



Licensing and Regulatory Committee	Thursday, 05 September 2019	Matter for Information
---	--	-----------------------------------

Report Title: **Selective Licensing Communications Plan**

Report Author(s): **John Lucas (Selective Licensing Officer)**

Purpose of Report:	To advise the Committee of the Council's plans to consult on a selective licensing scheme for private rented homes in the South Wigston Ward.
Report Summary:	The Council's adopted Corporate Plan 2019-2024 includes an ambition (GBE 3) to develop a scheme for licensing private rented homes in an area of the Borough. This report describes the ways in which the Council will consult with residents and landlords in South Wigston and beyond.
Recommendation(s):	That the content of the report and appendix be noted.
Senior Leadership, Head of Service, Manager, Officer and Other Contact(s):	<p>David Gill (Head of Law and Democracy) (0116) 257 2626 David.Gill@oadby-wigston.gov.uk</p> <p>Tony Cawthorne (Regulatory Services Manager) (0116) 257 2670 Tony.Cawthorne@oadby-wigston.gov.uk</p> <p>John Lucas (Selective Licensing Officer) (0116) 257 2678 John.Lucas@oadby-wigston.gov.uk</p>
Corporate Objectives:	<p>Building, Protecting and Empowering Communities (CO1)</p> <p>Growing the Borough Economically (CO2)</p> <p>Providing Excellent Services (CO3)</p>
Vision and Values:	<p>"A Stronger Borough Together" (Vision)</p> <p>Accountability (V1)</p> <p>Respect (V2)</p> <p>Teamwork (V3)</p> <p>Innovation (V4)</p> <p>Customer Focus (V5)</p>
Report Implications:-	
Legal:	The implications are as set out at paragraph 2 of this report.
Financial:	The implications are as set out at paragraphs 5.1 and 5.2 of this report.
Corporate Risk Management:	<p>Regulatory Governance (CR6)</p> <p>Economy / Regeneration (CR9)</p>
Equalities and Equalities Assessment (EA):	There are no implications directly arising from this report. EA not applicable

Human Rights:	There are no implications arising from this report.
Health and Safety:	There are no implications arising from this report.
Statutory Officers' Comments:-	
Head of Paid Service:	The report is satisfactory.
Chief Finance Officer:	The report is satisfactory.
Monitoring Officer:	The report is satisfactory.
Consultees:	Philippa Fisher (Marketing and Insight Manager) Ben Wilson (Project and Procurement Officer)
Background Papers:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Selective Licensing in the Private rented sector – A guide for Local Authorities issued by DCLG - https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/418551/150327_Guidance_on_selective_licensing_applications_FINAL_updated_isbn.pdf
Appendices:	1. Communications Plan Selective Licensing V1.1

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Housing Act 2004 enables Councils' to declare Selective Licensing areas within their boundaries in an effort to improve housing conditions, combat anti-social behaviour and deal with low demand for housing. Prior to declaring an area, Councils are legally obliged to carry out a wide and thorough consultation with all interested parties and stakeholders for a minimum period of 10 weeks, and to take into account the views of stakeholders prior to the declaration of a Selective Licensing scheme. This report advises members of the steps being taken to carry out that task.

2. Background

- 2.1 Section 80 (9) of the Housing Act 2004 states that before considering making a designation for Selective Licensing the local housing authority must:
- Take reasonable steps to consult persons who are likely to be affected by the designation; and
 - Consider any representations made in accordance with the consultation. In accordance with the legislation the Council will not consider representations which are withdrawn.
- 2.2 Local housing authorities are therefore required to conduct a full consultation. This should include consultation with local residents, tenants and landlords and where appropriate their managing agents and other members of the community and local businesses who live or provide services in the proposed designated areas and surrounding areas.
- 2.3 The consultation period required by the Department for Housing Communities and Local Government (MHDCLG) is a minimum of ten weeks. The Council will adopt a ten week consultation period.

3. The Consultation Process

3.1 Consultation should be to the scale, scope and nature of the project that is being completed. The communication process proposed by the Council will be informative, clear and concise so that the selective licensing proposal is easily understood. As this is a consultation, it may result in changes to the Council's Selective Licensing proposal. In order to ensure meaningful consultation the Council will:

- Publish a detailed paper outlining the reasons for the proposal; this will include the method used to identify the proposed licensing areas, the components of the fee structure, the proposed license conditions and any potential impacts both positive and negative;
- Provide some initial information about the project to aid discussion (i.e. a consultation leaflet);
- Ensure there is ongoing dialogue with consultees throughout the consultation process; facilitate face to face meetings; making sure that there is sufficient diversity among those groups or individuals being consulted, to ensure that all relevant parties are represented and all relevant information is gathered. Further details are provided at **Appendix 1**.
- Make sure that each interested party has the opportunity to respond to the consultation.
- Ensure the method of consultation suits the various interested parties, for example using formal written consultation and facilitating briefings and face to face meetings;
- Make sure that the information provided and the perspectives, concerns and issues raised during the consultation process are analysed and duly considered in the final design and implementation of any selective licensing scheme taken forward.

4. Methods of Communication

- a) OWBC Borough Council website www.owbc/selectivelicensing and other social media (Facebook, Twitter);
 - b) Mail drop to all residents, businesses and other stakeholders within the proposed Selective licensing areas and/or in the surrounding areas outside of the proposed designation who may be affected or who are likely to consider that they live in the same locality as the proposed scheme;
 - c) Direct mail-out to landlords, managing/letting agents who have properties in the proposed selective licensing areas and/or in the surrounding areas outside of the proposed designation who may be affected or who are likely to consider that they live in the same locality as the proposed scheme;
 - d) Engagement sessions: with landlords and managing/letting agents;
 - e) Drop-in's / briefing sessions for stakeholders and residents in the proposed selective licensing areas;
 - f) Direct mail-outs to partner agencies
 - g) Press releases (and the use of social media) as a means to engage with the wider community and businesses both inside and outside of the Borough;
 - h) Direct contact to members of the Safer communities partnership. Neighbourhood and Affordable Warmth Partnership meetings;
 - i) Information sharing with local Ward Councillors and Members of Parliament (including 1-1 briefing sessions);
 - j) OWBC Council Intranet to inform employees.
- 4.1 All documents including the proposal paper, the proposed fee structure and the draft licence conditions, details of the consultation process (including an on-line questionnaire) will be published on the Council's website and promoted to key groups utilising the methods outlined above.
- 4.2 The Council will produce a smaller summarised version of the Selective Licensing Scheme proposal (consultation leaflet). A questionnaire will also be published (paper and online) which will be used to gather views from all stakeholders to the proposal.

5. Stakeholders to be contacted

5.1 To ensure that all those likely to be affected by the proposal are consulted and have the opportunity to share their view we will carry out the following stakeholder engagement:

- Residents: the consultation leaflet and questionnaire (with a pre-paid reply envelope) will be hand-delivered to the home addresses of all residents living within the selective licensing area's and to those in direct adjacency;
- Ward Councillors and the local Member of Parliament will receive a letter advising them of the scheme proposals inviting feedback and comments;
- Businesses: the consultation leaflet and questionnaire (with a pre-paid reply envelope) will be delivered to all businesses within the proposed designation areas and the immediately surrounding areas, again inviting feedback and comments;
- Registered Provider landlords who operate in the proposed designated areas will be contacted directly and advised of the consultation process, and encouraged to comment;
- Landlords; all known landlords and letting/estate agents will be sent the summary leaflet and consultation questionnaire and encouraged to respond;
- National Landlords Associations will be directly contacted to inform them of the Council's proposal and encouraged to respond;
- Landlord drop in sessions will be held, aimed predominately at those who are directly affected or are likely to be affected. These will be informal so landlords can call in on a drop-in basis. Council staff will be on hand to answer any questions;
- Resident/business/stakeholder drop in sessions : will also be held in the proposed designated areas for residents and others to call in and speak to staff;
- Interested parties such as the Police and Fire and Rescue service will be contacted directly and invited to comment;
- Stakeholders/members of the Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise sector (VCSE): these will be contacted by letter and/or email to inform them of the proposal. They will be advised that all information can be viewed on the Council's website and views/comments will again be encouraged. Council staff will be available to attend follow-up meetings if required (during the consultation period);
- Council employees: details will be provided within the staff bulletin to advise them of the proposal and will again seek comments.
- Residents, businesses and stakeholders in and outside of the Borough: press releases (including social media) will be issued to local media to promote the consultation. In addition full details regarding the Councils proposal will be available on the Council's website, including an on-line consultation questionnaire and promoted through letterbox (distributed to each household in the Borough).
- The Council will also use its website to ensure that all information regarding the proposal is readily available to view. The website will also include an online questionnaire.

5.2 Whilst direct consultation will attempt to be as exhaustive as possible, any interested groups not already identified and consulted directly will also be encouraged to complete the on-line or paper questionnaire or make comments. Groups not consulted directly are considered likely to hear about the proposal through mediums such as the website and local press releases.

6. How issues raised in the consultation will be dealt with

6.1 Throughout the consultation process a record of each form of consultation undertaken will be recorded and all issues raised during the consultation process will be formally logged. The findings of the consultation will be analysed and the Council will publish an anonymised summary of responses received and will explain how these have been either acted upon or not and give reasons. A copy of this consultation report will be published and placed on the Council's website under the Selective Licensing pages.

6.2 Details of the above will then be reported back to the appropriate Committees. Subject to the outcome of the consultation, the Council will then make a final decision as to whether or not to proceed with the Selective Licensing proposal (including the scope and the scale of the designation).