

Agenda Item 12c

AGENDA ITEM 12(c) - Landlord licensing and the Private Rented Sector strategy

Amendment

- In Par 1, please replace everything after "with" with "the Office for National Statistics indicating last November indicating that it was 19% of all properties."
- In par 2, replace "privately rented homes" with "houses of multiple occupation,"
- In par 3, replace all after 2019 with: "the administration tasked officers to look at ways of driving up standards in the private rented sector. That month, the Labour Group also proposed a motion calling on the council to implement a Selective Licensing scheme."
- In par 4, add new final sentence: "However, major issues such as rent arrears or poor property conditions are not conditions of those licences."
- In par 6, delete the second sentence.
- In first bullet point add after "sector", "and welcomes the steps the Council has taken to help them, including:
 - a. Expanding the rent deposit scheme and introducing a guarantor scheme to help those who cannot afford to rent privately
 - b. Buying more homes, including empty private properties
 - c. Working with the University, Police and landlords to tackle recent COVID-related antisocial behaviour
 - d. Expanding Rent it Right to help landlords fill in less in exchange for lower rents, while prosecuting those who fail.
 - e. Installing central heating, offering free fuel vouchers, home visits and even fridge freezers to help private tenants lead better lives"
- Add new second bullet point: Endorses Council's October 2019 resolution that: "any future policy it produces on making renting privately easier and safer must include ways to tackle rent arrears and poor property conditions"
- In new third bullet point, add at start, "On that basis,"
- In new fourth bullet point, add after 'behaviour': "Noting that the Cabinet Member for Housing asked officers to explore ways to see how antisocial behaviour in privately rented properties can be included in the Council's enforcement regime at the HMO Governance Board on September 16th."

Proposed by (Name) Councillor Darren Sanders

Seconded by (Name) Councillor Lee Hunt

The Motion to therefore read (see overleaf):

The size of the Private Rented Sector in Portsmouth has grown significantly in recent years with the Office for National Statistics indicating last November indicating that it was 19% of all properties.

The rapid growth in the number of houses of multiple occupation, has led to a range of issues relating to housing conditions, property management and anti-social behaviour, particularly in areas with high concentrations of privately rented homes.

In July 2019 the administration tasked officers to look at ways of driving up standards in the private rented sector. That month, the Labour Group also proposed a motion calling on the council to implement a Selective Licensing scheme.

Such licensing schemes allow councils to ensure landlords and letting agents meet 'fit and proper persons' tests in addition to placing responsibilities on them to prove their properties meet decent housing standards. However, major issues such as rent arrears or poor property conditions are not conditions of those licences.

The administration accepted the need to do more to regulate rented housing and tasked council officers with drafting a Private Rented Sector strategy. That draft strategy, approved by Cabinet in March 2020, recommended consulting on introducing an Additional Licensing scheme for small HMOs.

However, the draft strategy does not propose to explore the use of a Selective Licensing scheme to cover non-HMO privately rented properties.

Full Council therefore:

- Supports the progress that has been made toward developing a council strategy for the Private Rented Sector and welcomes the steps the Council has taken to help them, including:
 - a. Expanding the rent deposit scheme and introducing a guarantor scheme to help those who cannot afford to rent privately
 - b. Buying more homes, including empty private properties
 - c. Working with the University, Police and landlords to tackle recent COVID-related antisocial behaviour
 - d. Expanding Rent it Right to help landlords fill in less in exchange for lower rents, while prosecuting those who fail.
 - e. Installing central heating, offering free fuel vouchers, home visits and even fridge freezers to help private tenants lead better lives.
- Endorses Council's October 2019 resolution that: "any future policy it produces on making renting privately easier and safer must include ways to tackle rent arrears and poor property conditions
- On that basis, requests Cabinet reconsider its decision not to include Selective Licensing as a policy intervention as part of the Private Rented Sector strategy.
- Suggests Cabinet be asked to explore whether more stringent conditions can be put into landlord licensing agreements with regard to responsible property management, for example dealing with anti-social behaviour, noting that the Cabinet Member for Housing asked officers to explore ways to see how antisocial behaviour in privately rented properties can be included in the Council's enforcement regime at the HMO Governance Board on September 16th.