

CABINET – 16TH SEPTEMBER 2021

ITEM 5 QUESTIONS UNDER CABINET PROCEDURE 10.7

Mr M. Hunt – Study of Houses in Multiple Occupation

- “1. In December the Council published A study of Housing in Multiple Occupation (HMO) in Charnwood by Professor Darren Smith and Dr Andreas Culora of Loughborough University costing over £20,000 over three years, so why was this charged to the Loughborough Special Expenses when it clearly relates to the Borough as a whole and contributes to the Evidence Base of the Draft Borough Local Plan and the Borough Housing Needs Assessment?
2. Given that the first aim of the Study was “*the creation of a comprehensive database identifying HMO in the Borough which can be updated as new information becomes available*”, which are the contributing data sources to that database?
3. As the Study states “*the database (HiMOG) provides an opportunity and baseline to annually update of the identification of HMOs and to identify the total number of bed spaces within each dwelling (i.e. total occupancy counts for each dwelling)*”, is it in active use and if so why has the database never been updated?
4. Would the Council include this contract in a forthcoming internal audit?”

The Leader, or his nominee, will respond:

1. *The study was commissioned in response to a recommendation from the Council’s Budget Scrutiny Panel following calls from Loughborough ward councillors to have a better understanding of HMO saturation in Loughborough in light of emerging research from Loughborough University into HMO geographies. As part of the budget setting process for the 2015/16 financial year, funding for the costs of the study was agreed by the Cabinet and Council (minute references Cabinet 84.4 2014/15 and Council 78.1.15 2014/15) in the form of a contribution towards the cost of a PhD thesis.*

While the study considered the impacts of HMOs across the whole Borough, the HiMOG database is only used in relation to planning decisions in Loughborough where an Article 4 Direction is in place. Similarly, Policy H7 in the Pre-submission Draft Local Plan only applies the threshold approach that makes use of the database to Loughborough.

The budget reports, including the allocation of this expenditure to the Loughborough Special Expenses, were prepared by the Council’s Head of Finance and Property Services and agreed by the Council’s Section 151 Officer who is responsible for the proper financial management of the Council.

2. *The HIMOG database was created in 2018 from the following datasets:*
 - *HMO Licences*
 - *Planning Register*
 - *Student registration data*
 - *Electoral Register*
 - *Council Tax exemptions*
 - *Information provided by local residents.*
3. *The HIMOG database is in active use and is updated.*
4. *Following the end of the project, and the handing over of the HIMOG database to the Council in 2018, there has been no contractual arrangement between the Council and Professor Smith.*