

STOCKTON-ON-TEES BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET RECOMMENDATIONS

PROFORMA

Cabinet Meeting16th September 2021

1. Title of Item/Report

PRIVATE LANDLORDS SUPPORTING STOCKTON (PLuSS) SCHEME REVIEW

2. Record of the Decision

Members were reminded that previous reports had been presented to Cabinet which considered the option of Selective Licensing of the private rented sector in Central Stockton and the Victoria area of the Mandale and Victoria ward (North Thornaby). During the selective licensing consultation period, private sector landlords approached the Council with an alternative proposal, one which they considered would achieve the same outcomes as Selective Licensing ; i.e. drive up standards of property condition and management of private rented housing.

In January 2019, Cabinet agreed to postpone a decision on Selective Licensing to allow for a period of engagement with private sector landlords and the establishment of a Landlord Led Membership scheme. Originally it was intended to report back to Cabinet 6-months after the scheme commenced, however due to the COVID pandemic Cabinet agreed to allow the scheme to operate for a minimum 18-months before a review/evaluation be undertaken. Cabinet were provided with a report detailing the scheme review undertaken by officers.

Applications to join the PLuSS scheme started well but decreased significantly after March 2020, with only 14 applications received between March 2020 and July 202d1. In considering how membership of the PLuSS scheme compared with the original proposal Selective Licensing scheme proposal, under the terms of the Selective Licensing proposal, it was estimated 1,523 privately rented properties would have required a licence across the two Selective Licensing areas. 593 properties are covered by the PLuSS scheme which equates to 39% of those properties which under the terms of a Selective Licensing designation would have required a license. PLuSS have tried a number of ways to promote and advertise the scheme but unfortunately this has had limited impact on securing new members.

Of those landlords and managing agents who signed the PLuSS

consultation document objecting to Selective Licensing and proposing this alternative scheme, only 57 (59%) have subsequently chosen to join the P LuSS scheme.

Mr Dominic Ferard, Chair of P LuSS, was in attendance at the meeting and spoke in support of its continuation.

Given that the number of private rented properties included in the Landlord Led Membership scheme was lower than anticipated, Cabinet was invited to consider the exploration of a Selective Licensing Scheme for the Borough as an option going forward. To do so, the Council would need to determine whether it had a robust evidence base to justify Selective Licensing and details of how this would be undertaken were included within the report. It was expected that this process of exploration could take 5-6 months to complete before a further report could be submitted to Cabinet, during which time officers would continue to support P LuSS in the promotion of their scheme with the hope of take up by private landlords increasing, at which point the position could be re-assessed.

RESOLVED that Cabinet:-

1. Note the outcome of the P LuSS 'Landlord Led Membership Scheme' evaluation;
2. Approve the exploration of a Selective Licensing Scheme for the Borough with a further report to Cabinet following conclusion of the evidence gathering exercise.

3. Reasons for the Decision

To enable Cabinet to consider the effectiveness of the P LuSS Landlord Led Membership Scheme and its impact on driving up property condition and management in the private rented sector across Central Stockton and North Thornaby.

4. Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

None

5. Declared (Cabinet Member) Conflicts of Interest

None

6. Details of any Dispensations

N/A

7. Date and Time by which Call In must be executed

Midnight-Friday 24th September 2021.

Proper Officer
20 September 2021