



The Rt Hon. Michael Gove MP
Secretary of State
Department for Levelling Up, Housing
and Communities

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Reply to
E-mail
Date

Cllr Tom Renhard
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9 May 2022

Bristol's priorities for the Renters' Reform white paper

Dear Secretary of State,

I welcome the Government's acknowledgement, with the Renters' Reform White Paper, that significant changes to the private rented sector in England need to be made. I am writing to you to ask that the key measures required are not weakened or left out of the draft legislation. In recent years Bristol's successes has led to it becoming one of the most popular, but also least affordable cities to live in the UK. One in three people, or over 134,000 here now rent privately and increased demand means Bristol rents have sky-rocketed and are now grossly disproportionate to local incomes. Over the last decade, private rents in Bristol have increased by 52%, while wages have lagged behind at only 24%.

Those in receipt of benefits are finding an ever-shrinking pool of properties available to them due to the combination of unaffordable rents and widespread discrimination against those claiming benefits. Home ownership is made impossible because average rents require such a high proportion of wages that people cannot afford to save.

In January this year the council passed a motion to stamp out discrimination against vulnerable tenants in Bristol. We are extending future landlord licensing schemes and will refuse permits to those who refuse to rent properties to welfare recipients. We also have plans to run public awareness campaigns of tenants' rights, help renters take letting agents to the property redress scheme, and to work with the West of England Combined Authority to update its code of good management practice and create a local action plan to formulate policies.

As such, we very much support the seven areas for action set out by the Renters Reform Coalition for the renters' reform white paper: Ending no fault evictions; Open-ended tenancies; Addressing affordability; A national landlord register; Preventing illegal evictions; Access to justice for tenants; Preventing discrimination. (see Appendix A at end for more detail)

The Bristol Living Rent City Commission

However, our ambitions in Bristol are likely to go beyond the scope of the white paper. Following

the commitment in the Mayor's 2021 manifesto to "campaign for the power to introduce rent stabilisation to make Bristol an affordable living rent city", we are establishing a City Commission of sector experts, tenants, landlords and academics to investigate the issues; to hear testimony from other places and individuals with lived experience; and to make recommendations on the rent control options that have potential to work in Bristol.

Earlier this year we held a Renters' Summit with the [Bristol Fair Renting Campaign](#), supported by Shelter and community union ACORN, giving local renters a platform to discuss options for tackling the rent crisis in Bristol.

The Commission will take forward this work, exploring what Bristol would need in order to become a "Living Rent" city, without having a negative impact on quality or availability of rental property. The Commission will look at examples of how rent stabilisation measures have proven to be effective in other countries and consider how we can move forward in a constructive way to determine the best system for our city.

I will be happy to share the findings from the Commission with yourself and your officials in the autumn. I urge you to confirm that the Renters' Reform Bill will be coming forward in the Queen's Speech this week and will include the important areas for action listed above and provide greater support and protections for people that are privately renting in Bristol.

Yours sincerely



Cllr Tom Renhard
Cabinet Lead for Housing Delivery and Homes

APPENDIX A:

Bristol City Council supports and emphasises the seven priorities set out by the [Renters Reform Coalition](#) for the Renters' Reform white paper:

- 1) Ending no fault evictions** - Renters deserve secure homes that they can call their own, where they can put down roots, free from the worry of the upheaval and cost of an unexpected house move. The new system introduced by the Government must provide tenants with security of tenure
- 2) Open-ended tenancies** - Once section 21 is abolished, tenancies should be open-ended, providing greater stability and preventing the continuous cycle of moving that many find themselves trapped in.
- 3) Addressing affordability** - It is widely accepted that in order to be affordable, housing costs should not take up more than a third of someone's income. The Government must act to bring rents down so that everyone has a home they can afford to rent where they can live and flourish.
- 4) A national landlord register** - A national register of all landlords should be introduced, making it easier for authorities to target criminal landlords.
- 5) Preventing illegal evictions** - Illegal eviction is a crime and must be treated as such. Tenants need to be protected from criminal landlords and letting agents who force them out of their homes.
- 6) Access to justice for tenants** - Access to justice is imperative. Any reform should be combined with better dispute resolution and mediation services relieving pressure from the courts.
- 7) Preventing discrimination** - The Private Rented Sector should be free of all discrimination. The Government's Right to Rent scheme, which requires private landlords to check the immigration status of tenants and potential tenants, should be scrapped.