



Subject:	Department for Communities Review of Houses in Multiple Occupation Licensing Scheme
Date:	17th November 2021
Reporting Officer:	Kevin Bloomfield, NIHMO Manager
Contact Officer:	Vivienne Donnelly, City Protection Manager Kevin Bloomfield, NIHMO Manager

Restricted Reports				
Is this report restricted?	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>

1.0	Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues
1.1	The Houses in Multiple Occupation Act (Northern Ireland) 2016 came into effect in April 2019 following the transfer from Northern Ireland Housing Executive's (NIHE) HMO Registration scheme to councils under a new licensing regime.
1.2	As part of the transfer arrangements, the Department for Communities (DfC) undertook to undertake a review of the implementation of the HMO licensing scheme within two years of the transfer.
1.3	The Committee, on 10th March 2021, agreed the Council's proposed response to the review.
1.4	DfC forwarded an initial feedback report on the review on 30th June and requested the NIHMO Unit to provide comments on Annex B which contains comments on the administration of the licensing scheme.
1.5	A number of themes were identified in Annex B and appendix 3 details the proposed Council response to those themes.

2.0	Recommendations
2.1	Taking into account the information presented, the Committee is asked to agree the proposed response to the initial feedback report issued by DfC in respect of its review of the HMO licensing scheme.
2.2	The Committee is also asked to agree an additional submission to DfC at paragraph 3.8 below and in Appendix 3.
3.0	Main Report
	<p data-bbox="261 533 416 566"><u>Key Issues</u></p> <p data-bbox="165 600 1476 703">3.1 The Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO) Act NI 2016 was commenced on 1st April 2019 which coincided with officers from NIHE transferring to Belfast City Council to administer and deliver the new HMO Licensing Scheme function for all councils in Northern Ireland.</p> <p data-bbox="165 734 1476 801">3.2 As part of the transfer arrangements, DfC undertook to review the implementation of the new licensing scheme within 2 years of the transfer taking place from the NIHE to councils.</p> <p data-bbox="165 833 1476 936">3.3 On 17th February 2021, the Committee considered a paper titled ‘Department for Communities On-Line Questionnaire’ as part of the Review of Houses in Multiple Occupation Licensing Scheme.</p> <p data-bbox="165 967 1476 1070">3.4 At the meeting of 17th February 2021, the Committee agreed to defer consideration of the draft response until its monthly meeting in March to allow for Members to consider it in greater detail.</p> <p data-bbox="165 1102 1476 1303">3.5 At the meeting on 10th March 2021 the Committee is asked to note and agree the Council’s proposed response to the on-line questionnaire issued by DfC in respect of their review of the HMO licensing scheme. Committee is also asked note and agree an additional submission to DfC to be considered as part of their review highlighting legislative anomalies and omissions with suggested amendments to improve the delivery and administration of the HMO licensing scheme. (Appendix 1)</p> <p data-bbox="165 1335 1476 1438">3.6 The Committee noted the report of 10th March 2021 and agreed to the Council’s proposed response to the on-line questionnaire issued by DfC in respect of its review of the HMO licensing scheme.</p> <p data-bbox="165 1469 1476 1639">3.7 On 30th June 2021, the Council received from DfC a copy of the “Initial feedback report on review of licensing scheme for Houses in Multiple Occupation” Annex B of the report contained comments on the administration of the licensing scheme, the department requested a response from the NIHMO Unit to these comments. A copy of the feedback report can be accessed at https://minutes.belfastcity.gov.uk/documents/s94961/Feedback%20Report.pdf</p> <p data-bbox="165 1671 1476 1989">3.8 A number of themes have emerged from the responses to the DfC consultation on the Houses in Multiple Occupation Act (Northern Ireland) 2016. Those themes being</p> <ol data-bbox="309 1774 743 1989" style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Cost 2. Guidance 3. Online application process 4. Revision to the definition 5. Environmental issues 6. Determination documentation

	<p>7. Planning 8. Over provision 9. Section 28 – change of ownership: effect on licence 10. Section 29 Death of sole licence holder: effect on licence 11. Communications 12. Council working against landlords 13. Administration 14. Out of hours contact number 15. Advert in the paper 16. Minimum room size 17. Section 63 Landlord Training 18. Fee for temporary notice</p> <p>3.9 Appendix 3 gives the Council’s response to each of the major themes raised by the consultation.</p> <p><u>Financial and Resource Implications</u></p> <p>3.10 None</p> <p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u></p> <p>3.11 There are no issues associated with this report.</p>
	<p>Documents Attached</p>
	<p>Appendix 1 – Committee report of 20th March</p> <p>Appendix 2 – Initial feedback report on review of licensing scheme for HMOs (link in paragraph 3.7)</p> <p>Appendix 3 – Council’s response to each of the major themes raised in the feedback report.</p>