

Appendix 1.

How do we get a better deal for private sector renters in Southampton? - Final Report Recommendations

#	<u>Recommendation</u>	<u>Accepted?</u> <u>(Y/N)</u>	<u>Draft Response / Associated Actions</u>	<u>Lead Executive Director</u>
Affordability of renting in the private rented sector To improve the affordability of private rented housing in Southampton the following actions are recommended:				
1	That the final version of Southampton City Vision Local Plan retains the ambitious housing delivery figures for the city, maintains an ambitious policy position for the delivery of affordable housing through major planning applications, and that the Council commits to facilitating the delivery of 8,000 affordable homes by 2040.	Y	Local Planning Authority housing targets are dictated by the Government's standard methodology for calculating housing need. The emerging Southampton City Vision Local Plan does, and will continue to, use the Government's adopted method for its housing need calculation. The emerging plan will also maintain an ambitious policy position for the delivery of affordable housing, but the percentage of affordable homes to be sought on major applications will be determined by the resulting of specialist evidence. Using this evidence to make the decision on the correct level of affordable housing contribution for new development is required to ensure the emerging policy is considered 'sound', as required by paragraph 35 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), and therefore defensible at independent examination. It is not the role of the Local Plan to provide a commitment to the exact number of affordable homes to be delivered, rather this is a decision for Cabinet given the complexities of affordable housing delivery which will likely need input from various Council teams and partners, plus additional evidence/analysis, to ensure the decision is made from a well-informed position.	Stephen Haynes
2	That partners develop and update a database of market rent levels in Southampton to support the work of the Valuation Office.	Y	This will be explored with the Data team	Debbie Ward
Security and stability in the private rented sector To improve the security and stability of tenants in private rented housing in Southampton the following actions are recommended:				
3	That Southampton City Council develops and embeds a range of creative	Y	The Housing Needs Team are currently scoping an initiative to work with private sector landlords through a private sector leasing scheme. This scheme aims to	Debbie Ward

	solutions, including the Call B4 You Serve initiative, to work with landlords and tenants in the private rented sector, at the earliest opportunity, to prevent homelessness.		increase the options for landlords to work with SCC at the same time increase SCC's access to additional temporary accommodation units. The Call B4 You Serve initiative aims to engage with landlords at the earliest opportunity to help prevent homelessness. We are currently identifying the most appropriate team within our existing structure to undertake this work.	
Housing conditions in the private rented sector				
To improve the conditions and standards for private sector renters in Southampton through effective enforcement the following actions are recommended:				
4	To help target enforcement action and facilitate the future use of available enforcement tools Commission a private sector housing conditions survey. This is vitally important in developing a scientific basis for understanding housing conditions and targeting enforcement action in a proactive and structured fashion	Y	A private sector housing conditions survey was tendered in 2022/23 and did not attract any initial interest. After some further work, conversations were had with a possible provider, however it became clear that the cost of such a survey would be circa £500K. Built into the MTFs is a budget of £250K in 2025/26 for this. There was originally a £250K allocation 2024/25 too but this was ultimately taken as a one-off saving as part of the 2024/25 budget setting process. . In order for the survey to be completed, an additional budget allocation of at least £250K is required.	Debbie Ward
To implement the pyramid of responsive regulation approach:				
5	Using examples of best practice, improve the information, advice and guidance provided to landlords and tenants, and utilise landlord forums and other opportunities to build relationships with stakeholders.	Y	We are now reviewing all our web pages in regard to housing information, with a view to providing updated guidance and improved access to information. A new landlord forum has recently been set up by Maria Byrne to encourage more engagement. The HMO licensing landlord forum has lapsed during 2024 but will re-start for 2025.	Debbie Ward
6	Review, with partners, the current approach to voluntary landlord accreditation in the city with a view to developing a citywide scheme akin to the Leeds Rental Standard or the Good Landlord Charter. Increasing the effectiveness and take up of voluntary accreditation schemes will allow the Council to concentrate regulatory	Y	An exercise and review was undertaken on landlord accreditation in December 2022 and a Cabinet briefing provided. At the time it was decided that there was insufficient funding and resources to provide an in-house scheme and that there was not a political desire to outsource this. The idea of accreditation was therefore put on hold. This will now be revisited and explored but it remains that the PSH service does not have any resource currently available to administer an in-house scheme and there is no budget available to implement such.	Debbie Ward

	resources on landlords and agents that show no sign of meeting standards voluntarily.			
7	Review the new operating and enforcement guidance for local authorities to be published by Government and identify opportunities to utilise the full range of informal and formal enforcement powers available to the Council. The use of Civil Penalty Notices, designating a new HMO additional licensing scheme, and a selective licensing scheme in the city should be considered as part of the review, following the recognised best practice examples provided in this report.	Y	<p>New operating guidance has not been published yet. The change in government in May has delayed new regulation e.g. Renters Reform Bill. This is now due to go to second reading & planned enactment by spring 2025.</p> <p>Civil penalty notices (CPN) are being used by SCC Private Sector Housing & HMO licensing teams. The first CPNs were issued in August 2024. These will now be used as a first means of action in relation to certain housing offences.</p> <p>A new additional HMO licensing scheme is being proposed in Autumn 2024 for designation and introduction in Spring 2025.</p> <p>Before any selective licensing scheme is considered, a full City- Wide stock condition survey is required to gather evidence for justification of any scheme.</p>	Debbie Ward
8	Undertake economic activity modelling to identify the additional resources required to deliver a comprehensive proactive and responsive regulatory approach to enforcement of the private rented sector in Southampton.	Y	<p>The private rented sector housing regulation function is within scope of the Regulatory Services Development transformation project</p> <p>Phase 1 of this project is currently under way and involves analyses of service activities and responsibilities to enable rationalisation decisions to be made (i.e. should activities cease, continue or be adapted), defining the scope of SCC's future regulatory services.</p> <p>Phase 2 of the project will be the redesign of these retained services' systems and processes to maximise value added by staff resources.</p>	Debbie Ward
To provide transparency to the Council's approach, utilise available expertise, and demonstrate political commitment:				
9	Develop a Private Rented Sector Strategy for the city that articulates Southampton City Council's strategic vision, standards and approach to intervening in Southampton's private rented sector.	Y	The housing strategy 2016-2025 previously detailed SCCs vision and priorities for the City's housing. A new strategy will be developed in conjunction with other teams, PSH, HMO licensing, Homelessness, planning etc & will be put before Cabinet in 2025.	Debbie Ward

10	Work with experts from the University of Southampton to help deliver the responsive regulatory approach.	Y	We welcome support from the University, in particular from Helen Carr & Mark Jordan who helped provide expert opinion during the Scrutiny process. Opportunities for further collaboration with the University will be explored.	Debbie Ward
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