

TASK AND FINISH GROUP REVIEW HOUSING STANDARDS. – Notes.

APPENDIX D

Meeting: 1000 hours 16 August 2022

REPRESENTATION BY:

Letting Agents within Boston.

Concern at the costs of selective licensing onto the landlords especially the genuine ones who did abide by the rules. Concern they would pass onto the tenants making extremely high rents even higher. Further concern that the rogue landlords were unaccountable at the present time for their behavior with difficulties in ascertaining who actually owned a property.

Issues of sub-letting, damage to properties and also no back reference for a tenant who has historically not paid their previous rent or caused damage or ASB. A number of landlords with small portfolio's (good landlords) were selling up due to the 'rights' of bad tenants. Poor landlords were buying up the smaller portfolio's leading to increased bad housing by de fault of how they used the homes.

Agreement that selective licensing within a certain area of the town where problems of poor housing standards were evident, including ongoing issues of overcrowding / ASB activity / continual rubbish build up and obvious negative impacts on neighbours and long term residents, *would be a good way to trial the process* without effecting all the good landlords across the town.

Should the trial prove successful then similar small areas could be targeted to address the key areas but a blanket wide trial across the whole borough would not be acceptable and could result in the loss of more good landlords.

There were issues in the rural areas of the borough but not on a significant scale to warrant a specific area to be covered at the current time.

Key concerns:

- An increase in waste issues since the introduction of the purple bin, and there are often bins not collected for a very small indiscretion also storage of bins and a lack of bins for house where there were clearly a number of residents. Increased education is required from the council rather than trying to blame the agent/Landlord. If a tenant's bin is causing a problem, the Council should be looking to educate that tenant and if that is unsuccessful then fining the occupier/tenant rather than the Landlord/agent.

Letting agents are happy to continue to remind tenants about their responsibilities and try to ensure they don't cause a problem however as the occupier of the property and the person responsible for paying council tax, surely they should ultimately bear the fine if they don't manage their waste correctly.

- Most good agents were responsible when it came to communicating repairs/poor quality in properties. If/when they had an issue raised directly from the Council they did try to work with them and the tenant and Landlord to get it resolved quickly.

A suggestion would be an additional link between tenant/landlord and Council especially where the property is not managed through an agent.

- Many tenants did not approach the Council for certain issues as there was a belief of repercussions, so some type of intermediary between the Council and private Landlord would help to elevate conditions without the need to resort to full on enforcement.

It may also be useful to have a department where private Landlords and tenants can discuss things without the feeling of a threat of enforcement etc.

- Section 21 problems. Whilst not specifically a “housing standards” problem, it could be linked. Some agents had been told that the Council had advised tenants that by leaving on the date stated on a Section 21 notice they are making themselves intentionally homeless resulting in the tenant being confused. More should be done in these cases to assist a tenant moving out within the notice date.