

**CABINET – 14 JUNE 2018**  
**QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC**

Agenda item 5 refers

1. **Ms Sheila Sullivan to Councillor Mark Wilkinson, Portfolio Holder for Housing**

The Housing Act 2004 provided for licensing schemes for Houses in Multiple Occupation to be operated on a revenue neutral basis, at no cost to the public purse. The costs of running the schemes, including enforcement, were to be covered by income from the licence fees.

A neighbour of mine has recently received an e mail from an Environmental Health Officer explaining that they have a waiting list of over one hundred suspected unlicensed HMOs to be investigated. The explanation given is that resources are limited.

Any tenants in these properties would not have the protection that licensing provides and may be at risk.

What action will Harlow Council take to clear this backlog of enforcement as soon as possible and ensure resources are adequate for the future?

**Reply from Councillor Mark Wilkinson, Portfolio Holder for Housing**

Resources made available through licensing fees and charges are deployed to administer the licensing regime including taking progressive and proportionate enforcement action in accord with the Council's enforcement policy where this is appropriate.

Concerns about possible HMOs raised by members of the public are quite properly recorded by the Environmental Health team amongst the information collected, and each enquiry is followed up. Experience demonstrates that the great majority of such enquiries when investigated relate to dwellings which do not meet the statutory definition of an HMO. There will always be a certain number of such lines of enquiry to follow up in any enforcement regime and the number of enquiries to be followed up should not be equated with an estimate of outstanding enforcement actions.

Resources allocation across all enforcement functions is kept under review to ensure that it remains in balance with Council priorities.