

Report of:	To:	Date	Item no.
Cllr. Roger Berry, Neighbourhood Services and Community Safety Portfolio Holder	Council	12 April 2017	8(e)

**Executive Report: Neighbourhood Services and Community Safety Portfolio Holder**

**1. Purpose of report**

- 1.1 To inform Council of progress on key objectives and the current position on issues within the Neighbourhood Services and Community Safety Portfolio as set out below.

**2. Private Sector Housing**

**Extension of the Licensing of Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs)**

- 2.1 Mandatory HMO licensing is currently governed by The Licensing of Houses in Multiple Occupation (Prescribed Descriptions) (England) Order 2006. Local Authorities have a duty to ensure all relevant properties are correctly licensed. At present the only properties currently requiring mandatory licensing are HMOs comprising of three stories or more occupied by five or more people forming two or more separate households. HMO licenses are valid for five years before a renewal application is required.
- 2.2 The Licensing of Houses in Multiple Occupation (Prescribed Description) (England) Order 2018 was agreed by parliament on 23 February and will come into effect across England on 1 October 2018. The most significant change in this Order is the definition of an HMO under the Housing Act 2004. When it comes into effect later in the year, the new definition of an HMO for licensing purposes will be any property occupied by five or more people, forming two or more separate households.
- 2.3 At present Wyre has 26 licensed HMOs. The removal of the requirement for licensable properties to be at least three stories will increase the number of mandatory licensable properties. It is estimated there could be up to 100 properties that will be required to have a licence by 1 October 2018. Resource implications on the Private Sector Housing Team are being assessed. We currently charge £970.00 for a HMO licence (although small discounts are applicable in some circumstances), therefore additional income is expected in 2018/19.

- 2.4 Information on the Council's website will be updated from April 2018 to reflect the upcoming changes, and liaison with landlords and letting agents will also commence to identify properties needing to be licenced from 1 October 2018.

#### **New minimum standards for Private Rented Sector Energy Performance Certificates (EPC's)**

- 2.5 The Energy Efficiency (Private Rented Property)(England and Wales) Regulations 2015 mean that from the 1 April 2018 there will be a requirement for any properties rented out in the private rented sector to have a minimum energy performance rating of E on an Energy Performance Certificate (EPC). The regulations will come into force for new lets and renewals of tenancies with effect from 1 April 2018 and for all existing tenancies on 1 April 2020. It will be unlawful to rent a property which breaches the requirement for a minimum E rating, unless there is an applicable exemption. A civil penalty of up to £4,000 can be imposed for breaches.
- 2.6 All the Lancashire District Authorities are currently working together to develop a common policy for the enforcement of the new regulations, including a consistent charging structure for penalties. Enforcement of the minimum standards will be carried out by our Private Sector Housing Team.

#### **Flexible Homelessness Support Grant Notification**

- 2.7 On 22 March information was provided on how much Flexible Homelessness Support Grant local authorities will receive through to the end of 2020. The funding has been allocated according to a formula which reflects relative homeless pressures and we will see grant levels for Wyre increase from £94,615 in 2017/18, to £105,331 in 2018/19 to £145,234 in 2019/20.
- 2.8 The Flexible Homelessness Support Grant gives local authorities more control and flexibility to prevent and relieve homelessness and forms part of the Government's end to end approach to help those at risk of homelessness and those experiencing a crisis. We will be employing this funding to continue to support a wide range of homelessness prevention measures.

### **3. Community Safety**

#### **Jimmy Armfield CBE**

- 3.1 Many tributes have been made to the late Jimmy Armfield who died on 22 January 2018. I should like to mention his work as Chair of The Lancashire Partnership Against Crime (LANPAC) which has been in existence for over 23 years and has worked in partnership with hundreds of organisations, large and small, to secure funding for additional community safety and crime reduction measures throughout the County. Under his leadership in the last six years alone over £1M has been allocated to hundreds of diverse projects including schemes aimed at protecting the vulnerable elderly, reducing incidents of burglary and

vehicle crime in addition to engaging with young people to introduce them to positive leisure time activities and divert them away from crime and anti-social behaviour.

### **The Police and Crime Panel for Lancashire**

- 3.2** I attended the Panel meeting on 12 March 2018 when details of the very recent report from HM Inspectorate of Constabulary into child protection were discussed. The report found that overall the service provided to children in need of help needed to improve. In particular some of the Constabulary's basic processes for recording child protection incidents were weak and many front line officers saw their responsibility for safeguarding children as being limited to identifying children as vulnerable on the police system. The Inspectorate felt this could result in missed opportunities to protect children at the earliest opportunity. The Panel was advised that the Police were urgently addressing the issues raised by the Inspectors and were developing an action plan which included training for front line staff. Since the inspection the Constabulary had revisited all the cases examined in the report and they had identified no further harm to children and no further offenders have been charged or cautioned as a result.

## **4. Flood Resilience**

- 4.1** In response to flooding issues raised at the Wyre Flood Forum and the Making Space for Water Group, multi-agency meetings have been held with Thornton and Churchtown Flood Action Groups (FLAGS) to identify and resolve specific flooding issues. Work is in progress, across the partner agencies, to resolve the issues raised.
- 4.2** The Council has held discussions with representatives from Pilling and St Michaels with the intention of setting up additional FLAGS, empowering residents to take action to protect their own communities during potential flooding events.

## **5. Rossall Coastal Defence Scheme**

- 5.1** The sea defence element of the project is nearing completion. All beach works have been undertaken and all pre-cast revetment units, re-curve wave walls and rear walls have been installed. Outstanding works are confined to the promenade area, more specifically around the Chatsworth and West Way areas. It is intended to open the promenade to the public in May.
- 5.2** The bulk of the earthworks, top soil and turf installation to Larkholme Grasslands is now complete along with most of the footpath work. The timber bridges have been installed and Lancashire County Council have commenced the construction of dropped crossings which will link to the new footpaths within the grassland area to the public highway.
- 5.3** A formal opening of the scheme is planned for 1 June 2018.

## **6. Comments and questions**

- 6.1** In accordance with procedure rule 11.3 any member of council will be able to ask me a question or make a comment on the contents of my report or on any issue, which falls within my area of responsibility. I will respond to any such questions or comments in accordance with procedure rule 11.5.

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