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# NORTH AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

23 October 2019

## Licensing Committee

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**Title:** Landlord Registration under the Antisocial Behaviour etc (Scotland) Act 2004, Part 8

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**Purpose:** To inform the Committee of Landlord Registration matters.

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**Recommendation:**

1. That the Committee should decide whether or not to make a Resolution excluding the public from the meeting at which this Report and its Schedules is to be considered;
2. For each Application or Review Proposal described in the Schedules: That the Committee should consider each case and
  - (a) decide whether or not the Application should be granted, or the Relevant Person should be removed from the Register;
  - (b) if appropriate, decide whether or not to issue a Notice under Section 94 (commonly known as a 'Rent Penalty Notice') in respect of any house, or to delegate authority to the Clerk to issue such a Notice.

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## 1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 The Licensing Committee has delegated authority from the Council to administer the Council's functions under the Landlord Registration Scheme regulated by the Antisocial Behaviour etc. (Scotland) Act 2004, Part 8.

## 2. Background

- 2.1 The persons named in the attached Schedules are Landlords who are either applying for Registration or who are registered. The Clerk has information suggesting that there may be a basis for the Committee concluding that the Landlords are not 'fit and proper', and that either the Application should be refused or the Registration already granted should be removed (each person has one Schedule). The rented houses concerned are listed in the Schedules. The Schedules are marked "Not for Publication".

2.2 The Committee will consider "Exempt Information" under the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973, Schedule 7A. The information is covered by one or more of the following categories of "Exempt Information" under Schedule 7A:

Paragraph 3: "Information relating to any particular applicant for, or recipient or former recipient of, any service provided by the authority."

Paragraph 6: "Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (other than the authority)."

Paragraph 14: "Any action taken or to be taken in connection with the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime."

Paragraph 15: "The identity of a Protected Informant" - where "Protected Informant" is defined in Part III as a person who informs the Local Authority about a past, present or future crime, breach of statutory duty, breach of planning control, or nuisance.

2.3 The Schedules are in the background papers given to Committee Members and will be sent to the respective Landlords before the Meeting. The Schedules are excluded from the published Agenda under Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973, Section 50B(2) and (5). This has been done as the Clerk considers that the meeting is likely not to be open to the public while those Schedules are being considered, as they contain "Exempt Information".

2.4 The Committee is entitled, but not obliged, to make a Resolution excluding the public from a meeting during consideration of an item of business whenever it is likely, in view of the nature of the business to be transacted or the nature of the proceedings, that if members of the public were present during consideration of that item of business there would be disclosure to them of "Exempt Information" (Section 50A(4)).

2.5 For example:

Paragraph 3 could apply in relation to information or advice requested by a member of the public.

Paragraph 6 could apply to a business activity (such as where an Applicant wants a Licence for business or employment, or where a Landlord lets a house).

Paragraphs 14 or 15 could apply where it was alleged:

- (a) that there was anti-social behaviour committed by the Tenant of a rented house, involving crime or nuisance, or
- (b) that the state of repair of the rented house indicated that the Landlord had defaulted in his/her legal obligations, or

- (c) that the Landlord had defaulted in another obligation applying to Landlords, or
- (d) that any person had committed a criminal offence (whether or not there had been concluded Court proceedings).

2.6. Accordingly, if a Resolution is made:

- (a) the publicly-accessible Minutes will exclude so much of the proceedings during which the public were excluded (Section 50C);
- (b) the Minutes will include a summary of the proceedings without disclosing the 'Exempt Information' (Sections 50C(2) & 50C(1)(b)).

### **3. Proposals**

- 3.1 The Committee should consider each case and decide whether or not to grant the Application, or remove the Registration.
- 3.2. If the Committee decides to refuse an Application, or to remove a Registration, and if it is satisfied that the house is presently occupied by a Tenant, it should then decide whether or not to issue a Notice under Section 94 (commonly known as a 'Rent Penalty Notice' or 'RPN') in respect of any house referred to in the Application or Registration.
- 3.3. If it is are not so satisfied, it may delegate authority to the Clerk to issue a RPN if and when the Clerk is so satisfied. Given that there would be nothing to stop the Landlord receiving Housing Benefit even if he/she was unregistered, the Committee may wish to delegate authority to the Clerk to issue a RPN if the Clerk later receives information that any house which is currently covered by the Registration is occupied by a Tenant under a Lease or an Occupier under an Occupancy Arrangement.

### **4. Implications/Socio-economic Duty**

#### **Financial**

- 4.1 There are possible financial implications in relation to any Licensing decision. If a RPN is made, the Benefit Authorities will be informed, so that the Landlord will no longer receive Housing Benefit or Universal Credit, if any is claimed for the house.

#### **Human Resources**

- 4.2 None.

## **Legal**

- 4.3 There are possible legal implications in relation to any licensing decision. Depending on the legislation, there may be a right of appeal.

If the Council makes a RPN, only the Tenant's liability to pay rent will cease. The other rights and obligations of the Lease will be unaffected (Section 94(3) & (8)).

For example:

- (a) the Tenant will continue to have whatever security of tenure he/she already had (and cannot be evicted for non-payment of rent where that non-payment is due to the RPN);
- (b) the Landlord will only be entitled to evict the Tenant if the First-Tier Tribunal grants an Eviction Order;
- (c) the Landlord will continue to have repairing obligations.

If a RPN is revoked by the Sheriff or Tribunal on appeal by the Landlord, the Tenant only has to pay 'arrears' of rent if, and to the extent, ordered. If a RPN is revoked by the Council then 'arrears' are not due (Section 95(3)).

## **Equality/Socio-economic**

- 4.4 Equality Act 2010 imposes duties on the Council:

Section 1(1) ("Public sector duty regarding socio-economic inequalities"): the Council

"must, when making decisions of a strategic nature about how to exercise its functions, have due regard to the desirability of exercising them in a way that is designed to reduce the inequalities of outcome which result from socio-economic disadvantage."

Section 149(1) ("Public sector equality duty") the Council

"must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to—

- (a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under [that Act];
- (b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a "Relevant Protected Characteristic" and persons who do not share it;
- (c) foster good relations between persons who share a "Relevant Protected Characteristic" and persons who do not share it."

The "Relevant Protected Characteristics" are: age; disability; gender reassignment; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion or belief; sex; and sexual orientation.

The Clerk has considered these Duties in preparing this Report and any specific impacts will be evaluated where appropriate. Unless the Clerk advises the Committee otherwise in a particular case, there are no significant impacts to be considered.

## **Environmental and Sustainability**

4.5 None

## **Key Priorities**

4.6 An effective licensing system, for example monitoring the 'fit and proper' status of landlords and the suitability of premises, helps progress towards one of the Priority Outcomes of the North Ayrshire Council Plan 2019-2024: "North Ayrshire's residents and communities are safe."

## **Community Wealth Building**

4.7 There are no Community Wealth Building issues.

## **5. Consultation**

5.1 No consultations are required by the legislation. Depending on the circumstances, the Schedules contain information supplied by the Police, other Council officers, or other agencies.

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For further information please contact **William O'Brien, Solicitor (Licensing)**, on **01294 324305**.

## **Background Papers**

None