

**PRS Service Update
Housing and Neighbourhoods
Overview and Scrutiny Committee
23 January 2020**

Introduction

- ❑ PRS Team Function

- ❑ Staffing Update

- ❑ Service Update

 - Private Tenancy Unit

 - Controlling Migration Fund

 - PRS Access and Sustain Fund

 - Selective Licensing

 - Performance Information

 - Planning and Article 4

- ❑ Next Steps

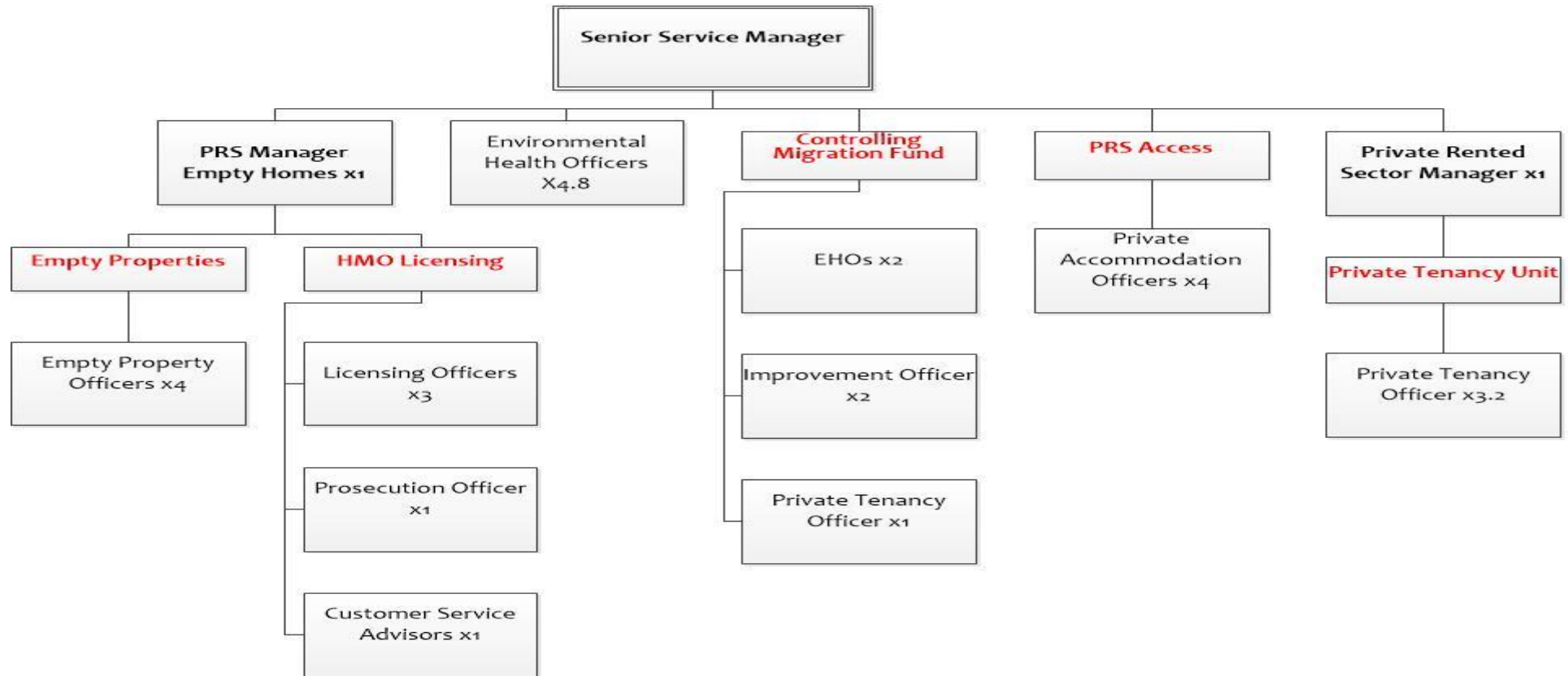
PRS Team Functions

- Private Tenancy Unit
 - Advice and Assistance
 - Enforcement
- HMO Licensing
 - Civil Penalties
 - Prosecutions

PRS Team Functions

- **Empty Properties**
- **Controlling Migration Fund**
- **PRS Access Fund**
- **Associated issues**
 - Planning and Article 4

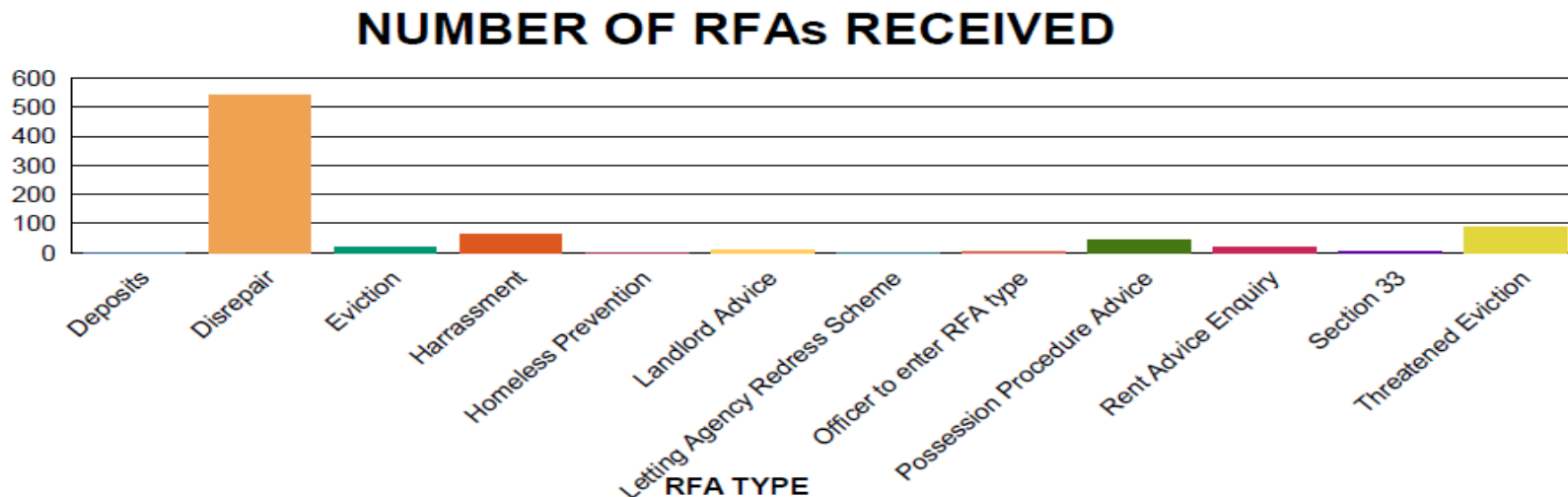
PRS – STAFFING UPDATE



- Currently recruiting to seven posts for the team
- Mix of capacity for selective licensing, EHO, PRS Access and fill established vacancies

Service Update – Private Tenancy

- April - December 2019
- 788 request for advice and assistance
- 950 advice and assistance via telephone



Service Update – HMO Licensing

- April – December 2019
- 500 new HMO licenses approved
- C700 HMO licences awaiting processing
- The IT solution purchased from Northgate was not fit for purpose. The resulting amendments required is a major cause for the delay in capacity. The revised computer system is currently being tested and it is expected that it will be BAU from February 2020.
- Recruiting the licensing officer vacancies will increase capacity to reduce the licenses awaiting processing.

Service Update – Civil Penalties

April - December 2019

- April - December 2019 , 12 Civil Penalties were issued
- Total fines £19,000
- Payments received £10,521
- Working with Legal Services to agree a process to recoup late payment of fines.
- In December 2019 there was a successful prosecution of a criminal landlord. It was a serious matter involving appalling conditions in a portfolio of properties. There is a history of the landlord failing to comply with the regulatory regime that applies to the letting of HMOs. The properties contained a real and obvious risk of harm to the occupants in addition to a lack of amenity.
- The landlord was fined a total of £19,740 and a collection order was also made.

Service Update - Performance

2019/2020 KPIs

- Annual target of 350 Private Sector Empty Properties brought back into use
- April 2019 – December 2019, 265 brought back into use. It is expected that the target will be met at the end of the financial year.
- Annual target of 350 PRS properties improved as a result of local authority intervention
April 2019 – December 2019, 236 properties improved.

Service Update – Selective Licensing

- May 2019
Councillor Thompson and delegation of officers visited Liverpool city council to learn from their experience of implementing Selective Licensing
Analysis of available data sets demonstrate that the city wouldn't meet the criteria for selective licensing.
- September 2019
Presentation to Cabinet Member for Homes and Neighbourhoods on options available to implement selective licensing
- December 2019
Update on the progress of selective licensing in the private rented service presented to Corporate Leadership Team
- January 2020
- Informal discussion with the MHCLG

Service Update – Selective Licensing

- Four Options for selective licence identified.
 - Option 1 – Based on data collated, implement selective licensing to address particular issues in specific areas
 - Option 2 – Whole ward implementation where 20% PRS criteria is met – if more than 2 wards meet the criteria the Secretary of State (SoS) approval would be required
 - Option 3 – Carry out in depth analysis of additional quantitative data and collate additional qualitative data including PRS housing sector quality analysis to develop robust evidence base covering gaps and areas of concern.
 - Option 4 – Progress the 25 LSOA's with sufficient evidence as a pilot/first run whilst progressing Option 3 to ensure all avenues of data and research is explored.
- Option 4 is the preferred option to pursue, depending on the level of risk associated with progressing the 25 current LSOA's identified.

Service Update – Selective Licensing

- Action Plan developed to progress selective licensing
 - £250K secured via the budget process to progress the work on selective licensing
 - Scoping exercise to develop the data analytics to identify the conditions required for selective licensing
 - Establishment of the steering group and associated terms of reference
 - Appointment of a dedicated project lead

Service Update – Empty Properties

- Empty Property Strategy 2019 approved at Cabinet in April 2019
- There are approximately 10,000 private sector empty homes
- Council Tax records indicate that at April 2019 approximately 3000 had been unoccupied for less than six months. This is an increase of 200 compared to October 2018
- In April 2019, Five of the City's ten Districts(Ladywood, Edgbaston. Northfield, Hall Green and Erdington) have above average empty property rate of 60% of the total number of private sector empty properties(*properties as April 2019=11492, total number of empty properties for these districts = 6916, therefore percentage is 60%*) out of this 60% the Ladywood District has the higher number of empty properties which is 23%.

Service Update – Empty Properties



On average 28 new cases of empty properties are reported each month

Service Update - Controlling Migration Fund

- The team was established June 2019
- The team with its partners operates on an intelligence led model. The three main aims of the team are;
- Tackle rogue and criminal landlords, thereby improving poor housing conditions
- Inform local communities of their rights and responsibilities
- Support vulnerable individuals.
- Multi-agency visits (Action Days) are carried out where there are concerns about the quality of property conditions or health and safety issues in relation to accommodation.

Service Update - Controlling Migration Fund

- The team primarily operates in 18 wards in the city; these principally have the highest number of HMOs and intelligence has identified that migrants to the city are more likely to live in such accommodation
- The wards are;
Aston, Newtown, Edgbaston, North Edgbaston, Ladywood, Soho and Jewellery Quarter, Nechells, Bordesley and Highgate, Bournbrook and Selly Oak, Sparkbrook and Balsall Heath East, Balsall West, Handsworth Wood, part Lozells, Part Holyhead, part Handsworth and part Bordesley Green

Service Update - Controlling Migration Fund

- The team has visited the 160 properties across the various wards. The majority of the visits have been in the Handsworth ward
- There has also been 3 Action Days with another planned for March 2020. The days have been in liaison with WM Police and WM Fire Service
- A multi- agency steering group to oversee the project and coordinate reporting to the MHCLG, and other council partnership boards has been established.
- The steering group consists of representatives from Adult and Children Safeguarding Board, West Midlands Fire Service, West Midlands Police and Birmingham Anti-Social Behaviour Team. first meeting of the Steering Group will take place in February 2020.
- Work on publicity of the service and materials for customers will be available at the end of March 2020. the materials include leaflets; welcome pack for migrants and publicity for residents about how they can assist migrants.

PRS Access Fund – Secure and Sustain Model

- Secured £711,311 as part of bid to MHCLG and part of another successful bid with Southwark for Transition Insurance
 - Set a target to deliver 150 PRS properties for either homeless Prevention, Relief or discharge of duty.
 - The team consists of four private accommodation officers.
 - They have worked with 100+ private sector landlords who are willing to work with the council
 - The service has prevented 72 households from becoming homeless
 - Further 25 households are in the process of having their homelessness prevented.
 - It is expected that the service will deliver the target of 150 PRS properties for homeless households
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PRS Access Fund – Secure and Sustain Model

- Consultation with landlords have identified that they are mostly concerned about potential damage to their properties and support needs of tenants
- A landlord Insurance scheme will be available to private sector landlords from the end of January.
- Up to 12 support is available for tenants to help them maintain their tenancies. After that period, tenants will know how to access support in their local community.
- Publicity of the service will commenced at the beginning of February.
- Available properties will be advertised on the Help 2 Rent website

Planning and Article 4

- Article 4 direction implemented on 08 June 2020
- Planning and PRS are working together to ensure smooth implementation

Next Steps

- Develop PRS Strategy 2019 to 2022
- Develop Business Plan 2019 to 2022
- Additional £250K approved via the budget process to increase capacity in the service
- Redesign current service
- Develop new communications plan coordinated with Landlords Steering Group and Working Group
- Implement supportive technology