

APPENDIX B – Further detail/background

Below are the 23 recommendations that the Living Rent Commission made specifically for Bristol City Council. Underneath each recommendation is how the Council plan to progress the recommendation/the next steps for progression.

1. Recognise there is substantial support for rent control and take forward further work and seek a coalition of support for more specific policy design.
 - The City Office and Mayors Office will look to progress this work by reaching out to relevant city stakeholders to establish next steps for collaborative work. The council will look to raise the profile of the LRC report through public affairs activity in parliament and Westminster.
2. Proposals for rent control policy should include an assessment of how rent control fits within the housing policy portfolio.
 - The council will look to explore this with the relevant service areas.
3. In parallel with the recommendations above, a communications strategy to address policy risk should be developed. Talk of “rent control” without providing any detail of that would mean can lead to significant negative side effects when sector actors, particularly landlords, assume the worst.
 - An approach to communications will be adopted and will be supported by external communications teams.
4. Consider whether it is desirable to advocate for a rent freeze.
 - The Council is and will continue to conduct public affairs activity which looks to raise recommendations in Westminster and Parliament to lobby government and call for devolution of rent control powers to local authorities.
5. Reinforce and extend existing firm policy stance against poor property and management standards. Review how BCC communicates its work in this area including its strategies, associated enforcement action, and licensing work – to make sure that the effectiveness of the approach is fully appreciated by those who are affected by it.
 - Subject to consultation, this will be explored as part of a Private Rented Sector Strategy, which will articulate priorities and vision and consider reinforcement and extension of the Councils existing firm policy stance.
6. Review the balance between informal and formal enforcement action on poor property standards.
 - This recommendation will be a part of the review into enforcement action that has been directed by the cabinet member. This will include a review of the existing enforcement policy and will subsequently be considered as part of a Private Rented Sector Strategy.
7. Embrace the potential of a regulatory regime that is more collaborative and networked. Explore more fully the role that organisations in the private and not-for-profit sector can play in the effective regulation of private renting, in partnership with the council, particularly

through improving the flow of information and timely identification of issues.

- The Council will further develop existing relationships and arrangements by liaising with third sector and private rent organisations to discuss key issues to ensure that we improve the flow of information between the sector and BCC.
8. The Commission recognises the council's commitment to tackling discrimination in the PRS. To move this agenda forward it is important to ensure that responsibilities are clearly allocated with clear accountability mechanisms. The development of local strategies and action plans for tackling discrimination would benefit from the formal involvement from renters and organisations.
- In addition to existing work outlined in the Cabinet paper, this will be explored further as part of a Private Rented Sector Strategy. This will include engagement with tenants and landlord organisations as part of this.
9. BCC should signal its intent by sending a clear public message condemning the practice via its formal communication channels.
- Council communications will be adapted to reflect this recommendation and will be supported by external communications teams.
10. BCC should take steps, working with industry bodies and other stakeholders, to raise the performance of poorer quality letting agents to the standard of the best.
- Existing work with industry bodies and other stakeholders, including Avon and Somerset Police, will continue and further work to raise performance will be outlined in a Private Rented Sector Strategy, including consideration of potential information advice and training for landlords and letting agents.
 - A consultation is currently live to consider introducing new additional and selective licensing schemes, as part of the consultation documentation, the outcomes from previous licensing schemes are outlined. The consultation closes on 7th November 2023.
11. The expansion of area-based and selective licensing could be part of a firm stance towards improving standards. Demonstrating the effectiveness of uses of this policy approach should be integral to any future expansion.
- A consultation is currently live, as part of the consultation documentation, the outcomes from previous licensing schemes are outlined. The consultation closes on 7th November 2023.
12. Ensure that fees and administrative processes associated with licensing schemes are no more of a burden on landlords than necessary.
- A consultation is currently live, as part of the consultation documentation, the outcomes from previous licensing schemes are outlined. The consultation closes on 7th November 2023.
13. Review the way that information about the PRS is currently shared. This includes information on rights, obligations and sources of help and support for both tenants and landlords. Map out which orgs are sharing info, with whom, and when. Explore the potential

for new collaborations to ensure accurate and timely information is reaching those who need it.

- A review of information sharing will be included as part of a Private Rented Sector Strategy. This will include working with partner organisations to engage with tenants and landlords as part of this. It has also been agreed to work with both universities and Students' Unions as part of this to ensure what the approach makes best use of city-wide resources.
14. Review the content and form of information being shared. The review should cover the accessibility and comprehensibility of the new information. It should consider whether new media or formats present opportunities to communicate the message more effectively. It should explore whether there is learning about what works that can be shared more effectively between information providers.
 - A review of information sharing will be included as part of a Private Rented Sector Strategy. This will include working with partner organisations to engage with tenants and landlords as part of this.
 15. Produce locally tailored versions of national documentation to ensure that Bristol landlords and tenants are clear on its relevance to them.
 - Production of locally tailored versions of national documentation will be considered as part of a Private Rented Sector Strategy.
 16. Establish a single, easily discoverable online location for presenting the range of relevant information for landlords, tenants and letting agents.
 - Review the online location for presenting relevant information alongside the process of establishing a Private Rented Sector Strategy.
 17. Review the data on the PRS that is routinely collected. Evaluate the benefits and costs of collecting additional information – for example, on rents and tenants' incomes, to enhance understanding of how the housing affordability situation is evolving.
 - Evaluation of the benefits and costs of collecting additional information will be considered as part of a Private Rented Sector Strategy.
 18. BCC should continue to do all it can to increase the supply of new social housing and continue to make the case to central government regarding need for more funding for social housing and the need to ensure that the welfare benefit system takes sufficient account of actual rents.
 - The council will continue to build affordable housing, with a focus on social rented homes that will be delivered as council housing on its own land, with support to maximise delivery through housing associations as well. The project 1000 delivery plan outlines how the council will focus its land, time, money, and influence. The council's ambition is to work with partners, local communities, and developers to deliver 1000 new affordable homes each year by 2024.
 - The council will continue to lobby government on the need for adequate funding and a benefit system that considers actual rents, locally. This includes unfreezing Local Housing Allowance rates which are set to the 30th percentile as of 2019. BCC has written to national government about this.

19. BCC should review administrative processes associated with planning and development control to ensure that they are streamlined and efficient.
 - To be explored through local plan policy and continued government engagement through the LGA, highlighting capacity restraints faced by planning departments and the need to review fees.
20. Enhance support for diverse, innovative community-led initiatives to develop new housing. This could include reviewing land made available to community-led orgs through the public land disposal programme; advocating for the involvement of community-led orgs in PRS developments; or supporting appropriately tailored organisational capacity building to bring development sites forward.
 - BCC will continue to build on existing relationships with community-led organisations to further enhance its approach to community-led housing delivery, including lobbying national government for the reinstatement of the community-led housing sector.
 - Through a focus on small sites, further opportunities for community-led housing may be made available.
 - The local plan policy proposed approach will include further enhancement of the role of community-led housing.
21. Ensure that there is clarity over the way that the city's universities' strategies are having an impact upon, and will further impact in future, the housing market. Initiate timely action, such as accelerating approvals for the development of purpose-built accommodation in appropriate locations, to mitigate side-effects.
 - To be explored through local plan policy and considered within the Private Rented Sector Strategy. As part of this, a student living strategy will be explored, learning from places such as Nottingham that have adopted similar approaches.
22. Seek to ensure that new purpose-built student accommodation is as affordable as possible and available to students in all years. Consideration of this issue should be integrated into the current local plan review process.
 - This will be explored through local plan policy that is currently under review with an updated proposed local plan coming to full council later this year for ratification for onward submission to the planning inspectorate in due course. This will include a requirement for new planning applications for purpose-built student accommodation to provide a minimum level of affordable student housing as part of the development.
23. Examine in more detail the evidence on the impact of short-term lets like AirBnB, second homes, and holiday lets on urban housing markets and, specifically, the effectiveness of strategies that have sought to regulate these subsectors.
 - BCC has responded to recent consultations regarding short term lets supporting proposals to devolve the powers for the introduction of a registration system for short term lets and the creation of a new planning use class. The outcome of the consultation conducted by the national government is not yet known. BCC will continue to respond to government consultations and reviews in relation to this area, helping establish a clear evidence base on the impact of short-term lets on Bristol. Where required, BCC will lobby government. The

impact of such lets will be considered as part of a Private Rented Sector Strategy.

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The national recommendations made by the Bristol Living Rent Commission were:

1. Central government should fully implement the Renters Reform Agenda, including the abolition of section 21 no-fault evictions, action to combat discrimination against lower income households, and ensuring that the court system has sufficient capacity. Action to raise the standard of service provided by poorer performing letting agents is also required.
2. Ensure that the benefit system properly recognises actual housing costs. This would imply significant increases to benefits. Restoring Local Housing Allowance rates to the 30th percentile of local market rents would be an important initial move in this direction.
3. Ensure that student incomes are sufficient to afford typical rent levels by increasing the student maintenance loan to recognize rising costs.
4. Ensure that local authorities have the resources to underpin their private rented sector activities. Central government sees local authority enforcement activities as key to improving quality in the sector, so sufficient resources must be available to allow these functions to be carried out effectively.
5. The decision to remove various tax reliefs has made being a small-scale private landlord a less attractive proposition. Reversing these decisions could have a significant positive impact on market supply.
6. Central government should recognise that the solution to our current housing challenges will not be achieved through reliance on the private rented sector alone. Investment in increasing the supply of social housing is integral to the solution. There is broad agreement on this point across all the stakeholder groups in the private rented sector. Stakeholders in the housing policy community have proposed a range of additional measures that have the potential to facilitate the delivery of more social housing. These merit serious consideration.