

Extract from letter sent to Philip Soderquest, Head of Housing & Public Protection (31st March 2022)

Ashington Town Council and Local Councillors are aware of the issues faced locally and of the multi-agency approach being initiated by Communities Together, and operation Momentum by Northumbria Police and partners. This is welcome news, and the Council is pleased to be informed and involved.

The Council has raised in the past the question of Selective Licensing of Private Landlords and would like to formally request that Northumberland County Council introduce a scheme of selective licensing of private landlords, as provided for in sections 79, 80 and 81 of the Housing Act 2004.

The Housing Act 2004 gave local authorities the power to designate areas of selective licensing to help tackle concerns over anti-social behaviour and low housing demand. In 2015, the conditions for designation were expanded to include poor property conditions, high crime, high levels of deprivation and high migration. Locally, Newcastle, Gateshead, Redcar and Cleveland, Middlesbrough, County Durham and Hartlepool all operate a Selective Licensing Landlord Scheme, but Northumberland County Council has not, and Ashington Councillors would like to know why, when areas of the town fit the conditions, the scheme is expected to address.

Opinion Research Services was commissioned by The Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) to conduct a review of selective licensing and conducted in-depth research and consultations with stakeholders from across the sector. The report found that selective licensing was an effective tool when implemented properly.

The Council would like NCC to include those areas of Ashington where it could have a positive impact by raising standards within the private rented sector leading to improvements in the overall social and economic conditions in the area to create a strong, healthy, and vibrant neighbourhood, in keeping with your Corporate Objectives:

'Living' "We want you to feel safe, healthy, and cared for", and 'Enjoying' "We want you to love where you live."

Following confirmation of a scheme being implemented in Blyth, a further email was sent.

Response from Head of Housing (4th October 2022)

NCC are proposing to undertake consultation in the area of Cowpen Quay, Blyth, with a view to introducing Selective Licensing of Landlords, but that it is not proposed at this time to bring forward any other potential areas within Northumberland.

That the position will be under review as NCC progress with Cowpen Quay and subject to how that work proceeds, other areas may be subject to future consideration. Assuming post development and consultation, that the scheme is ultimately approved and achieves the expected outcomes, NCC will identify other areas which meet the relevant criteria and progress accordingly. If this includes areas within Ashington, the Town Council will be contacted.

The following link is to the Cabinet Papers in September 2022, item 7 dealt with Selective Licensing <https://northumberland.moderngov.co.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=140&MId=2008>