

**NOTICE OF MOTION****LABOUR GROUP AMENDMENT****LETTING AGENTS**

Insert a new paragraph as shown in bold italics after the second paragraph and delete resolution (2) and replace with a new resolution (2) as shown in bold italics:

“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.

***This Council further notes that:***

***New proposals to be taken forward for consultation, as recommended in the recent independent review of the private rented sector, includes:***

- ***Introducing a light-touch national register of every private landlord in England to increase protection for both vulnerable tenants and good landlords. Landlords will need to include their registration number on all tenancy agreements and could be removed from the register for persistent poor performance like failing to carry out essential repairs, or not protecting tenants' deposits***
- ***Full regulation for private sector letting agents. Letting and managing agents do not currently need to have professional credentials. This means that both tenants and landlords have no realistic redress when things go wrong. To tackle these problems, the government proposes creating an independent regulator for all letting and managing agents***
- ***An improved complaints and redress procedure for tenants. For the first time, the Government will look to set up a mechanism whereby tenants are able to register official complaints about sub-standard landlords, and if these complaints are substantial and proven then landlords may be removed from the national register***
- ***Greater local authority support for good landlords. Local authorities will be encouraged to create 'local lettings agencies' to better facilitate tenancies in the private rented sector for those in housing need, including Housing Benefit recipients.***

It therefore calls on the council

1. to request the Chief Executive to 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.~~
2. to welcome the announcement by Margaret Beckett in May 2009 as Housing Minister, which took into account the concerns raised by the CAB and sought to improve the quality of the private rented sector by increasing professionalism, driving out bad landlords, and strengthening protections for tenants affected by repossessions.”

Proposed by: Cllr Christine Simpson

Seconded by: Cllr Anne Meadows



