

## **SLOUGH BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**REPORT TO:** Neighbourhood & Community Services Scrutiny Panel

**DATE:** 2<sup>nd</sup> November 2017

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**WARD(S):** All

### **PART I** **FOR COMMENT & CONSIDERATION**

#### **5 YEAR PLAN: OUTCOME 4 (ROBUST REGULATION OF PRIVATE RENTED SECTOR (PRS))**

##### **1. Purpose of Report**

- 1.1 This report sets out as to how the Council intends to carry out Robust Regulation in the Private Rented Sector.
- 1.2 The panel at the meeting of 26<sup>th</sup> June 2017 asked for officers to bring details of the above specific action under “Theme 2” of the Housing Strategy for review and discussions.
  - Theme 2 – Private Sector Housing – Robust Regulation of PRS.

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

The Panel is requested to resolve that:

- a) The Panel to note the key actions developed under Theme 2 of the Housing Strategy which aims to deliver the Outcome 4 of the 5 Year Plan.
- b) To consider the approach taken which is detailed in Para 5 and provide comments and advice to improve on the proposed service provision to achieve a better outcome.

##### **3. The Slough Joint Wellbeing Strategy, the JSNA and the Five Year Plan**

The connection between health and wellbeing and good quality housing is well established. The Housing Strategy sets out the Council’s ambition to regenerate neighbourhoods, improve the quality of housing and to contribute to the supply of new homes in Slough. This element of the Housing Strategy and the resulting action plan is a key intervention in improving health inequality in a housing sector that homes 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of Slough’s population. This is very much aligned with Slough’s JSNA and the 5 Year Plan aim and objectives.

#### 4. **Other Implications**

(a) **Financial**

There are no direct financial implications of the proposed action.

(b) **Risk Management**

Recommendation	Risk/Threat/Opportunity	Mitigation(s)
The entire process in this area is a risk based approach and the actions taken / policies adopted are within the legislative and regulatory framework that must have regards to actual and perceived risks	Minimal risk of effecting the housing market which has not proved to be the case so far in council's who adapted a similar approach. There is however a great opportunity to improve the lives of so many residents that rely on PRS..	Through a t partnership working we could reduce or mitigate any potential risks.

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

There are no human rights or other implications

(d) **Equalities Impact Assessment**

An EIA is not required. A full EIA was undertaken in the preparation of the new Housing Strategy.

(e) **Workforce Implications**

There are no workforce implications.

#### 5. **Supporting Information**

5.1 Slough's housing stock breakdown is comprised of the following:

- 52% owner occupier
- 28% Private Rented Sector
- 20% social housing (12% council owned 8% other Social Housing)

This breakdown illustrates the importance of PRS to Slough which houses a third of Slough's populations. Furthermore, It is not disputed that this will continuously and incrementally increase for the foreseeable future.

5.2 Considering this and taking into account Slough's 5 Year Plan priorities, improving this sector is paramount in achieving the aims and objective of the 5 year Plan, the Housing Strategy and the Council's commitment published in JSNA

### 5.3 What we have done so far:

- The housing Regulation Team has been doubled in size
- Commissioned review of private Sector Housing through Building Research Establishment (BRE) to establish breakdown and the condition of the private sector stock in Slough.
- This will enable the team to develop proactive intervention for going forward. The available data accurately and clearly maps out the areas with a disproportionate number of PRS which is impacting community cohesion as well as increasing the number of ASB and environmental crime. This data will enable us to better target areas worse affected.
- We are in the process of reviewing Policies and Procedure to improve efficiency and effectiveness
- Developed a comprehensive training programme for the new team which is currently being delivered.
- In the space of the last 6 months doubled the number of prosecution of rogue landlord's. This is to send a clear message that we will not tolerate criminal activities
- We engaged the Internal Audit team to carry out an independent audit of the service, processes and procedure with a view to accelerate and prioritise an improvement plan.
- Developed an excellent and effective partnership with Thames Valley Police (TCP), Royal Berkshire Fire & Rescue Service (RBFRS) and Home Office to deal with criminal activities, ASBs and tackle exploitation of vulnerable residents in PRS.
- Our partnership work with RBFRS has been particularly effective and crucial in recent months as we are jointly dealing with two high profile medium rise developments containing over 120 self-contained flats. Post Grenfell Tower events, this has proved extremely effective and vital as we have been able to draw from their knowledge, expertise and experience to take actions to safeguard Slough residents. This is in addition to our routine liaison and partnership with RBFRS in relation to dealing with individual Houses in Multiple Occupation(HMO).
- We have established and delivered an effective and successful empty property strategy to deal with derelict abandoned long term empty properties. There are currently 11 CPO cases of the Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO) in the pipeline.

### 5.4 What we plan to do :

- Complete the process of mapping and development of policies and procedures.
- Cabinet report to be submitted on 20<sup>th</sup> Nov '17 proposing a new civil penalties of up to £30,000 as an alternative to prosecution for certain offences under the Housing Act 2004.
- We will shortly begin a feasibility study of introducing a property / landlords Licensing Scheme. The initial evidence based report to Cabinet in January 2018
- To formalise / develop a proactive intervention rather than the current reactive approach. We intend to proactively identify and tackle rogue landlords who continuously break the law and exploit the most vulnerable.
- Carry out the feasibility of introducing a Landlords Accreditation Scheme to support good Landlords.

- Develop an outcome based performance monitoring
- The effectiveness of approach and action will be monitored through a regular neighbourhood Management Team meetings and the Housing Strategy Monitoring Board.

5.5 Effectiveness, relevance and outcome of these actions are monitored and reviewed by the Housing Strategy Project Board on a regular basis,

6. **Comments of Other Committees**

This report had not been considered by other committees.

7. **Conclusion**

This report provide details of actions taken and planned to deliver a key part of the Housing Strategy under Theme 2. The objectives and the resulting actions demonstrates the Council's commitment to improve homes across all tenure and in particular the PRS to ensure our resident live in a safe and decent homes.

We would welcome members comments and suggestions to improve the process and our approach to achieve better outcomes

8. **Appendices Attached**

None

9. **Background Papers**

None