

RESPONSE TO COMMENTS MADE BY CONSULTTEES:

COMMENT	RESPONSE
<p>The scheme is just a means of Income generation for the new council</p>	<p>Councils are not permitted to make a profit from the introduction of Housing Act licensing schemes.</p> <p>The licence fee must be used solely to administer and enforce the scheme. Indeed the council must charge the fee in two parts, the first part covering the application administration and the second part payable on approval of the application to cover the delivery of the scheme over its five year life.</p>
<p>The scheme will lead to increased rents and /or a reduction in affordable accommodation for those on low incomes.</p>	<p>Evidence from other schemes suggests that licensing does not lead to increased rents. The licence fee will equate to approx. £2 per week. Furthermore it is a legitimate business expense and is therefore tax deductible for landlords.</p> <p>The fee will be used in part to provide services to support landlords in the management of their properties. The council are exploring a range of services which will provide support which will address issues experienced by the areas landlords.</p>
<p>The scheme will lead to a reduction in available property</p>	<p>Once again the evidence from other schemes does not suggest that there is any reduction in available property.</p> <p>One potential benefit of licensing is that bad landlords, unwilling to meet their statutory obligations and provide safe, secure, well managed accommodation for their tenants, do leave the area. In such circumstances, the property does of course remain, and there is evidence that good landlords see a benefit in owning property where there are high standards of management and property maintenance.</p>
<p>The scheme will lead to reduced investment in the area.</p>	<p>As mentioned above, it is anticipated that landlords unwilling to provide safe, secure, well managed accommodation may decide to leave the sector.</p>

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	<p>Evidence from other schemes would suggest that potential investors will consider an area with a licensing scheme to be a good investment with less likelihood of derelict, poorly maintained properties having a negative impact on the area and property values.</p> <p>Licensing may therefore, have the potential to improve the sector.</p>
<p>Bad landlords will avoid licensing and continue to provide poor accommodation.</p>	<p>The council fully appreciates that in order for the scheme to have a positive impact on the area it will be essential to ensure that there are adequate resources in place to enforce the licensing requirement and the conditions attached to the licence.</p> <p>Part of the licence fee is used to pay for the resources necessary to enforce the scheme.</p> <p>Landlords should be aware that it is a criminal offence not to have a licence and non-compliance will lead to either prosecution or the imposition of a civil penalty of £30,000 max.</p> <p>It is also possible for the council, or a tenant, to seek repayment of rent paid if a property hasn't been licensed through a process known as a Rent Repayment Order.</p>
<p>Landlords cannot be held responsible for their tenants ASB, and cannot reduce incidence of ASB.</p>	<p>The council fully appreciates the difficulties that landlords face should their tenants behave in a way that disrupts their neighbours or the community. The aim of the scheme will be to ensure that all landlords take reasonable measures to check potential tenants prior to letting and to ensure that they include conditions within their tenancy agreements relating to anti-social behaviour.</p> <p>Services to support landlords that have troublesome tenants will form an important part of the scheme, and will hopefully be welcomed by landlords.</p>

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<p>Crime in the area is not associated with the private rented sector. Landlords should not be required to pay for a scheme to address crime.</p>	<p>The varied physical make-up and dynamic of the Ward has led to further analysis of reported crime. Melcombe Regis contains both the commercial core of Weymouth, an extensive night-time economy (NTE), high proportions of transient rental residents and a predominantly younger demographic. The Ward also covers the main built-up part of the Esplanade and beach front area. However, analysis of crime within the ward during the first half of 2018/19 revealed that crime not associated with the NTE, but related to residential property constituted 61% of total crime in the ward.</p> <p>Some 74% of people responding to the consultation, and resident in the area, agreed that action was necessary to address crime.</p>
<p>If the scheme is targeting crime in the area the Police must provide additional resource to the area.</p>	<p>Dorset Police are both supportive and committed to the proposal, with a commitment to providing additional resources part funded by the fee income.</p> <p>The police are supportive of measures aimed at increasing the security of resident's homes and addressing crime within the neighbourhood, and wish to work proactively with landlords to tackle crime in the area for the betterment of the community.</p>
<p>The scheme is seen as being unfair to good landlords who will already be meeting most of the licence conditions proposed.</p>	<p>The council acknowledge that most landlords do seek to provide good accommodation, and meet their statutory obligations to their tenants. Those same landlords wish to see the council proactively tackling the bad landlords providing poor accommodation.</p> <p>Licensing aims to improve management practices within the sector across the whole area, delivering positive outcomes for the whole community.</p>
<p>Enforcement powers are already available to the council and these should be more effectively used to tackle bad landlords.</p>	<p>Insecurity of tenure is recognised as a major obstacle to some tenants raising concerns about their accommodation or their landlord.</p> <p>Licensing will ensure that the council has a more accurate record of rented accommodation in the</p>

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	<p>area and enable inspections of property without the need for a complaint to be raised by the tenant. Licensing should provide the council with the information required to increase its enforcement activity against any bad landlords.</p> <p>Licensing also ensures that landlords do have the required gas safety checks, deposit protection, EPCs in place etc., without the need for a tenant to raise any concerns.</p>
<p>The council should provide Grants / Loans to assist landlords to maintain a good private rented housing stock.</p>	<p>There has not been any specific Government funding for private sector housing grants for many years.</p> <p>Fortunately the council did use the last funding received for that purpose to fund a subsidised loans scheme. The benefit of a loan scheme is that the funding is recycled enabling more and more people to take advantage. The loans scheme, administered by Wessex Resolutions CIC will be targeted at Melcombe Regis.</p> <p>In addition the council has recently secured £1.7m funding to enable the free installation of gas central heating into properties without heating. Landlords are encouraged to take advantage of this offer which must end in November 2020.</p>
<p>If the scheme is introduced the area should be increased to include other streets in the town or former borough area.</p>	<p>Originally it was proposed that the entire Melcombe Regis ward would be covered by the scheme. Advice from other councils operating schemes and from both the RLA and NLA was that smaller schemes worked better, with clear measurable objectives being set for the area and resources better targeted to ensure effective delivery.</p> <p>The proposed area covers the two 'Lower Super Output Areas' that feature highest in the indices of deprivation.</p>
<p>If the scheme is introduced the area should be reduced to only cover problem housing or streets.</p>	<p>The size of the area covered by the scheme is in part determined by geography of the area and the need for a balance between the administrative burden of licensing and the resources that can be funded by the income.</p>

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	<p>Advice from other councils and from the RLA and NLA is that schemes of 600-1200 incorporating clear community areas are the most effective. The proposed area covers the two 'Lower Super Output Areas' that feature highest in the indices of deprivation</p>
<p>The council must be clear about the objectives for the scheme and report regularly on progress with meeting those objectives during the life of the scheme.</p>	<p>The council fully appreciates that in order for the licensing scheme to have a positive impact on the area it is essential that its objectives are clearly stated and that progress is regularly reported.</p> <p>The council will commit to an annual report detailing the progress of the scheme, performance against the objectives, and providing financial information relating to income and expenditure.</p>
<p>The scheme if introduced must be supported by firm enforcement of standards against poor landlords. Landlords will want to see an improvement in the areas housing.</p>	<p>One of the benefits of licensing is that the council will have improved intelligence on properties that are being privately let and will be able to impose conditions upon landlords to ensure that there is a more level playing field within the sector.</p> <p>It is anticipated that there will be an increase in enforcement activity by the council as a consequence of the licence scheme.</p>
<p>The council must communicate regularly on how the scheme is progressing and how the revenue raised is being used.</p>	<p>As mentioned above the council will commit to the production of regular reports on progress with the scheme including financial information relating to fee income and expenditure.</p>
<p>If introduced the scheme must provide additional services and support for landlords to meet their additional obligations.</p>	<p>The council fully acknowledge that landlords quite rightly have an expectation that resources will be directed at assisting them to drive up standards of management within the sector.</p> <p>The scheme will include resources for landlords to assist with their obligations to address ASB, security in the home, property maintenance, and issues with waste collection, plus the provision of training opportunities.</p>
	<p>The council recognise that for a scheme to have a positive impact on the area it will be necessary for</p>

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<p>The RLA recommended that the council enter into a co-regulation arrangement should the scheme proceed.</p>	<p>it to be effectively implemented and enforced. The option of co-regulation has been explored and discussed with representatives of the local Landlords' Association as well as with representatives of Home Safe Scheme Ltd. In addition the option of developing a 'partnering arrangement' with approved letting agents will be explored.</p>
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