

5th November 2014

Housing & Health Committee

Essex Landlord Accreditation Scheme (ELAS)

Report of: *Helen Gregory, Acting Head of Housing Services*

Wards Affected: *All*

This report is: *Public*

1. Executive Summary

1.1 Update on the Essex Landlord Accreditation Scheme (ELAS), as previously discussed at Committee on the 9th July 2014 (agenda item 7). To re-iterate the ELAS scheme has been setup to promote and encourage landlords of privately rented homes to manage their properties to a high standard. Local Authority involvement will help to achieve the best level of management and will enable effective engagement in terms of securing positive relationships to encourage improvement in local housing.

1.2 The Vice Chair and Acting Head of Housing attended the ELAS launch event on the 25th September 2014 at Kelvedon Park, Essex. The event demonstrated the benefits of an integrated county-wide approach to engagement between Local Authorities and the private rented sector.

2. Recommendation(s):

2.1 **The Committee is asked to note the contents of Appendix A below [relating to legal questions arising out of the last meeting]; and to approve and confirm Brentwood joining the Essex Landlord Accreditation Scheme.**

2.2 **The Committee is asked to approve the use of monies from the Homelessness Prevention Fund to cover related setup expenditure; to include such matters as marketing, press and postage. The amount requiring approval is no greater than £5,000 to cover related expenditure.**

3. Introduction and Background

3.1 The ELAS launch event has provided an impetus towards joining the scheme, to ensure that as a Local Authority Brentwood is engaging effectively with private landlords who currently remain largely unregulated and with whom there is no significant current interaction at an operational and strategic level.

3.2 The Chief Fire Officers Association ('CFOA') 'Bluewatch', as the provider of the service to ELAS, has now setup the portal website for landlords to join the scheme. Currently the active consortium includes: Chelmsford, Colchester, Uttlesford, Tendring, Braintree, Epping Forest and Maldon. Private landlords are now able to register, at a fee of £95.00 per annum.

4. The Working Relationship

4.1 Once individual private landlords have registered they will be accredited as Provisional Members. Provisional Members will work towards full accreditation by making any essential improvements to their property portfolio following core checks. Once all components of the scheme have been satisfied then members will obtain Full Accreditation status.

4.2 The establishment of key working relationships with landlords is being supported by Environmental Health, as a complimentary initiative working alongside the existing Brentwood Landlord Forum. ELAS will provide new opportunities for both landlords and the Local Authority to build upon existing relationships and to encourage new membership accordingly.

4.3 Membership of ELAS will enable Brentwood to increase its range of strategic options in relation to housing provision within the Borough. Through improved relationships with local landlords Brentwood will be able to further engage in alternate prevention areas, such as the current provision of the Rent Deposit Scheme and potential future leasehold arrangements. Such arrangements allow for increased revenue and to create direct placements to solve homelessness and to reduce reliance on emergency bed & breakfast accommodation.

4.4 The operation of the accreditation scheme is conducted by Bluewatch with related property inspections being undertaken in-house by the Housing Department utilising existing resources.

5. References to Corporate Plan

- 5.1** As previously identified the joining of ELAS identifies a new method of working with Private Sector Landlords. In turn this will be both a vital strategy to help meet housing needs and as part of an essential toolkit of meeting departmental obligations in relation to homelessness prevention through building core relationships with the private sector. The ELAS project will develop to become a core part of service provision in relation to working towards the Department of Communities & Local Government Gold Standard rating.

6. Implications

Financial Implications:

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- 6.1** Approval of the use of up to £5,000 from the existing Homelessness Prevention Fund for start-up and management costs. Expected future resource implications will also be met within existing budgets.

Legal Implications

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- 6.2** The legal implications are as previously set out in the report put to Committee on the 9th July 2014. The discreet implications raised at last Committee are as set out in Appendix A below.

Other Implications (where significant) – i.e. Health and Safety, Asset Management, Equality and Diversity, Risk Management, Section 17 – Crime & Disorder, Sustainability, ICT.

None.

7. Background Papers

None.

8. Appendices to this report

Appendix A - Answers from Mr Paul Gayler, Chairperson of ELAS

Appendix B - ELAS Information Sheet

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