

<b>Report on</b>	Regional Environmental Health response to the Assembly's Committee for Communities 'Call for Views' on the new Private Tenancies Bill
<b>Date of Meeting</b>	6 <sup>th</sup> December 2021
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<b>Is this report restricted for confidential business?</b>  If 'Yes', confirm below the exempt information category relied upon	Yes	
	No	X

<b>1.0</b>	<b>Purpose of Report</b>
1.1	To inform Members of an EHNI response forwarded to SOLACE following the Assembly's Committee for Communities 'Call for Views' on the new Private Tenancies Bill, which focuses on the role and regulation of the private rented housing sector.
<b>2.0</b>	<b>Background</b>
2.1	In October 2021, the Assembly's Committee for Communities launched its 'Call for Views' on the new Private Tenancies Bill, which focuses on the role and regulation of the private rented housing sector. The closing date for responses was Friday 29 <sup>th</sup> October 2021.
2.2	If passed, this new Bill will provide tenants with better protection by ensuring landlords and agents meet regulations about the quality and safety of the accommodation offered. It also seeks to safeguard tenants by ensuring a legislative requirement for written tenancy agreements, restrictions on rent increases and an increase in the eviction notice period.
2.3	The private rental sector has grown considerably over the past decade, particularly for the 25 - 34 age group. It now accounts for more than 17% of housing stock in Northern Ireland. This growth is likely to continue if first time buyers are priced out of the market due to rising house prices and the potential shortage of accessible and affordable mortgage products.
<b>3.0</b>	<b>Main Report</b>
3.1	In response to the Assembly call for evidence, the attached response was prepared by EHNI and approved by SOLACE (see Appendix 1).
3.2	Environmental Health has a very long tradition of involvement in the private rented sector, primarily through its role in regulation of housing standards but also in respect of its statutory duties under the Public Health Acts. The enhanced powers devolved to district councils under the Private Tenancies (NI) Order 2006 (PTO) along with the transfer of the regulation of Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) in 2018, confirms the importance of the evolving role that district councils have in

	regulating the private rented sector. EHNI therefore welcomes that it has been seen as a key consultee in this process
3.3	Following on from this Committee's call for evidence, the decisions taken by the Department relating to areas that impact in the development of a long-term strategy for the private rented sector, will have a significant impact on the existing and evolving regulatory and advisory roles of Councils and other stakeholders in relation to its statutory housing functions
3.4	Therefore, whilst the additional regulation of the privately rented sector is to be welcomed, the resourcing of these additional powers, potentially being granted to Councils, will require to be evaluated in advance by the Department before commencement. There is no indication from the Department that any additional funding will be made available to Councils and that the introduction of some fixed penalty offences is not an adequate model, or sufficiently evidenced to fund the additional resources required. There will be additional and new work for Councils if they are required to undertake this role. A properly evaluated analysis of the impact on Councils would need to be undertaken and a suitable funding model identified and agreed before these can be facilitated and commenced so that there is no impact on the rate payers due to additional burdens to Councils.
<b>4.0</b>	<b>Other Considerations</b>
<b>4.1</b>	<b>Financial, Human Resources &amp; Risk Implications</b>
	Financial: Potential staff costs.
	Human: There will be additional and new work for Councils if they are required to undertake this role that would require allocation of resource.
	Risk Management: N/a
<b>4.2</b>	<b>Screening &amp; Impact Assessments</b>
	Equality & Good Relations Implications: N/a
	Rural Needs Implications: N/a
<b>5.0</b>	<b>Recommendation(s)</b>
5.1	Members are requested to note the content of this report.
<b>6.0</b>	<b>Documents Attached &amp; References</b>
6.1	Appendix 1 – EHNI response to the Assembly's Committee for Communities 'Call for Views' on the new Private Tenancies Bill.