

# Northampton Diverse Communities Equalities Forum

on Thursday, 23 January 2014 at 6:30 pm until not later than 8:30 pm

in The Holding Room, The Guildhall, St. Giles Square, Northampton, NN1 1DE

## Agenda

1. **Welcomes, Introductions and Apologies**
2. **Minutes and Matters Arising Not Already On the Agenda**
3. **NBC Budget 2014/15 - Cllr. Alan Bottwood**
4. **Consultation - Management and Regulation of Private Sector Housing (Including HIMO's) - Cllr. Joy Capstick**
5. **Taking the Forum forward**
  - (A) **Forum name**
  - (B) **Code of Conduct**
  - (C) **Action Plans**
  - (D) **Events Calendar**
6. **Items for Discussion at the Next Meeting**
7. **Date Of Next Meeting**

Map and directions at: [www.northampton.gov.uk/guildhall](http://www.northampton.gov.uk/guildhall)

For more information about this meeting please contact:  
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More information about the Forum generally is at: [www.northampton.gov.uk/forums](http://www.northampton.gov.uk/forums)



Facebook page: [www.northampton.gov.uk/dcf](http://www.northampton.gov.uk/dcf)

Please note that this Forum is supported and funded by Northampton Borough Council. The Forum may work in partnership and collaboration with other community groups, councils and local services from time to time. The views expressed and decisions taken by the Forum are not necessarily those of Northampton Borough Council.



## Budget in a minute 2014/15

- Extended free parking including every Saturday and 2 hours free during the week
- Business incentive scheme
- Capital budget projects and investment
- Providing an additional neighbourhood warden, two park rangers and a new vehicle
- Increase opening hours of Northampton Borough Council's museums
- Maintaining the investment of small community grants
- Senior management savings and review
- Staff terms and conditions

### Extended free parking including every Saturday and 2 hours free during the week

#### Proposal:

To provide more free parking to shoppers visiting the town throughout the year, including free parking every Saturday in multi-storey car parks (St John's, St Michael's, Grosvenor and Mayorhold) plus an extension of the previous one hour free stay to two hours in St John's, St Michael's, Grosvenor and Mayorhold.

#### Background:

- Northampton Borough Council is committed to providing convenient, safe and reasonably priced parking to help businesses, attract shoppers and visitors and improve the local economy
- In September 2011 Northampton Borough Council introduced cheaper parking in the town. Measures included: free parking on Sundays in all car parks; a stay of up to an hour free in the town's St John's, St Michael's and Mayorhold multi-storey car parks with two hour stays reduced by 25 per cent; and a 25 per cent reduction in the price of parking for two hours in Northampton's premier surface car parks and the Grosvenor Centre car park
- In summer 2013 and in the run up to Christmas, Northampton Borough Council offered free Saturday parking in the council's multi-storey car parks ( St John's, St Michael's, Grosvenor and Mayorhold) plus free parking on Thursdays from 3pm in all NBC car parks and continued free Sunday parking in all NBC car parks also
- The extended free parking will start April 2014

#### Budget investment if approved:

Free Saturdays: £282,348

First two hours free: £382,435

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## Business incentive scheme

### Proposal:

There will be more help for businesses looking to grow or join our town centre. Working with town centre businesses we want to invest £250,000 in improving the business environment and making our town centre a more vibrant and attractive location for shoppers and investors.

### Background:

- In consultation with businesses we will be looking at supporting existing businesses as well as attracting new enterprise to our town centre.
- We will set up a business incentive scheme, with an initial contribution of £250,000 to fund measures aimed to fill empty properties and encourage small businesses.
- The scheme would be in addition to the cap on business rate increases and doubling of Small Business Rate Relief that were announced in the Chancellor's Autumn Statement.
- The scheme could see money invested in improving the appearance of the town centre and shop fronts of both occupied and vacant stores.
- The Council will also be looking at a range of incentives for business to take over vacant shops and premises.

### Budget investment if approved:

£250,000

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## Capital budget projects and investment

The Council's Capital Budget is used for investments in land, infrastructure and equipment.

### Proposals:

- Following the decommissioning of Greyfriars Bus Station work will start to demolish the building and free up land for redevelopment. The demolition programme will cost £3.5million and save the Council around £500,000 a year.
- The restoration work at Delapre Abbey will continue with over £1.1million being invested next year in essential work to restore the buildings and roofing.
- Work is also set to start on reopening Abington Street. Next year the Borough Council will invest £2.85million in supporting businesses and making it easier for shoppers and businesses to come into Northampton town centre.
- To support our Cultural Quarter we will be investing £2million in public realm improvements to establish the identity of the area, promote the features of the Quarter and make the area more welcoming to visitors who want to spend time enjoying what the area has to offer.
- This would include work to widen pavements for example, which would allow for street entertainment or pavement cafés

**Budget investment if approved:**

£13,663,567

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## **Providing an additional neighbourhood warden, two park rangers and a new vehicle**

**Proposal:**

To provide one new post for a town centre warden, two new posts for park rangers and a new vehicle for park rangers' use so that parks across the town can be more effectively patrolled and monitored

**Background:**

- Northampton Borough Council is committed to helping look after the town's parks and make Northampton a better place to live and visit
- In September 2011 Northampton Borough Council introduced dedicated park rangers to work with other agencies and community groups to look after three of the town's premier parks (Abington Park, Delapre Park and the Racecourse)
- In 2012 the council committed to investing further in the service to recruit one more fulltime and one part-time park ranger to look after other parks and green spaces in the town.
- There are currently 14 wardens working for Northampton Borough Council and 3 park rangers
- The previous town centre warden was established by 'borrowing' a warden from another area. This new post will make the position permanent
- The new warden will be responsible for environmental issues and supporting proactive projects designed to improve local quality of life in the town centre
- The two new park rangers will also be responsible for environmental issues and coordinating projects that provide other interests and attractions in our parks
- The aim of this proposal is to get the greatest efficiency from park rangers by making them as mobile and visible as possible. The new vehicle will mean that they can cover a greater number of parks more quickly.

**Budget investment if approved:**

£121,750

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## **Increase opening hours of Northampton Borough Council's museums**

**Proposal:**

To increase the opening times of Abington Park Museum on winter weekend afternoons and to re-open Northampton Museum & Art Gallery on Mondays.

### **Background:**

- The current opening hours of Abington Park Museum are April to October on Thursday – Sunday 1pm – 5pm
- The current opening hours of Northampton Museum & Art Gallery are Tuesday – Saturday 10am – 5pm and Sundays 2pm – 5pm all year round
- The extended opening hours will help increase tourism to Northampton and raise the town’s profile
- Many of the town’s cultural venues are shut on a Monday and it would therefore be beneficial to open Northampton Museum & Art Gallery on this day
- Abington Park is used all year round and the museum is a favourite with locals. Extending the opening hours of Abington Park Museum in the winter will make for a more effective use of the building and provide facilities for visitors using the park throughout the year

### **Budget investment if approved:**

£41,000

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## **Maintaining the investment of small community grants**

### **Proposal:**

To maintain the current investment of £50k to help community based projects in Northampton through the small based grants process.

### **Background:**

- Northampton Borough Council recognises the excellent work being done by community groups and voluntary groups in the town
- So far in 2013/2014 the small grant scheme has helped 10 local community and voluntary groups
- The small based grants are administered by Northampton Community Foundation (NCF) on behalf of NBC
- The funding of the grants will be reviewed in the future

### **Budget investment if approved:**

£50,000

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## **Senior management savings and review**

### **Proposal:**

The cost of senior management at Northampton Borough Council has reduced by more than 40% over the last three years. Since 2010/11, the number of senior managers has been cut from 21 to 10.

**Background:**

- These savings are a result of work to streamline the organisation and create efficiencies.
- Savings have been achieved through sharing back office functions such as HR and finance with other authorities through the LGSS scheme.
- Savings in the cost of senior management has helped to protect frontline services at the Borough Council.

**Budget saving since 2010/11:**

£850,000

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## **Staff terms and conditions**

**Proposal:**

Consult staff and Trade Unions on the review of a number of terms and conditions of employment, which will be discussed with trade unions and employees starting today.

**Background**

NBC is having to make £2 million worth of savings in 2014/15. These are unprecedented times and we have very difficult budget choices to make.

Last year the council removed the essential car user allowance and ended payment of professional fees on behalf of employees. A proposal to charge for parking for NBC staff was agreed but deferred until April 2014 and will now be implemented.

We have no option other than to look at reducing employment costs, which currently stand at £19.5 million a year. In 2014/15 it is anticipated that we will need to reduce this figure by £365,000.

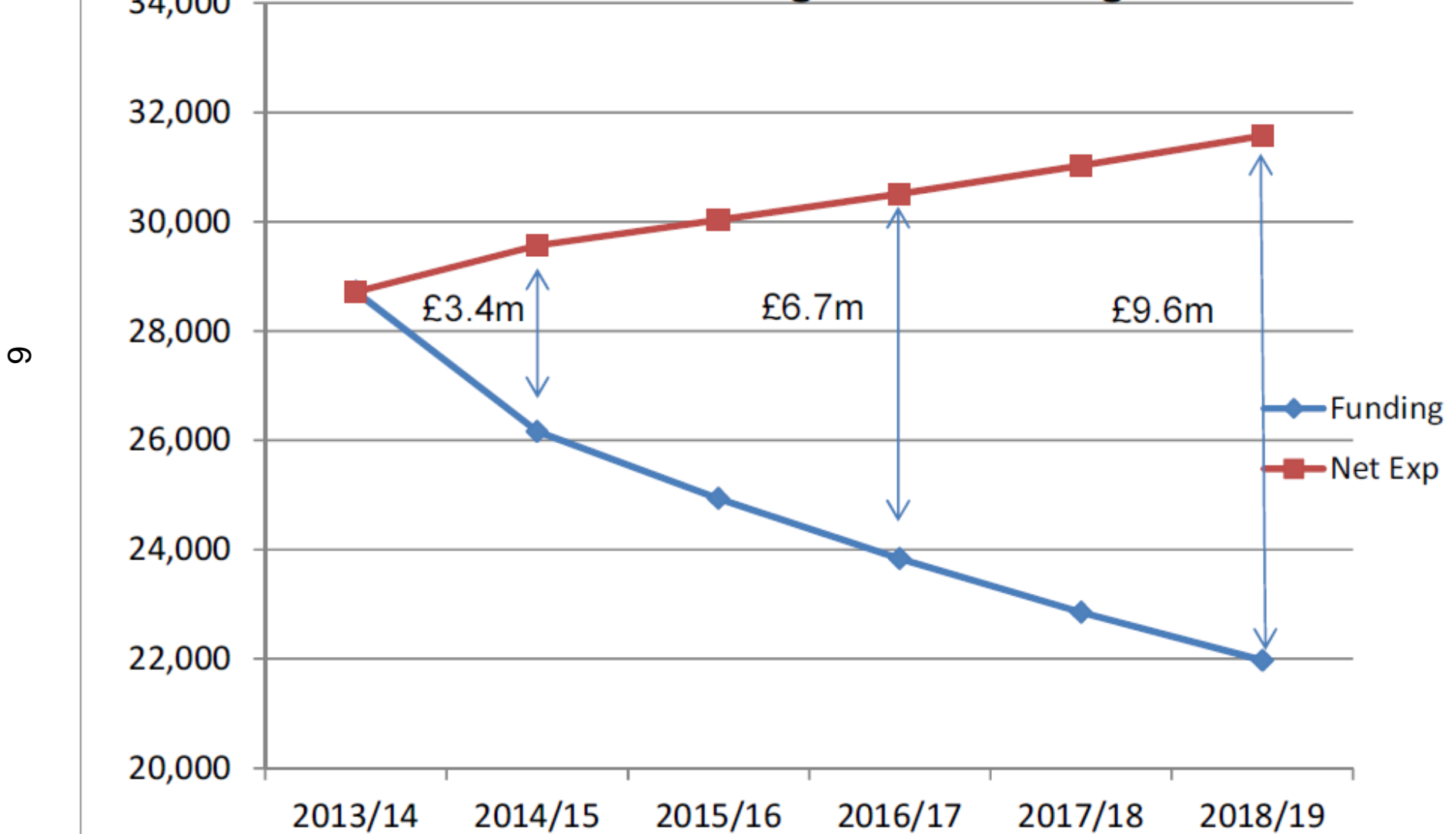
The alternative we face would be making further difficult decisions about reducing services and jobs.

**Budget saving if approved:**

£365,000

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£000s **General Fund Revenue Budget - Do Nothing Scenario**



## Your views are wanted!

Northampton Borough Council is facing an unprecedented financial challenge. Cuts in Government grants and increasing demands for our services mean that we will need to find £2m of savings over 2014/15 in order to balance the books.

We know you will understand these pressures, with households across the county sharing the challenge of making ends meet as living costs continue to rise and money coming in is harder to find.

We have already transformed the way we work, reducing our back office and senior management costs. We are now working more efficiently with fewer resources and will continue to make savings wherever possible.

We have a duty to rise to the financial challenge and this will involve some very tough choices.

Despite this bleak picture, the Council is committed to ensuring that we provide quality services, focusing our efforts in helping our economy to grow and those people who most need our support.

Your views will also help us understand how our proposals may affect you and our communities so that we can consider whether and how we can mitigate, if possible, the impact of any changes we introduce. Our decisions will only be made after listening to your views and we will continue to support the most in need and vulnerable in our society. Full details about the budget are also available on our website or can be obtained upon request.

Please complete this survey online. Alternatively, you can post your completed questionnaire to:

Corporate Policy and Consultation Manager  
Northampton Borough Council  
FREEPOST MID 17237  
Northampton  
NN1 1WJ

If you need help with this form or require the information in a different format, please visit our Customer Contact Centre at our One Stop Shop at the Guildhall, St Giles Square, Northampton NN1 1DE or call on 01604 837837 or by minicom on 01604 838970  
Closing Date: 31 January 2014

Personal data supplied on this form will be held on computer and will be used in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998. The information you provide will be used for statistical analysis, management, planning and the provision of services by the Council. The Council will not share any personal information collected as part of this survey. The Council's Data Protection Registration number is Z5256045.



## Council Tax Level

Despite the significant financial pressures faced by the Council, Council Tax levels were not increased since 2010.

The Council is considering keeping council tax levels the same for 2014/15. Do you agree or disagree with this approach?

- Strongly agree     Tend to agree     Tend to disagree     Strongly disagree

Please use this space for comments that will help us understand your response

## Draft Budget Proposals

A challenging programme of internal cost-cutting measures is proposed to tackle the shortfall and prevent the budget gap growing even further in 2015/16.

At the same time, order to promote growth, there will be a focus on investment, despite the need for the Borough Council to make savings to deal with a budget shortfall of £3.4 million in the next financial year.

# Northampton Borough Council Budget 2014/15 Consultation

A list of the draft budget proposals and background information can be found at [www.northampton.gov.uk/budget2014](http://www.northampton.gov.uk/budget2014)

These proposals, if/when agreed, will help the Council balance its budget for 2014/15. This is your opportunity to comment on the Council's draft budget options before they are submitted to the Cabinet for their consideration. Full Council will in turn consider the Cabinet's recommendation for approval on 24 February 2014.

Your comments on our options

## Key proposed budget options:

- Extended free parking including every Saturday and 2 hours free during the week
- Business incentive scheme
- Capital budget projects and investment
- Providing an additional neighbourhood warden, two park rangers and a new vehicle
- Increase opening hours of Northampton Borough Council's museums
- Maintaining the investment of small community grants
- Senior management savings and review
- Staff terms and conditions

Please tell us which option you wish to comment on and include any concerns you may have about how our specific proposals may impact on yourself or any sector of the community and if appropriate, tell us how we can minimise any such impact.

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## Alternative proposals

Is there anything else that you think we could do to achieve savings and/or any other comments you would like to make in respect of the budget options for 2014/15?

## Your details

Name:

Organisation (if applicable):

Address (including postcode):

Telephone number:

Email address:

## Monitoring Information (optional)

About you

Yes No

I live in Northampton

I work in Northampton

I study in Northampton

I have a business in Northampton

I am employed by Northampton Borough Council

I am responding on behalf of an organisation/group (insert name below)

Name of the Organisation I am responding from:

Are you:

Male

Female

How old are you?

Under 16  16-24  25-34  35-44  45-54  55-64  65-74  75 or above

How would you describe yourself?

White

Black/African/Caribbean/Black British

Mixed/multiple ethnic groups

Other ethnic group

Asian/Asian British

Prefer not to say

Thank you for taking part!



## OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY

### SCRUTINY PANEL 2 – Management and Regulation of Private Sector Housing (including HIMOs)

#### 1. Purpose/Objectives of the Review

- To investigate the regulation and management of private lettings, both by landlords and agencies

#### 2. Outcomes Required

- To agree the priorities for private sector housing towards achieving high quality, affordable private sector lettings
- To ensure that private lettings make a positive contribution to neighbourhoods
- To consider the options for licensing and make recommendations to Cabinet
- To consider the legislative options available to the Council and make recommendations to Cabinet
- To produce a best practice guide for Northampton's private sector landlords

#### 3. Information Required

- Background data
- Background reports and presentation
- Best practice data
- Desktop research
- Evidence from expert external witnesses
- Evidence from expert internal witnesses
- Site visits

#### 4. Format of Information

- Background data:
  - Presentation setting the context of private sector housing market
    - Changes over the last ten years
    - Future trends

- Map identifying known private rental properties including HIMOs
  - Private Sector Housing Strategy
  - Existing legislation and options available to local Councils for additional legislation
  - Options for licensing of HIMOs
  - Empty Homes Programme
- Evidence from:
  - Cabinet Member for Housing, Northampton Borough Council
  - Housing Options Team Leader, Northampton Borough Council (NBC)
  - Licensing (HIMOs) Consultation Manager, NBC
  - Community Safety Manager, NBC
  - Neighbourhood Wardens, NBC
  - Environmental Services Manager, NBC
  - Ward Councillors
  - Fire Safety, Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue Service
  - HMRC
  - Landlords' Association, Northampton
  - Letting Agents
  - Student Accommodation Officer and students - Northampton University
  - Northamptonshire Federation of Residents' Association
  - Secretary of Semilong Community Forum
  - Shelter
  - Representatives - Minority Groups
- Desktop research identifying best practice elsewhere
- Site visits to a variety of private letting accommodation within the borough

## **5. Methods Used to Gather Information**

- Minutes of meetings
- Desktop research
- Site visits (if applicable)
- Officer reports
- Presentations
- Examples of best practice
- Witness Evidence:-
  - Key witnesses as detailed in section 4 of this scope

## **6. Co-Options to the Review**

- None specifically identified for this Review

## **7 Equality Impact Screening Assessment**

- An Equality Impact Screening Assessment to be undertaken on the scope of the Review

## **8 Evidence gathering Timetable**

July 2013 to April 2014

- 8 July 2013 - Scoping meeting
- 17 October - Evidence gathering
- 18 November - Evidence gathering
- 5 December - Evidence gathering
- 23 January 2014 - Evidence gathering
- 13 February - Evidence gathering
- 30 April - Approval final report

Meetings to commence at 6.00 pm

Various site visits will be programmed during this period.

## **9. Responsible Officers**

Lead Officers Julie Seddon, Director of Customers and Communities  
Steve Elsey, Head of Public Protection  
Paul Bryon, Interim Private Sector Housing Manager

Co-ordinator Tracy Tiff, Scrutiny Officer

## **10. Resources and Budgets**

Julie Seddon, Director of Customers and Communities, Steve Elsey, Head of Public Protection, and Paul Bryon (Interim Senior Private Sector Housing Manager) to provide internal advice.

## **11. Final report presented by:**

Completed by 30 April 2014. Presented by the Chair of the Panel to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and then to Cabinet.

## **12. Monitoring procedure:**

Review the impact of the report after six months (approximately December 2014/January 2015)

# **NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL**

## **OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY**



### **SCRUTINY PANEL 2 – MANAGEMENT AND REGULATION OF PRIVATE SECTOR HOUSING (INCLUDING HIMOS)**

#### **CORE QUESTIONS – EXPERT ADVISORS**

#### **NORTHAMPTON DIVERSE COMMUNITIES EQUALITY FORUM**

**– 23 JANUARY 2014**

The Scrutiny Panel is currently undertaking a Review investigating the regulation and management of private lettings, both by landlords and agencies.

The expected outcomes of this Scrutiny Review are:

- To agree the priorities for private sector housing towards achieving high quality, affordable private sector lettings
- To ensure that private lettings make a positive contribution to neighbourhoods
- To consider the options for licensing and make recommendations to Cabinet
- To consider the legislative options available to the Council and make recommendations to Cabinet
- To produce a best practice guide for Northampton's private sector landlords

#### **QUESTIONS:**

A series of key questions have been put together to inform the Panel's evidence base:

- 1 How can it be ensured that private let properties do not impact adversely on neighbourhoods, please provide examples.



- 2 What are your views regarding a Landlord Accreditation Scheme and should landlords be offered incentives to join such a scheme and become accredited?
- 3 There are a number of options for licensing of private sector lettings, including HIMOS, available to the Council; in your opinion which of these should be introduced in Northampton and why.
- 4 Do you feel a best practice guide for Northampton's private sector landlords would be useful tool, if so, please supply headlines of what this document should include.
- 5 How well do you consider the Student Housing provision in Northampton is working?
- 6 How well do you think the licensing of HIMO's and the Council's other work to engage with landlords is operating?
- 7 What is your overall perception of private rentals in Northampton?
- 8 Do you have any areas of concern regarding private sector lettings, including HIMO's, that you would like to inform the Scrutiny Panel of?