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New Landlord Licensing Scheme Set to Begin in Scunthorpe in October

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A stricter licensing scheme for private landlords in parts of Scunthorpe will now officially begin this October 6, following the dismissal of a legal challenge. North Lincolnshire Council's long-delayed plans aim to raise housing standards and ensure responsible property management across more than 1,200 privately rented homes.

The initiative, known as selective licensing, will cover areas within Crosby, Park, and Town wards, including parts of Scunthorpe High Street, Old Crosby, Normanby Road, and Buckingham Street North and South. Under the scheme, landlords must apply and pay for a

council-issued licence to legally rent properties within the designated zones. The licence also requires compliance with strict housing standards.

The scheme had originally been scheduled to launch in March but was temporarily paused due to legal action from the local Crosby Landlords' Association, which now operates under the name Scunthorpe Landlords Association. However, the High Court dismissed all ten grounds of challenge in May, allowing the council to proceed with the programme. The claimant was also ordered to pay £10,000 in legal costs.

Councillor Richard Hannigan (Conservative, Ferry Ward), cabinet member for Independent Families-Adults and Health, confirmed at a recent cabinet meeting: "I'm sure that we all remember the journey that we've been on to get this scheme into force." He noted that discussions around selective licensing in Scunthorpe date back as far as 2017, when the council explored a voluntary approach to improve housing conditions, a method it later concluded was ineffective.

Selective licensing, as defined under the Housing Act 2004, is a policy that allows councils to require private landlords to hold a licence for properties in designated areas. It is commonly introduced to combat issues such as poor housing conditions, anti-social behaviour, or low property demand.

The council has partnered with Home Safe Delivery Partners to implement the scheme. Home Safe will be responsible for a cloud-based application and payment system, and a schedule of property inspections. The council will also recruit one additional staff member to support the programme's rollout. A detailed plan of how the scheme will function is expected to be released by early August.

Cllr Hannigan described the scheme as a "fundamental intervention in delivering a safe and healthy place to flourish" and highlighted its aim to enhance property standards through "compliance inspections, pro-active engagement and enforcing licensing conditions."

The scheme has gained support across party lines, though the Labour Party's role in the process has not gone unnoticed. Cllr Lorraine Yeadon (Labour, Town Ward) expressed gratitude to officers: "Thank you very much to the officers involved in getting this off the ground. It's been a long journey."

Meanwhile, Cllr Darryl Southern (Labour, Frodingham) raised questions about the possibility of expanding the scheme to his ward. Cllr Hannigan clarified that the licensing fee will only cover the costs of running the scheme, and added: “We’ll review the success of this approach after six months and if it’s proven to be effective, it will be rolled out to Frodingham.”

Local authorities are legally prohibited from generating profit through licensing fees. The council has confirmed that any money collected will be reinvested solely into administering and enforcing the scheme.