

APPENDIX 2

From: Executive Director (Growth and Housing)

Sent: 24 November 2021

Subject: Selective Licensing - Update re Minute 400 of P&R Scrutiny Committee 7.10.2021

Importance: High

Dear Councillor

Further to discussions held at the Policy & Resources Scrutiny Committee on 7th October 2021 (Minute 400), at which Cllr Gilbert undertook to supply further information regarding the Selective Licensing work, please note the following.

We were asked to furnish specific financial data which had not been included in the Cabinet report of 14th September 2021. These relate to staffing, ICT and enforcement costs:

- The new Selective Licensing Team consists of 8 officers, including a Team Manager. The posts range between Level 5 and Level 11, and the budget for the team is £363,549 per annum inclusive of National Insurance and Pensions contributions. There is an additional one-off budget of £23,417 for recruitment costs;
- The ICT system which has been procured for the delivery of Selective Licensing, has a total cost of £89,000 over the 5-year term of the scheme, this being £21,800 in Year 1, and £16,800 for each year thereafter;
- With regard to enforcement costs associated with Selective Licensing, we have consistently noted that it is very difficult to predict these at the outset of a scheme as it depends on the amount of Fixed Penalty Notices (FPNs) which will be issued. This varies from Council to Council. The best way to ensure we reduce the funding pressure and generate good income to offset against pressures and any high level enforcement is to have a robust Enforcement Policy. This, which is on the Forward Plan, will be drafted to reflect a very strong stance on enforcement and allow for the appropriate charges and FPNs to be issued to ensure compliance, and reduce the need for higher level enforcement. The advice we have received is that the setting of quotas is not good practice, and has been perceived by landlords as a prosecutions target, which is not in keeping with the objectives of Selective Licensing.

In addition to the above, officers were asked to consider whether the process for the introduction of Selective Licensing was correctly followed, and whether the agreement for a go-live date was undertaken properly. There were also questions raised regarding Cabinet reports and whether the information they contained was of sufficient detail.

Subsequent to the Policy & Resources Scrutiny Committee of 7th October 2021, we have taken expert legal advice on this matter and whose opinion is that the required process has been followed and is sound. This opinion also states that the detail provided in reports is appropriate and in keeping with expectations. We have also worked closely with leading specialist consultants in Selective Licensing throughout the period before and since the Cabinet of 23rd February 2021, and our approach is consistent with that taken in the other local authorities in which they are currently operating.

I trust the above is helpful and addresses the points raised.

