

Date: 19 Oct 2022

Cllr Lynda Thorne
Cabinet Member, Housing & Communities

Correspondence Sent via e-mail.



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Dear Cllr Thorne,

CASSC Scrutiny Committee 17 October 2022: Implementation of the Renting Homes (Wales) Act 2016

On behalf of the Community and Adult Services Scrutiny Committee, my sincere thanks for attending Committee on 17 October 2022 to present how the council intends to implement the Renting Homes (Wales) Act 2016. Please also pass on our appreciation to Sarah, Jane and Helen.

For ease of reference, the observations made by the Committee following our consideration of the item are captured in this letter. We asked a number of questions regarding the following, and were satisfied with the responses we received.

The Committee noted that new contracts have been drafted and that they are currently with both internal and external legal services to ensure they are fit for purpose.

We were told about the “29 matters” that ensure that a property is fit for human habitation, and that processes are being developed to ensure that these are recorded accurately when properties are being let to avoid contract holders withholding rent payments. It was noted that officers hoped that few cases would need to be taken to court, but that is was possible during the transition period. Although it was noted that the legal cost for a private tenant to take a landlord to court would be prohibitive.

Members raised concerns about the new repair standards and recurring ‘damp and mould growth’ issues that are not being resolved which could lead to withholding of rent. Officers noted that ‘damp and mould growth’ concerns were a perennial issue and that often this was the result of ‘lifestyle’ choices i.e., drying clothes indoors,

showering and cooking with insufficient ventilation. We were informed that a short video and a fact sheet are available to help reduce condensation that causes this problem. However, we also noted that in the current economic climate residents may be less inclined to open windows when they are trying to keep their home warm.

The Committee noted the important role that private landlords have in the rental market; however, the new requirements of the act may make this a less attractive option. We asked if any modelling had been done in relation to a reduction in the number of properties available from the private rented sector and what mitigating actions will be put in place. Officers informed us that they were aware that landlords are giving notice to tenants, however, the reasons for them wishing to leave the market are not known, although Cardiff Landlords Association have recently undertaken a survey to understand their concerns. It was noted that in order to support landlords the Council is operating a leasing scheme, offering up to £5,000 in a renovation grant, undertaking the management role in return for a lease of at least 5 years. This was seen as a positive by the Committee though it raised further questions in relation to the mortgages that landlords may have and their ability to be able to enter into a lease agreement. We were informed that the Welsh Government were aware of this concern and are reviewing the scheme.

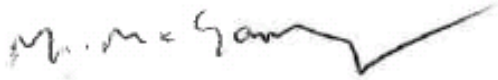
Regarding the provision of information to tenants it was noted in the presentation that 'different formats/languages' would be available, including 'Welsh, English, large print and braille. Members asked what other language would be available given the demography of the city. Officers confirmed that the information would be available in other community languages including Somali and Arabic.

The committee asked that given the demand for properties, how many abandoned or unfit properties are there currently in the city. Officers confirmed that there are very few 'unfit' properties only those that were undergoing structural repairs. The issues with 'abandoned' properties is more difficult as action can only be taken when the authority knows about the property, therefore reporting is encouraged. It was noted that the new requirements mean that the Council will no longer need to go to court to repossess a property, however it may remain void for a longer period as 'proper investigations' will need to be carried out and 4 weeks' notice served.

There are no formal recommendations arising from this letter.

Once again, on behalf of the Committee, please pass my thanks to all who attended the Community & Adult Services Scrutiny Committee. A response to this letter is not requested.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mary McGarry', with a stylized flourish at the end.

COUNCILLOR Mary McGarry

Cc Members of the Community & Adult Services Scrutiny Committee
Sarah McGill, Corporate Director People & Communities
Jane Thomas, Director Adults, Housing & Communities
Helen Evans, Assistant Director, Housing & Communities
Cllr Arian Robson, Group Leader, Conservatives
Cllr Andrea Gibson, Group Leader, Common Ground
Cllr Rhys Taylor, Group Leader, Liberal Democrats
Chris Pyke, OM Governance & Audit
Tim Gordon, Head of Communications & External Relations
People & Communities Performance Leads.