

Castle, Hyson Green & Arboretum and Radford Area Committee - 11 March 2020
Housing Licensing (Selective Licensing) Update

1. Summary

This ambitious scheme, one of the largest of its kind in the country, started on 1st August 2018 and is due to run to July 2023. Its implementation followed a pledge by the previous administration to introduce a city-wide licensing scheme which was part of an overall vision of 'Quality Housing for all'.

A team of 75 officers, across 12 different roles (many of whom were recruited from outside the authority) has been established, and there is satisfaction with how the scheme has developed.

2. Performance update

Key statistics (to 26 February 2020, unless otherwise stated)

Ward	Castle	Hyson Green & Arboretum	Radford
Licence applications received	3,033	2,220	1,020
Estimated number of properties requiring licensing *	3,020	5,337	3,490
Draft licences issued	1,585	1244	539
Final licences issued	276	360	200

* BRE report April 2018.

Appendix 1 shows the three ward maps with point data showing applications received.

City wide data from 1 August 2018 to 1 Feb 2020

Temporary exemption requests	793
Selective Licensing prosecutions / Civil penalty	41
Properties inspected	660
Properties improved – intervention	202
Properties improved – before we intervened	70

Commentary

The Council has received above the level of expected licence applications to date. A whole new team needed to be created, new processes and ways of working had to be developed whilst working within a new regulatory context. This has presented challenges, but we are already seeing some positive outcomes.

There focus of the Selective Licensing team has been processing and issuing the licences. Whilst some pre-licensing and compliance housing inspections have been

undertaken to a total of 660 properties, with 272 properties improved, such as gas fires replaced by gas central heating and smoke alarms installed.

The main compliance work is planned to start in April 2020 working with internal teams and other partners to be focused on a ward by ward basis. A draft plan to cover all wards in the scheme every 12 months is being developed. This will maximise time to inspect high numbers of properties, as well as check safety certificates such as gas and electric, as well as ASB action plans. This will be a focus throughout the remainder of the scheme.

Higher than expected levels of temporary exemption requests (over 700) have been received: these require a response and this has created an unexpected pressure on the team.

The following are the priorities and delivery plan for the scheme as identified by the Executive Board report, April 2018:

Year	Promote	Process	Engage	Enforcement	Compliance	Review
1						
2						
3						
4						
5						

3. Engagement

Significant resources and effort have been put into engaging with landlords in order to raise awareness of the scheme, better inform landlords and support them through the process. The programme has included:

- 30 events, with 400 landlords and agents engaged with proactively, including support for older landlords and landlords with English as a 2nd language at libraries and community centres;
- 5 larger landlord / managing agent events, another planned for May, each with approximately 100 attending;
- Landlord newsletter and updates being sent to over 3,000 signed up landlords;
- Applications are now live for a landlord and separate managing agent liaison group to improve dialogue with these stakeholders.

4. Enforcement action

The council has and continues to use its powers to take action against landlords who do not comply with their legal obligations and apply for licences. Since August 2018

the council has issued 19 civil penalty notices and 22 prosecutions, relating to offences for failing to apply for a selective licence.

There has been a response rate of 45% from landlords written to. The visits to unlicensed properties have uncovered imminent disrepair to properties and in particular has noted some smoke alarm systems not working or being completely absent placing tenants at increased risk.

The Council is proposing to continue to undertake more proactive promotion of the scheme in areas where applications still have not been made, along with enforcement activity utilising a risk-based approach. This includes further correspondence with responsible parties (using Council Tax data) to their 'away' address. This letter covers approximately 10,000 properties.

5. Successes

The enforcement work has been positive, as well as some of the housing inspections, already mentioned above. It is relatively early days to identify successes in terms of the scheme outcomes, but the below show some successes.

- Proactive engagement with tenants causing ASB and satisfactory resolution of cases, supporting tenants to stay in their property.
- Significant increase in number of Energy Performance Certificates (EPCs) issued in the PRS.
- Proportion of PRS homes with energy rating below 'D' reduced from 25.9% in 2018 to 15.6% in 2019.

6. Challenges and other lessons learned

- Despite the significant amount of awareness raising there is still a large number of landlords that have not applied for a licence.
- On the back of the Grenfell disaster and Hackitt review blocks of flats (some recently built / converted) have come under more scrutiny which were not envisaged when the scheme was being developed. Joint working with Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service is on-going to audit the significant number of blocks of flats within the city to ensure they are safe, following some local concerns that the sign off of buildings by approved inspectors was not up to always satisfactory. Licensing is providing opportunities to inspect and engage with a broader range of such buildings. Some blocks of flats within the city contain flats that fall under the 3 different licensing schemes, (mandatory, additional and selective), causing confusion.
- Due to a query about the legislation covering flats within blocks, the Council has reviewed the fee for such blocks and this was signed off as an executive decision in November 2019. 26 out of 70 blocks written to have requested to move to a block licence.

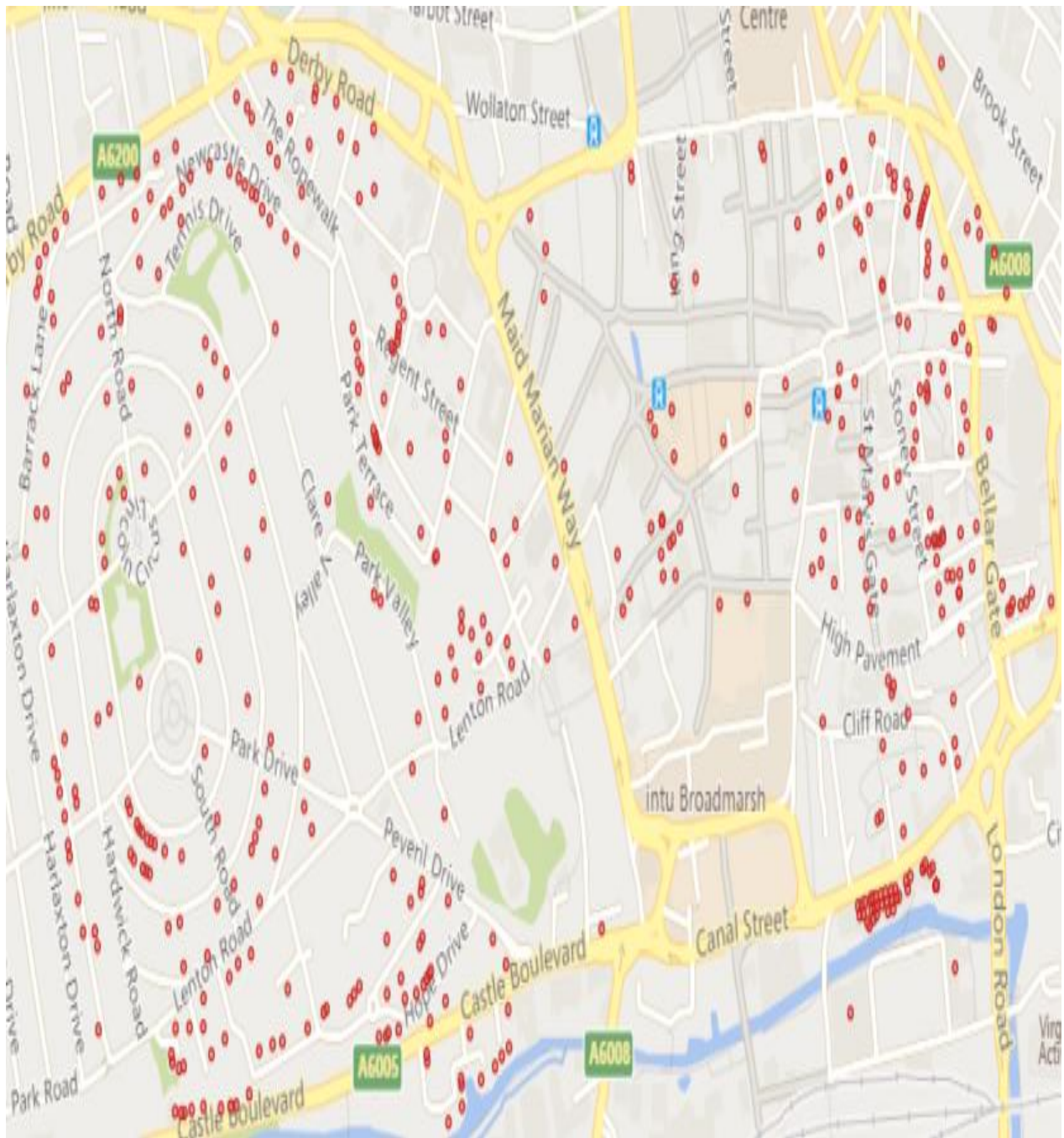
- Digital by default for application forms has created difficulties for some landlords, with the Council offering support and a paper application form as appropriate.
- Engaging hard to reach landlords, ensuring maximum number of applications are received. We continue to identify a lack of awareness in neighbourhoods – amongst both landlords and tenants.
- Significant, and above expected levels of freedom of information, temporary exemption and subject access requests.

7. Developments

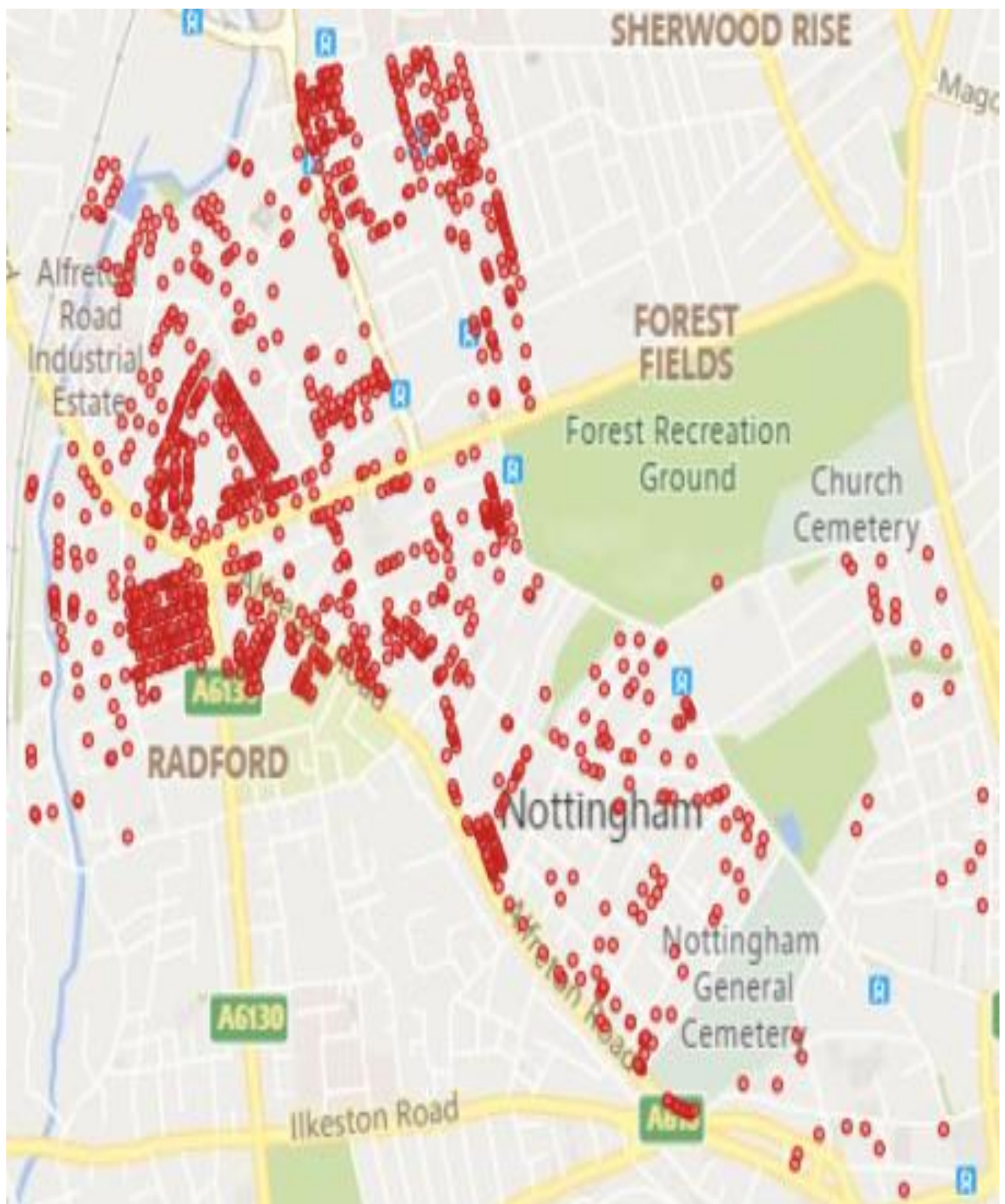
- Move to compliance – area based, neighbourhood focus, working locally with partners and engaging with local NAT meetings.
- Led by data / evidence, using a Business Analyst
- Developing the MyProperty webpages- Mapping applications received / properties licensed
- Continued enforcement / awareness raising of the scheme
- Landlord and Managing agent liaison group – applications live
- Measuring outputs and outcomes for this scheme and to help with any future schemes, working with Housing Strategy colleagues.

Appendix 1 – Ward maps of Selective Licence applications received

Castle ward



Hyson Green & Arboretum ward



Radford ward

