

Report on	Update on Houses in Multiplication (HMOs)
Date of Meeting	12 th January 2021
Reporting Officer	Fiona McClements, Head of Environmental Health

Is this report restricted for confidential business? If 'Yes', confirm below the exempt information category relied upon	Yes	
	No	X

1.0	Purpose of Report
1.1	To update members on the regulation of HMOs carried out on behalf of Mid Ulster District Council in the 19/20 year, following the transfer of the function to Councils on 1 st April 2019.
2.0	Background
2.1	The Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO) Act NI 2016 legislation was commenced on 1 st April 2019. Staff from the Northern Ireland Housing Executive transferred to Belfast City Council on 1 st April 2019, and since then the HMO Unit has been administering and delivering the new HMO Licensing Scheme function for all councils in Northern Ireland.
2.2	Service Level Agreements (SLAs), a data processing agreement and a Memorandum of Understanding are in place to ensure effective working in partnership between the councils and with the Department for Communities in implementing and administering the new HMO licensing scheme for NI.
2.3	The above documents clarify the roles and responsibilities of the councils in satisfying the requirements of the HMO Act. The SLA is an essential document between the agreed lead delivery council (Belfast City Council), the sub-regional lead Councils that are part of the delivery model (Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council and Derry City and Strabane District Council), and the other Northern Ireland councils.
3.0	Main report
3.1	All HMO owners must comply with the Houses in Multiple Occupation Act (Northern Ireland) 2016 and must have a licence from their local council to continue running it as a HMO.
3.2	Until 1 st April 2019, HMOs were registered with NI Housing Executive. Properties on the NI Housing Executive Register automatically transferred to the new licensing scheme and are contacted by the NI HMO Unit when the licence is due for renewal. This will be five years from the last registration.

3.3	All HMO licences have a number of conditions attached. These include the management of the physical property, respect of occupant's rights, antisocial behaviour and neighbourhood concerns.
3.4	<p>All HMO landlords must make sure that the accommodation they provide is safe, of good quality, and has suitable facilities for the number of occupants by making sure that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • all safety and maintenance certificates are valid and kept up to date • electrics and electrical appliances are safe, maintained and in proper working order at all times • stairways and escape routes are maintained free from obstructions • carbon monoxide alarm is installed • chimneys and flues cleaned annually • inspection records and tests are maintained • furniture is kept in a safe condition and proper working order • security arrangements are in place • heating is provided throughout living accommodation • the property has an Energy Performance Certificate with a minimum E rating for energy efficiency.
3.5	<p>HMO landlords must also give tenants an information pack (in alternative languages or formats if appropriate) which includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a copy of the HMO licence • copies of the current gas certificate, electrical safety report and energy performance certificates • advice on reporting anti-social behaviour • list of tenant duties and responsibilities • contact telephone numbers, including an emergency out of hours contact number • emergency information (this must also be display emergency information clearly and prominently in the accommodation).
3.6	<p>Tenants also have responsibilities to make sure the landlord can carry out their duties; tenants must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • allow the landlord or manager access, at all reasonable times, to any occupied room • provide them with any relevant information • comply with fire safety and litter storage and disposal arrangements in the property • not hinder the landlord or manager in performing their duties • take reasonable care to avoid damaging anything which the landlord has an obligation to keep in good repair.
3.7	<p>Fees</p> <p>The HMO licence application cost depends on the number of people living in the property; this is £37 per person living in the property per year.</p>

A licence may be granted for up to five years. A five-year licence costs £185 per person.

This means a five-year licence for a property to hold three tenants would cost £555, four tenants would cost £740 and five tenants would cost £925. There is no maximum fee.

There is also a charge to vary the licence or to add more occupants after the initial application.

3.8 The table below has been provided by the NI HMO unit and shows the number of properties licensed and the number of HMO applications received in Mid Ulster from 1st April 2019, when the function was transferred to councils up until 31st March 2020.

Mid Ulster HMO 1 April 2019 to 31 March 2020

Applications received	5
Proposed decisions issued	2
Rejected Breach of planning	1
Waiting for documents	2
 Properties Licensed	 28
 Service Requests Received	 28
Advice	14
Temporary Exemption Requests	5
Unlicensed Premises Complaint	4
Other	5

3.9 Any concerns about HMOs in the Mid Ulster area can be referred to the NI HMO unit at Belfast City Council, contact details are below.

Email nihmo@belfastcity.gov.uk or Telephone 028 9027 0414.

4.0 Other Considerations

4.1 Financial, Human Resources & Risk Implications

Financial: Belfast City Council receive funding

Human: Limited officer time as function is managed by Belfast City Council

Risk Management: N/a

4.2	Screening & Impact Assessments
	Equality & Good Relations Implications: N/a
	Rural Needs Implications: N/a
5.0	Recommendation(s)
5.1	Members to note the content of the report.
6.0	Documents Attached & References
6.1	Further information is available at https://www.belfastcity.gov.uk/nihmo