

NOTICE OF MOTION**GREEN GROUP****LETTING AGENTS**

“This council notes the findings of the national Citizens Advice report *Let down* (1) on the activities of private rented sector letting agents, which revealed:

- 73 per cent of tenants interviewed were dissatisfied with the service provided by their letting agent. Common concerns included difficulties in contacting the agent, serious delays in getting repairs carried out, inadequacies in the protection of clients’ money and the frequency with which additional charges were made.
- 94 per cent of letting agents surveyed imposed additional charges on tenants on top of the tenancy deposit and rent in advance. The size of these charges varied hugely. The charge for checking references ranged from £10 to £275 and the charge for renewing a tenancy ranged from £12 to £200. In some cases additional charges for a tenancy amounted to over £600.
- Less than a third of agents willingly provided full written details of their charges to CAB workers when asked.
- 61 per cent of the tenants surveyed said that paying these charges was a problem. Some had to borrow the money, others had difficulty paying other bills or went into debt.

This council further notes:

The Citizens Advice call for:

(1) The licensing of letting agents who should be required to demonstrate professional competence, have adequate client money protection arrangements and operate a system for handling complaints and redress;

(2) The introduction of regulations specifying that no additional charges should be made to tenants for activities that are part of the routine letting and management process. The cost of this work should be included in the rent paid by the tenant and/or the management fee paid by the landlord. The ultimate sanction against letting agents breaching the regulations should be the withdrawal of the licence to operate.

It therefore calls on the council to request the Chief Executive to:

1. Write to the Government and the major political parties seeking their support for the Citizens Advice proposals; and

2. Ask the Office of Fair Trading to carry out an investigation into the activities of letting agents.

Proposed by: Cllr Bill Randall

Seconded by: Cllr Georgia Wrighton

Supported by: Cllrs Ian Davey, Ben Duncan, Rachel Fryer, Amy Kennedy, Jason Kitcat, Alex Phillips, Sven Rufus, Paul Steedman, Keith Taylor, Vicky Wakefield-Jarrett, Pete West