

Report on	Landlord Registration
Date of Meeting	10 th November 2020
Reporting Officer	Fiona McClements

Is this report restricted for confidential business?	Yes	
If 'Yes', confirm below the exempt information category relied upon	No	X

1.0	Purpose of Report
1.1	To inform elected members of the proposal by the Department for Communities (DfC) to transfer the function of Landlord Registration to Councils.
2.0	Background
2.1	The current landlord registration scheme which was introduced in 2014 was set up to enable all private landlords to register and provide details of themselves and their properties, thereby creating a single database of Landlords. Landlords pay a £70 fee for a three-year registration. Once registered, Landlords receive an initial information pack and a quarterly newsletter. The information collected is available to Councils who use the data to help ensure that Landlords comply with the law.
2.2	The Landlord Registration Scheme Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2014 legislated for the appointment of a Registrar to establish and maintain the register. The Landlord Registrar manages the Scheme, including meeting any on-going costs through a registration fee paid by Landlords.
2.3	The scheme is currently administered by NIdirect on behalf of the DfC, including processing of applications by telephone and non-electronic postal applications. The service also includes providing advice to applicants through a contact centre. While the Landlord Registration Scheme went some way to professionalising the sector, it is the view from Councils that consideration should be given to strengthening the regulation prior to transferring to Councils. While it established a database which provides a useful source of information, there is little evidence to show it has effected change.
2.5	Councils have responsibilities for a wide range of housing related areas, including those contained in the Private Tenancies Order and the transfer of the Landlord Registration function could enhance and improve aspects of the Private Rented Sector.
3.0	Main Report
3.1	The Department for Communities is examining the potential of transferring the Landlord Registration function to Councils. DfC statistics dated February 2020 indicate that there are 3411 registered landlords and 4609 rented properties in the Mid Ulster area.

3.2	A regional working group has been established and had its initial meeting in March 2020. The terms of reference for the working group are attached at Appendix 1.
3.3	Council Chief Executives have stated their approval for an independent report to provide options for a suitable delivery model, examining the cost options for each delivery model.
3.4	<p>Consultants have been appointed and will be expected to produce an economic appraisal in accordance with NIGEAE guidance to establish:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The effectiveness of the current scheme in professionalising the sector and the evidence for enhanced regulation; • the best value for money delivery option for the transfer of the Landlord Registration functions to Councils; • the most cost effective delivery model for a revised registration scheme; • benchmarking those against other UK regions which already operate registration schemes; and • the fee required for full cost recovery.
3.5	<p>Options for a suitable delivery model</p> <p>Approach 1 – the total costs for each individual council to deliver the registration scheme using an 11 council model with shared service;</p> <p>Approach 2 – the total costs for the delivery of the registration scheme with a 1 council model with shared service;</p> <p>Approach 3 – the total costs for the delivery of the registration scheme with a 2 and 3 council mode with shared service.</p>
3.6	Consultants will provide an independent robust business case which will access the full costs for the transfer to include the preferred value for money option for the effective delivery of the licensing scheme with the recommendation of a suitable delivery model. Further details are in the specification attached at Appendix 2.
3.7	The appointed consultants will undertake a detailed assessment of the total costings to provide the assurance for the Department, elected representatives and Council Chief Executives of the total financial support required for the transfer and for Councils to operate the registration scheme effectively.
3.8	The consultants have contacted each Council individually. EHNI have also prepared a collective response to the consultants which is attached at Appendix 3.
3.9	The consultant's report is expected in the autumn and will be brought to Committee for its consideration when available.

4.0	Other Considerations
4.1	Financial, Human Resources & Risk Implications
	Financial: Not yet known
	Human: Staff time
	Risk Management: N/a
4.2	Screening & Impact Assessments
	Equality & Good Relations Implications: N/a
	Rural Needs Implications: N/a
5.0	Recommendation(s)
5.1	Members to note the content of this report.
6.0	Documents Attached & References
6.1	Appendix 1 – Terms of Reference
6.2	Appendix 2 – Specification
6.3	Appendix 3 – EHNI correspondence dated 4 th September