

WRITTEN ANSWERS FOR COUNCIL

2ND MARCH, 2016

Council Minutes

Question - Minute No. 125 (Revised Membership Arrangements) Councillor Currie asked if licensing was still on the risk register and if it be impartial for the Chair of the Licensing Board to be included on the membership of the Audit Committee.

Answer – Councillor Currie was correct to highlight a potential conflict of interest that could arise should there be any review and/or discussions relating to Licensing arising at any meeting of the Audit Committee. The Committee would take a prudent approach to any contribution the Chair of Licensing could make to any relevant item, and would seek advice from the Legal Officer as to what the contribution might be, as appropriate. The Committee would also seek advice as appropriate to any declarations of interest it feels might be required.

Thank you for raising the point which, in fairness, it is worth noting the Committee was already alert to.

Question - Minute No. 129 (Planning Board) Councillor Currie referred to application RB2015/1169 (change of use of former Council offices and erection of a three storey building to form a residential institution at Rawmarsh Hill, Parkgate for Action Housing) and asked if the Looked After Children's Council had been a consultee.

Answer - Currently looked after young people are not statutory consultees and the Planning Department would not normally consult with them or any other group for specific planning applications.

For your information looked after children are not expected to be clients of this facility.

Rotherham Housing Strategy

Question - Councillor M. Vines referred to the reference that there had been a positive effect with Selective Licensing in some areas and sought clarification on the prosecution rates of those landlords in conflict.

Answer – More than 80% of licensable properties have now registered with the scheme.

134 landlords have been warned of prosecution for failing to submit gas safety certificates as part of the licence conditions, with which the licence holders have now fully complied.

One licence has been formally revoked after the landlord brought to our attention pending criminal charges and one licence has been formally refused based on the proposed licence holder's previous criminal convictions.

Two phases of warnings for landlords operating unlicensed houses involving 230 landlords and more than 300 properties. The first phase of 83 landlords saw a compliance rate of 80%, with the remaining being prepared for prosecution. Three cases have been submitted to Legal Services with the remaining cases currently being investigated and where necessary prosecution files drafted.

The first prosecution for failing to licence was a success at the Magistrates' Court on the 16th March where the landlord pleaded guilty and was ordered to pay more than £1,000 in fines and costs. Two further cases involving more than 30 individual properties are due in Court in May.