



CABINET WORKING PARTY SELECTIVE LICENSING/HOUSES OF MULTIPLE OCCUPATION

30th January 2026 at 9.30am

Present: Councillors Aisthorpe (Chair)
Councillors Bonner, Jackson, Patrick and S Swinburn.

Officers in attendance:

- Carolina Borgstrom (Director of Economy, Environment and Infrastructure)
- Zoe Campbell (Senior Scrutiny and Committee Advisor)
- Dee Hitter (Head of Regulation and Sustainability)

Also in attendance:

Councillor Shutt

There were no members of the press or public in attendance at the meeting.

CWP.12 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence received for this meeting.

CWP.13 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interests made from members with regard to items on the agenda for this meeting.

CWP.14 MINUTES

RESOLVED - That the draft minutes of the meeting of the Houses of Multiple Occupancy Cabinet Working Group held on 26th November 2025 be approved as a correct record.

CWP.15 UPDATE ON SELECTIVE LICENSING

The working group received an update on the selective licensing scheme.

A member raised concerns about ensuring cost-effectiveness and efficiency in administering the scheme, given that fees were fully cost-recoverable, to keep charges as low as possible while maintaining quality. Ms Hitter assured members that whole-life costs, including inflationary pressures, were being considered, benchmarking against other local authorities had been conducted, and fees would be subject to scrutiny. The scheme must be robust enough to meet its stated objectives and reporting requirements of the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government.

A member enquired if the fee structure now accounted for external partner. Ms Hitter explained that while an external partner would reduce the need for internal resources, the council would still require internal staff for licence processing, fit and proper person tests, and enforcement, which could not be outsourced. The overall external resource requirement would be less than a fully council-delivered model.

A member questioned why a briefing paper on the reviewed indicative fees had been circulated to the Transport Infrastructure and Strategic Housing and Communities scrutiny panels before this working group. Ms Borgstrom clarified that the Cabinet Working Group's role was "task and finish" to make recommendations to Cabinet while ongoing monitoring whilst the scrutiny of implementation fell under the scrutiny function.

A member expressed concern about communication, feeling the working group should be kept informed. Other members disagreed with the interpretation, asserting that the working group's terms of reference included producing option appraisals and recommendations, which remained relevant given material changes, such as the shift from a council-led to an external provider model. A member requested an urgent meeting to discuss the revised fees and the implications of this material shift. A member supported this request, advocating for a pushback on the interpretation of the working group's role.

Ms Borgstrom suggested officers sought clarification from the Monitoring Officer on the Cabinet Working Group's terms of reference and its role in monitoring the implementation and changes to previously recommended schemes.

Ms Borgstrom clarified that briefing notes on the relevant Officer Decision Records (ODRs) had been circulated to all members of both the Communities and Transport Infrastructure and Strategic Housing scrutiny panels, as those decisions fell within Cabinet delegations and did not require further Cabinet approval.

A member sought clarification on whether bed and breakfast establishments would fall under selective licencing. Ms Hitter indicated that B&Bs were typically not considered private rented accommodation but would confirm the specific criteria based on the nature of their setup.

A member was concerned about the realism of the current timetable for delivery of the selective licensing scheme before the 8th April 2026 given delivery uncertainties. Ms Hitter confirmed the timetable was being adhered to, with staff working intensively to meet deadlines due to potential judicial review risks.

RESOLVED –

- 1) That the update be noted
- 2) That clarification be sought from the Monitoring Officer on the Cabinet Working Group's terms of reference and its role in monitoring the implementation and changes to previously recommended schemes.

CWP.16 RENTERS RIGHT ACT 2025

The working group considered a report on renters' rights act 2025.

A member expressed concern that the legislation was "anti-landlord" and did not sufficiently emphasise tenant responsibility, predicting that many landlords, particularly small ones, would withdraw from the market, leading to supply issues. Another member countered that the legislation was long overdue, addressing instances of poor landlord behaviour and questioning whether it would genuinely choke off supply, drawing parallels to past predictions about minimum wage impacts. The member acknowledged that some tenants were problematic but suggested rogue tenants often aligned with rogue landlords. Another member agreed, viewing the Act as addressing a long-standing imbalance in the landlord-tenant relationship.

A member asked if the council would be operationally ready by May. Ms Hitter acknowledged it would be a challenge, given the same service was managing selective licencing and transformation. While recent recruitment factored in both initiatives, further review might be needed, potentially requiring different roles (e.g., intelligence officers). The Act introduced more civil penalty notices, necessitating robust procedures.

When asked about the main risks of increased demand, Ms Hitter cited capacity constraints. She confirmed that confidence in current capacity was not high and that a wider council approach involving Legal and Homelessness teams would be necessary. The Act also shifted some previously private landlord-tenant actions to local authority duties, increasing pressure. A member enquired about additional government

resources. Ms Hitter confirmed a small amount of funding was received last year, with an announcement for 2026-27 awaited. She noted that funding did not guarantee the ability to recruit necessary staff, and the challenge was compounded by the team's recent transition from other duties.

A member highlighted concerns about vulnerable groups, such as foreign workers, who may be particularly exploited and unaware of their rights. Ms Hitter stated that collaboration with regional authorities would be crucial to share best practises and resources in addressing these challenges.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

CWP.17 NEXT STEPS

The working group discuss the next steps including timetable for future meetings.

The Chair confirmed that the data analysis would be presented at the next meeting on the 4th March 2026, providing estimated numbers of Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) in the borough, with varying levels of certainty based on cross-referencing data (e.g., multiple surnames at an address). This report, combined with previous information, would provide a comprehensive overview for discussion.

RESOLVED – That the next steps be noted and added to the agenda for the next meeting on the 4th March 2026.

There being no further business, the Chairman declared the meeting closed at 10.03 am