

Council - 18 July 2016

Public Questions (1)

1.	Question from Tess Beck to Cabinet Member Housing, Councillor Peter Jeffries
	<p>Recent months have seen a number of retrospective applications for planning permission for large Houses of Multiple Occupation (HMOs with more than 6 tenants). Some of these HMOs had been operating as such for several years and had been licensed by Cheltenham Borough Council during that period.</p> <p>Why were these properties licensed despite not having planning permission in place?</p> <p>What steps will be taken to improve cross-checking and communications between the Planning, HMO Licensing and Building Control teams in the future?</p>
	Response from Cabinet Member Housing
	<p>Historically, Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO's) were licensed without planning consent being in place, because some properties had been in this form of occupation for many years and therefore had established use and owners were not obliged to seek planning consent. A lack of planning consent is not an automatic bar on a property being licensed, as separate pieces of legislation govern these issues.</p> <p>More retrospective applications are being submitted for planning permission relating to larger HMO's as a direct result of the activity of the council's enforcement team. Since the housing and enforcement teams were merged, closer joint working has generated significant additional income from retrospective applications.</p> <p>A number of issues arise in ensuring that HMO's have the required license and planning consent, for example:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The number of occupants can vary over time;• The level of occupancy is not always obvious and may change where a property is subdivided or extended;• Properties are often adapted without consent, or under permitted development rights, without any notification to the council of an increase in the number of occupants.