

A New Deal for Renting

TenancyReform@communities.gov.uk

Chair of the Place and External Relations Scrutiny Panel

Councillor Mike Glover

Tameside One
Market Place
Ashton-under-Lyne
OL6 6BH

Email: mike.glover@tameside.gov.uk
Phone: 0161 342 2199
Ask for Paul Radcliffe
Date: 12 October 2019

To whom it may concern,

A New Deal for Renting

I write on behalf of Tameside Council's Place and External Relations Scrutiny Panel. The Panel seeks to submit a formal response to the consultation on A New Deal for Renting, which closes on 12 October 2019. This letter therefore aims to provide a summary of collective points and to express any areas of issue and concern. I would be extremely grateful if on receiving this letter you are able to take the appropriate action to ensure the collective response is suitably recorded and submitted to the consultation.

Tameside, as a place, continues to face significant challenges with an ongoing need to address social, economic and health inequalities. Unemployment in Tameside remains higher than the national average, with a higher proportion of residents claiming out of work benefits. This is further compounded by almost 50% of the population living within the 30% most deprived areas nationally and parts identified within the top 5% for deprivation.

Research and intelligence shows that the percentage of people living in relative poverty, after housing costs, is higher in the North West than the national average. Tameside's low income households and single parents continue to be adversely affected by the impacts of welfare reform and Universal Credit. This also includes housing elements such as the Local Housing Allowance and pressures placed on single people in receipt of the shared room rate who continue to face limited housing options.

The private rented sector (PRS) in Tameside has grown over recent years, with a wider range of residents now living in the sector and for longer. There are approximately 15,000 privately rented properties in Tameside, housing 40,000 residents of which 12,000 are children. For the first time, there are now a higher number of older residents living in the PRS when compared to numbers housed with social landlords.

Housing remains a significant challenge in Tameside, with a large number of residents and families desperately in need of landlords to provide a secure and safe living environment so that they can get on in life. Data tells us that certain areas have more than 30% of housing located in the PRS, which is often in close proximity to the town centres and areas of high deprivation. The assumption can be made that part of the PRS is housing some of the most

vulnerable residents, with reduced choice or options due to limited economic and social mobility.

Tameside Housing Advice is a frontline service that provides residents with help and advice for all aspects of housing and directly supports individuals and families to resolve housing problems. The demand for advice and support is increasing, with the following data drawn from 2018/19.

- 657 households accepted as being owed a homeless relief duty or main homeless duty.
- 276 households homeless or at risk of being made homeless as result of loss of property in PRS.
- 97 households became homeless as result of loss of property in PRS (Section 21 notices).

Evidence therefore shows that the end of tenancies as a result of a Section 21 notice is a contributing factor of homelessness and something we in Greater Manchester are all too aware of the consequences.

The Council recognises the work of the vast majority of private sector landlords who act responsibly towards their tenants. Tameside's PRS is varied and the majority of properties will be of good quality. A priority going forward is to work more closely with the sector to improve the consistency of quality housing and to reduce the number of residents in need of crisis support for housing.

Having familiarised myself with the consultation document, I have listed some of the main points below, which are to be viewed under the collective of Tameside's Place and External Relations Scrutiny Panel.

- Tameside residents are facing real impacts of Section 21 notices, with panel members supportive of all measures to improve standards and security for both tenants and landlords, while seeking to protect our most vulnerable residents.
- The Panel support a decision to abolish the assured shorthold regime, including the use of Section 21 notices for all users of the Housing Act 1988. There is a need for the future amendment to become 'fit for purpose' based on evidence, impacts and to take account of changing trends in the PRS.
 - In addition, this further supports a motion carried unanimously at a meeting of Full Council on 8 October 2019.
- There is a need to stabilise tenancies by removing elements of uncertainty and the future expectation of reasonable practice for landlords. This could include the introduction of break clauses for both parties and greater clarity around eviction procedures. The Panel appreciate that there is a future need for landlords to act promptly should a breach of tenancy occur and this should remain within the act.
- Members have a specific interest to ensure tenants of all types and age are safeguarded against the impact of eviction. There are currently limited housing options available to residents receiving the shared accommodation rate, with significant risks associated with tenancies and standards in this part of the PRS.

- The varied nature of the PRS does make it difficult to determine whether a fixed term assured tenancy should have a minimum length, also whether an assured periodic tenancy agreement should be introduced from the offset. The options do represent progression in the market however this does have potential to create a system whereby the needs of landlords are met in advance of tenants.

If further clarity is needed on any of the above points, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours faithfully,

Councillor Mike Glover
Chair - Place and External Relations Scrutiny Panel