

To	Housing and Neighbourhoods O&S Committee
Subject title	Private Rented Sector (PRS) Update
Date	25 March 2020
From	Deborah Moseley Acting Senior Service Manager – Private Rented Sector

### **PRS Staffing**

The PRS has a current staffing establishment of 30 FTEs. Five of those FTEs are funded from a two year grant from MHCLG which finishes on 31 March 2021.

Nationally there is a shortage of enforcement officers – EHOs etc whose role it is to improve conditions in the private rented sector and oversee HMO licensing. Since October 2019, there have been two rounds of recruitment to fill outstanding vacancies. Offers were made to two successful candidates, only one person accepted it.

In recognition of the lack of qualified staff, we are developing an apprenticeship programme and we are currently working with DWP, local universities and our HR Directorate to establish it. Such a programme will help to attract interested persons and also assist with succession planning for the service and the council.

An additional £250,000 has been permanently allocated to the staffing budget and recruitment is currently in progress to recruit to the five post created. It is expected that they will be in post at the earliest May 2021. Once recruitment has been completed and training provided there will be a further 4 staff members to work on HMO licensing.

### **HMO Backlog**

During the year, work has been carried out to upgrade the IT solution used to process HMO licences. The upgrade allows landlords to submit licensing applications online whereas prior to that applications were submitted by post. The new way of submitting applications went live in September 2020 and the speed at which M3 processes applications remains the same.

This year a target was set to reduce the HMO licensing backlog by 31 March 2021. This has been revised to Spring of this year for two main reasons.

- a) The requirement for staff to work from home due to Covid-19, which means that it takes longer to process applications given the new way of working. E.g. arrangements are constantly having to be made to access hard copy licensing files stored at council offices.

- b) Acivico has been contracted to help reduce the HMO backlog and four staff members are dedicated to this task. Training had to be provided to ensure the licenses are processed in accordance with the council's licensing procedure and access arrangements made for files to enable them to undertake the work. Delays have also been experienced due to compatibility issues with IT systems.