

UPDATE ON PROGRESS OF PRIVATE SECTOR HOUSING SURVEY

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to update the Community Policy and Review Panel of the progress being made with the private sector housing survey, which commenced on 29th March 2016.

2.0 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Nationally, the private rented sector has doubled from 2.0 to 4.1 million between 1996 and 2012. Locally, the 2001 census showed that the private rented sector was 6% of our total housing stock and by 2011 this had increased to 18%. We also have a higher percentage of privately rented properties compared to the number of affordable rented properties in the Borough, and this is higher than neighbouring Boroughs.
- 2.2 There is a high dependency on the private rented sector to secure permanent accommodation which has led to a shortage in the supply of properties available for renting. Therefore, residents are accepting lower standards or smaller accommodation in order to secure a tenancy.
- 2.3 The private sector housing team in Rushmoor has seen an increase in the number of complaints received relating to poor housing conditions, disrepair and overcrowding. This indicates that there may be many more residents who are living in potentially dangerous and overcrowded conditions
- 2.4 The Government issued guidance to local authorities in March 2015 called Improving the Private Rented Sector and Tackling Bad Practice. This document recommends that Councils develop a pro-active approach to dealing with poor housing conditions and rogue landlords, including a door-to-door survey.

3.0 RUSHMOOR'S APPROACH TO THIS PROBLEM

- 3.1 On 17th November 2015 members of Cabinet gave approval for a surveyor to be employed by the Council to carry out a survey of the private sector housing stock in the Borough.
- 3.2 A fully qualified surveyor joined the Private Sector Housing (PSH) team on 14th March 2016 on a twelve-month contract to implement the survey.
- 3.3 In preparation for the survey, GIS maps and local knowledge were used to identify 12 specific areas to be targeted, starting in Aldershot. These areas were determined taking account of the IMD, population, age of residents, local

knowledge and history of housing issues being raised.

3.4 The areas are shown on the attached map see Appendix 1

4.0 WHAT WE AIM TO ACHIEVE

4.1 We aim to have more up to date information about the Rushmoor private sector housing stock, this will include:

- Identifying hmo's
- Identifying disrepair and poor housing conditions
- Identifying overcrowding

4.2 As each issue is identified by the Surveyor the PSH team are dealing with it This means that immediate improvement action is being taken in response to identified issues.

4.3 Once the survey has been completed consideration will be given to the information gathered and how this can be used to drive up housing standards in the Borough and to stop rogue landlords operating in the area.

5.0 HOW THE SURVEY WORKS IN PRACTICE

5.1 To date the surveyor has carried out initial visits to all properties in areas 1 and 2.

Area 1 (Aldershot) includes:

- Alexandra Road, Cambridge Road, Kings Road, Perowne Street, parts of Queens Road, Sandford Road and parts of York Road

Area 2 (Aldershot) includes:

- Arthur Street, parts of Grosvenor Road, High Street, Pickford Street, Station Road, Union Street, Union Terrace, Victoria Road and Wellington Street

5.2 The surveyor will attempt to gain access on three separate occasions and if access is still not obtained, the Surveyor will work with the PSH officers to gain access through the enforcement route e.g. Notice of Entry or warrant if he suspects that there is disrepair, overcrowding or multiple use at the properties.

5.3 Further checks will be made to determine occupancy through use of the electoral roll and intelligence from other areas in the Council.

5.4 In order to ensure that we have reliable data from the survey, all visits are being held on our IT system, from which reports can be pulled detailing, numbers of visits, no access, referrals to PSH team and all further actions taken

5.5 Appendix 2 shows details of the number of visits, revisits, no access, action required, full survey or referred cases at 30th May 2016

6.0 CONCLUSION

- 6.1 The Surveyor is making good progress and is currently carrying out re-visits and letter drops on areas 1 and 2. In some cases, access is challenging but this is being addressed by repeat visits and leaving calling cards, followed up with letters when necessary
- 6.2 The information gathered to date is showing that there are issues, predominantly around overcrowding and disrepair. Some situations have needed immediate intervention by members of the PSH team and Hampshire Fire and Rescue Service

7.0 RECOMMENDATION

- 7.1 That Community Policy and Review Panel note the progress of the private sector housing survey to date.

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Background papers: Appendix 1 – Maps, Appendix 2 - details of visits made

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