

MEMO

Shelter & Environment

Housing & Environment

Second Floor West, Marischal College



ABERDEEN
CITY COUNCIL

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From	Ally Thain, Private Sector Housing Manager, Housing & Environment		
Email	allyt@aberdeencity.gov.uk	Date	8 November 2012
Tel.	522870	Our Ref.	
Fax.		Your Ref.	

Part 5 of Housing (Scotland) Act 2006

Application for a Licence to operate a House in Multiple Occupation (HMO) at No.77/79 Bon Accord Street, Aberdeen

Applicant/s: Aberdeen City Council

Agent: Edward Thomas, Assistant Homelessness Manager

I refer to the above HMO Licence application, which is due to be considered by the Licensing Committee at its meeting on 20 November 2012, for the reason that previous licence applications in respect of the same premises have proved contentious.

I can advise you as follows:

The HMO legislation

This application is being dealt with under the provisions of Part 5 of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2006, as amended. Available grounds of refusal are as follows:

- 1) The applicant and/or agent is not considered to be a 'fit & proper' person to hold an HMO licence, and
- 2) The property is unsuitable for occupation as an HMO for one, some or all of the following reasons:
 - i) Its location
 - ii) Its condition
 - iii) Any amenities it contains
 - iv) The type & number of persons likely to occupy it
 - v) Whether any rooms within it have been subdivided
 - vi) Whether any rooms within it have been adapted, resulting in an alteration to the water & drainage pipes within it
 - vii) The safety & security of persons likely to occupy it
 - viii) The possibility of undue public nuisance
 - ix) There is, or would be, an overprovision of HMOs in the locality

The premises:

The premises to which this HMO Licence application relates is a 4-storey double-tenement, which is operated by Aberdeen City Council as a facility offering temporary accommodation for homeless persons.

The premises was originally 2 separate tenements, however following acquisition by the Council some years ago, the 2 buildings were converted into the facility which exists today and which provides accommodation on all 4 floors. In particular, the accommodation comprises of 20 letting bedrooms, 3 public rooms, 4 kitchens and 9 bathroom/shower-rooms. There is also a staffroom. The location of the premises is shown on the plan attached as Appendix 'A'.

Previous HMO licence application:

The Licensing Committee at its meeting on 22 March 2011, considered my report concerning an HMO licence renewal application in respect of the premises, which had attracted 61 letters of objection and a 20-signature petition. Following a vote, the Committee resolved:

That the application for 77/79 Bon Accord Street, Aberdeen be granted for a period of 18 months subject to the following conditions:- (1) that the staffing measures are put in place at the minimum levels proposed; and (2) that the applicant establish a Community Engagement Group, comprising representatives of the local community and elected members to be facilitated by Aberdeen City Council.

The current HMO licence application:

The HMO licence application is dated 20 September 2012 and was received by the HMO unit on 20 September 2012.

Work/Certification Requirements:

The HMO Officer carried out an initial inspection of the premises and identified upgrading work and certification required to bring the premises up to the current HMO standard. At the date of this memo, all requirements have not been met, however that is not the reason for referral to Committee.

Letters of Representation/Objection:

No letters of representation/objection have been received by the HMO Unit.

Applicant's response:

The applicant has submitted a report in support of the application. The report is attached as Appendix 'B'.

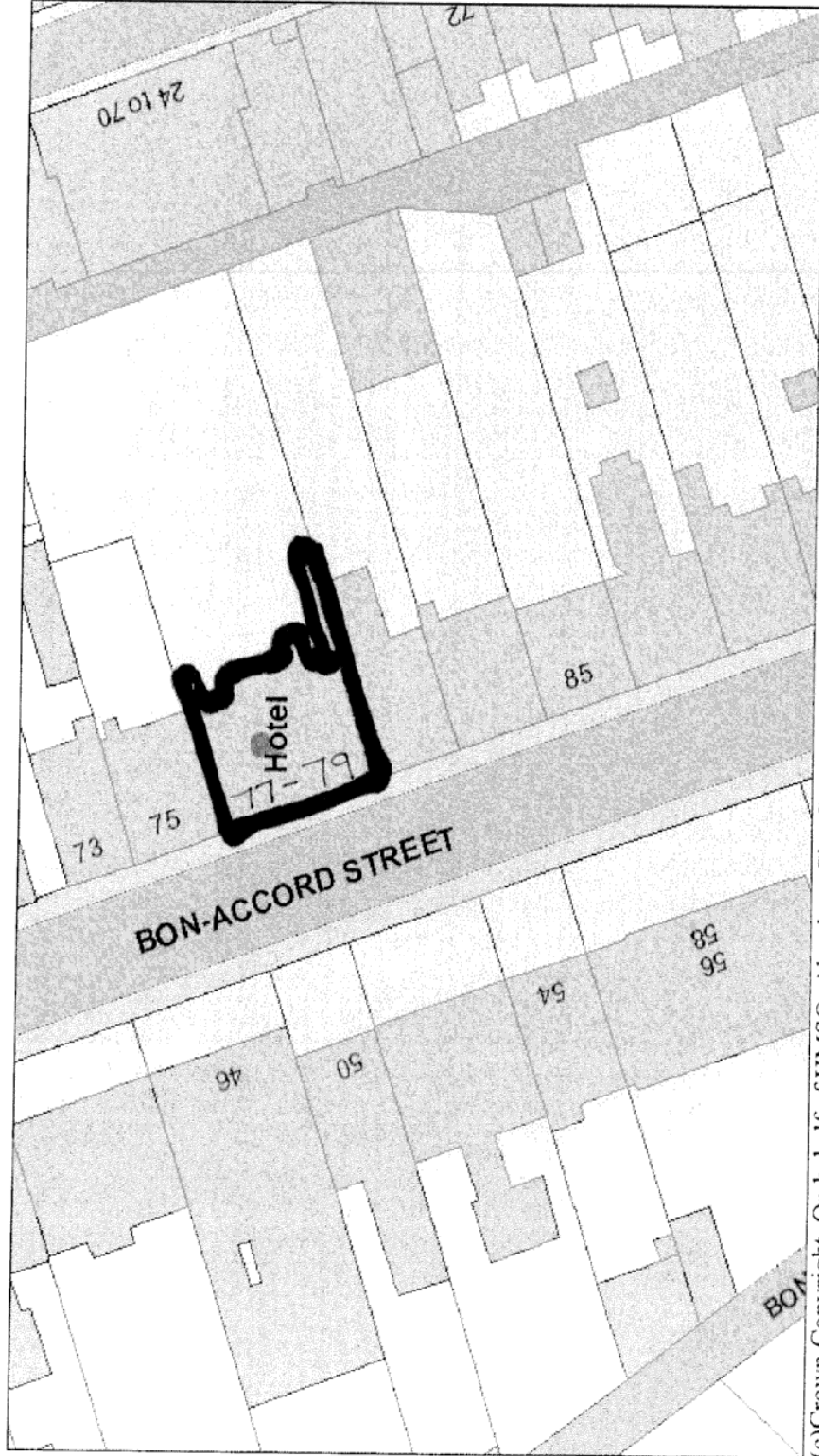
Other considerations:

- The Chief Constable, Grampian Police, has been consulted in respect of the applicant's suitability as a 'fit & proper' person, and has made no comment or objection.
- Grampian Fire & Rescue Service has been consulted in respect of the suitability of the premises as an HMO, and has made no comment or objection.

- The premises are outwith the Council's Anti-Social Behaviour Investigation Team's remit, however in any case the Team has no record of any complaints from neighbours.
- The premises are exempt from the Landlord Registration legislation.
- The applicant and the HMO Unit have agreed that a maximum occupancy of 39 persons is acceptable in terms of space and layout.
- The HMO licence application under consideration was submitted prior to the expiry of the previous HMO Licence, therefore the premises may legally be operated as an HMO until the application is determined.

I trust the above explains the position. Please contact me on x2870 should you have any queries regarding the above.

Ally Thain
Private Sector Housing Manager



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Report



**Bon Accord Street
Accommodation Unit
Community Engagement Group
April 2011 – September 2012**

November 2012



**ABERDEEN
CITY COUNCIL**

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1 Introduction

This report will detail the operation of the Bon Accord Street Community Engagement Group between April 2011 and August 2012.

Background to the report

- 1.1 Aberdeen City Council has operated residential Accommodation Units at 77/79 Bon Accord Street and 95 Bon Accord Street since 1993. The premises currently consist of 18 bedroom and 5 bedroom 'hostel' style properties respectively.

The facilities are each classed as a 'House in Multiple Occupation' (HMO) since bathing and cooking facilities are shared and accordingly licences have been in place since 14 July 2006.

- 1.2 A significant number of objections were received when the HMO licences were due for renewal in July 2009 and February 2011. These resulted in the duration of the licences being limited and have latterly required the Council to facilitate a Community Engagement Group to oversee the operation of the premises.

- 1.3 The Community Engagement Group has been operating since an inaugural meeting on 14 April 2011, with the following delegates attending:

- Aberdeen City Council Community Safety (City Wardens & ASBIT);
- Aberdeen City Council Homelessness Service;
- Elected Members for Torry/Ferryhill;
- Ferryhill Community Council representatives;
- Grampian Police;
- Local residents from Bon Accord Street and surrounding area.

- 1.4 Aims and objectives of the report

The primary aim of the report is to review the operation of the Bon Accord Street Community Engagement Group, the extent to which it met the aims agreed at the initial meeting:

"To reduce the negative impact experienced by the local community (anti-social behaviour) resulting from the concentration of accommodation for homeless people."

2 Context: Homelessness Service & Temporary Accommodation pre 2009

Housing in Aberdeen

- 2.1 The demand for social housing in Aberdeen has been consistently high in recent years.
- 2.2 Access to market housing in Aberdeen City is particularly challenging due to the average house prices being the highest in Scotland after Edinburgh (Nationwide House Price Index, December 2011) and rental valuations for most property sizes being the highest in Scotland (Scottish Government Local Housing Allowance Figures, February 2012).
- 2.3 The rental market in Aberdeen is also particularly professionalised, with a large number of letting agents operating in the city, applying stringent criteria when letting properties. Few landlords are willing to consider tenants in receipt of Housing Benefit. All of which factors limit the ability of those who are not entirely self-sufficient to acquire housing outwith the social sector.
- 2.4 The Council's responsibility to homeless people has been gradually enhanced in recent years by legislative changes, with duties primarily derived from the Housing (Scotland) Act 1987, Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 and Homelessness etc. (Scotland) Act 2003.
- 2.5 In practice this means that the Council has an immediate duty to provide temporary accommodation for anyone it has reason to believe may be homeless and either to permanently rehouse or to provide temporary accommodation for such a period as to afford reasonable opportunity to source alternative accommodation.
- 2.6 A regulatory inspection by Communities Scotland in 2005 resulted in Aberdeen City Council's Homelessness Service being classed as 'poor'. One of the main criticisms was the lack of temporary accommodation, with the Council routinely failing to meet its statutory duties in this regard.

Homeless Presentations

- 2.7 Homeless presentations between 2006 and 2011 increased from 2,300 to 3,403 (67.6%).

Table 1: Homeless Presentations to ACC 2006/07 – 2010/11

	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11
Homeless Presentations	2,300	2,500	2,831	2,614	3,403

Source: HL1 returns

3 Homelessness Service Restructure: 2009 - 2011

Management Structure

- 3.1 A consultant's report commissioned in April 2009 highlighted significant areas of weakness in the management structure of the service and recommended an overhaul, in particular the recruitment of two additional senior managers: a Homelessness Manager and Temporary Accommodation Senior Officer.
- 3.2 The new posts were advertised in September 2009 and appointments were made in November 2009.
- 3.3 Council approved a further restructure of the Homelessness Service in June 2010, including:
- The recruitment of a dedicated manager for each Accommodation Unit;
 - The recruitment of a Prevention Team to focus on early intervention;
 - Establishment of a Private Sector Leasing Scheme to procure properties from the private sector;
 - Commissioning of a new Accommodation Unit.

Prevention

- 3.4 The vision for future Homelessness services has Prevention as its top priority. The move towards prevention will be incorporated into a wider change in the culture of the service.
- 3.5 A Prevention Team was established in early 2010 consisting of a Team Leader and 5 Prevention Officers.
- 3.6 The Prevention Officers deliver/lead on the interventions. Additional Support and Housing Information & Advice Services have also been commissioned from Shelter Scotland and Aberdeen Cyrenians to assist households at risk of eviction, with the Shelter staff based within the Council's offices.
- 3.7 In addition a Prevention Fund, practical Tenancy Set Up Scheme and Furniture Leasing Scheme have been introduced to help with tenancy sustainment and to provide a flexible response to prevention or alleviating homelessness.

Temporary Accommodation

- 3.8 The Council's temporary accommodation provision at the start of 2010 consisted of Accommodation Units, B&Bs, Temporary Flats and Supported Accommodation.
- 3.9 At this time there was a chronic shortage in capacity and despite a considerable reliance on B&B accommodation, the Council was failing in its duty to provide temporary accommodation at some time to in excess of half of households to whom it owed a statutory duty. As a result there was an onus to utilise any available accommodation and at that time this was predominantly concentrated in several streets near the city centre, with four establishments in Bon Accord Street offering a total of 53 rooms each night. In most instances

proprietors retained vacancies solely for the Council and due to the volume of tenants occupying the property as their 'sole or principal residence' these too were licensed HMOs.

Table 2: Temporary Accommodation Stock as at 01/01/10

	Units of Accommodation	% of provision
Accommodation Units	45	11.5%
B&Bs	106	27.0%
ACC Temporary Flats	142	36.2%
Supported Accommodation	99	25.3%
Total Temporary Accommodation	392	100%

Source: Aberdeen City Council Housing Management Database & Commissioned Services

Allocations

- 3.10 The Homeless Persons (Unsuitable Accommodation) (Scotland) Order 2004 required the Council to provide self-contained accommodation to families/pregnant applicants as soon as available. In practice only Temporary Flats meet this requirement therefore single applicants were predominantly allocated to Accommodation Units or B&B premises for the duration of their homelessness, thus concentrating a volume of single applicants within a relatively small radius for considerable periods of time.
- 3.11 Whereas there has never been a designation of Accommodation Units as a facility for people with addiction problems, in placing predominantly single applicants there for a prolonged period, at times the proportion of applicants with such problems was higher than would be typical of other neighbourhoods in the city and the prevalence of premises within Bon Accord Street certainly contributed to increased social associations between homeless persons accommodated in the area, some of which centred on substance misuse.

Table 3: Accommodation Unit Premises as at 01/01/10

	Units of Accommodation	% of provision
77/79 Bon Accord Street	18	40%
95 Bon Accord Street	5	11.1%
165 Crown Street	22	48.9%
Bon Accord Street Total	23	51.1%
Total Temporary Accommodation	45	100%

Source: Aberdeen City Council Housing Management Database

- 3.12 The Accommodation Co-ordinator had responsibility for day to day management of all clients in Accommodation Units or B&B establishments, which at the start of 2010 consisted of over 150 persons in 14 premises. It was clearly unrealistic that a single manager could oversee such a volume of provision adequately, as highlighted by Licensing Committee in September 2009 and this was a principal factor in the restructure.
- 3.13 Staff roles within the Accommodation Units were primarily focussed on the security and cleaning of the building and the level of interaction with clients

was therefore limited in depth, albeit staff members regularly exceeded their remit in an effort to engage with clients to resolve their problems. The volume of clients was however too great to allow for this to be comprehensive.

Table 4: B&B Premises as at 01/01/10

	Units of Accommodation	% of provision
Dunvegan Guest House, 113 Bon Accord Street	8	7.5%
Ferndale Hotel, 62 Bon Accord Street	9	8.5%
Glenbervie Guest House, 152 Crown Street	14	13.2%
Gordon Guest House, 72 Bon Accord Street	8	7.5%
Grants Guest House, 151 Crown Street	8	7.5%
Hatton Guest House, 398 Great Western Road	10	9.4%
Jamaica Guest House, 1 Jamaica Street	6	5.7%
Montana Guest House, 302 Great Western Road	9	8.5%
Shelton's Guest House, 46 Bon Accord Street	28	26.4%
Wallacebrae Guest House, 2 Wallacebrae Road	3	2.8%
Willowbank Accommodation, 22A Willowbank Road	3	2.8%
Bon Accord Street Total	53	50%
Total Temporary Accommodation	106	100%

Source: Aberdeen City Council Housing Management Database

4 HMO Licensing

Legislation

- 4.1 The Civic Government (Scotland) Act 1982 (Licensing of Houses in Multiple Occupation) Order 2000 introduced requirements for Houses in Multiple Occupation to be licensed.

2006 – Initial Application

- 4.2 The Council first applied for House in Multiple Occupation (HMO) licences for the three Accommodation Unit premises in 2006; these licences were granted on 14 July 2006, for the full three year duration, expiring 13 July 2009.

2009 – First Renewals

- 4.3 The first renewals were submitted on 25 May 2009. The notice of application posted at each premises for 21 days attracted 64 valid objections and as a consequence the applications were referred to the Licensing Committee which met to consider them at a special sitting on 09 September 2009, in conjunction with a separate application for the Council's premises at 165 Crown Street.

- 4.4 Approval to issue licences for 77/79 Bon Accord Street & 95 Bon Accord Street was granted for 12 months, whilst the application for 165 Crown Street was refused. The licences were granted from 02 February 2010 following completion of outstanding works.

- 4.5 The deliberations made by members of the Licensing Committee, having received the objections and heard verbal statements from those in attendance at the meeting, are contained within the Statement of Reasons for the grant of the licence, included as Appendix 1 of this report.

- 4.6 At that time the recruitment process for the Homelessness Manager and Temporary Accommodation Senior Officer posts had been underway, appointments being made on 09 November 2009. Approval was also granted for the recruitment of a dedicated manager for the premises at 165 Crown Street on 30 June 2010 and an interim manager promptly took over day to day responsibility for that premises until a permanent appointment could be made later in the year. This was accepted as a material change in circumstances when the Council applied for a new application for 165 Crown Street in July 2010 and a licence was issued after consideration by Licensing Committee on 15 September 2010. No valid objections were lodged against this application.

2011 Renewals

- 4.7 The licences for 77/79 Bon Accord Street and 95 Bon Accord Street expired on 01 February 2011 and renewal applications were submitted on 31 January 2011. 62 letters of objection and a petition were received. The content generally focussed on the conduct of residents, people loitering in the street and other anti-social behaviour.

4.8 In response to the objections the Homelessness Service lodged a written submission to the Licensing Committee prior to its meeting on 22 March 2011, detailing measures that had been and were scheduled to be implemented to minimise the impact of the Accommodation Units on the local community. This submission is included as Appendix 2 of this report.

4.9 The Licensing Committee determined that:

“That the application for 77/79 Bon Accord Street, Aberdeen be granted for a period of 18 months subject to the following conditions:- (1) that the staffing measures are put in place at the minimum levels proposed; and (2) that the applicant establish a Community Engagement Group, comprising representatives of the local community and elected members to be facilitated by Aberdeen City Council” and “to grant the application for 95 Bon Accord Street, Aberdeen for a period of three years.”

5 Community Engagement Group

Inaugural Meeting & Group Remit

- 5.1 All those who had submitted an objection to the renewal of the HMO licence were invited to attend the inaugural Community Engagement Group meeting on 14 April 2011.
- 5.2 Nine members of the local community attended the initial meeting at Aberdeen Foyer, Marywell Street, and the ongoing remit of the group was agreed:

“to reduce the negative impact experienced by the local community (anti-social behaviour) resulting from the concentration of accommodation for homeless people”.

Composition of the Group

- 5.3 The Group agreed that all local community members continue to be invited, rather than nominating representatives, and also requested that B&B proprietors who accommodate homeless persons on the street be invited to attend future meetings.

Communication

- 5.4 Good communication was identified as key to the success of the group and contact details were circulated for all relevant day to day and senior management for the homelessness service.

Frequency of Meetings

- 5.5 The group agreed future dates at the conclusion of each meeting, with 7pm on a Thursday suiting most delegates. The schedule of the 11 meetings which took place was:

14 April 2011;
19 May 2011;
21 June 2011;
21 July 2011;
29 September 2011;
01 December 2011;
29 March 2012;
07 June 2012;
05 July 2012;
09 August 2012; and
13 September 2012.

- 5.6 After the first two meetings the venue was changed to Ferryhill Community Centre, Albury Road, initially due to availability. Since this suited group members it has continued there since.

Community Concerns

- 5.7 Through the meetings a number of general concerns emerged:
- Lack of response from Police;
 - Loitering and a resultant fear of crime;
 - The Quality of Street Lighting;
 - Derelict properties in the neighbourhood – visual appearance and attracting nuisance;
 - ACC/B&B proprietors buying additional properties in the area;
 - Littering and fly-tipping;
 - Bon Accord Gardens – intimidation, dogs and alcohol;
 - External appearance of the Accommodation Units;
 - How allocations are made and length of time residents are staying;
 - Impact of residents from wider city centre area;
 - Notman's Chemist and associated transit.
- 5.8 Whilst a number of the matters raised were unrelated or indirectly related to the Accommodation Units, the group endeavoured to address any of these, often by channelling the concerns to the relevant parties. The group evidently provided a good focus for resolving wider problems, having already brought together a number of Council officers, elected members, Police and local residents.

Police Response

- 5.9 Grampian Police have sent delegates to each meeting of the group, primarily community officers who have an excellent operational knowledge of the area, and also Inspectors and Sergeants on a number of occasions. It is clear that Grampian Police are committed to maintaining a presence in the area and proactively working to minimise problems, crucially listening to local residents and working closely with the Homelessness Service and City Wardens. This has undoubtedly improved the situation over the period the group has met and has gone a tremendous way to allaying the concerns initially expressed by the community.

Loitering and fear of crime

- 5.10 The most prevalent factor cited in the objections lodged in 2009 and 2011 was the extent of persons believed to be resident in Accommodation Units and B&B premises were loitering in the street and surrounding area, sometimes smoking and drinking and generally creating an atmosphere of fear and alarm to local residents, feeling intimidated and fearing crime.

The Homelessness Service has worked with residents of the units & B&Bs to ensure they are aware of the sensitivities of the local neighbourhood and conduct themselves in a considerate way. Smoking arrangements had been a factor, particularly for residents in Shelton's Guest House, 28 of whom would require to stand out on the street.

Close liaison with City Wardens and the Community Policing Teams has also ensured that the neighbourhood in general is monitored and problems

identified and addressed, whether directly related to homeless accommodation or not. Staff remits have been widened to include responsibility for the neighbourhood and security contracted to support staff and patrol the neighbourhood.

The most considerable change has been the reduction in concentration of homeless placements on Bon Accord Street over the period; B&B usage down from 53 rooms per night to none. Notwithstanding the impact of the numerical reduction alone, the withdrawal from Shelton's Guest House in July 2011 has removed the intense concentration of 28 single males being located directly across from 77/79 Bon Accord Street and much of the footfall and loitering had been ascribed to that arrangement.

Whereas loitering, intimidation and fear had been the more prominent concerns of local residents in previous objections and at the initial meeting, subsequent meetings have not noted that this is an ongoing issue, which can largely be attributed to the measures taken and continued oversight of the group.

Quality of Street Lighting

- 5.11 After the first meeting it had been highlighted that the quality of street lighting in the narrower part of Bon Accord Street (Craibstone Street – Springbank Street) was inadequate and this contributed to the unease of local residents at night.

In response to this, and a suggestion that it may be opportune to use the road disruption for gas works to improve the infrastructure, contact was established with the Principal Engineer (Lighting), who agreed to bring forward the schedule to upgrade the lighting and completed this promptly. He also responded to further queries about the operation of the lights, brightness etc. The group was unanimous that this had been a considerable improvement to the previous standard of lighting and made a difference at night.

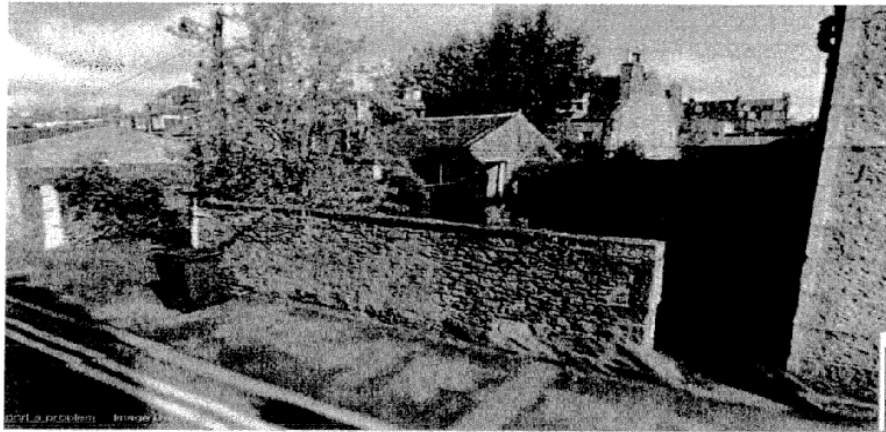
Derelict Properties – Appearance and Nuisance

- 5.12 From the initial meeting the derelict shop front across from Shelton's Guest House had been identified as an eyesore, with the recess being frequented by smokers and drinkers.



Efforts to contact the owner of the property proved fruitless and staff at the Accommodation Unit arranged with the Community Service Team to close off the recess and paint over the wooden façade. This was acknowledged as having aesthetically improved the property, as well as removing a notorious spot for loitering and associated nuisance.

At the meeting in July 2011 it was raised that an unenclosed garden, with insecure outhouse on the corner of Crown Street and Rosebank Terrace, was attracting nuisance.



Contact with the owner of the property was established via the Council's Private Sector Housing Team and the landlord promptly erected a fence to enclose the garden and since then there have been no further complaints received, the problem having been resolved.

ACC/B&B Proprietors buying properties in the area

- 5.13 At the initial meeting some concerns were voiced about the prospect of Aberdeen City Council or local B&B proprietors purchasing additional properties in the neighbourhood to accommodate more homeless persons. Whereas the option to do so (not limited to Bon Accord Street, but not excluding it) had been raised as a potential measure to alleviate a critical shortage of temporary accommodation in a report to Council on 30 June 2012, by the time the Community Engagement Meetings commenced other measures had been approved or implemented to ensure that this was no longer needed. Reassurance was given that existing B&B proprietors sourcing other properties in the area were unrelated to the Homelessness Service and that the Council was not actively pursuing any such arrangements.

Littering and Fly-tipping

- 5.14 The problem of littering (often empty drinks containers) and fly-tipping, particularly on the stairs leading from Bon Accord Street to Rosebank Terrace, and the recess beside them, had been raised at the initial meeting. Liaison with the Cleansing department and City Wardens ensured that the initial mess was cleared and subsequently this area has been frequently inspected. In the course of any patrols of the neighbourhood when such

matters are identified they have been raised with colleagues at Cleansing in order to quickly resolve them and in an effort to prevent the problem becoming protracted.

Bon Accord Gardens

- 5.15 It had been highlighted that people were frequenting the park drinking and otherwise loitering in groups, which neighbours found to be intimidating. Liaison with the Grampian Police and City Wardens has ensured this is monitored on a daily basis, with the former having conducted undercover patrols to ensure the problem was not solely solved by uniformed presence. In addition staff from the Accommodation Unit have included the park in patrols to ensure residents are not causing problems and any problems identified pertaining to members of the public are communicated to the Police.

At the meeting in March 2012 the issue of unruly dogs was raised and after initial responses from the City Wardens and Police, a communication from the Dog Warden was issued at the subsequent meeting, with details of their powers and contact details should problems persist. It was noted that pets are not typically permitted within temporary accommodation properties and there was no suggestion that this was the source of the problem.

Residents conveyed to the meetings that there had been less activity in the park this year, perhaps partly on account of the poor weather, but certainly aided by the proactive measures to minimise the opportunity for anti-social behaviour to arise.

External Appearance of Accommodation Units

- 5.16 The appearance of the accommodation units had been described at the inaugural meeting as an 'eyesore', with window coverings unkempt or absent, and residents wedging windows open with towels.

The Team Leader consulted with neighbours across the road and agreed new window coverings to be installed, ensured that the opening range of the windows was limited and issuing guidance to tenants about their use. This was said to be an improvement and staff have continued to monitor the external appearance to ensure it does not detract from the community.

Allocations and Length of Stay

- 5.17 The method of allocating accommodation and how long residents are due to stay was queried at the initial meeting. An overview of the allocations and assessment process was provided at the second meeting, detailing the limited information which may be available at the outset and the options for moving tenants to appropriate alternatives at the earliest opportunity thereafter.

Impact of Residents from wider city centre

- 5.18 Concerns regarding the conduct of individuals known to reside at other properties operated or commissioned by the Homelessness Service have been made periodically at the group. From the early stages the Team Leader for the Accommodation Unit at 165 Crown Street has been invited to attend the meetings, and respond to/resolve issues identified as emanating from that

premises. More recently several individuals resident at Margaret House, a care home operated by the Cyrenians, had caused problems in the area and senior management met with counterparts at Cyrenians promptly and agreed a range of measures to resolve some difficulties identified with the composition of the client group and assist in identifying more appropriate options. This appears to have had some impact in reducing impact, however the situation will continue to be closely monitored and Cyrenians staff have expressed willingness to meet with the local community should problems return.

Notman's Chemist

- 5.19 Notman's Chemist, Millburn Street, has long been associated with the dispensing of Methadone. In recent years there has been a considerable daily footfall of people going to or returning from collecting prescriptions and the volume and association with current drug users was of concern to the local community.

The impact over the period has been monitored; there is little anecdotal evidence of a major problem and the proprietor is generally regarded as operating a very professional establishment. When the problem with the garden on Rosebank Terrace was identified it was believed some people may have used it as a stop-off going to and from the chemist, however the thoroughfare appears more naturally to be centred on Crown Street from the city centre and whilst this factor is being monitored, neither the Police nor City Wardens have observed any particular trends which would particularly affect the Bon Accord Street locale.

6 Ongoing initiatives

- 6.1 The progress made since the restructure of the Homelessness Service is the work to date; legislative changes are due to enhance duties the Council has to homeless applicants and there is an overarching responsibility to provide as tailored a service as possible to prevent and alleviate homelessness, without undue impact on the household. Therefore a range of further initiatives has also been scheduled to enhance the service provided those who are homeless or threatened with homelessness.

Prevention

- 6.2 Taking a lead from the Scottish Government, the primary focus of the Homelessness Service will continue to be Prevention. The Council's mainstream housing department has just undergone a major restructure, with more area based contact which will provide a frontline approach to resolving problems at an early stage in the neighbourhood housing estates. Existing resources focussed on responding to homelessness will be kept under review, with the option of further early intervention capacity if deemed necessary.

Victoria House

- 6.3 Approval has been granted for a bespoke new-build development of modern temporary accommodation on the site of Victoria House, West North Street. Plans are currently at an advanced stage with architects, with demolition to commence in the weeks ahead. The service is scheduled to be operational by Spring 2014 and a review of the Council's temporary accommodation requirements will be undertaken at that time.

Priority Need

- 6.4 The Council is due to meet the legislative target to abolish the priority need test by the end of 2012, and is at the lower end of authorities in terms of interim progress (83% in 2011/12). The pressure on social housing allocations has meant it is vital that the progress made in preventative activities is maintained to ensure that the additional duty to households currently deemed to be 'Non Priority' can be fulfilled without seriously impacting on waiting times.

More recent figures, following revised guidance on assessments in recent months, have seen the percentage increase above 90%, therefore whilst there will be an inevitable increase in those the Council has an enhanced duty to by the end of the year, it should not lead to an excessive impact on temporary accommodation. That said, a fluctuation in demand could still stall the diminishing requirements for B&B accommodation, or lead to an increase in the short – medium term.

7 Summary

Response to Previous Objections

- 7.1 The principal objections lodged against the HMO licence renewals in 2009 and 2011 being based on the concentration of homeless persons in Bon Accord Street and anti-social behaviour attributable to them, it is clear that significant progress has been made in alleviating many of the concerns and certainly minimising the impact in so far as is practicable.

It has been crucial that the local community has worked with the Council and partner agencies, particularly commendable given the frustrations emergent over previous years. The Council remains committed to maintaining the progress made and continued vigilance to ensure that the aim of “(reducing) the negative impact experienced by the local community (anti-social behaviour) resulting from the concentration of accommodation for homeless people” progresses.

B&B accommodation

- 7.2 A significant reduction in the use of B&B accommodation was underway at the time of the last renewal and progress has continued since then. A major milestone was reached in July 2011 when the Council ceased placing clients in Shelton’s Guest House, 46 Bon Accord Street, removing 28 of the short-term residents who had hitherto been accommodated directly across the road from 77/79 Bon Accord Street.

The Ferndale Hotel, 62 Bon Accord Street, has not been used by the service since June 2012 and the final homeless residents of Gordon’s Guest House, 72 Bon Accord Street, and Dunvegan Guest House, 113 Bon Accord Street, left on 11 October 2012. Since then there have been no B&B establishments used by the Homelessness Service on Bon Accord Street, removing in total 53 B&B residents from the street compared with the time of the last renewal.

This progress has made a major contribution to the objectives of the Community Engagement Group and has returned four premises in the vicinity of the Accommodation Unit to providing holiday or short term accommodation for workers in the city.

Impact of Accommodation Unit Premises

- 7.3 The Accommodation Unit staff have meticulously logged incidents and observations in the local community, therefore providing an authoritative record of the relative impact of the premises.

Contacts from local residents have averaged around one per month over the duration of the group, with updates provided at each meeting. The logging has identified a level of activity related to transit from licensed premises near Union Street and some neighbouring properties, particularly an adjacent flat, which itself has been the subject of several incidents noted by our staff team.

Trip Advisor comments regarding stays in B&B establishments in the area of Bon Accord Street around the Accommodation Units in recent months have

noted how quiet the street is, being so close to the city centre. It is a positive view of the neighbourhood and it is encouraging that there are no contrary comments.

In view of the Accommodation Unit at 77/79 Bon Accord Street providing a sole residence for 18 households at any time, the relative impact of the premises is considered to be low, however the Homelessness Service will continue to work with the local community to be responsive to any comments or complaints and be proactive in liaison with other agencies.

STATEMENT OF REASONS

- for the -
Grant of an application for the renewal of a
licence for a House in Multiple Occupation
by
Aberdeen City Council
for
premises at 77-79 Bon Accord Street
and 95 Bon Accord Street
Aberdeen

At their meeting on 9th September 2009 the Licensing Committee of Aberdeen City Council as Licensing Authority ("the Licensing Authority") considered an application by Aberdeen City Council as statutory Homelessness Authority, for the renewal of two licences for houses in multiple occupation (HMOs) in respect of premises at 77-79 Bon Accord Street, and 95 Bon Accord Street, Aberdeen. The applications were made in terms of the Civic Government (Scotland) Act 1982, (the 1982 Act).

The applicant was represented by Craig Stirrat, Head of Service for Planning and Policy for Housing, Charlie Lynch, Senior Homelessness Officer and Steven Inglis, Solicitor

As a preliminary point Mr Inglis raised the issue of whether or not an additional document could be tabled that contained a police analysis of the problems and crimes experienced in the Crown Street area of the City, Crown Street being a street parallel to Bon Accord Street. He had just received it that day. He submitted that this document might explain why the police had not commented on the applications. There being no submissions to the contrary, the Committee agreed to hear the material contained in the document.

There were 64 objectors to the renewal of the licences, all of whom were invited to attend the meeting, and 2 late objections. All the letters of objection referred to both 77-79 and 95 Bon Accord Street so the Committee resolved to hear both these applications together. Neither of the late objectors attended the meeting to explain the reason for the late objection. The Committee, in the absence of an explanation, resolved not to consider the late letters.

Alastair Thain, Private Sector Housing Manager advised the Committee that the premises at 77-79 Bon Accord Street was a four storey double tenement operated by the applicant as a hostel for homeless people. Originally the premises were 2 separate tenements and were knocked into one with accommodation at basement, ground, first and second floors. The accommodation comprises 18 bedrooms, 3 public rooms, 4 kitchens, 9 bathrooms and 1 staffroom.

Work required to bring the property up to a standard whereby it was suitable to be licensed as an HMO consisted of some fire safety work and training for staff, fire resistant glazing to be installed, keyless locks to be fitted, various items of signage and portable fire fighting equipment to be provided, some internal decoration and minor maintenance works and valid gas and electrical safety certificates to be provided.

95 Bon Accord Street, also operated as a hostel for the homeless. The accommodation comprised a four storey tenement with accommodation at basement, ground, first and second floor levels. The accommodation comprises 5 bedrooms, 1 public room, 2 kitchens and 4 bathrooms.

Work required at this property to bring it up to a suitable standard for licensing included fire safety and staff training work, various items of signage and portable fire fighting equipment to be provided, minor internal maintenance works, and valid gas and electrical safety certificates to be provided.

The Chief Constable, Grampian Fire & Rescue Service and the Council's Anti-Social Behaviour Unit were all consulted on the applications and none of these bodies had any comments to make.

Members of the Committee asked some questions of Mr Thain in regard to the fire safety work and who was responsible for ensuring that the required standard was maintained. Members were concerned as this was the renewal of a licence and fire safety standards should not have slipped in the time since the licence was granted or last renewed. Mr Thain advised that some of the work required and listed in his memo had been completed since the memo was written.

A list of competent objectors is attached as Appendix A. The following objectors attended the meeting:- Mr G Lepre, Ms A Duncan, Mr I Cruickshank, Mr A Wilcox, Ms B Stewart, Ms AM Adam, Mr B Adam, Ms McMinimin, Mr M Laws, (Ms McMinimin spoke on behalf of Mr Laws), Mrs P Carrol, H Leiper, Mrs Walker, Miss E Skinner, Graham Smith, Mr G Adams and Ms J Wilken (Ms Wilken spoke on behalf of both), Mr Bavidge on behalf of M Robertson, E Weatherhead, Mr C Moore, Ms M Lindsay, Mr & Mrs Greig (Mr Greig spoke for both) and Mr I Morrice and Ms J Leslie (Ms Leslie spoke for both),

Because of the number of objectors and the potential for all 64 to attend the meeting and wish to speak, the Committee resolved that each objector would be given 2 minutes to make their case to the Committee. In addition, where there were multiple names on the same letter, only one person would be invited to address the Committee on behalf of all of those named. 5 objectors would be heard, then the Committee Members would ask questions of those 5. The next 5 objectors would then be heard and questioned until all of them had been dealt with.

Mr G Lepre, Ms A Duncan, Mr I Crucikshank, Mr A Willox and Ms B Stewart were called to speak first.

Mr Lepre referred to the murder in early summer 2009 in the area for which 2 residents of one of the Bon Accord Street hostels were charged. The Wednesday preceding the Committee meeting a brick had been thrown through his restaurant window in Bon Accord Crescent. He had called the police but because there was "no blood" they would not attend the incident. Business had decreased because people were afraid to go to the area or to cross the park (Bon Accord Crescent Gardens). Drugs were marketed in the area and the quality of life had deteriorated. Ms Duncan is the owner of a children's nursery in Bon Accord Street. Her staff were afraid as they had witnessed a lot of assaults and she got a lot of complaints from them regarding their personal safety.

Mr Cruickshank had run a business in Bon Accord Street for 15 years. At that time the street was a prime location and good for business. Now people wander in if the door is left open and they hang around in the lane. He no longer allows his female staff to leave his premises by the back door (into the lane) unless they are accompanied. He had 2 break-ins in the last year. There were people coming and going all the time shouting and swearing. In his opinion the hostel was in the wrong location.

Mr Willox has lived in the area for 40 years. In the last few years there had been shouting, swearing, alcohol, drugs from early morning to late at night. People were hanging around frightening and threatening passers-by and cans were thrown from windows at them. His grandchildren were no longer allowed to visit their grandparents because of the intimidation and he and his wife were forced to live at the back of the house. His car has been damaged 4 or 5 times. He and his wife were not comfortable living in the area.

Ms B Stewart spoke next. She owned a guest house in the street. She witnessed "terrible scenes". Hostel residents congregated on her wall and practically naked females could be seen in the hostel bedroom windows. She was subjected to verbal abuse and constant threats. Alcohol was taken into the hostel and if incidents were reported to the staff they just hid the evidence. If the hostel was managed properly these things should not happen. The behaviour was anti social, shouting from windows. Weeks previously she had been accosted in the park.

The Members the asked questions of these 5 objectors.

There were questions about whether or not the incidents complained of had been reported to the police. The local residents did not generally report incidents to the police as they had no faith that they would be dealt with. The police had failed to identify the culprits of the 2 brick incidents. Ms Stewart had not reported the incident whereby she was accosted in the park. It involved residents from both the Bon Accord Street hostels who were intoxicated and hurled abuse at her.

Next were Ms A Adam, Ms McMinimin, Ms P Carrol, Hazel Leiper and Mrs Walker. Ms Adam wondered why we were here again as the last time the licences were granted (2004), the residents had objected and were promised more CCTV cameras and better supervision of the hostel. Ferryhill was overrun with homeless people. Drugs, drink, anti social behaviour and break-ins were just part of society. She had a commitment to her guests. Why did it take a murder before anyone investigated the situation? The Council say it is their duty to house the homeless but they also have a duty to help the residents of Ferryhill.

Ms McMinimin wished to back up all the other objectors said. The previous week Mr Lynch (Senior Homelessness Officer) told local residents that the hostel management was in control of the premises. They disagreed because on a daily basis they witnessed hostel residents passing by with alcohol and under its influence. She had owned a guest house for 13 years and it had been a lovely area when she bought it. There was a good mix of business and residents on Bon Accord Street then. The homeless had spoiled Ferryhill and were a nuisance.

Ms Carrol just wanted to back up everything that had already been said. Hazel Leiper owned 3 guest houses in the area. Over the 10 years she had lived in the area the homeless who were not a problem originally, had become so. When the hostels housed families in genuine need there was no issue. Now there were drug takers who hung about shouting abuse and urinating outside shops. Children

witnessed this behaviour. Local residents could not use the park because of drinkers. The police drove past them (the drinkers) and ignored them. It was a struggle to get guests for her business because of this behaviour.

Mrs Walker had a strong objection to the applications. She had lived over 30 years in the area which was beautiful until the homeless moved in. A man from the hostel had come into her home and tried to pull up the pavement grill at her house. A girl wandered in her back door one day when she forgot to lock it. She could not go out at night without her family taking her. She was not safe.

Members then asked questions.

Mrs Walker was asked if she had identified the people who entered her house. She said she had tried to speak to the manager of the hostel but she was unavailable.

Next to speak were Miss E Skinner, Graham Smith, Ms J Wilken, Mr Bavidge and E Weatherhead.

Miss Skinner said that she and her 4 year old daughter were subjected to disgusting behaviour daily. It was a beautiful area when she moved in 10 years ago. The management of the hostel was not working. The Council was failing to protect local residents. The crime statistics for the area were horrifying. 2 hostel residents had recently murdered someone locally. 1 hostel resident had stabbed someone and, having served half his sentence was now living in the hostel. There was also a male resident who was dealing in cocaine and supplied 21.3 grams from his hostel bedroom.

Graham Smith was the property factor with J&G Collie Solicitors whose office was on Bon Accord Street. Daily hostel residents congregated round their office drinking, arguing, shouting abuse, vandalising office cars and littering with cans and syringes. The litter had to be cleaned up at company expense. They had provided CCTV footage to the police. It was always the same faces.

Ms Wilken was next. She was often living alone as her partner worked away. Her doorbell was constantly rung. Residents used her garage and the back lane as a toilet. There was human excrement in her garden. It was costing her "a packet" to get it cleaned up. It was disgusting. Hostel residents came in her door and went upstairs. She could see the back of the hostel from her windows. Residents hung about the back lane. A friend of hers had been mugged at knifepoint. She would like cameras to be installed in the lane.

Mr Bavidge was next. His guesthouse was located on Springbank Lane a quiet lane off Bon Accord Street. He regularly had to call the police on numerous occasions because of damage to vehicles and plants. There were "a pack of people" regularly in the lane drinking and leaving needles and human excrement. It was very unpleasant and getting worse not better. People stripped off in public and had sex in the lane. The area is a maze of lanes and the police never went into them, only the street. A lot of drug dealing went on in the lanes. There was also shoplifting and the community was up in arms.

S Weatherhead thought Aberdeen was lovely when she moved here 5 years ago. Now it had changed. A woman wandered into her house and used the toilet one day. She had been drinking all day and bothering people asking for money. It was bad for tourists.

There were no Members questions.

The final objectors to speak were Mr C Moore, Ms M Lindsay, Mr A Greig and Ms Leslie.

Mr Moore reiterated everything the other objectors had said. He had had a car damaged and things were getting worse.

Ms Lindsay had a guest house for a year. She got complaints from her guests who were asked for money when walking to the shops.

Mr Greig owned a guest house in Springbank Terrace. There was a big rise in the people drinking, taking drugs in the area. His garden was used as a toilet, his car had been damaged and his business was affected. A lovely area was going downhill.

Finally Ms Leslie spoke. Living 30 years in the area she felt emotional to see it go the way it was. She had spent £15,000 landscaping her garden and the plants and flowers had been ripped out by homeless people. They urinated everywhere and were sick in the street.

There were no Members questions.

Mr Inglis was then invited to speak on behalf of the applicants.

He started by saying that, of the various grounds of refusal, no ground existed in respect of this application.

The applicant was fit and proper. There were no criminal convictions and the applicant had not been disqualified in terms of the Civic Government (Scotland) Act 1982, Schedule 1, paragraph 5(3)(a)(i).

Notwithstanding the number of objections there was nothing in the location which made the premises unsuitable to be licensed as an HMO. Homeless hostels needed to be in a central location so residents could access services in the city centre. Once the upgrading works were complete the premises would be suitable therefore the ground in Schedule 1 paragraph 5(3)(c)(i).

With regard to paragraph 5(3)(c)(ii) the nature and extent of the activity, the premises had been licensed as an HMO for several years. The fact that it was used as a hostel for homeless people did not render it unsuitable for licensing. The residents had needs and degrees of vulnerability which required a central location to meet those needs.

The main issue was undue public nuisance in terms of paragraph 5(3)(c)(iv). A lot of the complaints were not linked to the premises. There was a danger that all the anti social behaviour was laid at the door of the premises. The police had made no observations on the application, nor had they been getting reports of criminal behaviour. The area was not a crime "hotspot" and the police had said this openly at public meetings.

The Council's Anti-Social Behaviour Unit had no comment to make on the application either. There was a lack of official verification of the problems. A police analysis of the crime statistics only linked 5 offences to the 3 hostels for homeless people in the city centre run by the Council. Most of the crime related to drunk people making their way home from the city centre. There were also drug and alcohol issues in the city centre not attributable to the application premises. In the wider city context there were other premises for the homeless nearby run by agencies other than the Council.

With regard to issues of public order and public security contained in paragraph 5(3)(c)(v), again the police had no comments or objections to make on the

application. Comments made in relation to the location and character of the premises also applied to this ground of refusal.

There was no other good reason to refuse the application. The facts and circumstances were in favour of renewing the licence. There was an established HMO use at the premises. There was a need for the Council to provide managed homeless units and small hostels were a good way of doing this. There was a shortage of temporary accommodation in the city. 200 homeless people had been turned away in the period April to July 2009. Refusal of this application would increase the shortage and mean some of the occupants would end up on the street increasing the problems.

An internal review had been initiated on the provision of temporary accommodation for homeless people and the future provision of services.

The Council was about to start this review. There was already in place a problem solving partnership with the police to work together. If the Committee members had concerns about the number of objections it could renew the licence for a shorter period as Members thought appropriate. The licence could also be conditioned to take care of Members concerns. It would be a drastic step to refuse it. Another option would be to defer the application to obtain more information from the police rather than refuse.

A police document "Problem Profile Crown Street Area" was distributed to Members. Among other things it showed spikes of offending by time of day. There were a lot of references to licensed premises and no agency looking at the problem as a whole. He moved the Committee to renew the licence.

Members then asked questions.

The first concerned the provision of homeless accommodation in the city centre. Members were advised that the Council faced challenges meeting the 2012 national target to abolish priority need. If a homeless person presents to the Council it has an obligation to provide accommodation. Homelessness strategy was being reviewed. The Council was in the process of looking at costs and suitable alternative accommodation. At this stage it could not be predicted what the outcome would be for the application premises.

The applicant was asked what action had been taken when hostel residents had wandered into local residents houses and what had been done when it was discovered that heroin had been dealt from the hostel, information which was available on the internet. Members were advised that when an issue was identified to the manager she took action.

The applicant was not aware of the information on the internet. 2 of the 5 criminal incidents attributed to the hostel involved drugs offences. The incident Ms Skinner referred to, the manager had reported to the police.

Members wanted to know what the timetable for the review was. In answer they were told that it was already in commission with a deadline for determination of May 2010 but there was a problem getting other agencies to come forward to offer services. Even if alternative accommodation was identified and budgets were approved this year it could be 2 years before anything was in place.

Members also asked why the premises had outstanding maintenance works when there was a 3 year licence in place and money in the budget for maintenance. It was explained that fire safety regulations had changed and some items of fire safety equipment had to be changed as a result. Ongoing response maintenance was done regularly and also when a room became vacant.

Reasons

Members considered that the grounds of refusal in the Civic Government (Scotland) Act 1982, Schedule 1, paragraph 5(3)(a)(i) and (ii) were not open to them.

Nor were the grounds in paragraph 5(3)(b) or (d).

With regard to paragraph 5(3)(c)(i) Members accepted that the condition of the premises would be suitable once the fire safety and other work contained in the memo dated 26th August 2009 from the HMO Unit manager was completed. The location of the premises did not concern the Members unduly and they did not consider this as a ground of refusal. Paragraph 5(c)(ii) and (iii) were not considered either. Paragraph 5(c)(iv) and (v) were considered.

The Members were extremely concerned at the picture of violence, drug taking, abuse, anti-social behaviour, intimidation and crime painted by the objectors and by the lack of support from the police when complaints were made.

Members considered that the supervision of the hostel and its core client group had changed over the years. Because there were 2 hostels on Bon Accord Street this exacerbated the problems. Residents moved between them and this affected the quality of life of local people. Members were sympathetic to the problems these people were experiencing and recognised that they had a duty to them as well as the homeless. This situation could arise in any community in the city if they had homeless hostels located there.

Homeless people knew each other and did tend to congregate together. There was however, (with some exceptions) little evidence to link specific incidents with the hostel residents. Members recognised that a lot of what went on was not reported to the police and this led to a paucity of recorded incidents which was not helpful. They were very concerned about the volume of objectors and the nature of the incidents reported in the objection letters and the submissions to the Committee. Members had no doubt that the incidents happened as described and, despite the lack of an evidential chain, that hostel residents were responsible for many of them. One intruder had been identified as a previous hostel resident and another could not be identified.

Members were aware that they were dealing with applications for HMO licences and the fact that the premises were hostels for the homeless was not relevant to their decision except insofar as the criminal and anti-social behaviour emanating from the premises impacted on a ground of refusal. Only 5 incidents in the police report related directly to the application premises.

Most of the incidents complained of took place outside the hostel and Members were concerned about how much control the hostel manager could and should have over residents when they were outside the premises. Regardless of this however Members were of the opinion that the hostel was badly managed and a lot more could and should have been done in terms of maintenance and control of residents, especially inside the hostel, for example preventing alcohol being taken into the premises and residents inappropriate behaviour at the windows of the premises.

The Convener moved, seconded by Councillor Cassie, that the application be refused. Councillor Hunter moved as an amendment, seconded by Councillor Crockett, that the licence be renewed for a period of 1 year. Councillor John West

moved as a second amendment that the licence be renewed for a period of 3 years. On a division to decide the amendments there voted for the first amendment five (5), Councillors Donnelly, Cormie, Crockett, Hunter and Robertson and for the second amendment three (3) Councillors Dunbar, John West and Noble. The Convener and Councillor Cassie no voted.

The first amendment was thereafter voted against the motion. On a second division there voted for the motion four (4) the Convener and Councillors Donnelly, Cassie and Robertson and for the amendment six (6) Councillors Cormie, Crockett, Dunbar, Hunter, John West and Noble. The amendment was therefore carried and the licence renewed for a reduced period of one year.

For these reasons the licence was renewed.



Brenda Flaherty
Legal Manager
Licensing Team
Clerk to the Licensing Committee
7th October 2009

Our Ref. PH/ECT
Your Ref. 024508/Q26/024509/Q26
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ABERDEEN
CITY COUNCIL

21 March 2011

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Dear Mr Thain

**Re: HMO Premises: 77/79 Bon Accord Street, Aberdeen AB11 6ED
& 95 Bon Accord Street, Aberdeen AB11 6ED**

This correspondence provides information in support of the above renewal applications for housing in multiple occupation (HMO) licences at 77/79 Bon Accord Street & 95 Bon Accord Street, Aberdeen for consideration by the Licensing Committee. These premises have been operated by the Council's Homelessness Service as temporary 'Accommodation Units' in fulfilment of statutory duty.

Background

Delegated approval to grant renewal of HMO licences for these premises was granted by the Licensing Committee on 09 September 2009 for a period of one year. At a meeting on the same day Members refused a renewal application for the premises at 165 Crown Street, which at that time was operated by the same manager and staffing team. A key criticism within the Statement of Reasons for refusing this licence was the lack of a dedicated manager within each premises.

The licences for the Bon Accord Street premises were issued under delegated powers on 02 February 2010 once the stipulated conditions were met.

Aberdeen City Council subsequently appealed the decision to refuse the renewal of a licence for 165 Crown Street and court proceedings were ongoing when a further application based on material change of circumstances was submitted on 26 July 2010. This followed approval to recruit a dedicated manager for 165 Crown Street, thus leaving the manager at Bon Accord Street with responsibility only for 77/79 & 95 Bon Accord Street.

At the time of making that new application, less than one year had elapsed since refusal. However a material change of circumstances was recognised as having occurred.

No competent objections were received and a further licence for 165 Crown Street was granted by Committee at its meeting of 15 September 2010. Implicitly this recognised that the management deficiency previously highlighted by Committee had been addressed.

The renewal of the licences for the premises in Bon Accord Street is of strategic importance to the service, since failure to renew would include the possibility of removing a further 23 properties from our housing stock, thus making it even harder for those other than homeless households to get a council house.

The other main impact is financial. The resultant shortfall would prolong the Council's reliance on B&B accommodation, the larger proportion of which is also in Bon Accord Street. This further loss of subsidy to the Council would be around £100,000 plus a loss of income that supports the Homelessness Service of around £150,000.

Changes Since Previous Renewal

Since the renewal application was considered on 09 September 2009, Aberdeen City Council has already made significant improvements to its management of its accommodation units and is in the process of implementing a further range of initiatives.

Two posts at a more senior level – Homelessness Manager and Temporary Accommodation & PSL Senior Officer – have been created.

This has resulted in more collaborative working with other agencies such as Shelter who have rarely challenged the decisions made by the homelessness service in the last year.

More directly, improvements to the operation of the units have been implemented. The Manager for the Bon Accord Street premises is no longer responsible for 165 Crown Street, and a full time Assistant Manager has recently been appointed for the Bon Accord Street premises.

Consultation has taken place with the staffing group since last September with the intention of revising the job description, grading and working hours for all staff across the units. Approval has just been received to implement this restructure and it is anticipated this will be implemented on 02 May 2011.

Further Scheduled Changes

The staffing arrangements for the Bon Accord Street units are for an Accommodation Team Leader, supported by an Assistant Team Leader and 3 x Resettlement Worker/Shift Leaders, responsible for the day-to-day management of the units. The Accommodation Team Leader will report to the Temporary Accommodation & PSL Senior Officer and the Homelessness Manager.

The Accommodation Team Leader's responsibilities include liaison with the immediate neighbours/local community, ensuring that any concerns raised are addressed promptly.

Splitting the staff group between the units will give 77/79 & 95 Bon Accord Street its

own dedicated team under its own dedicated manager. This will result in them knowing the occupants better, developing relationships with them and tackling issues more quickly.

The shift pattern, below, will ensure that a manager/shift leader is on duty for the majority of each day and there will be at least three staff on duty at any one time during the daytime.

	M	T	W	TH	F	S	S
Team Leader	9-5	9-5	9-5	9-5	9-5		
Assistant Team Leader		E	E	E		E	E
Resettlement Worker	E	E			L	L	L1
Resettlement Worker	L	E	E	E	E		
Resettlement Worker	E	L	L	L	E		
Resettlement Assistant	D3	D2	D1	N			
Resettlement Assistant		D3	D2	D1	N		
Resettlement Assistant			D3	D2	D1	N	
Resettlement Assistant				D3	D2	D1	N
Resettlement Assistant					D3	D2	D1
Resettlement Assistant	N					D3	D2
Resettlement Assistant	D1	N					D3
Resettlement Assistant	D2	D1	N				

E	8.00am - 3.50pm	7.33hrs + 30 min break	x 13		95.29
L	3.10pm - 11.00pm	7.33hrs + 30 min break	x 6		45.96
L1	3.00pm - 10.15pm	6.75hrs + 30 min break	x 1		6.75
		Average over 4 weeks			37.00
D1	8.00am - 6.45pm	10.25hrs + 30 min break	x 7		71.75
D2	9.45am - 8.30pm	10.25hrs + 30 min break	x 7		71.75
D3	11.15am - 10.00pm	10.25hrs + 30 min break	x 7		71.75
N	8.00pm - 8.00am	11.5hrs + 30 min break	x 7		80.50
		Average over 8 weeks			36.97

The role of Resettlement Assistant is being introduced to carry out direct interventions with the customers and provide them with more focus to their day-to-day lives.

These staff will be responsible for ensuring good order/behaviour within the unit and the safety and wellbeing of the customers as well as providing the support and guidance necessary for tenancy preparation. The staff will also help customers to access other services such as drug/alcohol services, GPs, etc.

In addition to the above, dedicated cleaning staff will be appointed rather than these tasks being part of the Assistants' roles.

We will also have a two staff on duty at night, with a contracted security person available for the night shift seven days a week. The security person will be based at 77-79 & 95 Bon Accord Street premises and will have responsibility for the conduct

of residents within the premises as well as the wider neighbourhood.

The security person's Work Portfolio/Areas of Responsibility will include:

- Patrolling the external environment of the accommodation units and the bed & breakfast units in the area;
- Assisting with keeping the internal/external areas clean and tidy;
- Supporting staff in maintaining appropriate behaviours within the accommodation units.

As part of the wider homelessness service restructure provision has been made for a specialist support worker for applicants with addiction issues.

We have also recruited a team of Resettlement Workers whose remit in providing support to tenants will include those in B&B establishments. This is a considerable enhancement to the existing service, where there is no routine assistance available to such tenants.

Increased liaison has been undertaken with the Police and City Wardens and we are much more pro-active in dealing with potential issues.

The Homelessness Service is also increasing the range and number of options that it has available to discharge its statutory duties. This includes an additional accommodation unit in another area of the city, more temporary accommodation in ordinary flats and making use of flats in the private sector.

The increased range of options and revised management practices will ensure that homeless households are placed in a way which means there will be lower concentrations of people with issues in the relevant establishments.

Each household waiting for permanent accommodation will be reviewed regularly to ensure their placement remains appropriate.

Management recognises a responsibility with respect to the surrounding area in addition to its responsibility for the interior of the premises. Changes to occupancy rules for customers and working practices for staff are intended to keep behaviours within the premises and ensure the environment has a positive impact on those using it.

Impact on the Area

Community Engagement

The service acknowledges the concerns previously expressed by the local community about the use of 77/79 Bon Accord Street and 95 Bon Accord Street as temporary homelessness accommodation/houses in multiple occupation and reiterated in the objections to these renewal applications.

Aberdeen City Council's Homelessness Service is committed to engaging with communities who have an interest in, or are affected by, homeless facilities in their area, to minimise any adverse impact on the neighbourhood.

Following the opening of St. Fittick's House, Torry as an additional Accommodation Unit in November 2010, we established a Community Engagement Group, comprising representatives of the local community and elected members. We will convene a similar monitoring group in Bon Accord Street as a platform for constructive dialogue.

Concentration of Homeless Accommodation

We recognise that the level of short-term accommodation for homeless persons in Bon Accord Street can be seen as having a negative impact on the community, between the Accommodation Units and B&B establishments, consisting of 23 rooms and up to 51 rooms respectively.

The provision of B&B accommodation within the street is expensive for the Council and lacking in facilities for occupants. We have more than doubled the number of dispersed temporary accommodation flats since September 2009 and as we reach our target of letting 300 such properties by June 2011.

With the Private Sector Leasing (PSL) scheme being launched in April 2011 we envisage a considerable reduction in recourse to B&B accommodation over time and ultimately to limit its use on any considerable scale.

Responsibility for the Neighbourhood

We are committed to further monitoring the impact of our premises on the wider community and to that extent will ensure greater collaborative working with Council Wardens, with increased presence in the area and a clear remit to ensure that Anti Social Behaviour and public nuisance are dealt with quickly and effectively.

Our recruitment of security personnel with similar remit through the night shift will ensure that there is a constant monitoring of the impact of homeless persons and others within the neighbourhood, identifying when problems are associated with our premises and ensuring that responsibility extends beyond the perimeter of our properties.

The wider effect of this enhanced monitoring presence in the community as well as operational matters pertaining to the Accommodation Units and B&B establishments will be a key aspect of the remit for the monitoring for the Community Engagement Group.

Yours sincerely

Edward C. Thomas
Temporary Accommodation & PSL Senior Officer