



CABINET WORKING PARTY SELECTIVE LICENSING/HOUSES OF MULTIPLE OCCUPATION

26th November 2025 at 10.00am

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)
- Drew Hughes (Head of Strategy, Policy and Performance)
- Dee Hitter (Head of Regulation and Sustainability)

Also in attendance:

There was one member of the public and no members of the press in attendance at the meeting.

CWP.5 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence received for this meeting.

CWP.6 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

CWP.7 MINUTES

RESOLVED - That the draft minutes of the meeting of the Houses of Multiple Occupancy Cabinet Working Group held on 20th October 2025 be approved as a correct record.

CWP.8 HOUSES OF MULTIPLE OCCUPANCY DATA SETS

The working group received a report outlining the options to proactively identify properties likely to be operating as Houses of Multiple Occupation (HMOs) that were currently unknown or unregistered, supporting better housing management, enforcement, and community wellbeing.

Mr Hughes explained that option 1 (in-house data analysis) would utilise a mix of local and national data sets (e.g., Royal Mail, census, council tax, utility data, complaints, planning history). The Insights team would apply data science techniques to identify patterns and create a list of likely HMO properties, scoring each based on indicators such as multiple names on bills, high waste levels, planning history, and complaints. A process of validation through targeted checks would refine the approach over time.

He explained that the benefits would be to proactively identify potential HMOs, make efficient use of council resources by focusing on high-risk properties, supporting data-driven decisions, addressing community concerns, and this could be delivered in-house.

Option 2 (Hire BRE Group) involved engaging external consultants, similar to Leicester City Council's approach, which used predictive modelling to estimate HMO locations and support targeted enforcement.

The benefits would be an independent, comprehensive analysis, successfully used by other councils. However, Mr Hughes highlighted that there would be significant cost for external consultants and less flexibility to refine the approach over time compared to an in-house model.

Officers recommended Option 1 (in-house data-driven approach) due to its cost-effectiveness, flexibility, and confidence in making the best use of the Council resources. Mr Hughes confirmed that the next steps would be to access all relevant data sets, combine and analyse data, develop and test a scoring model, and report findings for targeted action, followed by a validation process.

A member enquired about the impact of this work on enforcement capacity. Mr Hughes clarified that this approach provided information to guide enforcement, rather than directly affecting its capacity.

The Chair raised concerns about GDPR compliance when using data such as credit data and electoral roll information. Mr Hughes confirmed full engagement with the Data Protection Officer would ensure compliant data

usage, including establishing data sharing agreements if necessary. He emphasised that data would be used to identify properties, not individuals.

Regarding timelines, Mr Hughes indicated that accessing, cleaning, and manipulating the data would be the most time-consuming phase while the actual data modelling would be quicker.

A member clarified if this meant pounds rather than thousands. Mr Hughes stated there would be no additional revenue or cash costs as existing team members would deliver the work. Minor licencing fees for data access (hundreds of pounds) might be incurred.

A member questioned the confidence in capturing the vast majority of target properties. Mr Hughes expressed confidence that this was the best approach, similar to models used externally, and would be effective for North East Lincolnshire.

Referring to identifying HMO's, a member asked about alternative approaches. Mr Hughes mentioned ongoing discussions within the officer group. Ms Hitter added that the forthcoming Renters' Rights Act, with its mandatory landlord database, would also aid in capturing information.

The member further enquired how unregistered HMOs or properties falsely listed as empty but operating as HMOs would be identified. Ms Hitter explained that general enforcement, civil penalties for unregistered landlords, and embedding broader enforcement skills across council services (e.g., waste management, food visits) would help identify such properties. Empty property lists would also be subject to investigation.

RESOLVED – That option one, data analysis by the NELC Insights Team, be the preferred option.

CWP.9 HOUSING ENFORCEMENT SERVICE TRANSFORMATION

The working group received a report on the transformation of the Housing Enforcement Service.

The Chair asked how many of the initial 55 HMO cases had led to enforcement actions. Ms Hitter clarified that these were primarily investigatory cases, often referrals from the public, identified as potential HMOs.

Addressing concerns about staff well-being and potential burnout (noted in the report), Ms Hitter explained that the situation was being managed sensitively, working closely with people and culture. New graduate and entry-level roles were designed to support existing staff, allowing them to focus on more complex cases while new recruits handled administrative tasks to gain experience.

A member enquired about feedback from the fortnightly sprint meetings. Ms Hitter confirmed these meetings focused on service redesign and selective licencing progress, and reports could be provided if requested.

A member questioned the relevance of this report to the working group, viewing it as operational and lacking specific recommendations for the group's decision-making.

The Chair disagreed, emphasising the report's importance in addressing long-standing capacity issues, which directly impacted the working groups ability to progress work on selective licencing and HMOs. The Chair felt it provided reassurance on staff support and operational progress.

Councillor Jackson suggested that members submitted any specific agenda items they wished to discuss in writing to the Chair.

RESOLVED – That the update be noted

CWP.10 HEDNA AND CENSUS DATA

The working group received a report with further analysis of Census and Housing and Economic Development Needs Assessment (HEDNA) data.

Ms Borgstrom clarified that this was an independent technical document that formed part of the local plan consultation and highlighted that there was a significant need for smaller homes (one to two-bedroom units) within the borough. This demand was driven by demographic changes, including an ageing population and an increase in single-person households, alongside an existing stock imbalance where three-bedroom homes dominate.

The evidence suggested that 20-40% of new market homes should ideally be one to two-bedroom unit and the need was even greater in the social housing sector, with 55-75% of current waiting list demand being for one to two-bedroom homes. Ms Borgstrom highlighted that this evidence was currently part of the local planning consultation.

A member asked about information regarding housing for the elderly, attached accommodation, and supported accommodation. Ms Borgstrom stated that the refreshed housing strategy (due to come to scrutiny in Spring 2026) would address these needs, acknowledging a growing demand for extra care and adaptive housing. She clarified that supported accommodation typically consisted of self-contained flats and did not usually fall under the HMO definition, though some units might.

The relevance of this item to the Working Group's remit, specifically concerning HMOs and licencing was queried by a member. Ms Borgstrom

explained the relevance was because there was an unmet need for smaller housing units which created an incentive for property owners to convert properties into HMOs to meet market demand.

Ms Borgstrom highlighted that if the Working Group considered implementing Article 4 directions (which would require planning permission for HMO conversions), planning officers would have to consider the underlying housing need. A strong need for smaller units could make it difficult to refuse such conversions. She suggested a planning officer could provide more technical detail on this aspect at a later date.

Councillor Jackson explained that Article 4 was explicitly included within the Working Group's terms of reference, as agreed at the Council AGM in May 2025.

The Chair reaffirmed that Article 4 was within the group's remit and encouraged members to submit any further questions on the HEDNA report to herself or Ms Borgstrom.

RESOLVED – That that updated be noted.

CWP.11 NEXT STEPS

The next meeting of this working party was scheduled for 30 January 2026 and the proposed agenda items for that meeting included:

- An update on selective licensing implementation, with a target implementation date of April 2026.
- Discussion on the Renters' Rights legislation.
- A review of Voluntary Landlord Schemes (using the previously circulated report).

A member suggested exploring other areas for future selective licensing schemes, emphasising a neighbourhood-based rather than ward-based approach. The member also proposed reviewing the cost-effectiveness and practicalities of voluntary landlord schemes. Councillor Jackson clarified that the current selective licensing scheme was already based on neighbourhood boundaries, not strictly ward boundaries.

Mr Hughes confirmed that the data collected from the current HMO identification work would assist in identifying other geographic areas suitable for selective licensing.

The Chair acknowledged previous discussions about expanding selective licensing, noting the initial focus on one ward to establish foundations, with voluntary schemes considered for other wards to build evidence.

Regarding voluntary schemes, Carolina Borgstrom noted that national evidence on their effectiveness was mixed. Councillor Jackson suggested re-circulating the previous report on voluntary schemes to allow members to revisit the discussion.

A member enquired about a future date to consider additional areas for selective licensing. The Chair confirmed that the Communities Scrutiny Panel would review the scheme after one year to assess its success and potential for earlier expansion.

RESOLVED –

1. That the voluntary scheme report be circulated to members of this working party.
2. That the following items be included in the agenda for the meeting of this working party on 30th January 2026:
 - An update on selective licensing implementation, with a target implementation date of April 2026.
 - Discussion on the Renters' Rights legislation.
 - A review of Voluntary Landlord Schemes (using the previously circulated report).

There being no further business, the Chairman declared the meeting closed at 10.52 am