



To be submitted to the Council at its meeting on 11th December 2025

## **SPECIAL JOINT MEETING OF COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY PANEL AND TRANSPORT, INFRASTRUCTURE AND STRATEGIC HOUSING SCRUTINY PANEL**

**7<sup>th</sup> October 2025 at 6.30pm**

**Present:** Councillors Aisthorpe, Augusta, Bonner, Boyd (substitute for Crofts) Brookes Cairns (substitute for Sylvester) Hasthorpe, Holland (substitute for Bright) Lindley, Mill, Patrick, , Shutt, Wheatley and Wilson.

### **Officers in attendance:**

- Carolina Borgstrom (Director of Economy, Environment & Infrastructure)
- Katie Brown (Director of Adult Social Care, Housing and Communities)
- Simon Jones (Assistant Director Law and Governance (Monitoring Officer))
- Jo Paterson (Scrutiny and Committee Advisor)
- Jaqui Wells (Head of Housing Strategy)

### **Also in attendance:**

- Councillor Jackson, Leader and Portfolio Holder for Economy, Net Zero, Skills and Housing
- Councillor S Swinburn, Portfolio Holder for Housing, Infrastructure and Transport
- Councillor Shepherd Portfolio Holder for Safer & Stronger Communities
- Mr Lawrence Brown (RICS Registered Valuer)

There were no members of the public and press present.

### **JSPCT.13 APPOINTMENT OF CHAIRMAN**

RESOLVED – That Councillor Mill be appointed Chair for this joint scrutiny panel meeting.

**OUNCILLOR MILL IN THE CHAIR**

## **JSPCT.14 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Bonner, Bright, Crofts, Farren, Hudson, Pettigrew, and Silvester.

## **JSPCT.15 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest made with regard to any items on the agenda for this meeting. None

## **JSPCT.16 CALLING IN OF DECISIONS – SELECTIVE LICENSING**

The panel considered a formal request from councillors Patrick and Farren to call-in the above decision taken by Cabinet at its meeting on 20th August 2025.

Councillor Patrick described the rationale for the call-in, in particular he was concerned around governance and the lack of transparency in the cabinet's decision-making process. He also noted that scrutiny recommendations were missing from the online papers and not accessible to all members during the call-in period. He urged future governance improvements to ensure full disclosure and accessibility of scrutiny materials.

He further stressed the urgent need for selective licensing, citing over 10 years of delays and the prevalence of rogue landlords. He noted that initially, three areas were proposed; East Marsh, Sidney Sussex, and Heneage wards, however only East Marsh was retained based on questionable data. He noted that scrutiny had supported the East Marsh scheme but wanted other areas reconsidered where needed. He asked for a clear commitment to expanding licensing schemes where this was justified.

He also raised concerns about the charity 'CARE', which housed vulnerable residents through private landlords. CARE properties were already frequently inspected, and inclusion in the licensing scheme could discourage landlords, risking homelessness. He requested that CARE and similar charities be exempted or reconsidered in the licensing scheme.

Councillor S. Swinburn, Portfolio Holder for Housing, Infrastructure and Transport, clarified that scrutiny recommendations were typically not included in the Cabinet report, but instead tabled separately on the night of the meeting, a standard procedure. He further responded that the Cabinet Working Group had confirmed that the current licensing scheme was being implemented on a 'trial' basis. The trial would ideally include Heneage Ward and Sidney Sussex Ward, though only one area was currently active. If the trial were to prove successful, the scheme could be expanded to other areas of the borough.

Panel members had concerns that the scrutiny recommendations presented to Cabinet were not an accurate reflection of what was agreed

by scrutiny. Mr Jones confirmed the scrutiny recommends papers were tabled at the Cabinet meeting and referred to at the time of the decision.

Mr Lawrence was invited to present his questions to the panel.

Mr Lawrence asked how the success of the proposed scheme was going to be measured and what was the baseline metric from which improvements could be measured?

In response to the question, Officers explained that the criteria for selective licensing were defined by legislation which focused on deprivation and crime levels. Officers further explained that after five years, the scheme's success would then be measured against these statutory criteria. The statutory framework outlined the terms, and the business case included KPIs for the trial scheme.

It was confirmed that under the procedure Mr Brown would receive a full response in writing. The panel asked that the response be circulated to them also.

Mr. Jones addressed perceived governance concerns, clarifying that while pre-decision scrutiny was not required, it was welcomed by the administration. He emphasised that the process was transparent, with the scrutiny meeting considering selective licencing held in public and the recommendations of that panel being captured. . He confirmed that both the Leader and Portfolio Holder were present at the Scrutiny meeting, and that scrutiny recommendations were received and acknowledged. Councillors Patrick and Faren had also referred to these during the meeting. He concluded that the core issue of the call-in related to how scrutiny input was handled, not to reopen the decision, and that it was a matter for Cabinet as to what weight (if any) it gave to the recommendations. .

The Leader also reaffirmed that scrutiny recommendation papers were always tabled and brought to the attention of Cabinet members. He too emphasised the importance of scrutiny recommends papers in informing decisions.

Members felt more transparency of scrutiny recommendations was needed going forward.

The panel raised concerns about the potential impact of selective licencing on the CARE charity and referred to an email from the charity voicing its concerns around extra charges and costs.

Ms Borgstrom explained that the fee structure for selective licensing would have to be finalised and signed off by both the Portfolio Holder and herself prior to implementation and until that happened, the scheme could not proceed. She clarified that charities were not automatically exempt from the scheme, and it was for the council to determine how the fee structure was set. It was later confirmed that certain charities were exempt under current arrangements.

Regarding the concerns with charities, a member asked officers if they had any flexibility in the new pilot scheme to address these concerns. Officers confirmed that they had the flexibility to offer discounts to charities under the proposed pilot scheme, subject to an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) and consultation with the portfolio holder.

A brief discussion ensued around the EIA with a member highlighting that the Cabinet report included an EIA however, despite the EIA stating there were no issues, the member felt that there were still issues, and these should be properly considered. Furthermore, the EIA should be revisited as part of the decision-making process.

Mr Jones added that EIAs were not fixed and should be flexible and regularly reviewed. The pilot scheme also allowed for discretionary decisions, including charity-related concerns.

Members asked if the final decision would be reported back to scrutiny and wished to confirm which panel this would be. Ms Borgstrom clarified that that enforcement of the scheme fell under the remit of the Communities Scrutiny Panel.

Another member urged that there be no further delays, recommending the decision be released for implementation, with the EIA treated as part of the normal process.

Councillor Holland wish to recommend to Cabinet that the decision be released for implementation noting concerns regarding potential impact on charities and requesting that an Equality Impact Assessment is revisited prior to implementation.

This was proposed by Councillor Holland and seconded by Councillor Asthorpe. Upon being put to the vote this was duly agreed by a unanimous vote.

**RESOLVED:**

That the Cabinet decision of 20th August 2025 regarding Selective Licensing be released for implementation and that the panels, noting concerns regarding potential impact on charities be forwarded to Cabinet alongside and requesting that the Equality Impact Assessment be revisited prior to implementation.

**JSPCT.17 HOUSING**

The panel received a report from the Director Adult Social Care, Housing and Communities providing an update on housing delivery. Ms Brown also referred to a brief presentation which provided an overview of the current housing situation in North East Lincolnshire, including challenges relating to empty homes, housing stock, and the complex needs of residents.

Member raised a number of comments ad queries as below:-

- Concerns were raised around the high number of empty homes (3,000) which was a significant concern. Members also asked for timescales around when some form of action would be taken. Ms Brown stated that there were plans to address this issue through the Neighbourhood Plan for Towns and Community-led Housing Initiatives.
- With regards to housing needs, the presentation had highlighted a high demand for one-bedroom properties and a significant proportion of households with multiple and complex needs.
- The establishment of a corporate landlord function was discussed, with the aim of improving compliance and property management across council-owned assets.
- The panel discussed the possibility of the Council becoming a registered housing provider. Ms Brown confirmed that the work started by Paul Evans will be continued
- Members were concerned with the number of households in temporary accommodation this being sixty-seven and asked how many of these included children. Ms Brown confirmed that seventy-four were children.
- Members highlighted an issue with the housing register data, Ms Brown noted there had been some issues with the system and confirmed she would share the corrected data with members in due course.
- Members asked for more detail around Priority 2 (reducing housing need through upstream intervention). Ms Brown explained that this approach included prevention models, focusing on early intervention and working with other teams in community locations like the family hubs. This should help with early intervention reducing the numbers of people coming to the council requiring crisis accommodation
- Concerns were raised about poor housing conditions in rented accommodation and the need for a comprehensive Communication Strategy to inform residents about available support. Officers noted that the Housing Strategy 2023 to 2028 will require policy adaptations due to evolving legislation. Further reference was made to the Renter's Rights Bill, decent home standards, and new energy efficiency requirements being introduced by the government in the next year.
- The potential for developing brownfield sites for social housing was discussed by the panel. Officers were aware of brownfield sites owned by social housing providers, but stressed the need to understand their plans, especially where sites remained unused. Some of these sites could present opportunities for future development.
- The age and quality of the existing housing stock was identified as a significant challenge; also further discussion took place on retrofitting and potential selective demolition.

- The use of modern methods of construction (modular building) was explored by the panel, with considerations of cost and viability, noting it cost around 25% more than traditional buildings, creating viability issues, especially in certain areas.
- The number of rough sleepers in the area was reported as relatively low, however the MHCLG data on rough sleepers was unclear . Ms Brown would report back to the panel with clarity on the changes of numbers between December and January in some previous years.
- It was noted that a new Assistant Director for Housing and Communities was due to start at the beginning of December.

RESOLVED

1. That the report be noted.
2. That revised rough sleeper data be provided to the panel in due course.

There being no further business, the Chair declared the meeting closed at 8.28 p.m.