



## Work Outline

# Working with HMOs

## Housing and Homes Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Our key question:	How should the City Council work with HMOs to get the best outcomes for landlords, tenants and local residents?
1. How is O&S adding value through this work?	<p>Birmingham currently has 1710 licensed HMOs (as at 23 January 2018).</p> <p>A motion to City Council in January 2018 raised concerns about an increasing reliance on HMOs to address homelessness; the impact of HMOs on local communities and the need for decent, high quality accommodation (see motion attached).</p>
2. What needs to be done?	<p>Key lines of enquiry:</p> <p><i>HMOs in Birmingham: strategic planning</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. What do we know about HMOs in Birmingham (numbers, type, demand, trends, number of registered providers and student housing);</li><li>2. What are the current plans for housing mix and the role of HMOs within that?</li></ol> <p><i>Policy on HMOs, and Planning and Regulatory Framework</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>3. What is City Council policy in relation to HMOs?</li><li>4. What are the planning and regulatory tools available to the City Council in relation to HMOs?</li></ol> <p><i>Birmingham context</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>5. What are the issues in relation to HMOs in Birmingham? Where do they occur?</li><li>6. How should the planning and regulatory tools be used?</li><li>7. How can the Council work with HMOs?</li></ol> <p><i>What happens elsewhere?</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>8. What are other local authorities' policies in relation to HMOs?</li></ol>
3. What timescale do we propose to do this in?	The work will be undertaken by the Committee in an evidence gathering session in March 2018 and will report to the Cabinet Member for Housing and Homes and the Chair of Planning Committee.

## **MOTIONS FOR DEBATE FROM INDIVIDUAL MEMBERS**

### **FIRST MOTION**

#### **RESOLVED:-**

This Council believes that in any modern city, a diverse range of housing options are required to match the needs of the population. The Council also recognise that every community within Birmingham is unique and distinctive and it is important that we preserve the character of these areas. The Council also believes that the City has a shortage of quality family housing and the conversion of family dwellings to HMO properties exacerbates this problem.

This council regrets that the failure of the Government's housing policies evidenced by the growing homelessness crisis, combined with the impact of welfare reforms since 2010, mean that a growing number of citizens of all ages are increasingly reliant on the HMO market.

The Council recognises that there is a need to increase the housing supply, but believes that this must be balanced against the concerns there are about the proliferation of HMOs and about the impact this can have on established communities and neighbourhoods and how they can undermine the character of historical parts of Birmingham. The Council notes that the police have also often raised concerns through the planning process in relation to HMO conversions because of the impact they can have on community cohesion.

The Council also notes the importance of the provision of decent, high quality accommodation and that often HMOs are over intensive for the building they are put in, leaving rooms below adequate size.

The Council notes that there are already policies in place in parts of the City that seek to restrict the creation of new HMOs via an Article 4 Direction, however this is not City wide and even where it is in place has had limited impact in restricting the creation of new HMOs.

The Council also notes that under an Article 4 direction, planning fees cannot be charged meaning that any extension of such arrangements would create a cost pressure for the Council. However, under current planning laws this is the only way to remove permitted development rights for a change from C3 to C4.

The Council notes that Selective licensing has recently been extended to parts of the City but whilst this goes some way to

promoting good management of HMOs after conversion it does not prevent their proliferation across the City.

Council therefore calls on the Council Leader to consider the options for further restricting HMO conversions as part of revised local planning policies, including further area-based Article 4 Directions where appropriate. Such a Direction should include a requirement for all conversions from C3 to C4 to require planning permission, and that this permission should be considered based on the existing character of the local area, the impact on communities and the wishes of local residents.

The Council will pursue policies contained within the Birmingham Development Plan preventing the loss of existing dwelling stock to other uses. Such loss will only be permitted where there are good planning reasons or social need for the proposed use.

As part of the emerging Development Management Document, the Council will produce a specific policy on HMOs to avoid their cumulative impacts in regard to ensuring that there is the right mix of housing types in an area but also in relation to impacts on residential character, appearance, amenity and parking.

The Council also calls for covenants to be placed on all future Council new builds or disposals (including Right to Buy) to prevent future conversion of these properties into flats or HMOs.

The Council also asks the Council Leader to write, jointly with the other Group Leaders, to the Minister of State for Housing and Planning urging him to look at the impacts of welfare reform and the growing national housing crisis on the HMO market. The Government must act now to ensure that everyone has access to a decent home.