

Labour Group amendment to Liberal Democrat Group Motion **Better rented homes for Haringey**

Proposer: Cllr Williams

Seconded: Cllr Bartlett

Council notes that:

1. Mandatory HMO licensing is boroughwide and has been in place since it became operational in 2006.
2. Haringey has an Additional HMO Licensing Scheme under section 56 of the Housing Act which applies to all buildings that are HMOs as defined by sections 254 of the Act other than HMOs that are subject to mandatory licensing under section 55(2) (a) of the Act subject to any statutory exemption or exception with licenses granted for up to five years.
3. In addition to these two schemes, we also successfully applied to government for the additional Selective Licensing Scheme, which applies to all privately rented homes let to a single person, 2 people, or a single household (e.g. a family) in thirteen wards across the borough (Bounds Green, Bruce Castle, Harringay, Hermitage and Gardens, Noel Park, Northumberland Park, Seven Sisters, South Tottenham, St Ann's, Tottenham Central, Tottenham Hale, West Green, White Hart Lane, Woodside).
4. Almost every local council in London with a large-scale scheme does not inspect HMOs for safety before granting licences to landlords, including Southwark, Brent, Waltham Forest. This is because it is advantageous to undertake a written assessment of the landlord at the outset as to their suitability as a landlord, which can then be legally enforced upon during the tenure of the property. Checks before an HMO is approved would radically reduce capacity to deliver housing placement and address the crisis in housing demand. Just like Brent, Haringey does in fact inspect properties at the outset where concerns are flagged in the initial written assessment.
5. The Renters' Rights Act 2025, introduced by the current Labour Government, enshrines vital rights and protections for tenants and represents a generational rebalance of power in the relationship between landlord and tenant. While landlords have a critical role to play in improving the housing crisis, the fundamental rights and welfare of tenants should and will remain sacrosanct. While an effect is noted, this yet-to-be activated law has not had a significant impact on housing supply.
6. The Renters' Rights Act 2025 gives councils new powers and responsibilities to enforce higher standards through Awaab's Law and Decent Homes Standards. Awaab's law is expected to be activated in late 2026, while the Decent Homes Standards will not be operational for several years.
7. Awaab's Law represents a huge victory for housing campaigners in response to escalating damp and mould issues, placing new requirements on landlords to tackle damp and mould, when the legislation is activated.
8. The council currently makes use of the Private Rental Sector, including HMOs, to provide Temporary Accommodation to Haringey Residents, and to direct Haringey Residents to private assured shorthold tenancy agreements through the Council's Private Sector Renting team, including by making Private Rented Sector Offers.

9. The council considers that a landlord has fulfilled his duty under sec 87 Housing Act 2004 when an application is considered. The Act states 'An application for a licence must be made to the local housing authority'. The Council does not consider HMO's as licensed as soon as a licence application is submitted. Under sec 87 Housing Act 2004 a landlord has fulfilled their duty in terms of HMO licensing by virtue of submitting a full licence application to the council. Once submitted the local authority must consider a licence application under various criteria before determining if a licence should be refused or granted.
10. An application once submitted goes through a series of legal checks. If further information, documentation, or site inspections are required before a draft licence can be granted then this is undertaken.
11. If the council is aware of unlicensed premises, then the formal process to investigate these properties is commenced.
12. During COVID restrictions, the number of CPN's issued by Haringey was impacted by unavoidable recruitment issues and illness, as was the case with many other London boroughs. However, to date, Haringey has delivered –
 - 4468 HMO compliance inspections undertaken.
 - 4262 Selective compliance inspections undertaken
 - 286 Enforcement Notices Issued
 - 5 Prosecutions with legal
 - 113 Civil Penalty Notices issued.
13. The Council recently reviewed its Civil penalty Notice policy and as a result the threshold for fines has increased. CPN money is ring-fenced for use by the directorate for further enforcement work.
14. Interim Management Orders are notoriously time and resource intensive and costly, requiring the council to take possession, collect rents, deal with arrears, and make repairs to the property. They are therefore not a viable option for local authorities – who simply do not have the resources to manage every private-rented property in their area.
15. The housing crisis has created a binding challenge for local authorities: reduce severe housing demand, while building council homes and helping to improve the quality of private-rented sector homes, all under extreme financial pressure following 14 years of austerity.
16. Under this Council, we are the second highest builders of council homes in London: 800 new council homes; 1,000 by Christmas 2025; and on track to build 3,000 by 2031.
17. Under this Council we are also taking major action to help residents out of temporary accommodation:
 - Home-buying initiative for temporary accommodation (with hundreds bought already).
 - Incentives for private landlords to rent to families currently in temporary accommodation.
 - Ended the outsourcing of housing repairs – investing in faster void turnarounds.
18. Under this Council, we have reduced rough sleeping by 33% since 2022, despite a 20% increase nationally. This has been delivered through collaboration and partnership working, embedding a strong foundation of trauma-informed, evidence-led practice, co-produced with people with lived experience.

Council believes that:

1. This Council has made huge progress since 2022, under enormous financial pressure, to relieve housing demand and reduce homelessness and the use of temporary accommodation.
2. With the delivery of the Renters' Rights Act, the Labour Government has shifted the balance of power to tenants. This will go on to reduce the endemic of poor quality private-rented housing across the UK, although it will take time to realise.
3. Decent housing is a fundamental human right, and everyone should have a home which is safe and well-maintained.
4. The Council has a crucial role to play, both as a landlord responsible for its own housing stock, and as the enforcement body for the private rented sector in ensuring the highest safety standards of housing across the borough.
5. The Council also has a duty to ensure that any property that Haringey either directly places residents in, or signposts tenants towards, whether it is Temporary Accommodation, Private Sector Lease Accommodation (PSLs) or Private Rental Sector Accommodation is compliant with the relevant legislation and Code of Guidance to make it safe, fit for purpose, and properly licensed, before the council makes that placement or recommendation. Enforcement powers are only effective if landlords and tenants believe they will be used.
6. If an owner is found to be not fit and proper, and continues to own and rent a licensable property, then they must nominate an alternative agent or person. This person or agents must be fit and proper to manage the property in their place. This is determined by legislation and is out of the council's control.

Council therefore resolves to:

1. Work with the government to understand how the council can support with the rollout of the Renters' Rights Act to ensure bad private landlords are held accountable within Haringey.
2. Continue to hold the highest standards for the "fit and proper person" test, including our checks to ensure landlords successfully prosecuted by Haringey Council are flagged when applying the test, ensuring that convicted rogue landlords cannot operate in our borough.
3. Continue reviewing all properties that hold an HMO license or Selective License within Haringey to ensure they have the requisite planning permission, and where they do not, to immediately proceed to planning enforcement, as is common practice.
4. Continue ensuring the council does not place residents in, make private rented sector offers to, or signpost residents towards, properties which lack the required planning permission, have not had licenses granted, or have not had and passed safety inspections or compliance checks.

5. As per the council's new Homelessness Strategy, we will ensure that every resident contacting the Council for housing assistance, and every resident in private rented accommodation, is given clear information about:
 - a. their new rights;
 - b. the new, higher standards for landlords;
 - c. how to spot an unlicensed property; and
 - d. how to report any problems to the council.
6. As well as this, through 2026 and 2027 we will conduct planned and sustained renters' rights campaigns, including through communications targeted at groups of renters, especially those who are traditionally hard to reach.
7. Train officers across the council to provide information, advice, and signposting to private renters about their new rights under the Renters Rights Act
8. As per the revision of our CPN policy and recent recruitment, continue to ramp up the use of fines, which remain ring-fenced for further enforcement work.
9. Continue following the legal guidance under the Housing Act 2004 and the Council's enforcement policy with regards to the issuing of enforcement notices and the most appropriate and best course of action as part of that decision making process.
10. Continue to report progress on the above and all measures related to enforcement and HMO measures through the Council's CDP Performance and working closely with the Housing, Planning and Development Scrutiny Panel.