

My Ref: Scrutiny/Correspondence/Cllr McGarry

21 July 2017

Councillor Lynda Thorne
Cabinet Member Housing & Communities
County Hall
Cardiff
CF10 4UW



Dear Lynda

Community & Adult Services Scrutiny Committee – 19 July 2017

On behalf of the Community & Adult Services Scrutiny Committee, I would like to thank you and officers for attending for consideration of the Single Licensing Enforcement Policy.

Members were pleased to hear of the success of Rent Smart Wales, and that to date 80,000 landlords have registered 164,000 properties under the mandatory provisions within the Housing (Wales) Act 2014. Thank you for clarifying that the proposed Single Licensing Enforcement Policy has been constructed in consultation with all Welsh local authorities, to ensure there is minimal conflict with their own local enforcement policies. The Committee acknowledges that, as Cardiff has by far the greatest number of privately rented properties in Wales, it is a natural home for Rent Smart Wales, and development of the Single Licensing Enforcement Policy. Following our discussions at the Way Forward Members have asked that I convey the following observations and concerns following their scrutiny.

The Committee considers that Cardiff is effectively delivering Rent Smart Wales, but is keen to establish more clearly how the Council benefits. We acknowledge that the service is cost neutral, that there are employment benefits, and that the initiative has created opportunities for our own staff. However, we are less clear as to whether there are potential financial benefits, bearing in mind that the Council must save £80million over the next 3 years. We know from previous scrutiny that almost £5.5 million was allocated in the business model for Rent Smart Wales to local authority enforcement over the next 5 years, and this represents 21% of the total fees. The Committee is unclear as to where exactly the remaining income from fees and fixed penalty income will accrue, and would be grateful if you could provide us with greater detail.

At the meeting, Members heard it is a private Landlord's responsibility, as a business owner, to comply with the legal requirements by obtaining a license for themselves and their rental properties from Rent Smart Wales. They were therefore pleased to hear there is a carefully targeted marketing strategy to encourage registration, relevant to the demographics of a local authority area, and amongst third sector stakeholders such as Shelter Cymru. We will in future look to monitor the effectiveness of such engagement. We wish to endorse the opportunity for further promotion of registration by local ward

councillors, as you pointed out at the meeting. When dealing with private rented tenants on ward matters all councillors should encourage tenants to check the property they are considering is a registered property.

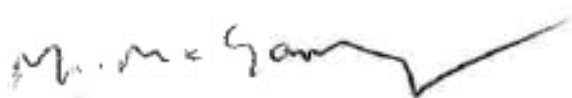
The Committee noted that, where Rent Smart Wales become aware that a landlord or agent is not registered, reasonable and proportionate enforcement action is taken. We also note that whilst at present a warning is considered appropriate, stricter enforcement would be appropriate six months from now. The Committee is minded to monitor the progress of Rent Smart Wales and the Single Licensing Enforcement Policy in tackling the 20% of landlords and agents that remain non-compliant.

To recap the Committee:

- Wishes to establish more clearly how the Council benefits in delivering this service, specifically where the remaining income from fees and fixed penalty income will accrue, and would be grateful if you could provide us with greater detail.
- Endorses the carefully targeted marketing strategy to encourage registration, and will in future look to monitor the effectiveness of such engagement with stakeholders.
- Encourages all councillors to raise awareness of landlord registration in their wards by encouraging tenants to check a property they are considering living in is a registered property.
- Will monitor the progress of Rent Smart Wales and the Single Licensing Enforcement Policy in tackling the 20% of landlords and agents that remain non-compliant.

Once again, thank you for attending committee and offering an opportunity for pre-decision scrutiny of the proposed Single Licensing Enforcement Policy.

Yours sincerely,



COUNTY COUNCILLOR MARY M^CGARRY
Chairperson - Community & Adult Services Scrutiny Committee

Cc:	Sarah McGill	Director of Communities, Housing & Customer Services
	Isabelle Bignall	Assistant Director, Customer Services & Communities
	Angharad Thomas	Group Leader, Rent Smart Wales
	Liz Patterson	Personal Assistant
	Joanne Watkins	Cabinet Business Manager
	Naomi Evans	Cabinet Office