



CITY AND COUNTY OF SWANSEA
DINAS A SIR ABERTAWE

To
Councillor Mark Child
Cabinet Member for Wellbeing and Healthy
City

Councillor Robert Francis-Davies
Cabinet Member for Enterprise, Planning
and Development

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13 February 2017

Summary: This is a letter from the Houses in Multiple Occupation Scrutiny Working group to the Cabinet Members for Wellbeing & Health City and Enterprise, Planning & Regeneration following the meeting of the Working Group on 12 January 2017. It is about the Housing in Multiple Occupation in Swansea.

Dear Cabinet Members,

Houses in Multiple Occupation Scrutiny Working Group – 12 January 2017

The Houses in Multiple Occupation Scrutiny Working Group has now concluded its work. Thank you for your contribution to our meeting on the 12 January. This letter contains our views, conclusions and recommendations from our examination of this topic and the issues brought to our attention.

The Scrutiny Programme Committee agreed for this to be an issue for scrutiny after they were contacted by a member of the public who expressed concern about the numbers and control of HMOs in Swansea. They also raised particular issues about the spread of HMOs in the east side due to the new University campus, and its effect on the local area.

The Working Group received background on the subject from the relevant Council departments on the 25 November, spoke to you both as the relevant cabinet members and also asked for submissions from the public both in writing and in person at our meeting on the 12 January.

As part of this work we considered:

- The Council's responsibilities (legislative or otherwise) and current position regarding HMOs licensing, management and control, and future plans.
- Service aims / targets / performance measures /Service costs
- The intensity of HMOs across Swansea including East / West comparison

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- Recent changes / trends and causes. Future projections.
- The Council's engagement with universities / landlords / HMO providers, and partnership working
- Impact on Council Tax revenue from HMO properties

We would like to thank those members of the public who submitted their views both in writing and in person ([full copies](#) of consultation submissions are available). In summary, this highlighted:

- The need for communities to feel they are listened to, valued and respected, particularly in areas where there are already a large concentration of HMOs
- The changing demography of certain parts of Swansea and its impact on community cohesion (including residents, facilities available in the areas and the sustainability of community groups)
- The noise disturbance, anti-social behaviour and street scene issues caused by large concentrations of HMOs on communities/individuals living in these areas
- The fear that without intervention now St Thomas will experience similar issues to Uplands area
- The need for a ceiling to the numbers of HMO properties so they are more spread across Swansea and not concentrated in certain areas
- The need to look for ways of encouraging re-conversion of properties back to family homes
- Potentially harmful concentrations and the proposed HMO concentration ratios and radius from property applications

We are aware that Supplementary Planning Guidance on HMOs was discussed at Planning Committee on the 10 January and that it will now go out to public consultation. We welcome this new guidance and would encourage members of the public to give their views directly into this process.

Following our consideration of the relevant information and issues we wish to make a number of recommendations:

Recommendations

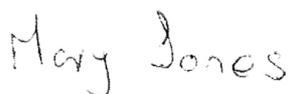
In your response we would appreciate your comments on any of the issues raised in this letter. We would be grateful, however, if you could specifically refer to our recommendations below:

1. The Working Group identified a financial surplus from the fee income received after licensing related salaries of HMO Officers had been paid. This discovery came from figures provided by the department and from questions by working group members to officers. We recommend that this surplus should be used to increase the number of HMO Licensing Officers.
2. Bring forward the Additional HMO Licencing Scheme review to be agreed at the October 2017 Council meeting for implementation in March 2018 and use this opportunity to:
 - a. Raise the landlord fee, and use any identified surplus between fee income and costs, to employ additional enforcement officers. This will enable the service to be proactive rather than reactive enabling greater enforcement

- of existing legislation particularly around policing of HMO's over the five year term.
- b. Determine the evidence base for consideration of Additional HMO Licensing across the City and County of Swansea by immediately undertaking proactive survey work, starting with the St. Thomas Ward. The survey for this Ward should be completed by April 2017.
 - c. Promote:
 - i) the new Rent Smart Wales legislative requirements to landlords and to tenants, which allows tenants and prospective tenants to identify properly registered landlords and licenced agents.
 - ii) the public register of licensed HMOs on the Council's website www.swansea.gov.uk/hmoregister
 - iii) the Environmental Protection Act 1990 and obligations on householders regarding waste, litter, and nuisance.
 - d. In addition to the above, liaise with Wrexham Council to learn from their practice whereby they differentiate between good and not good landlords. *'Separating the Good from the Bad' – The public register will be promoted as the most appropriate place to find shared accommodation. This should assist tenants to avoid substandard properties and rogue landlords and ensure that tenants are directed towards licensed HMOs.'* **Wrexham County Borough Council**
3. The Supplementary Planning guidance define a threshold above which concentration or intensification of HMOs will be deemed harmful within a 50 metre radius of a proposal
 4. The Supplementary Planning Guidance define a HMO threshold of:
 - a. No more than 20% in the designated HMO Management Area
 - b. No more than 10% in the remainder of the City and County (the Working Group accepts that there may be exceptions that would need to be assessed on their own merits)
 5. Advise on noise insulation for all HMO licenced properties of 3+.
 6. Take action against landlords / tenants that remove or tamper with the closures on fire doors within HMOs. There should be more rigorous enforcement of the requirement for fire doors to soft close and be properly maintained.
 7. Investigate the possibility of incentives being offered to re-convert surplus HMOs back to family homes.

We look forward to your written response by 7 March 2017.

Yours sincerely,



COUNCILLOR MARY JONES

Convener of the Houses in Multiple Occupation Scrutiny Working Group

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