

**NORTH SOMERSET COUNCIL**

**DECISION OF COUNCILLOR AP REES  
THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR STRATEGIC PLANNING, HIGHWAYS,  
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND HOUSING  
with advice from the  
DIRECTOR, PEOPLE AND COMMUNITIES**



**DECISION NO: P&C 23**

**SUBJECT: SELECTIVE LICENSING OF THE PRIVATE RENTED SECTOR –  
WESTON-SUPER-MARE (PART)**

**DECISION:**

1. To agree to revoke the designation of the area comprising Weston-super-Mare Central and Hillside wards as set out in the report to the Executive of 21 June 2016 as a Selective Licensing Area under the provisions of Housing act 2004
2. That further work be undertaken to review conditions in the private rented sector and identify and progress options to deliver improved conditions

**BACKGROUND:**

At the meeting of 21 June 2016 based on a report presented by the Executive Member for Strategic Planning, Highways, Economic Development and Housing the Executive approved the designation of part of the area comprising Central and Hillside wards in Weston-super-Mare as a selective licensing scheme under the provisions of the Housing Act 2004. This required all privately rented homes in the area, unless exempted, to be licensed. This decision was made following considerable consultation and was with the key objective of tackling the poor housing conditions found in privately rented homes in this area. Licensing has an important role to play in improving housing conditions particularly when combined with other powers and initiatives. It was felt the introduction of a Selective Licensing Scheme in combination with existing projects e.g. West of England Rental Standard was the best way to achieve the overall objective of improving the poor quality housing and was consistent with the practice adopted in a number of Local Authorities. Following this decision the process to designate the scheme was commenced.

Subsequently however in preparation for the implementation of the scheme some local landlords and a number of tenants expressed concern about the potential impact of the scheme and the landlords suggested a number of alternatives which they believe could achieve the objective of improving housing conditions. It is disappointing these suggestions did not come forward as part of the extensive consultation process although at the formulation stage, a range of options were considered. The landlords have formed a local group to campaign against the scheme and we understand that they raised the funds needed to launch a legal challenge to the scheme.

In the light of this further legal advice was sought and based on this advice it is recommended that the scheme designation is revoked. This would then enable a further review of housing conditions in the private rented sector and options to deliver improvements to be undertaken including consultation with tenants, landlords and agencies. As part of the further review of options all of the remedies and opportunities open to the council and its partners to improve housing conditions in the private rented sector would be considered including licensing which could be in the form of the original licensing scheme or a revised scheme.

**REASONS:**

Based on legal advice the original designation needs to be revoked to avoid the risk of legal challenge and the risk of the council incurring significant costs. Revoking the original designation will also avoid continuing uncertainty for landlords and tenants. The proposed review will enable options for improving privately rented housing to be further considered.

**OTHER ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED:**

Not agreeing the recommendations – it would not be possible to revoke the Selective Licensing area and there is a medium to high risk that the decision taken by the Executive on 21 June 2016 regarding this scheme would be subject to legal challenge resulting in the scheme being significantly delayed and the risk of the council incurring significant costs


**FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:**

Incidental costs and costs involved in undertaking the further review will be funded from existing resources

**IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE YEARS:** No specific implications

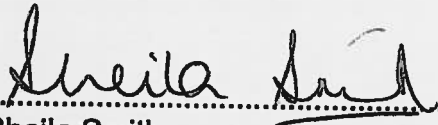
Signed: .....  
Councillor Ap Rees  
Executive Member for Strategic Planning, Highways, Economic Development  
And Housing

Dated: ..... 31/8/16

Reviewed:   
Mark Hughes, Head of Strategic Housing

Dated: 31/8/16

**Confirmation of advice given:**

Signed:   
Sheila Smith  
Director, People and Communities

Dated: 31.8.16

1912

1912

1912

1912

1912

1912

1912

1912

1912