

To: Housing and Homelessness Panel
Date: 30 November 2022
Report of: Head of Regulatory Services and Community Safety
Title of Report: Tenants Forum Update

Summary and recommendations	
Purpose of report:	To update the Panel on the development of a Tenants Forum which arose as an action from the Council motion on DSS discrimination
Key decision:	No
Cabinet Member:	Councillor Linda Smith, Cabinet Member for Housing
Corporate Priority:	Deliver more affordable housing, Support thriving communities
Policy Framework:	None
Recommendation(s): That the Housing and Homelessness Panel:	
<p>1. Notes and comments on the current position with regard to the development of a Tenants Forum.</p>	

1. At the Council meeting on 26 July 2021, a cross party motion was passed regarding DSS discrimination and four actions were agreed. These have all been acted upon and three have been completed.
2. The fourth action related to establishing a tenants forum and the purpose of this report is to update the Panel on progress on the following:

Action 4

Establish a permanent “tenants’ forum”, which should:

- *Be composed of community groups and stakeholders representing tenants, both in private and council housing;*
- *Be invited to consult directly with the Housing and Homelessness Panel bi-annually at least and whenever decisions significantly impacting the rental sector come before Council;*

3. At the time of the previous update report in March this year Councillor Thomas was the champion for private tenants and was in the process of setting up a tenants' forum. Publicity was issued and a number of private tenants came forward who were interested in joining a forum.
4. However, the level of interest was not considered sufficient to launch a forum at that time in a sustainable manner. There are also other organisations that operate in the city to support private tenants and it was considered important to ensure there was buy in across the sector for the initiative.
5. With the change of portfolios and reprioritisation of focus following the government's approval of the citywide Selective Licensing Scheme the forum has not progressed further at this stage. The introduction of Selective Licensing on 1 September 2022 means that every privately rented property in the city now needs a licence and it has changed the power balance within the sector. For example, tenants cannot be evicted from unlicensed properties. The impacts of the scheme are yet to be felt and the benefits or disbenefits for tenants will only become apparent once Selective Licensing has become business as usual and the enforcement activity has begun which will be in the New Year.
6. Once Selective Licensing has moved to the enforcement stage in the New Year those tenants who expressed an interest will be recontacted to make sure that they are still interested and further promotional work will take place to generate additional interest from private sector tenants. Engagement will also take place with other organisations that operate in the city to support private tenants to assess their willingness to work with the Council.
7. Once this work has been carried out the Panel will be advised of progress and the proposed membership of the forum.

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