes back into use. An interim policy agreed in March 2010 gave a greater focus on longer term empty homes that were causing a nuisance to local people. The success of both policies has been limited but the changing economic climate and the priority to resolve unmet housing needs in Slough means we must review our strategy for dealing with empty homes.

5.5 **Empty Homes in Slough – The Problem**

- 5.5.1 The Private Sector Stock and House in Multiple Occupation Condition Surveys carried out on behalf of the Council in 2009 estimated the number of empty homes at 740 or 1.9% of the housing stock. A breakdown of these properties by time vacant is shown in Table 1 overleaf.

Table 1 – Empty Homes by Time Vacant

Length of vacancy	Number	%
Newly vacant (less than a month)	93	12.5%
Mid term vacant (1 to 6 months)	491	66.3%
Long term vacant (6 months or more)	157	21.2%
Second/holiday home	0	0.0%
All empty homes	740	100.0%

Source: Slough Borough Council Private Sector Stock and HMO Condition Survey 2009

5.5.2 The survey also provided an estimate of the repair costs for empty homes which, at an average of £4,844, were identified as the category of homes in greatest need of repair. However, many of the long term empties will need to have much more than the average cost spent on them

5.5.3 More recent analysis of the empty homes identified on the Council Tax register at January 2011 shows the number of homes empty and currently enjoying an exemption for Council Tax is 259. This suggests that the number empty between one and six months estimated through the survey has either decreased during the past two years or that owners have been unaware of the exemption. As the exemption ceases after 6 or 12 months the register provides no information about the properties empty beyond these periods.

5.5.4 Compared to the national and local picture Slough has a low proportion of homes empty for over 6 months. Table 2 below shows the number estimated in Slough by the survey in 2009 compared to the England, the South East and neighbouring authorities.

Table 2 Comparison of homes empty over 6 months by area

Area	Number dwellings	Number homes empty over 6 months	% of total dwellings
Wycombe	68900	159	0.2
Slough	50060	157	0.3
Spelthorne	41310	311	0.8
South Bucks	27220	333	1.2
Windsor and Maidenhead	59740	954	1.5
South East	3660700	32819	0.9
England	22693000	295519	1.3

5.6 Since the launch of our existing policy in 2005 we have succeeded in bringing a number of empty homes back into use through our advice and support to owners and our enforcement activity. Two long term empty homes causing a nuisance to local people have been identified for enforcement action, such as compulsory purchase. However this has resulted in the owner commencing refurbishment of the properties to bring them back into use informally.

5.7 Although staff resources are limited, a number of Council staff have dedicated time to dealing with empty homes as part of a wider role in housing. In addition the role of community wardens includes the monitoring and referral of empty homes identified to private sector housing for action. Over the last year the emphasis on monitoring and securing has become more relevant as the incidence of squatting is increasing

5.8 Future Challenges and Priorities

5.8.1 Our future challenges relating to empty homes are broad and significant. The main driver for our strategy is the opportunity that empty homes represent in resolving unmet housing need which is significant.

5.8.2 Through the survey of empty homes' owners and the Landlords' Forum we have sought stakeholder views on the approach we should take to encouraging the reuse of empty homes in Slough. The survey identified that around 30% of owners would be willing to rent their empty property and whilst 33% of these said they wished to rent to professional people, many indicated they wanted to rent to families with children and vulnerable people.

5.8.3 Other challenges include:

- Owners of empty homes need information, advice and help to bring them back into use. In recent years a number of owners have asked the Council for help and the survey carried out suggested that many would use the service.
- Neighbours of empty homes want a positive outcome following complaint and satisfaction ratings of these complainants has not been good to date.
- Empty homes are also referred to us by the Police and Fire and Rescue following criminal activity or fire.
- The condition of empty homes requires improvement. The average cost of repairs needed by empty homes (£4,844) was assessed as higher than any category of property in the Private Sector Stock Condition Survey 2009.
- The delivery of new affordable homes to meet housing need is expected to slow down in coming years. The number of homes forecast for 2011/12 and 2012/13 is 61 and 150 respectively despite the Council identifying sufficient land for housing development¹. Enabling the re-use of empty homes will help to provide additional affordable housing and will contribute to the calculation of the New Homes Bonus.
- Income generation is an important priority for the Council. The Council has produced plans to raise extra income and the re-use of empty homes can contribute to this. For every month a home lies empty the council loses between 10-100% of the normal Council Tax income (up to 6/12 months depending on condition).
- Keeping the information about empty homes up to date and keeping abreast of good practice is important. The information about empty homes available from Council Tax records is limited to a particular point in time because of the short term nature of the exemptions. The records also do not include information about the size and type of property. Hence the Council has to be proactive in finding out about empty homes. Activity in bringing empty homes back into use across the country is forever improving and we need to research this and learn from it to keep our approach fresh.

5.8.4 The challenges outlined above and the steer we have identified from the consultation have provided us with a clear set of priorities. These are:

- Providing better information, advice and support to owners
- Developing and offering a letting agency service to owners

¹Land available for housing development as identified in Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment, March 2010.

- Helping owners sell or find tenants for their homes through our advertising service
- Providing grants and low interest loans where owners are unable to fund necessary repairs
- Enforcing the re-use of empty homes where our informal help fails
- Increasing the Council Tax income to the Council from empty homes
- Improving the way we identify empty homes
- Keeping up to date with best practice.

6. **Comments of Other Committees**

This report will be considered by Cabinet at its meeting on 18th July 2011.

7. **Conclusion**

The strategy was prepared with the support of a range of stakeholders (landlords, letting agents, owners etc) who were consulted during its preparation. Slough has a relatively low level of empty homes when compared to the rest of the South East region. While we recognise that empty homes will have a lower priority than other private sector housing issues in Slough, we will need to find ways of bringing empty homes back into use to meet our housing needs and reduce overcrowding. We will keep the strategy under review to ensure that it is suitable for the housing issues and concerns in Slough.

8. **Appendices Attached**

'A' - Empty Homes: Housing Solutions - A strategy for Slough

9. **Background Papers**

- '1' - Housing Act 1985
- '2' - Housing Act 2004
- '3' - Guidance issued by the Empty Home Agency
- '4' - Housing strategy 2005-2010
- '5' - Regional Housing Statement 2003

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Empty Homes: Housing Solutions – A Strategy for Slough

MARCH 2011

Lynn Collingbourne, HQN Associate

Foreword

The number of families and other households needing homes in Slough has grown by over 50% since 2007/08 to 6,500 in January 2011. With only 750 homes becoming available to rent each year it could take nearly 9 years to meet their needs. Building new affordable homes is becoming harder for housing associations to fund in the current economic climate and the rate of new private development has also slowed down. Empty homes in Slough therefore represent an opportunity to provide homes that local people need.

There are around 740 empty homes in Slough of which over 150 have been empty for over 6 months. Whilst we have little information about the reasons that owners leave their properties empty it is likely that many do not know what to do with the home after a loved one dies, are fearful of renting it out or are finding it difficult to sell. An empty property represents a financial drain in terms of council tax, mortgage payments and insurance premiums. Paying for repairs and maintenance, particularly where vandalism is an issue, increases the overall cost of an empty home. Therefore for the owners of empty properties, as well as for the people needing homes, we must do something about this wasted resource.

We are pleased to introduce our plans for bringing more empty homes back into use, particularly for rent to people on the Slough housing register. We intend to be more proactive – providing better information, advice and support to owners. This will include the offer of a letting agency service to take the worry away from owners – or they will be able to take advantage of free advertising via our website or through our Homeseekers service if they choose to manage the tenancy themselves. For those needing financial help to bring an empty property up to standard we will provide access to grants and loans. However where owners do not engage with our informal support we will continue to use our legal powers to force the reuse of the wasted home.

Councillor James Swindlehurst
Commissioner for Neighbourhoods and Renewal

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 Empty homes in Slough represent a wasted resource. With 6,528 households on the housing register of which 972 are living in overcrowded conditions the 259 empty homes in Slough currently enjoying an exemption from Council Tax appear an easy solution to meeting the needs of many local people.
- 1.2 Empty homes also incur costs for their owners. Whilst the level of council tax payable is reduced for empty homes, there is still a charge of 90% for habitable dwellings and full council tax is charged on uninhabitable property empty for over 12 months. Mortgage payments (where applicable) and insurance premiums still need to be paid. Although maintenance needs due to wear and tear will be minimal, empty homes need to be maintained to preserve the fabric of the building and the cost of remedying vandalism can be high. These costs can be offset by letting the property and in most cases a profit can also be realised.
- 1.3 We understand that there are many good reasons why owners keep a property empty. Delays in the process of probate following the death of a family member are commonly the cause of properties lying empty for long periods. Inability to sell in the current economic climate and nervousness about letting a treasured ex-home is also a cause. Some owners intend to occupy their property but find difficulty in arranging and paying for the work necessary to make it habitable. Whatever the reason we are committed to working with owners to bring empty properties back into use as quickly as possible, ideally to meet the needs of local people without a suitable home.
- 1.4 There are other good reasons for the Council to work proactively with owners of empty homes to bring them back into use. When a property becomes empty and has no furniture or white goods, it can be exempt from Council Tax due for a period of up to 6 months. To qualify for a 12 month exemption a dwelling must be deemed as uninhabitable, i.e. undergoing major works or structural alterations. Both these exemptions will require verification by a Council Tax Inspector. From the date the exemption ceases the full charge will be payable. However during the exemption period there is a significant impact on revenue income and funding for local services.
- 1.5 Some homes left empty for extended periods fall into disrepair, often because of the owners' incapacity in dealing with the problems arising at the property or lack of knowledge about the problems. These properties can present problems for neighbours and local communities. Damage can occur to adjacent properties due to water penetration and dry rot. Overgrown gardens and dilapidated properties are an eyesore and can attract vandalism and other crime. A common cause of complaint about empty homes by local communities is the impact on the value of their home and their ability to sell. Many of the empty homes notified to the Council by local people fall into this category but the numbers are low and the work involved in bringing them back into use is usually extremely time intensive.

- 1.6 Reuse of empty homes is a Government priority. As part of the Comprehensive Spending Review in October 2010 they announced plans to provide £100m to support housing associations to refurbish up to 3,000 homes for affordable rent for up to 10 years. Further details of the funding are awaited and the Government have also announced that bringing empty homes back into use will count as new supply for the New Homes Bonus¹, the incentive payment scheme proposed to encourage communities to support new development. The use of existing homes to meet housing need also supports the Government commitment to improve value for money and to tackle climate change.
- 1.7 In the past in Slough we have focussed attention on empty homes in the private rented sector and those empty for long periods. Our first Empty Homes Policy approved in 2005 focussed on bringing empty private rented homes back into use. An interim policy agreed in March 2010 gave a greater focus on longer term empty homes that were causing a nuisance to local people. The success of both policies is outlined below but the changing economic climate and the priority to resolve unmet housing needs in Slough means we must review our strategy for dealing with empty homes.
- 1.8 Finally, bringing empty homes back into use will clearly contribute to four of the five priorities in the Slough Housing Strategy 2005-10 and three of the Slough Community Strategy 2008 priorities shown below (latter in brackets and italics):
- Maximise the supply of affordable housing and make best use of existing buildings
 - Strengthen communities to make sure all of our neighbourhoods are safe, viable and attractive areas to live in (*Being safe, feeling safe and A cleaner, greener place to live, work and play*)
 - Prevent homelessness and tackle housing need
 - Improve housing conditions in the public and private sectors
 - *Prosperity for all.*

2 Empty Homes in Slough – The Problem

- 2.1 The Private Sector Stock and HMO Condition Survey carried out on behalf of the Council in 2009 estimated the number of empty homes at 740 or 1.9% of the housing stock. A breakdown of these properties by time vacant is shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1 – Empty Homes by Time Vacant

Length of vacancy	Number	%
Newly vacant (less than a month)	93	12.5%
Mid term vacant (1 to 6 months)	491	66.3%
Long term vacant (6 months or more)	157	21.2%

¹ The New Homes Bonus will provide match-funding for council tax receipts on new homes delivered and empty homes brought back into use for six years.

Second/holiday home	0	0.0%
All empty homes	740	100.0%

Source: Slough Borough Council Private Sector Stock and HMO Condition Survey 2009

- 2.2 The survey also estimated that the average repair costs for empty homes in £4,844. Empty homes were identified as the category of homes in greatest need of repair. However, many of the long term empties will need to have much more than the average cost spent on them
- 2.3 More recent analysis of the empty homes identified on the Council Tax register at January 2011 shows the number of homes empty and currently enjoying an exemption for Council Tax is 259. This suggests that the number empty between one and six months estimated through the survey has either decreased during the past two years, or that owners have been unaware of the exemption. As the exemption ceases after 6 or 12 months the register provides no information about the properties empty beyond these periods.
- 2.4 Whilst the Council Tax register does not provide information about the size and type of dwellings left empty, the data has been analysed by Council Tax band (as a crude indicator of size) as shown in Table 2 below.

Table 2 – Council Tax (CT) band by number dwellings

CT band	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
Number	6	62	116	40	27	7	1

Source: Council Tax records of all properties enjoying 6 and 12month exemptions, January 2011

Although there is a large variance between properties of a similar size in different parts of Slough, it can generally be assumed that band C-G properties, ie those valued at £52,000 or more in 1991, will have more than one bedroom. If this is the case then around 75% of the properties could be suitable for families living in overcrowded conditions as outlined in section 4 below.

- 2.5 Compared to the national and local picture Slough has a low proportion of homes empty for over 6 months. Table 3 below shows the number estimated in Slough by the survey in 2009 compared to the England, the South East and neighbouring authorities.

Table 3 – Comparison of homes empty over 6 months by area

Area	Number dwellings	Number homes empty over 6 months	% of total dwellings
Wycombe	68900	159	0.2
Slough	50060	157	0.3
Spelthorne	41310	311	0.8
South Bucks	27220	333	1.2
Windsor and Maidenhead	59740	954	1.5
South East	3660700	32819	0.9
England	22693000	295519	1.3

- 2.6 A separate database of long term empty properties is held by the Council and kept under regular review. This currently includes 40 properties and appropriate action is taken on these in line with the current policy and within the resources available. In addition when property inspections are carried out by the Private Sector Housing Service any empty rooms, especially in houses in multiple occupation, are referred to the Housing Options Service to assist people on the housing register.
- 2.7 A survey of empty property owners carried out in the autumn of 2010 showed that the majority were empty following death of a family member or awaiting sale. However responses indicated that sale in the current economic climate was difficult and roughly half suggested that they may be willing to let the property, ideally to professional people or families with children.

3 Empty Homes in Slough – Our Achievements

- 3.1 Since the launch of our existing policy in 2005 we have succeeded in bringing a number of empty homes back into use through our advice and support to owners and our enforcement activity. Two long term empty homes causing a nuisance to local people have been identified for enforcement action, such as compulsory purchase. However this has resulted in the owner commencing refurbishment of the properties to bring them back into use informally.
- 3.2 In some cases we have been able to help people on the housing register to move into an empty home. In these situations the new residents have expressed high levels of satisfaction with the property.
- 3.3 Although staff resources are under pressure, a number of Council staff have dedicated time to dealing with empty homes as part of a wider role in housing. In addition the role of community wardens includes the monitoring and referral of empty homes identified to private sector housing for action. Over the last year the emphasis on monitoring and securing has become more relevant as the incidence of squatting is increasing.

4 Future Challenges and Priorities

- 4.1 Our future challenges relating to empty homes are broad and significant. The main driver for our strategy is the opportunity that empty homes represent in resolving unmet housing need.
- 4.2 In January 2011 there were 6,528 households on the housing register. This represents an 11% increase since the end of March 2010 and a 53% increase on the number on the register in 2007/08. Of these 102 are identified to have a high priority need for housing (Band A in our Homeseekers policy) and just under half are in Band B, with reasonable preference for homes becoming available. During

2009/10 754 local authority and housing association homes were let in Slough, including 110 to existing tenants of the Council. This means that during the course of the year we were unable to help all of the households in most need of housing. With only 225 new affordable homes built in 2009/10 the need to increase the supply of suitable housing to meet housing requirements is imperative.

- 4.3 Whilst the households with the highest priority need are our primary concern, we also have a responsibility to assist the large number of households on our register in Band B, the second priority category, who are living in overcrowded conditions with little hope of a transfer to alternative social rented accommodation. The housing register in January 2011 identifies 972 households are in this position.
- 4.4 A survey of 3,219 households in Band B of the register in the autumn of 2010 elicited a response from over 800, 72% of whom identified themselves as being overcrowded. The majority of these, 61.5% had been waiting over 2 years for alternative accommodation and 13.8% had been waiting over 5 years. Whilst in the minority, 38.6% said they would be happy to consider renting from a private landlord and 61.9% indicated they would be happy to rent from a housing association. Therefore enabling the use of empty homes by these households, whether through direct let by the owner or through a housing association purchase or lease scheme, would have a positive impact.
- 4.5 The type of home needed by applicants and their preferred location is also an important factor in planning to meet needs through enabling a supply of homes. We use this information when working with developers and housing associations delivering new housing and need to do so when considering the reuse of empty homes. Table 4 below shows the number of bedrooms required by households on the housing register. 46% of households only need a single bedroom but 47% need 2 or 3 bedrooms and these households will generally be families with children. As referred to in paragraph 2.4 the majority of homes empty for over 6 months are likely to have two or more bedrooms based on the Council Tax bands.

Table 4 - Households on housing register by bedrooms required

Number bedrooms	1bed	2bed	3bed	4bed	5bed	total
Number households	3042	1873	1220	301	92	6528

Source: Slough Housing Register, January 2011.

- 4.6 The top 5 location preferences for customers awaiting housing are Central, Town Centre, Wexham, Upton and Stoke Bayliss. These are also areas where social rented homes are in short supply. Of the 259 empty homes exempted from Council Tax, 64 are within these areas of high demand. Table 5 below identifies the potential supply of additional rented accommodation through reuse of empty homes in each of these areas.

Table 5 – Number of empty homes in each of the areas of high demand for social housing

Area	Number
Central	15
Town Centre	17
Wexham	12
Upton	12
Stoke Bayliss	8

4.7 Although only 38.6% of respondents to our survey said they would be happy to rent from a private landlord, those that did said they would be more likely to consider this if the property was in their preferred location and the landlord was reliable. We have helped more customers through this route in recent years due to the low supply of social housing. Between April 2010 and January 2011 around 100 private rented homes have been let to customers on the housing register and 20 homeless households have accepted a qualifying offer to private rented housing instead of waiting for a social tenancy.

4.8 Other challenges include:

- Owners of empty homes need information, advice and help to bring them back into use. In recent years a number of owners have asked the Council for help and the survey carried out suggested that many would use the service.
- Neighbours of empty homes want a positive outcome following complaint and satisfaction ratings of these complainants has not been good to date.
- Empty homes are also referred to us by the Police and Fire and Rescue following criminal activity or fire.
- The condition of empty homes requires improvement. The average cost of repairs needed by empty homes (£4,844) was assessed as higher than any category of property in the Private Sector Stock Condition Survey 2009.
- The delivery of new affordable homes to meet housing need is expected to slow down in coming years. The number of homes forecast for 2011/12 and 2012/13 is 61 and 150 respectively despite the Council identifying sufficient land for housing development². Enabling the re-use of empty homes will help to provide additional affordable housing and will contribute to the calculation of the New Homes Bonus.
- Income generation is an important priority for the Council. The Council has produced plans to raise extra income and the re-use of empty homes forms part of this. For every month a home lies empty the council loses between 10-100% of the normal Council Tax income (up to 6/12 months depending on condition).
- Keeping the information about empty homes up to date and keeping abreast of good practice is important. The information about empty homes available from Council Tax records is limited to a particular point in time because of the short term nature of the exemptions. The records also do not include information about the size and type of property. Hence the Council has to be proactive in

²Land available for housing development as identified in Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment, March 2010.

finding out about empty homes. Activity in bringing empty homes back into use across the country is forever improving and we need to research this and learn from it to keep our approach fresh.

- 4.9 Through the survey of empty homes' owners and the Landlords' Forum we have sought stakeholder views on the approach we should take to encouraging the reuse of empty homes in Slough. The survey identified that around 30% of owners would be willing to rent their empty property and whilst 33% of these said they wished to rent to professional people, many indicated they wanted to rent to families with children and vulnerable people.
- 4.10 The challenges outlined above and the steer we have identified from the consultation have provided us with a clear set of priorities. These are:
- Providing better information, advice and support to owners
 - Developing and offering a letting agency service to owners
 - Helping owners sell or find tenants for their homes through our advertising service
 - Providing grants and low interest loans where owners are unable to fund necessary repairs
 - Enforcing the re-use of empty homes where our informal help fails
 - Increasing the Council Tax income to the Council for empty homes
 - Improving the way we identify empty homes
 - Keeping up to date with best practice.
- 4.11 The action we will take to deliver these priorities is summarised in section 6 and more detail is available in Appendix A.

5 Resources

- 5.1 As part of our commitment to bringing empty homes back into use we have ensured that the grants and loans available for improving conditions in private housing are available to owners of empty homes in certain circumstances. Our budget for all grant assistance in 2011/12 is £120,000 with a maximum grant per property of £5,000. We have also made funding available through our Home Improvement Loan Scheme for low interest loans, £80,000 in 2011/12 and £120,000 in 2012/13.
- 5.2 Staff resources have also been committed to ensure the service continues to be successful and meets our new priorities. The staff allocation to the service includes:
- Enabling Officer – 0.2 post
 - Housing standards officer – 0.2 post
 - Continued support from community wardens in the monitoring and referral of empty homes.

6 Our Future Plans

6.1 Our plans for addressing the priorities are set out in detail in Appendix A. In summary these include:

- **Providing better information, advice and support to owners.** We will market our service through our website and send a letter offering help to all owners of empty homes at the start of a period of Council Tax exemption with a leaflet outlining our service. We will offer support in choosing the best option for the future use of the property and help to progress this.
- **Developing and offering a letting agency service to owners.** We will develop our Deposit Guarantee Scheme to enable us to assist owners of empty homes wishing to let to customers on our housing register. We will also develop a scheme with housing associations to manage empty homes made available for let and to purchase or lease them where the owner prefers.
- **Helping owners sell or find tenants for their homes through our advertising service.** We will develop our Homeseekers service to enable owners wishing to let their home to advertise it alongside the homes being let by the Council and housing associations. Owners wishing to sell will be able to advertise their home through the empty homes pages in our website.
- **Providing grants and low interest loans where owners are unable to fund necessary repairs.** We will publicise the criteria for awarding grants and loans to repair empty homes and promote these to owners seeking help to bring them back into use.
- **Enforcing the re-use of empty homes where our informal help fails.** We will continue to use the legal powers available to us to force owners to bring property back into use where they do not respond to informal action.
- **Increasing the Council Tax income to the Council for empty homes.** We will change the policy for exemption from Council Tax for empty homes and chase income to help us deliver better services.
- **Improving the way we identify empty homes.** We will offer an incentive for owners to respond to the initial letter sent by Council Tax and provide us with information about their empty home and their intentions for future use. We will also advertise our service to the wider community to encourage them to report empty homes to us.
- **Keeping up to date with best practice.** We will maintain our link with the Empty Homes Network and Empty Homes, a charity promoting action for bringing empty homes back into use, to ensure we keep our knowledge up to date. We will also attend events and meetings to learn how others are approaching the problem of empty homes and make links with adjacent Councils to explore how we can work together to tackle them.

Appendix A – Action Plan

Ref	Action	Who	When
Provide better information, advice and support to owners	Revision of all standard letters and leaflets Update of website Support to choose the best options for future use of property Revision of the Private Sector Renewal Policy to include loans and grants to owners to let their property to people from the Housing register Initial letter to be sent by council tax to provide information about empty homes and future use	JR MB JR MD xx	Feb 11 July 11 Feb 11 – April 11 xx
Develop and offer a letting service to owners	Develop our Deposit Guarantee Scheme to assist owners of empty homes who wish to let to customers on our housing register by offering a range of options via working with letting agents and Housing associations	MD	May 11 – Oct 11
Help Owners to sell or find tenants	Develop home seekers service to enable owners wishing to let their homes to advertise along side the homes being let by the council or Housing associations. Also be able to advertise through the empty homes pages of our website	??	
Use of enforcement options to council	Continue to use legal powers where owners to not respond to informal action	MD	As necessary
Increase income to the council for empty homes	Change the policy for exemption from council tax for empty homes Improve methods of recovering debts and/or prevent debt from occurring	??	??
Keeping up to date with best practice	Maintain our links with empty homes network Maintain our links with Home and Communities agencies for any funding opportunities	MD	On going

Appendix B – Empty Homes Toolkit

HQN is the largest independent housing training and consultancy company in the UK. Over 680 housing organisations nationwide subscribe to The Housing Quality Network which provides high quality briefings and workshops on a wide range of issues affecting the sector. We also run a number of specialist networks, provide bespoke consultancy and research, in-house training, interim management (The Pool) and executive recruitment (The Source) services and host a comprehensive programme of conferences and seminars.

For further information, please contact:

Consultancy: Jason Lukehurst – jason@hqnetwork.co.uk

Networks: Ben Osborne – ben@hqnetwork.co.uk

Events: Fiona Macfarlane – fiona@hqnetwork.co.uk

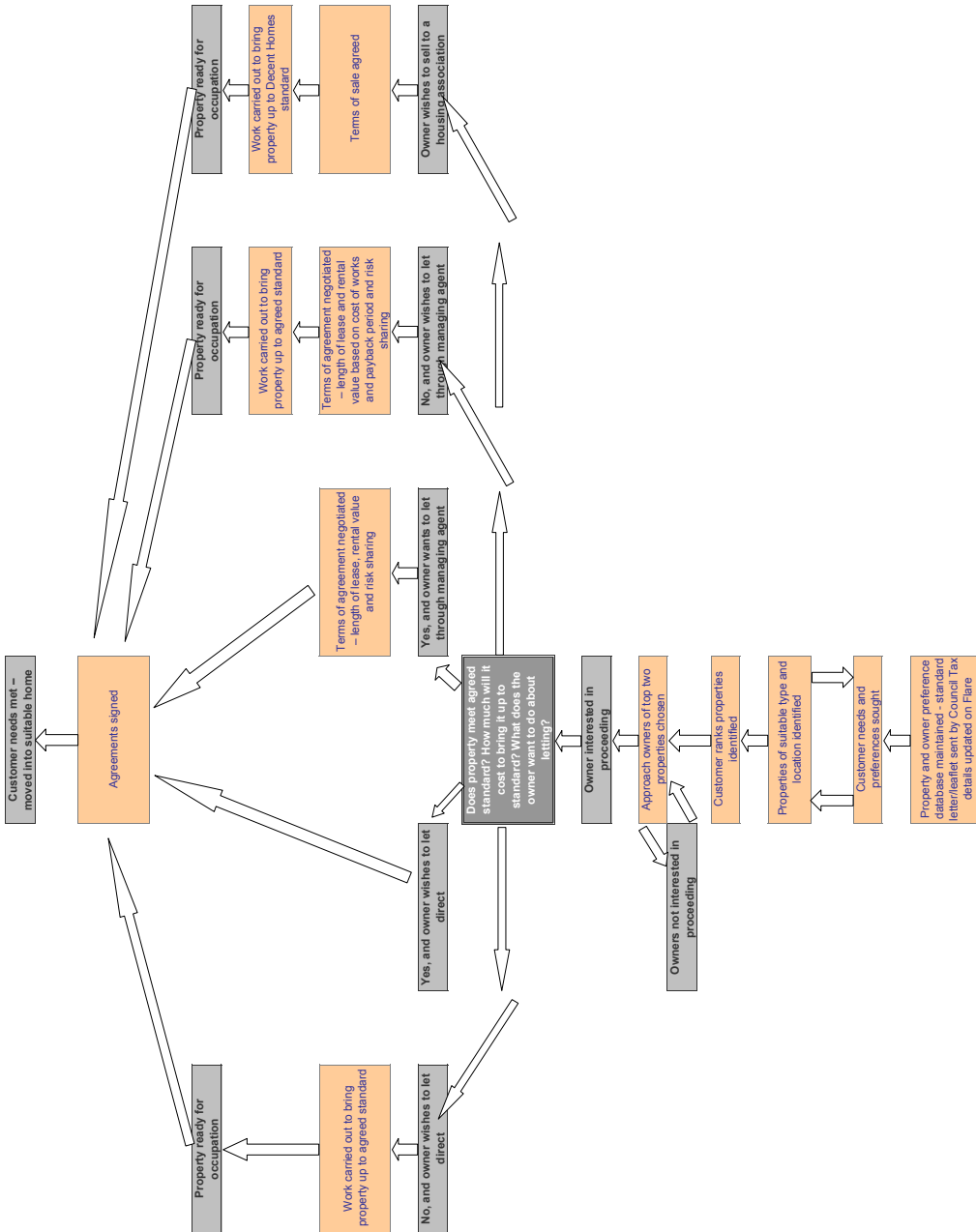
Training: David Ganz – dave@hqnetwork.co.uk

The Pool: Ruth Leap – ruth@hqnetwork.co.uk

The Source: David Ganz – dave@hqnetwork.co.uk

Or call any of the above on 0845 4747 004 For further information: www.hqnetwork.co.uk

Process



Tools

- Agreement documents: customer and owner; customer and managing agent; managing agent and owner
- Funding - RCGF, S106 committed sums; not HA borrowing (all subject to viability, potentially)
- Agreed property standard. Model agreements.
- meeting ??
- Report from Flare - properties on database by location, size, etc
Monthly meetings to match customer preferences to properties
- Standard letter, feedback checklist and leaflet/webpage about options

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SLOUGH BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Neighbour and Renewal Scrutiny Panel **DATE:** 16th June 2011

CONTACT OFFICER: Manju Dhar Private Sector Housing Manager
(For all Enquiries) (01753) 875251

WARD(S): Chalvey

PART I
FOR COMMENT & CONSIDERATION

A PROPOSAL TO IMPLEMENT ADDITIONAL HOUSES IN MULTIPLE OCCUPATION LICENSING FOR CHLAVEY WARD

1. **Purpose of Report**

The purpose of this report is to present the proposal to implement an additional licensing scheme for the Chalvey ward to this meeting for comments and consideration and to take those views forward to Cabinet on the 18th July 2011

2. **Recommendation(s)/Proposed Action**

The Committee is requested to recommend approval for the implementation of the additional licensing scheme for the Chalvey ward to Cabinet on the 18th July 2011.

3. **Community Strategy Priorities**

The report contributes to all of the the Community Strategy Priorities, in particular:

- **Being Safe, Feeling Safe**
- **A Cleaner, Greener place to live, Work and Play**
- **Prosperity for All**

It does this by

- maximising the supply of affordable housing
- making best use of existing buildings,
- strengthening communities to make sure all our neighbourhood are safe, viable and attractive areas to live
- promote independent living
- Improve housing conditions in all sectors
- Make sure new homes are built to a high standard

4. **Other Implications**

(a) **Financial**

We intend to adopt the same fee structure as Mandatory Licensing which was agreed by Cabinet in 2006. This charging scheme is based on time taken to process the application. Rates vary from a standard rate where an application is

complete and does not require a verification inspection to a higher rate where the application is incomplete and requires an inspection etc. It is intended to retain the discretion to charge more where additional resources are needed. . We will offer discounts to landlords with multiple licensable HMO's within the borough and if they are accredited by a recognised body such as the National Landlords Association.

Whilst the legislation allows for our costs to be recovered in full the council needs to take into consideration the impact of these charges on the availability of this type of accommodation e.g. an increase in fees could potentially create an increase in rent. Unfortunately there is already a significant problem with HMOs being unaffordable to many. This is evidenced by the number of HMOs in Slough which operate on a "bed renting" basis's which is particularly common in the migrant population.

In addition the council approved £100,000 for 11/12 for this work to be continued as part of the exit strategy for the migration project – improving housing conditions in the privately rented sector

(b) Risk Management

Some significant risks, threats and opportunities associated with the approval or otherwise of the recommendations made in section 2 of this report, together with any proposed actions, with timescales, to mitigate the identified risks/threats.

Recommendation	Risk/Threat/Opportunity	Mitigation(s)
If scheme to introduce a licensing scheme for Chalvey ward is approved	Opportunity - Introduction will allow effective use of council resources from several service areas Opportunity to make a real difference to health and well being of the population in poor housing conditions	Close working with the community wardens and public health and referral process with a number of other service areas set up Actions taken to address threat
	Risk – focusing resources in one ward/impact on others areas	Landlord unlikely to move out of Chalvey to other areas due to difficulties and cost of selling as opposed to the cost of the Licence
	Risk of loss of HMO type accommodation	Have a range of measure in place to support and encourage landlords to continue letting
If scheme is not approved	Threat – not having an effective scheme in place would lead to poor management of properties and have a detrimental affect on area	Encouragement for use of support organisation such as the national landlords association and residential landlords associations

	Threat - Increase in poor conditions in the privately rented sector	Continuation of inspections and joint working with landlords and others
	Risk - Poor housing leading to poor neighbourhoods and lack of economic investment	Continuation of inspections and joint working with landlords and others
	Risk - Poor housing conditions leading to increased resources being spent on health and social needs	Effect targeting of limited resources and close working with other services

(c) Human Rights Act and Other Legal Implications

In the housing Act 2004 the Government introduced a national licensing scheme for larger HMOs that are a minimum of three storey high, have five or more bedroom (people) living there and sharing of facilities such as bathrooms. In Slough we have been licensing these larger HMOs since the housing act was implemented in 2006.

Local Authorities have options to enhance the mandatory scheme by either widening the types of HMO's a licensing scheme covers, seek approval for an additional licensing scheme or adopting selective licensing to deal with particular problems in an area such as low housing demand or anti-social behaviour.

Section 56 of the Housing Act 2004 gives local authorities the power to designate certain areas or the whole of the areas within the district as subject to additional licensing. The local authority then has power to require that all of the HMOs in that area that are not licensable under the mandatory scheme should be licensed under the additional licensing scheme. The maximum duration for an additional scheme in five years. Guidance from the communities and local Government (CLG) also has to be taken into consideration.

In order to adopt either scheme the Local Authority must consult widely and justify the need and obtain approval from its members. Until March 2010 discretionary licensing schemes could only be set up with approval from Communities and Local Government (CLG). On 1 April 2010, the government issued a general consent order, so schemes can now be approved by local authority councillors. At the time of the order, CLG Commissioned Local Government Regulation (LACORS) to provide guidance and support for councils setting up Licensing schemes to ensure that the same rigor as was applied as was required for specific consent from CLG. The councillor check list attached in Appendix B forms part of a set of guidance notes for local authorities, aims to help Councillors gauge how well they have met the legislative requirements in relation to discretionary licensing.

There are no Human Rights Act Implications from this report.

(d) Equalities Impact Assessment

An EIA initial screening of the council's enforcement policy and this proposal has been carried out and show that there is no adverse impact for age, religion and sexual orientation.

5. **Supporting Information**

5.1 **Additional Licensing**

Chalvey has been chosen as one of the first wards in which to introduce additional licensing because:

- There is strong evidence of significant and persistent problems of anti social behaviour taking in and around the location of HMO's affecting other residents and the local community and landlords are not taking steps to reduce the problems. Tenants in some Chalvey HMO's are known to be engaged in street prostitution, anti social drinking and the street drug market.
- The activities of the private sector housing team in terms of enforcement action taken against landlords of HMOs indicate a higher number of houses with overcrowding and poor amenities where landlords are failing to take action.
- The external condition of some of HMOs in the area adversely impact upon the general character and amenity of the area. In our recent consultation about additional licensing 90% of Chalvey residents thought that badly maintained homes were bad for the neighbourhood
- It meets the criteria as set out in the CLG guidance and Housing Act 2004

5.2 **Proposed Scheme**

5.2.1 Although additional licensing will give the Council increased powers to regulate HMOs in the area we also see this as an opportunity to help landlords of HMOs in this area. We intend to continue to offer these landlords training and encourage them to work towards attaining accreditation.

5.2.2 The decision for Chalvey has been made based upon results from our consultation process, advice from the department of Communities and Local Government (CLG) and our ability to resource the scheme. However we will review the scheme after it has been operating for a full year and look again at other areas in Slough that might benefit from this kind of action.

5.2.3 The consultation proposed that only two storeys HMO's with five or more tenants (that do not fall within the mandatory scheme) would be licensable. However after taking into consideration the comments contained within the responses and the need for a scheme that officers were able to police effectively, we now propose a scheme that would make all HMOs (that are not already covered by mandatory licensing) within Chalvey licensable. Our experience with mandatory licensing has been that some landlords have been known to reduce the number of tenants in the house from 5 to 4 in order avoid the property being subject to mandatory licensing, These properties have continued to be poorly managed and have had to be regularly monitored as it is common for these landlords to put tenants back into the property once officers have stopped monitoring the property. It is intended that by applying the additional licensing scheme to all HMOs in Chalvey not

covered by mandatory licensing we avoid the scenario of a poorly managed HMO that falls outside of both schemes.

5.3 **Licensing Conditions**

We intend to adopt the Mandatory licensing conditions as set out within Schedule 4 of the Housing Act 2004 and will use Part 1 of the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) and the HMO Management Regulations to deal with any other areas as necessary.

5.4 **Duration of the Scheme**

We intend to operate the scheme for the initial five-year period and will monitor its success in line with our annual performance monitoring process. This will cover numbers of properties licensed and also numbers of properties improved to an acceptable standard in terms of the housing act 2004 and the Decent Homes Standard. We will consult with partners and local residents to ascertain their views on whether it is necessary to continue with the scheme. We will also review its effectiveness after the initial year of its implementation to determine whether the scheme should be extended to further ward(s).

5.5 It has been recognised that the recent surge of unregulated HMO's within this ward has had a detrimental effect on the area. We consider that establishing additional licensing will make a significant and tangible contribution to the other initiatives currently being taken by the local authority to improve this part of Slough for the residents and businesses of Chalvey.

5.6 **Effects of additional licensing on other areas outside Slough**

5.6.1 We consider that there would be no detrimental effects on adjoining areas if the scheme were to be introduced. The nearest local authority to the Chalvey ward is Windsor and Maidenhead. It is unlikely the introduction of additional licensing to Chalvey would lead to landlords moving from Chalvey to set up HMOs in the adjacent area as the housing stock within a mile of Chalvey is not readily adaptable for HMO use. House prices within that area would also be prohibitive. There is unlikely to be any effect in other authority areas that are not adjoining. In South Bucks house prices are again likely to be prohibitive and in general migrant workers who live in HMOs in Chalvey tend to work in Slough either on the trading estate or in relatively low paid construction and retail jobs. Public transport links between Slough and the Spelthorne area are poor and people are unlikely to want to travel from Spelthorne to Slough. In the London Borough of Hillingdon the areas most likely to attract landlords from Chalvey, for example, West Drayton, are already part of an additional licensing scheme Hillingdon introduced recently.

5.6.2 It is unlikely that landlords would go to the expense of selling their properties in Chalvey only to purchase similar houses in other wards in order to avoid the need to license.

5.6.3 We consider that a discretionary licensing scheme would have a positive effect throughout Slough. Due to the extent of the problem in Chalvey and how time consuming the enforcement process can be, over the years a disproportionate amount of officer time has been expended trying to improve properties in this ward, compared to other wards. We expect that after the first 9 months of its introduction landlord compliance with the relevant legislation will be greatly improved which will free up our limited resources to tackle similar problems in other wards. It will also send out a clear message to landlords that the council will not tolerate a situation where the safety of tenants is being put at risk.

5.6.4 An additional benefit is that this scheme would make a significant contribution to the campaign to improve the image and standing of Slough as a good place in which to work and live

5.7 **Partnership working**

- In order to deliver this initiative effectively we have over the last 12 months built upon existing links with internal and external groups , particularly with the Planning, legal Berkshire Fire and Rescue services and the National Landlords Association (NLA)
- We also understand the valuable contributions that that be made to this initiative from the various charities and organizations that are based in Slough and in particular in Chalvey
- The private sector housing services has formed a strong link with the NLA and they deliver training to slough landlords which will contribute to properties being managed well

6. **Comments of Other Committees**

This report will be considered by Cabinet at its meeting on 18th July 2011. Any Comments received by the Scrutiny Panel will be forwarded to Cabinet.

7. **Conclusion**

The introduction of additional licensing will make a significant contribution to the strengthening of communities as areas around Slough with HMOs have three times a greater concentration of anti social behaviour incidents than the rest of Slough. Other benefits of licensing include contribution to community cohesion in that noise and rubbish complaints can be dealt with more swiftly as landlords must attend to these matters as a condition of his license. This eases the tensions between landlords, occupants of the HMO and the neighbours

Similar schemes in other parts of the country demonstrate that the targeting of resources together with additional regulation can prevent an area becoming blighted, assist in wider regeneration and encourage investment and for a ward such as Chalvey offers may benefits

8. **Appendices Attached**

'A' - The Proposal to Implement Additional HMO Licensing for the Chalvey ward. Copies of this document are available from Democratic and Member Services on 01753 875120.

9. **Background Papers**

'1' - Analysis of Anti-social Behavior occurring near to Houses in Multiple Occupation, in Slough Evidence Led Solutions August 2010

'2' - 2009 Private Sector Stock and HMO Condition Survey November 2009 Final Report. Fordham Research

'3' - The English Indices of Deprivation 2004 Summary for Slough

'4' - Housing Act 2004

'5' - Communities and Local Government Guidance – Approval steps for additional and selective licensing designations in England

SLOUGH BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Neighbourhoods and Community Services Scrutiny Panel **DATE:** 16th June 2011

CONTACT OFFICER: Ginny de Haan, Head of Food, Safety and Business Support
(For all enquiries) (01753) 875225

WARD(S): All

PART I
FOR INFORMATION

FOOD STANDARDS AGENCY – IMPORTED FOOD CONTROL UNIT

1 Purpose of Report

To advise the Overview & Scrutiny Committee of

- the outcomes following the Food Standards Agency's focused audit of the Councils' Inland Imported Food Control Arrangements and
- for Members to note the action plan for dealing with the identified non-conformities.

2 Recommendation(s)/Proposed Action

Endorsement of the action plan.

3 Community Strategy Priorities

The Food Standards Agency (FSA) is an independent Government department set up by an Act of Parliament in 2000 to protect the public's health and consumer interests in relation to food.

Authorities are audited against the Food and Food Law Enforcement Standard in the Framework Agreement, which sets out the minimum standards of performance expected. The audit reports are published on the Food Standards Agency's website.

• **Celebrating Diversity, Enabling inclusion**

- Supporting and encouraging all the cuisines in Slough to provide healthy eating (Catering for Health) choices, safe food businesses including importation of ethnic foods.

• **Adding years to Life and Life to years**

- Ensuring imported foods available in the Borough are safe to eat.

• **Prosperity for All**

- Supporting local businesses in meeting their legal requirements around the complex legislation related to imported foods.
- The Council has a 'Primary Authority' agreement with a major food importer based in the town.

4 **Other Implications**

(a) **Financial**

It is anticipated that the plans can be implemented within existing resources. However, unplanned reactive pressures, such as major investigations, may have an adverse impact upon the availability of the team to complete the identified actions within the existing agreed time frames.

(b) **Risk Management**

Recommendation	Risk/Threat/Opportunity	Mitigation(s)
Approval of the action plan	Limited risk to delivery from serious incidents such as Work Related Death Investigations, Animal Health Disease; food poisoning outbreak or unplanned staff absences	Contingency plans in place supported by re-assessment of priorities.
Failure to approve	Serious risk to delivery of statutory obligations and potential criticism from the Food Standards Agency; resulting adverse publicity for the Council.	Re- assessment of resources and priorities

(c) **Human Rights Act and Other Legal Implications**

There is a legal obligation for the Council to maintain an effective Imported Food Control Service. There are no Human Rights Act implications in this report.

(d) **Equalities Impact Assessment**

Equality Impact assessments have already been completed for the core policy areas of the Services

5 **Supporting Information**

The Food Standards Agency's Strategy to 2015 sets out the approach to be taken to ensure that people can have trust and confidence in the food they buy and eat, including imported food, and that regulation is effective, risk based and proportionate.

Slough was identified for a focused imported foods audit because of the towns diverse community and likelihood that a number of local food outlets handle imported foods. In addition the Council has more that 30 enhanced remote transit sheds (ERTS) which handle imports of products of both animal origin and non – animal origin, including those that require organic verification; these foods are then distributed nationally.

Significant comments/ findings from the FSA include;

- 'It was clear that imported food controls form an integral part of the food service provided by the Food and Safety and Trading Standards teams responsible for the enforcement of imported food controls at Slough Borough Council.'
- 'The Authority had developed Service Plans for both the food safety and trading standards services which were broadly in line with the Service Planning Guidance in the Framework Agreement'
- 'Documented procedures for the authorisation of officers had been developed and implemented for both teams.'
- 'Food safety officers had received training in imported food controls and it was acknowledged that officers in the Trading Standards Team would also benefit from undertaking some basic training on inland imported food control.'
- 'There was evidence that officers made relevant checks on imported food as part of routine food hygiene and standards inspections. The food safety inspection aide-memoire had been amended to include a useful section to prompt officers to record details of their imported food traceability checks.'
- 'The Authority had developed policies and procedures relevant to the scope of the audit. It was acknowledged that trading standards procedures would benefit from more regular and ad hoc reviews'
- 'The Authority had submitted an imported food return on the Local Authority Enforcement Monitoring System (LAEMS) for 2009/2010, which broadly reflected the Authority's sampling and enforcement activity.'
- 'It was clear that the Service was proactive in providing advice to food businesses on imported food controls.'
- 'The Food and Safety Team had developed a comprehensive internal monitoring procedure and there was clear evidence of effective internal monitoring across the Service, including imported food control activities.'
- 'A 'reality visit' was undertaken to an ERTS in the district that handled imported foods.

The report identified 7 recommendations for improvement in relation to non-conformities identified; these are detailed in Appendix 1.

In addition 2 examples of good practice were highlighted;

- Enforcement Guidance. The Authority had produced a range of useful guidance for officers on relevant and specific imported food issues
- Advice to Businesses. The Authority was proactively involved in providing advice to business in a range of ways to help them comply with imported food legislation.

Work is progressing on completion of the actions identified; the FSA will contact the Council for an update on progress against the action plan in August 2011. It is anticipated that all actions will have been completed.

6 Conclusion

Imported Food Control is a critical part of the work carried out by Food Officers at Slough; this is recognised by the audit, together with the information, advice and support that is given to local businesses. The areas of non-conformity identified are mainly in relation to documentation covering the work. It is anticipated that the actions required will be completed ahead of a 6 month review by the FSA in August 2011.

7 **Viewing of plans**

The full report from the Food Standards Agency Audit is available for viewing by contacting Democratic Services on 01753 875120.

8 **Background Papers**

'1' Food Standards Agency Framework Document

'2' 'Safer Food for the Nation', Food Standards Agency, March 2011

9. **Appendices Attached**

Appendix A - Action Plan from the FSA Audit Report

APPENDIX A - Action Plan for Slough Borough Council

Food Standards Audit date: 17-18 November 2010

TO ADDRESS (RECOMMENDATION INCLUDING STANDARD PARAGRAPH)	BY (DATE)	PLANNED IMPROVEMENTS	ACTION TAKEN TO DATE
3.1.3 Ensure that future Service Plans contain details of the resources required to carry out the service effectively compared directly against the resources available. [The Standard – 3.1]	31/05/11	To include in 2011/12 Service Plan further details of the resources required to carry out the service effectively compared with the resources available.	Further information on resources and demands for 2011/12 collated and to be confirmed once budgets are finalised in March 2011.
3.1.8 Ensure that all documented policies and procedures, including those relevant to imported food control activities, are reviewed at regular intervals and whenever there are changes to legislation and centrally issued guidance. [The Standard – 4.1]	Completed	All relevant joint procedures between Food Safety and Food Standards updated and implemented.	Imported Food Procedures updated to include recent legislative changes and to incorporate QA of notices served by hand.
	Completed	Joint system in place to review all food hygiene and food standards procedures annually and when there are changes in legislation and centrally issued.	Joint Food Alert procedure updated to include to RASFF completed.
	30/04/11		Full implementation of joint procedures from April 2011.

TO ADDRESS (RECOMMENDATION INCLUDING STANDARD PARAGRAPH)	BY (DATE)	PLANNED IMPROVEMENTS	ACTION TAKEN TO DATE
3.1.11 Review the documented procedures for the officer authorisations of ensure they clearly set out the authorisation process based on individual officer competence and in accordance with the Food Law Code of Practice. [The Standard – 5.1]	28/02/11	Procedure for authorisation of officers reviewed to include details of the process and criteria of individual officer competency assessment. Implementation during February 2011.	Details of assessment and process for officer competency incorporated into the new joint Authorisation Procedure.
3.1.16 Ensure that all officers receive appropriate and adequate training on the enforcement of imported food controls in accordance with the Food Law Code of Practice. [The Standard – 5.4]	Completed 28/02/11	In line with the revised joint procedure on authorisation, all officers to have received adequate training on the enforcement of imported food controls.	Food Standards Officers registered with the FSA On-line training service. Training to be completed by end Feb 2011.
3.2.15 Ensure that formal enforcement notices are drafted and served in accordance with the relevant legislation, the Food Law Code of Practice and centrally issued guidance. [The Standard - 15.3]	Completed	All Notices served, including those served by hand, are included within the QA procedure and evidence of service confirmed.	Amendment of Imported Food procedure highlighting process for notices served by hand.

TO ADDRESS (RECOMMENDATION INCLUDING STANDARD PARAGRAPH)	BY (DATE)	PLANNED IMPROVEMENTS	ACTION TAKEN TO DATE
<p>3.2.23 Maintain up to date accurate records in retrievable form on all food establishments in its area and for all relevant checks on imported food, in accordance with the Food Law Code of Practice and centrally issued guidance. These records shall include reports of all interventions and inspections, the determination of compliance with legal requirements made by the authorised officer, details of action taken where non-compliance was identified, details of any enforcement action taken, and results of any sampling and follow-up. [The Standard - 16.1]</p>	<p>Completed 31/03/11 30/04/11</p>	<p>Accurate data maintained on the all food establishments and continued use of the existing procedure for new and closed premises. Introduction of revised data entry process for Food Standards activities. Increased internal monitoring of records as part of revised monitoring procedures, to ensure sufficiently detailed records provided.</p>	<p>Database now accurate in relation to the match between Food Hygiene and Food Standards Premises. Revised data entry for food standards work scheduled for March 2011.</p>
<p>3.3.3 Review, expand and implement the documented internal monitoring procedure to include all aspects of the Service, including that of Trading Standards activities, in order to verify the Service's conformance with the Standard, relevant legislation, the Food Law Code of Practice, relevant centrally issued guidance and the Authority's own policies and procedures. Maintain records of all internal monitoring undertaken. [The Standard - 19.1, 19.2 and 19.3]</p>	<p>30/04/11</p>	<p>A comprehensive internal monitoring procedure to be implemented for both Food Hygiene and Food Standards teams.</p>	<p>Joint QA procedure prepared. Extension of QA process to food standards activities scheduled implementation from April 2011.</p>

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**NEIGHBOURHOODS AND COMMUNITY SERVICES SCRUTINY PANEL
AGENDA PLAN 2011-2012**

Draft Report Deadline	Final Report Deadline	Agenda Dispatch	Agenda Item	Meeting Date
27th May 2011	3rd June 2011	7th June 2011	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Empty Homes: Housing Solutions – A Strategy for Slough (Manju Dhar) • The Proposal to implement additional Houses in multiple occupation licensing for Chalvey ward (Manju Dhar) • Ten Pin and Tennis Progress update (A. Stevens) • Food Standards Agency Audit report on the SBC Food Controls Service (G. DeHaan) 	16th June 2011
26th August 2011	2nd September 2011	6th September 2011	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Traffic Light Synchronisation (J. Carter) • Update on Tennis Participation Scheme ? 	15th September 2011
5th October 2011	12th October 2011	14th October 2011		24th October 2011
16th November 2011	23rd November 2011	25th November 2011		5th December 2011
29th December 2011	4th January 2012	6th January 2012		16th January 2012
10th February 2012	17th February 2012	21st February 2012		1st March 2012

Items are subject to review by the newly appointed committee

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