

Report to	Cabinet	Item
	11 March 2020	
Report of	Director of people and neighbourhoods	5
Subject	Raising the standards: The Norwich private rented sector charter	

Purpose

To seek approval for the Norwich private rented sector charter

Recommendation

To approve the Norwich private rented sector charter

Corporate and service priorities

The report helps to meet the corporate priority great neighbourhoods, housing and environment

Financial implications

The costs of implementing this charter will be met from approved budgetary provision.

Ward/s: All Wards

Cabinet member: Councillor Jones - Safer, stronger neighbourhoods

Contact officers

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Background documents

None

Report

Introduction

1. This report sets out some context on the private rented sector in Norwich, its current condition, the issues faced by tenants living in the sector and details on the council's intention to introduce a Norwich Private Renter's Charter.
2. There is no legal requirement to register a privately rented property with the local housing authority unless it is subject to mandatory or discretionary licensing scheme. In Norwich, there are no discretionary licensing schemes in operation. The current mandatory scheme applies to houses in multiple occupation (HMOs) occupied by five or more households who share amenities. Therefore there is no way of knowing where all the privately rented properties in the city are located.
3. In 2014 the council commissioned Building Research Establishment Ltd (BRE) to provide information on key housing and domestic energy variables, with a focus on private sector housing. The information was derived from a series of models which made use of the Experian UK Consumer Dynamics database using a range of statistical methods. In 2018, through the Norfolk Warm Homes funding some of the data was updated independently of the 2014 survey, by Energy Saving Trust.
4. In both cases, the stock modelling methodology provides information on the likely condition of stock and the geographical distribution of properties.

Setting the scene

5. A safe, decent and affordable home is central to residents being able to enjoy a good quality of life.
6. However, with housing in short supply and the housing system regularly referred to as broken, the challenges for residents being able to achieve this ambition has reduced year on year.
7. The Norwich housing strategy published in 2013, highlights the contribution made by good housing towards improving the local economy by having the right type of homes in the right place at the right price to meet housing need and to attract new businesses and investment in the city, which in turn will help to create new jobs and training opportunities.
8. The strategy also refers to housing playing an important role in improving health and well-being, both in terms of the quality and affordability of housing as well as the quality of neighbourhoods and communities.
9. Norwich City Council plays an important role as the housing authority for the city, as a landlord and as a regulator of the private sector housing provision which includes owner occupied properties, other social rented properties not let by the council, and properties in the private rented sector.
10. Indeed the council has a proud tradition and history of building and providing good quality affordable housing for a significant number of the city's residents for the last 100 years.
11. However, the city is facing an increasingly scarce resource in terms of provision and affordability.

12. Not only is the council's own stock reducing due to the impacts of right to buy, there is also a growing population; the wider impacts of welfare reform and social, financial and health inequality which is impacting on the ability of many residents to live in a safe, decent and affordable home.

Housing in Norwich

Changes in tenure

13. In Norwich, where and how people secure a home is changing. Between 2001 and 2016, the number of people renting privately doubled and the sector now accounts for 22% percent of all homes (see table 1 & graph 1 for 2018 data which is the latest available for all tenures). With continued barriers to home ownership and limited social rented homes, the sector looks set to remain an important source of housing for the foreseeable future.
14. Whilst for some, it may be a tenure of choice, for many it is the only choice available and in many cases it is far from being affordable, given the limitations of a low wage economy and levels of benefit take up.
15. Equally, where a landlord is not meeting minimum standards, this can mean poor property conditions and the precarious nature of an insecure tenancy.
16. The tenure split across the city, shown in the table below, has seen a 5 % decrease in the social housing sector due to the impacts of right to buy and a 5% increase in home ownership, reflecting government policy changes over the last five years.
17. Whilst the number of private rented dwellings has risen, the size of the sector remains the same in relation to the whole housing market. Again this reflects government policy changes in relation to buy to let finance, mortgage tax relief and housing legislation.

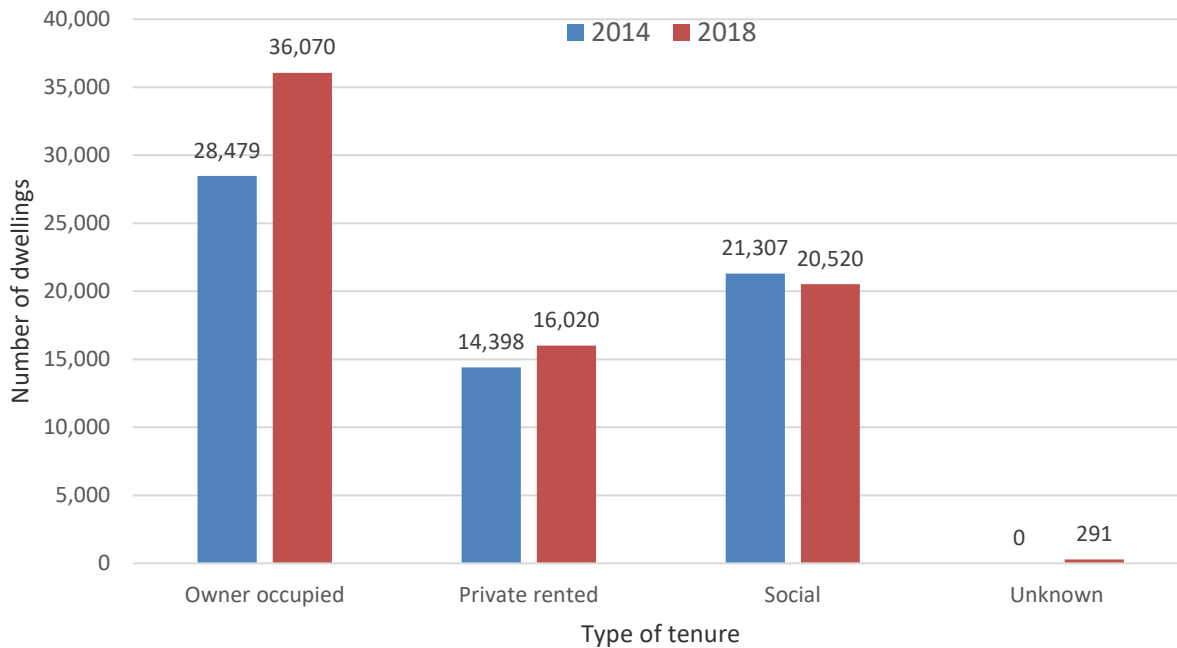
Table 1 - Stock totals by tenure for local authority area¹

Tenure	Number of dwellings	% of all stock	Number of dwellings	% of all stock
	2014		2018	
Owner occupied	28,479	44%	36,070	49%
Private rented	14,398	22%	16,020	22%
Social	21,307	33%	20,520*	28%
Unknown	-	-	291	1%
Total	64,184		72,901	

*figure includes council stock of 16,012 as at 2018. The current stock figure as at 31.01.20 is 14,610

¹ Energy Saving Trust stock modelling 2018

Chart 1: Stock totals by tenure for local authority area



The state of the private rented sector in Norwich – costs

Affordability

18. Tables 2, 3 and 4 provide a snap shot of private rental property available in the Norwich area during January 2020 including the number of properties available; the rental and the rental value by property type. ²

Table 2 - summary of properties to rent in Norwich (January 2020)

Total properties for rent in Norwich:	1,072
Average property rents in Norwich:	£1,084 pcm

Table 3 - properties to rent in Norwich by value

Rental	No. of properties
Rent under £250 pcm	6
£250 to £500 pcm rent	165
£500 to £1,000 pcm rent	408
£1,000 to £2,000 pcm rent	399
£2,000 to £5,000 pcm rent	94
Rent over £5,000 pcm	0

² Source Homes.co.uk – Norwich market rental strategy February 2020

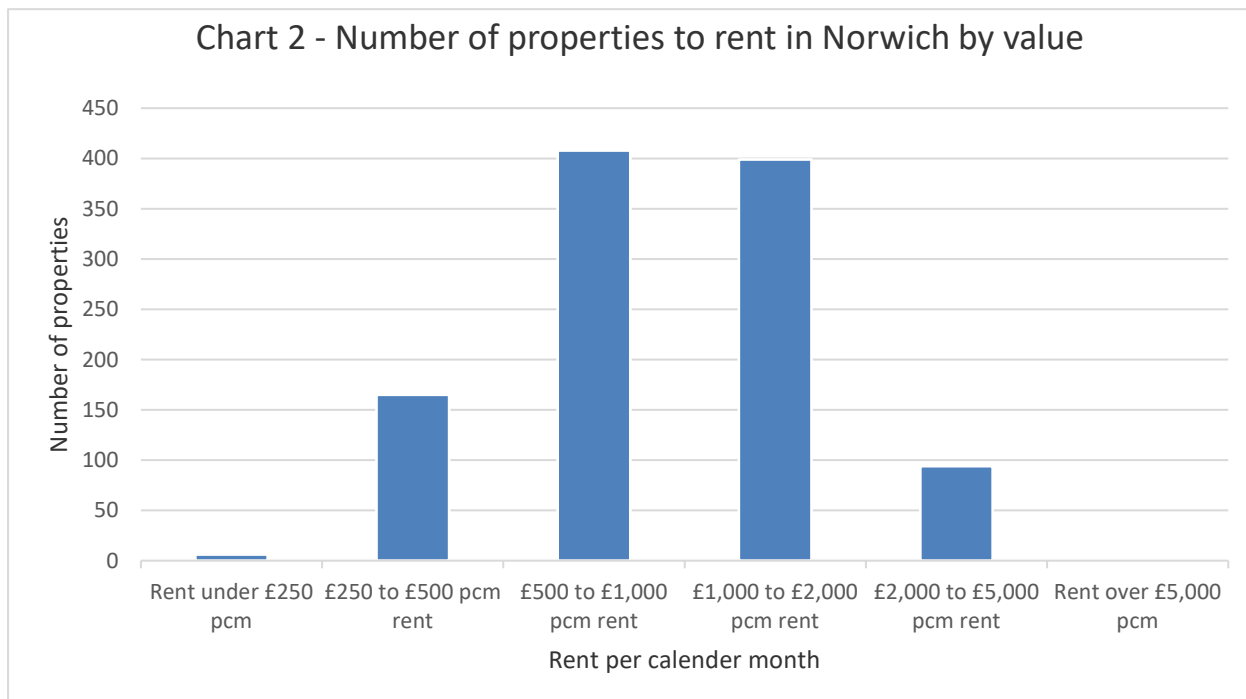
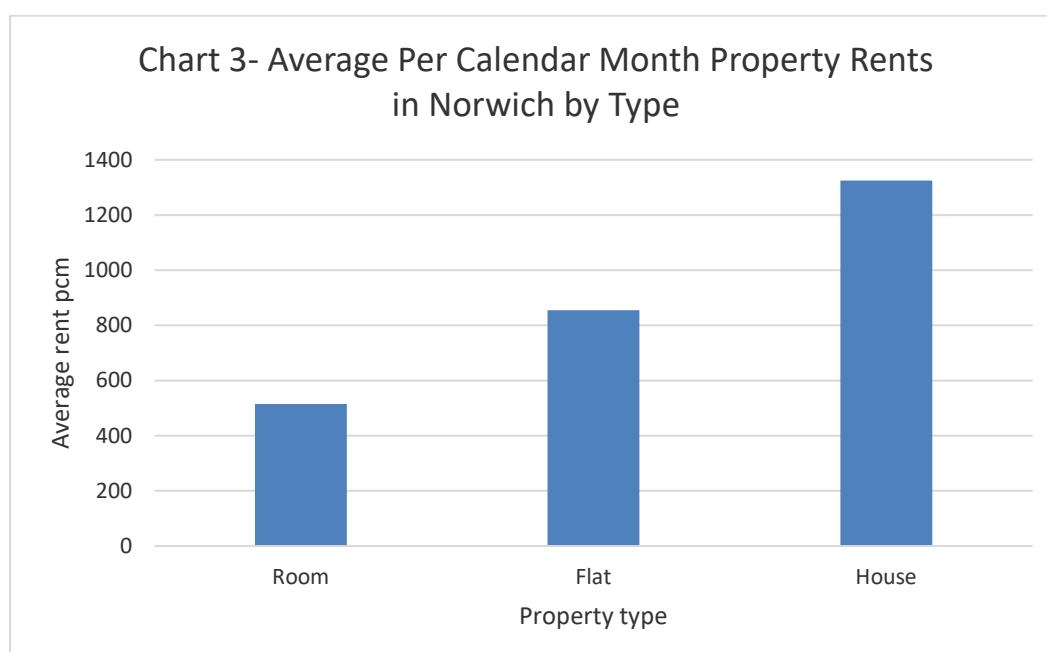


Table 4 - property rents in Norwich by Type

	No. of properties	Average rent
Room	117	£515 pcm
Flat	293	£855 pcm
House	599	£1,325 pcm



19. For those residents and families seeking affordable private rental homes, these costs firmly puts much of the sector out of reach or, if choice is limited, takes an increasing amount of the family income
20. This is evidenced by the impacts of welfare reform for those who require help with their housing costs and that there is a widening gap between benefit paid and rent.

21. This is exacerbated by changes to Local housing allowance (LHA).
22. LHA is the mechanism that housing benefit is calculated for people who are privately renting and has been subject to a range of cuts and changes since 2011. Data from Department of Work and Pensions for August 2019, indicates that there were 2,283 households in Norwich in receipt of housing benefit or universal credit housing element costs; this is estimated to be around 14% of private rented households in Norwich.³ This compares to around 18% in England.⁴
23. The number of households in the private rented sector in the UK increased from 2.8m in 2007 to 4.5m in 2017, an increase of 1.7m (63%) households. Younger households are more likely to rent privately than older households and in 2017 those in the 25 to 34 year age group represented the largest group (35%).
24. Shelter research shows that in 97% of areas in England, people will experience a shortfall between their rent payable and the LHA for a 2-bedroom home rented at the bottom 30% of private rented homes in any local area.
25. A family in Norwich with one or two children renting in the private sector would face a shortfall of £139.92 per month for a typical two bed terraced house.
26. This is evidenced that in 2018/19, 9% or £42,290 of the council's discretionary housing payment fund was spent on helping households meet the shortfall in their local housing allowance.
27. Affordability is therefore a key issue.
28. Table 5, shows this in comparison to council rents and benefit payable.

³ Alternative dwelling stock by tenure estimates, ONS (Nov 19)
<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/housing/datasets/alternativedwellingstockbytenureestimates> Accessed on 07/02/20.

⁴ Source data from DWP Stat Xplore: <https://stat-xplore.dwp.gov.uk/webapi/jsf/dataCatalogueExplorer.xhtml> Accessed on 07/02/2020. Data for number of households in PRS is from:
<https://www.ons.gov.uk/economy/inflationandpriceindices/articles/ukprivaterentedsector/2018> Accessed on 07/02/20.

Table 5 - shortfall in housing costs for households living in PRS in receipt of help with their housing costs

Housing type/size	Rent levels £							Difference shortfall £ +/-					
	Local housing allowance rate	NCC ⁵	HAR	30%	80%	M	UQ	NCC	HAR	30%	80%	M	UQ
Shared house	63.29	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
1 bed	95.77	67.01	79.20	121	110	137	150	28.76+	16.57+	25.23-	14.23-	41.23-	54.23-
2 bed	120.02	71.95	93.00	155	134	167	195	48.07+	27.02+	34.98-	13.98-	46.98-	74.98-
3 bed	139.42	80.23	102.70	183	163	204	259	59.19+	37.42+	43.58-	23.58-	64.58-	119.58-
4 bed	184.11	83.83	n/a	276	254	318	346	100.28+	n/a	91.89-	69.89-	133.89-	161.89-

Key: NCC= Average rent value Council homes; HAR= Housing association rent; 30% = 30th Percentile of market rent; 80%= 80% of market rent; M= Median rent; UQ= Upper quartile

29. Also of concern and which shows the insecurity of the private rented sector, private rented accommodation is the tenure that most people are living in when they approach Norwich City Council's housing options team for help.

30. It is estimated that for the period July 2018 to July 2019 (for which is the latest data available), 25% of all households presenting to the council as threatened with homelessness do so because their private rented tenancy is ending. This is in common with the Eastern region as a whole.

Housing and inequality

31. The quality of the home we live in can have a significant impact on every aspect of our lives. Poor housing conditions, overcrowding and affordability will all have an adverse effect on public health and well-being and exacerbate health inequalities.

32. Making modifications to improve a home including its physical and legal security can lead to enhanced health and well-being that not only benefits the individual but also brings wider social and economic benefits.

33. The proportion of private rented properties in Norwich likely to have an excess cold category 1 hazard - *a hazard that is a serious and immediate risk to a person's health and safety* - remains at 5% for the sector. This is the same as the national average, which has reduced to this figure from 8%. Therefore the city has not followed the national trend in reducing the proportion of privately rented properties likely to have an excess cold category 1 hazard

34. The energy efficiency rating suggests the private rented housing stock in Norwich to be better than the 2016 national average. The average energy efficiency rating for Norwich is 64 compared to the national average of 60 for the sector. However, this is far lower than the council's own housing stock.

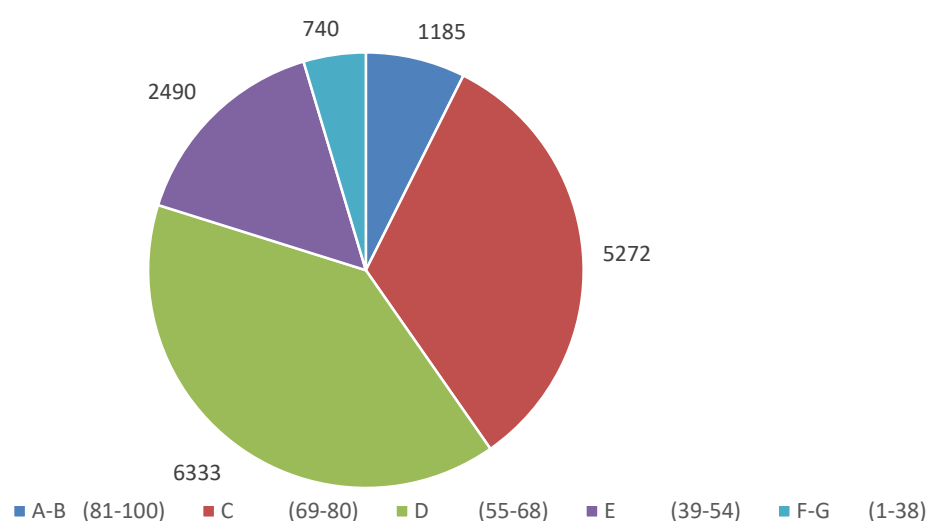
⁵ Norwich City Council homes average rents as of April 2019/20.

35. Since April 2018 there has been a requirement for private rented homes to have a minimum energy performance rating of at least E, unless there is an applicable exemption.
36. In 2016, according to the English Housing Survey, some 7% (320,000) of private rented homes nationally had a rating of an F or G energy efficiency rating which are the two lowest energy efficiency bands. Table 6 (and chart 4) shows that 5% of the private rental stock in Norwich has a rating of either F or G compared with 9% prior to the change in legislation showing issues remain.

Table 6: EPC rating for dwellings in the private rented sector ⁶

Row Labels	Count of Energy efficiency band (EPC)	% of stock 2018	% of stock 2014
A-B (81-100)	1185	7%	1%
C (69-80)	5272	33%	20%
D (55-68)	6333	40%	31%
E (39-54)	2490	15%	39%
F-G (1-38)	740	5%	9%
Grand Total	16020		

**Chart 4: EPC rating for dwellings in the private rented sector
- Number of properties by energy efficiency band (EPC)**



37. The impact of all of this is increased fuel poverty.

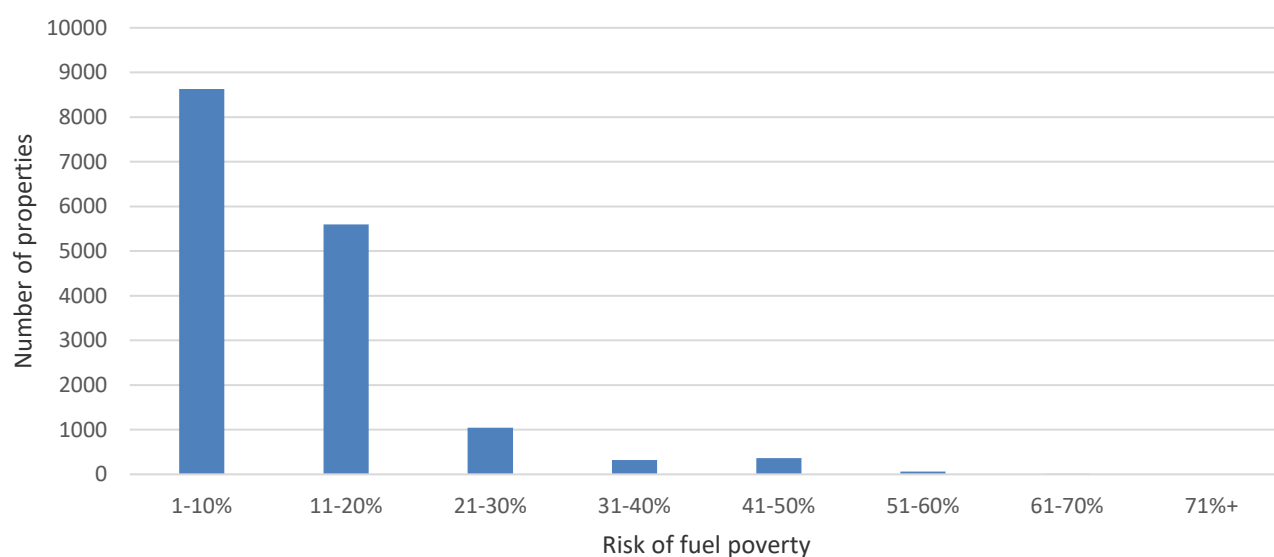
⁶ Source BRE stock condition survey 2014 and EST stock condition survey 2018

38. In Norwich there is a higher risk of being in fuel poverty if you are living in the private rented sector than if you own your home.
39. Survey data from 2018 estimated that fuel poverty was likely to occur in 19% of households, using the low income high cost definition of fuel poverty. Table 7 (chart 5) shows the likelihood of those living in fuel poverty based on a number of factors, which provides a more accurate picture of those, likely to be in fuel poverty living in the private rented sector.

Table 7: Fuel poverty in the private rented sector

Risk of fuel poverty (fuel bill >10% of full income)	Number of properties	% of PRS stock
0-10%	8627	54
11-20%	5595	35
21-30%	1043	7
31-40%	321	2
41-50%	363	2
51-60%	60	0.4
61-70%	11	0.07
71%+	0	0

**Chart 5: Fuel Poverty in the private rented sector -
Number of properties by risk of fuel poverty**



40. This is supported by national data, where we know that people in the private rented are far more likely to be fuel poor (19.4% of private rented homes are

fuel poor, compared to 8% of owner-occupied homes) than all other tenures, including social housing.

What are the consequences of poor quality housing?

41. Children growing up in poverty are more likely to live in poor quality housing, will have poor health outcomes and achieve lower grades at school.
42. As adults, they are more likely to experience health problems, less likely to be employed and to have lower income. Therefore, an increased use of services and difficulties associated with child poverty continue into adult life.
43. Poor outcomes for children living in poverty are also affected by their increased likelihood of living in cold, damp, and overcrowded housing. These include both adverse health outcomes, such as increased instances of circulatory and respiratory problems, and problems in educational achievement because of decreased ability to concentrate in a cold and overcrowded house.
44. The cold and damp of winter and issues of excess cold can have dramatic effects on those already vulnerable because of their age, deprivation, illness or disability.
45. Fuel poverty can be found in many parts of the city including in the council's own housing stock, though the latter is largely driven by low income. However, it also occurs in older private rented homes that date back to Victorian times. These homes are more likely to be larger, less efficient than newer homes and therefore cost more to heat and taking an increased level of income.
46. Fuel poverty, cold and damp housing conditions have an impact on the number of excess winter deaths. For every degree Celsius drop in temperature in the winter, the death rate in the coldest 10% of homes increases 2.8%.
47. Other issues include an increased risk of fire, where substandard or poor electrical systems are present, or risk of falls where flights of stairs are not to standard.
48. These are features of many private rented properties.

Policy context

National

49. At a national level, Government housing policy is generally to build more homes and increase home ownership. Changes with the new Government remain unclear. However, early indications are that these priorities may not change but with a possible shift of emphasis.
50. A recent announcement from Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government of a *First Homes scheme* will see discounts of up to 30% funded from section 106 contributions paid by developers to councils,

which in many places, are currently used to help fund the construction of social and affordable housing. The Local Government Association have said that it is important that this does not come at the expense of providing truly affordable homes for rent.

51. The private rented sector specifically, has seen changes in recent years with different approaches taken in Scotland and Wales compared to England, as housing is a devolved function.
52. The coalition Government did not follow the approach in other parts of the UK, taking the view that additional regulation would increase the administrative burden on reputable landlords. The Housing and Planning Act 2016, did introduce increased transparency for letting agent fees and strengthened the sanctions to tackle rogue landlords.
53. More recently, the Tenant Fees Act 2019, will abolish most upfront fees for prospective tenants and place a cap on security deposits.
54. An additional requirement to licence smaller houses of multiple occupation was introduced in 2018.
55. In 2019, the Government consulted on changes to the so called 'no-fault' evictions by repealing section 21 of the Housing Act 1988 and improving section 8 eviction grounds. This would increase the security for tenants living in the private sector.
56. The consultation closed in October 2019 with as yet no announcement of if and how the changes will be implemented.
57. If implemented, this would provide tenants with more stability, protecting them from having to make frequent moves at short notice, and enabling them to put down roots and plan for the future.
58. There have been suggestions that the result of this if implemented will be a shrinkage of the private rented sector. However, this won't prevent rental increases, which in itself will make the home unaffordable and potentially more unlawful evictions that the council would need to be aware of.

Norwich

59. At the Norwich level, the city council and partners published the Norwich 2040 City vision in November 2018, which sets out the five themes which form the foundation of a shared vision for the city. This sets out that the city should be:
 - a. Creative
 - b. Fair
 - c. Liveable
 - d. Connected
 - e. Dynamic
60. The council's current corporate plan (2019-2022) identifies key priorities and actions to enable Norwich to be a fine city for all with great neighbourhoods, housing and environment where people live well. It specifically focuses on the following outcomes:
 - a. Healthy lives
 - b. Reduced inequalities
 - c. Enhanced wellbeing

- d. Feeling safe
- e. Reduced housing need
- f. Sustainable city
- g. Good local environment
- h. A sense of community
- i. Good quality housing
- j. Quality buildings and infrastructure.

61. Underpinning all these outcomes is good quality housing.

62. The council has a long and proud history of providing good quality, affordable homes. With councils able to build new council housing once again, schemes have been implemented at Goldsmiths Street, Bullard Road, Hansard Close and the first phase of homes at Rayne Park in Bowthorpe. The council is ambitious not only to continue to build new homes but also to ensure the existing stock is well maintained and fuel efficient, so that it meets the needs of tenants.

63. Whilst some council households do have higher rates of fuel poverty when compared to owner occupiers, it is lower than private rented homes, despite tenants tending to be in lower income deciles.

64. A large reason for this is likely to be that council homes tend to be more energy efficient, with the SAP rating of council-owned homes being a 70.3, whereas the private rented sector has an average SAP rating of 60.

The ambition

65. The council's ambition is that tenants in the private rented sector have access to a safe, decent and affordable home. To achieve this a number of strands of work are to be progressed (see appendix 1 for the private renters' charter action plan).

Raising the standards: Tenants' rights – the Norwich charter

66. The first is to ensure that tenants in the private rented sector are fully aware of their rights and the responsibilities of their landlord and that tenants are empowered and their rights protected.

67. In some cases, tenants do not have the confidence to report issues or repair requirements to their landlord, fearing eviction. Equally, tenants may not have the confidence to report concerns to the council for the same reason, meaning they may remain in unsuitable or at times dangerous accommodation.

68. A tenant's charter has been prepared which sets out what tenants should expect (see appendix 2).

Raising the standards: Enforcing un-suitable conditions

69. The council has a statutory duty to take action to remedy category 1 hazards and may take action to remedy a category 2 hazard. Action undertaken is guided by the private sector housing enforcement policy 2017.

70. The functions covered by this includes:

- a. Taking action to remove hazards in privately-owned housing
- b. Regulating the management of houses in multiple occupation
- c. Licensing of privately rented accommodation
- d. Taking action to bring empty homes back into use
- e. Regulating the functions of landlords and managing agents

71. The overall aim of these functions is to:

- a. Prevent, detect and control risks to the health, safety and wellbeing of the occupants of privately owned houses and their neighbours.
- b. Reduce the adverse impact of empty and poorly maintained dwellings on neighbourhoods

72. Whilst most complaints about housing conditions can and should be resolved between tenants and landlords without the council's direct involvement, the council recognises that not all tenants are aware of their rights or understand the best way, or in some cases have the confidence to approach their landlord.

73. When a complaint or a concern is received by the council, the tenant will be encouraged to approach their landlord. Template letters and guidance is provided to help facilitate this.

74. Where an immediate risk is identified, or where this approach has not resulted in the desired approach, an inspection will be undertaken.

75. If through an inspection a hazard is found, then formal action will be taken as prescribed under the Housing Act 2004.

76. For a category 1 hazard, this may include:

- a. Serving an improvement notice
- b. Making a prohibition order
- c. Serving a hazard awareness notice
- d. Taking emergency remedial action
- e. Making an emergency prohibition order
- f. Making a demolition order
- g. Declaring the area in which the premises are situated to be a clearance area

77. Where a category 2 hazard is identified, the council may take the following:

- a. Serving an improvement notice
- b. Making a prohibition order
- c. Serving a hazard awareness notice
- d. Making a demolition order
- e. Declaring the area in which the premises are situated to be a clearance area

78. Under the Housing and Planning Act 2016, the council is able to impose a civil penalty up to a maximum of £30,000, on an individual or organisation

as an alternative to prosecution for the following offences under the Housing Act 2004:

- a. Failure to comply with an improvement notice
- b. Offences in relation to licensing of houses in multiple occupation
- c. Offences in relation to licensing of houses under Part 3 of the Act
- d. Offences of contravention of an overcrowding notice
- e. Failure to comply with management regulations in respect of houses in multiple occupation

79. The council will consider the use of civil penalties in all cases where it is satisfied beyond reasonable doubt that an offence has been committed. In each case, the council will also consider whether the civil penalty is in the public interest.

80. Within many of these powers, the council is able to recover costs. The council is able to keep the penalty money collected from penalties under Housing and Planning Act 2016 and under other regulations such as redress scheme regulations. The penalties collected must be used to cover the costs incurred in carrying out its enforcement functions in relation to the private rented sector.

81. A successful prosecution will usually result in costs being awarded to the Council.

82. The council receives about 400 reports a year from tenants about poor conditions and management and we act upon these in line with council policies and legislation.

83. With the budget constraints faced by the council and the number of properties within the private sector, the work has to be prioritised and the focus of enforcement action is to target the worst cases. These issues come to light from complaints; proactive targeting of properties and landlords; and intelligence from other public agencies where there is a known problem.

84. Last year the council:

- a. Empowered 76 private rental tenants to deal with their issues directly with their landlord through providing a toolkit with information and guidance on how to resolve these
- b. Identified 51 houses as having a 'category 1 hazard'
- c. Made safe 64 properties by direct action
- d. Brought in over £83,000 in civil penalties imposed on non-compliant landlords
- e. Undertook emergency remedial action and prohibited from use, 47 flats at St Faith Lane due to serious safety concerns and a failing alarm system. Further formal actions include issuing civil penalties and prosecution for failure to comply with improvement notices and failure to comply with the management regulations. The Council gave evidence to the Upper Tier Tribunal at the Royal Courts of Justice in January, the outcome of which is waiting to be received.

85. It is important that the public protection team have access to the fullest range of information to support enforcement action in the private rented sector.
86. It is important to highlight, that the private rented sector is the tenure that most people are living in when they approach Norwich City Council's housing options team for help. It is therefore vital, that the conversations had at this point of contact with housing advisors, are drawing out all the relevant information and that there is close liaison between housing options and the council's public protection team to ensure a property is improved and made safe.

Raising the standards: Liaison with landlords

87. Local landlords, agents and their associations are key parts of the housing sector.
88. We recognise the responsible landlords have an interest in promoting better standards to raise the overall standing of the sector and avoid the need for further regulation.
89. The council will explore how it can work more effectively with good landlords where this will benefit the private rented sector and tenants specifically.
90. Clearly, when we become aware of landlords who are not providing accommodation that does not meet the required standards, action will be taken.

Conclusion

91. Residents living in the private rented sector in Norwich should expect and deserve to receive a high standard of rented accommodation. Unfortunately, where private rented accommodation fails to meet the legal standard, residents can expect to experience a range of harmful consequences ranging from poor health; fuel poverty; reduced life chances for children and in extreme cases early death.
92. Residents should expect high standards of service and peaceful enjoyment of their homes.
93. The council's renewed approach aims to raise standards in private rented accommodation by empowering tenants, encouraging best practice and taking action when it is needed.

Integrated impact assessment



NORWICH
City Council

The IIA should assess **the impact of the recommendation** being made by the report

Detailed guidance to help with the completion of the assessment can be found [here](#). Delete this row after completion

Report author to complete

Committee:	Cabinet
Committee date:	11 March 2020
Director / Head of service	Director of people and neighbourhoods
Report subject:	The Norwich private renters charter
Date assessed:	25 February 2020

	Impact			
Economic (please add an 'x' as appropriate)	Neutral	Positive	Negative	Comments
Finance (value for money)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Where properties fail to meet legal standards enforcement action will be taken for which civil penalties may be levied which will be invested in the service
Other departments and services e.g. office facilities, customer contact	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Providing good quality information to tenants on their rights will support improved customer contact
ICT services	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Economic development	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Financial inclusion	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The charter will improve fuel poverty for private renters
Social (please add an 'x' as appropriate)	Neutral	Positive	Negative	Comments
Safeguarding children and adults	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The charter will help safeguard vulnerable children and adults from living in poor quality accommodation
<u>S17 crime and disorder act 1998</u>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The charter will help protect residents living in poor quality unsafe accommodation
Human Rights Act 1998	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The charter will improve the rights of private renters
Health and well being	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The charter will improve the health and wellbeing for private renters living in poor quality accommodation

	Impact			
Equality and diversity (please add an 'x' as appropriate)	Neutral	Positive	Negative	Comments
Relations between groups (cohesion)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Eliminating discrimination & harassment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The charter will improve the information available for private renters on their rights and the responsibilities of landlords thereby reducing the risk of harassment where it exists
Advancing equality of opportunity	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The charter will improve the health and wellbeing for private renters living in poor quality accommodation
Environmental (please add an 'x' as appropriate)	Neutral	Positive	Negative	Comments
Transportation	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Natural and built environment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The charter will help improve the quality of private rented accommodation
Waste minimisation & resource use	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The charter will help improve fuel poverty and use of resources by private renters to heat their homes
Pollution	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Sustainable procurement	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Energy and climate change	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The charter will help improve fuel poverty and use of resources by private renters to heat their homes

	Impact			
(Please add an 'x' as appropriate)	Neutral	Positive	Negative	Comments
Risk management	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

Recommendations from impact assessment
Positive
The proposals will make positive improvements to the lives and living conditions of private renters
Negative
Neutral
Issues

Raising the standards: The Norwich private sector renters' charter action plan

Aim

To ensure that tenants living in the private rented sector are able to access a safe, decent and affordable home and live their lives with confidence and without harassment.

What we will do

1. Publish a **Norwich private renter's charter** – which sets out the responsibilities and standards that private landlords and agents must meet; the rights of tenants and the condition of the property that should be expected; so the tenants can live safely and confidently in their home. This will empower tenants and help support the raising of standards within the sector.
2. Provide **good quality information** to tenants on their rights.
3. Explore the development an **enhanced Norwich standard for private rented properties** that sets out to raise the standard of rented properties. This will set a higher standard for the condition and fixtures tenants can expect within a private rented home. This will be an enhanced standard which exceeds what is prescribed by legislation and which is at least on par with the council's Norwich standard for its own housing stock. This would be developed on consultation with tenants, landlords, agencies and landlord associations.
4. **Create a tenancy relations role** - who will provide help and support to tenants with advice to take action against landlords where this is required and enhance landlord knowledge in the private rented sector. This will be resourced by an additional post of **private sector tenant liaison officer**. The post holder will also liaise and share information with advice organisations in the VCSE sector.
5. **Take enforcement action** against landlords who break the law. To ensure that the council has access to and able to assess all relevant information, a new role of **private sector housing intelligence officer** will be established to ensure that action is taken to address hazards in the poorest performing dwellings. This role will increase the capacity in the team that enforces compliance with this legalisation by improving our data and intelligence gathering capacity and increasing our activity to prosecute landlords who break the law.
6. **Joining up our work within the council – across all the teams that work with private renters**. It is important that all teams that work with tenants living in the private rented sector and who have concerns about the conditions of a property or where tenants are at risk of eviction are working together effectively and efficiently.
7. **Liaison with landlords** – the council will continue to work closely with landlords that meet or are willing to meet the requirements of the Norwich charter.

8. **Lobbying government** – local government cannot resolve the issues within the private rented sector alone and Government action is also required. The council will continue to lobby Government for a better deal for private renters.
9. **Communication** - provide clear and concise information to tenants and landlords about their respective rights and responsibilities, using digital and interactive information that is easy to read.
10. **Consultation** – see the views of stakeholders on the Norwich private renters' charter

Raising the standards: Norwich city council private renters' charter

Residents living in the private rented sector in Norwich should expect and deserve to receive a high standard of rented accommodation. Unfortunately, in some cases, private rented accommodation fails to meet the legal standard and residents experience a range of harmful consequences ranging from poor health; fuel poverty; reduced life chances for children, unsafe housing conditions and in extreme cases early death.

The council wants to raise standards in private rented accommodation by empowering tenants, encouraging best practice and taking action when it is needed.

This charter sets out the standards that private landlords and agents must meet and aims to help people live in the private rented sector to have a better understanding of they can expect and if things go wrong, what they can do and where to get help.

More detailed information is available on the council's website or from a number of voluntary sector advice organisations.

Tenants must be treated fairly

Before you move in

No discrimination

It is against the law to discriminate against your nationality, race, religion, sexuality, disability or gender. However, you have to provide proof that you have a right to live in the UK.

Letting agency fees

Until letting agency fees are banned, they must be displayed clearly in agents' offices and websites – you shouldn't have to ask to see them.

Complaints

Agents must be registered with an independent organisation for dealing with complaints. The logo of the complaints redress scheme they belong to must be displayed.

Money protection

Ask whether your letting agent belongs to a client money protection scheme. These schemes protect any money you pay to the agent as deposit and rent - even if the agent closes down.

Fixtures and fittings

Do all the fixtures and fittings work – do the light switches work and water come out of the taps?

Moving in

Legal Information

Your landlord or agent must give you the government's 'How to Rent' booklet when you move in.

Deposit protection

Your landlord must protect your deposit with 1 of 3 schemes, and provide you with proof, within 30 days of taking your deposit money. (TDS, DPS, my deposit logos).

Tenancy terms

Your tenancy terms must be fair and understandable. You shouldn't be hit with surprise fees.

Rent increases

Your rent should not go up during the fixed period of your tenancy.

Tenancy agreement

Good landlords/agents will provide a written tenancy agreement. At a minimum, they must put in writing the address of the room or flat, length of the agreement, the rent you will pay and the landlord's name and contact address.

Moving out

Landlords must follow a strict legal process if they want you to move out - and that process takes time. If your landlord or agent wants you to move out, get immediate advice.

Permission to rent

Check that your landlord has the necessary permission to rent. You can check what permission they need on our website.

Having a home that is safe and secure

Alarms

Your home must have a working smoke alarm on every floor. If you have a gas supply, decent landlords also provide carbon monoxide alarms.

Gas safety

If you have a gas supply, you must be given a valid gas safety certificate when you move in. Gas appliances must be checked by a certified Gas Safe engineer every 12 months.

Electrical safety

The wiring and any electrical items supplied with your home must be safe.

Reasonable repair

Your home must be safe, and its structure must be kept in reasonable repair.

Damp, mould and heating

Your home should be free from damp and mould problems and have heating that is controllable.

It's your home!

Your landlord or agent must not disturb or harass you. Your landlord can only visit when it is convenient for you, unless it's an emergency. They must give you at least 24 hours' notice.