

Other written responses (anonymised)

Response 1.

Landlord telephone call to give feedback (key points summarised) – prior to the consultation going live

I would have to find £1,800 or £1,900 for 3 properties. It's an awful lot of money to pay. It's like one month's rent has gone per property. I've got particularly good tenants, I've got 3 houses and got particularly. I've spent £1500 on one of them in the last 2 years. That's because I'm a responsible guy. Why do I need to pay £600 for this?

I'm left with 3 options - sell the properties and use the money as my pension; I pay the money and have 11 months' worth of rent; or I pass it onto the tenants.

I don't think it's very well thought out. As soon as the council sees that it can make money on the schemes, everyone wants to introduce it – it's just a con. It's just like another local tax. I'll either put my rents up or sell my properties. If everyone decides to sell, then the council has no housing stock and people will be homeless.

I don't have a lot of confidence in the survey, as they will still go ahead with it. It is morally wrong to penalise someone who is providing a good service. Mine are modern houses and they are looked after well.

I think you should introduce it on the basis if someone complains and the complaint is justified that the landlord should be made to pay. Otherwise it's just an income tax.

It says 'we propose' to introduce licensing in Bootle. For a council to say that, it's had council blessing. They couldn't state we 'propose to' unless a resolution has been made. They've been specific about where they are introducing it – I know how council's work. A housing department hasn't got the authority to say they propose to without going to be a council meeting. I think this has gone further than you are telling me. A decision has been made and you are just not aware of it. This has been blessed by someone. It's a decision made by a member – they've got approval to do this. I think the jobs done and it's fait accompli and it's very disappointing. I will have to pass this onto the tenants and I'll just have to tell them.

Response 2

Landlord telephone call to give feedback (key points summarised)

How do you get involved – I haven't seen any letters? Have you sent them to landlords – I've seen them sent through to tenants with an incentive to fill it out, but not to landlords. I've not seen

anything and I should be on those lists. I get housing benefit but didn't see anything. I got a leaflet but didn't get a letter.

The leaflet is misleading and saying that landlords can claim it back via tax returns and get it back. That's not true and it's misleading. If I earn £10000 a year, I'd not be able to get tax relief on anything. It makes it out as though landlords are loaded anyway. There's no the equity in property in Sefton like people believe there to be for . There's so much crime and poverty already and this will only make it worse.

No other form of licensing works this way – they don't have to pay for a license 5 years up front. It's not helpful, as its. Any decent landlord is putting money back into properties. If I was a taxi driver, I'd pay a fee every year.

There is no way of appealing about it and for landlords like me to meet with the council and speak to councillors to . We're all paying private letting agents fees, who supposedly make sure there are guarantors and reference checks on tenants. We're also paying council tax which should deal with Anti-Social Behaviour. You can just listen to me and it makes no difference. It's all very cloak and dagger isn't it. How can I put myself forward to talk to the council and speak to someone.

Can't they look at tax returns and get information other ways rather than licensing

Most people aren't opposed to this, as if you are then you are potentially not a good landlord.

There should be grants or loans to tap into to help landlords to improve their houses – there's money available to housing associations to improve homes, but nothing for private landlords. It's just penalising everyone all the time.

Most of us landlords are registered with the council anyway – they should be charging an annual fee per landlord, not per property.

This is a way for the council to line its pockets – people are already employed to do this anyway.

The most vulnerable people, landlords who run HMOs are basically part time social workers. Often they have no-one – they have drug or alcohol problems and landlords bend over backwards to keep them on. I work with the Council's Housing Options team, and taken tenants on from that. They need a lot of care otherwise they end up on the streets. I've let them off hundreds of pounds. It's not their fault, they are just so poor and it's so sad. Putting all this on landlords, you are going to lose a lot of good people in the industry who just say that they can't do this anymore.

A lot of the ASB is reported but the council don't seem to be doing anything. The police aren't doing anything. They never prosecute anyone and if they do it must be a very small amount as it never hits the new anyway. I've taken photographs myself – there are major issues of people dealing with drugs in this street (Kilburn Street) and the council say they are working in partnership with the police, but nothing seems to be done. I'm happy to meet with the council on these points too.

All the landlords I know do a good job and do well by their tenants, as do the letting agents I've been involved with.

Most landlords with a letting agents, need you to have many of the conditions, won't let you rent a property out without things like a gas safety certificate. I can't speak for everyone, but those who do use letting agents have to comply with these things anyway. Most people use letting agents. If you don't use letting agents, you attract the wrong people. Each property you let out, you're paying a few hundred pounds – they're already doing the job of the council. Most responsible landlords use letting agents.

Where are they getting that 2,800 from – from housing benefit.

I've not seen this advertised in the local press – the Echo have had a massive decline in readership. I buy the Echo and get the Champion and haven't seen anything. Why haven't they paid to advertise it if they were sending out press releases and they can't guarantee it will feature? It's not really a fair thing because it doesn't reach everyone. Most papers are going online and you have to subscribe.

How does it work with the landlords percentage as its going to be only a very small number compared to all those who take part in the consultation overall.

Response 3

Email response

We have about 12 houses and flats in Southport, which we rent out to private residential tenants and manage ourselves. We maintain high standards of presentation of the properties, and do our best to ensure that the tenants' experience is as pleasant as it can be relating to the location and style of property.

We object as strongly as possible to any Government/Local Authority Licencing Scheme.

1. A Licencing Scheme introduces a layer of expensive bureaucracy which all Landlords will have to pay for. This cost will inevitably be passed to the tenants as increased rent.
2. The Licencing Scheme will inevitably be administered by Local Authority employees, and be subject to the usual inefficiencies and delays which are part of any Local Authority Scheme. This is not a criticism of the individual employees but the conflicts of cost-cutting and management strategies.
3. There is a clear political background to this Scheme implementation, with the inference that Landlords are corrupt and greedy and aim to exploit vulnerable tenants. This is not a fact in the vast majority of cases.
4. Why should reasonable and hard-working Landlords be penalised and charged for the sake of a few bad landlords.
5. There are sufficient tools available already for bad landlords to be helped to improve their operation, driven by the tenants or the Local Authority.

6. What proof is there that the additional sanction of Licencing will be more effective than present methods of dealing with bad Landlords?

We will use the Residential Landlords Association/NorthWest Property Owners Association to make representation on our behalf in this matter.

Response 4

Email response

To whom it may concern.

I agree in principal with landlord licencing but it should be carried out in a fair way and should not be seen as a money making scheme as it is in Liverpool.

As the scheme is to weed out bad landlords then the licence should apply to the individual landlord or agent with a small cost for every property under his or her control. The licence should be affordable so as not to cause rent increases and relaxed enough so as not to chase perspective or current landlords away from the market place as it has done in Liverpool.

Many thanks for listening in advance.

Response 5

Email response

Good Morning,

I have received the information leaflet regarding the Housing Licensing Consultation for Sefton.

I own a Lettings Agent on the Wirral and we are already licence holders for 13 properties in selected licensed areas over this side. Whilst there has been an improvement in the standard of the properties being rented there is a huge fundamental flaw which seems to be over looked.

A landlord is being charged to become a licensed landlord/property and they have to abide by the rules & regulations set out by the council in order to be a responsible landlord. Most agents will welcome this

decision and I as an agent fully support the licensing of a property or landlord in a rundown area. I am all for progression and improvement of various residential areas. However, there is an important point which much be addressed and I am working with Angela Eagle MP for Wallasey at the minute to try to make some changes on this.

A licensed landlord has to abide by a set of rules or they will be held to account and fined. But what about a tenant who doesn't abide by the rules? What about the tenant in a licensed property who decides not to pay forward their Housing Benefit or Universal Credit to pay their rent? Where does that leave the landlord? How do they pay the mortgage? How do they pay for the repairs at the property?

I appreciate the need to improve some properties and areas and to flush out the 'bad' landlords but what protection do they have from a tenant who decides that they don't have to pay their rent? It is unfair to impose the cost of a licence onto a landlord and have them conform to a number of set standards for them not to be paid any rent.

So what happens to the tenant who receives Housing Benefit or Universal Credit direct and doesn't pay it forward? Nothing!! They spend the money on anything other than rent and this starts the entire process of eviction. We serve a section notice usually allowing 2 weeks - 2 months notice. If they fail to leave we issue court proceedings giving possibly a further 2 months. Once we have the possession order and if they still don't leave we have to apply to the High Court Bailiffs to carry out the repossession. All the time this is happening the landlord is not receiving rent. Do you know that on average a landlord is approximately £6,100 out of pocket at the point of possession of their own property?

How does the landlord then get all of the money they are owed? They issue a small claim. What are the chances of the getting the money back if a judgement is made in their favour? Zero!!!! The tenant gets a CCI (which they probably already have a collection of so this doesn't bother them) and the process has cost the landlord more money to take court action.

If there are going to be consequences for 'bad' landlords then equally there has to be consequences for 'bad' tenants. If a council makes an over payment of any kind of benefit they will claw it back by making a nominal deduction from payments moving forward until the money is paid back. So why can't this happen if a tenant has taken money in the form of Housing Benefit or Universal Credit and not paid it forward? Why can't the council deduct this money from their future benefits and pay it back to the landlord? This needs to be looked into in more depth as this is why the council are having to re-house so many tenant and why there are so many evictions. It is costing millions of pounds to councils, landlords and tax payers. There is a simple solution. Review the way rents are paid from Housing Benefit and Universal Credit. Impose a fine to a tenant who does not pay their rent forward. I had a conversation with one tenant we evicted and their

exact words to me were 'I don't have to pay any rent. You have to take me to court to get me out and it'll cost you more to do that. And if I get a CCJ you can chase me for the money. I'll pay you £1 a month until its paid'. How is this acceptable??

I can guarantee if you told them that any monies not forwarded onto the landlord by them would be deducted from their benefits moving forward until the debt was paid, we would certainly see a change in their attitude. They see it as free money. When they realise it isn't things will change. There will be less evictions and less pressure on the councils to re-house evicted tenants.

If landlords were receiving their rents on time then they wouldn't have need to evict anyone. It is a simple as that. So as far as I support licensing some 'bad' landlords, I still feel the system should be fairer in that the landlord should be paid the rent direct if he is in a selective licence post code and there should be consequences put in place for those tenants who choose not to pay their rent. As I have stated earlier, we have landlords who are licensed in the selected areas so we know there are no problems with the property yet the tenants are still not paying their rents.

I am happy to get involved in any consultation etc...This is something which is becoming a major issue and should be looked into in more depth.

Response 6

Email response

We have 2 HMO in our area one on the corner of our street (Percy St Bootle L20 4PQ) although the address of the HMO is given as Knowsley Rd Bootle, one across the road in Elliott St Bootle.

The Elliott St HMO permanently has trouble with the residents, the police are frequently there. Also both these HMO's have no where to keep there household rubbish so everyday they place bags, bin bags, household rubbish on the streets regardless of when the bin men are due.

I think licencing these HMO's would make the landlord responsible for his tenents.

Response 7

Email response

To Who It Concerns

Please could you keep me informed of the progress of this. I do feel very disappointed with Liverpool City Council as they have decided to make every Landlord apply for a License and it is unfair that good Landlords like myself are getting attacked from every angle. I am shocked that Sefton council are doing the same.

I am an accredited Landlord with Liverpool City council and I am a member of the Residential Landlords Association. All my properties are to a very high standard and I have never been reported to any council for problems with my houses as they are all in very good condition and any maintenance that needs doing is done ASAP.

Could you tell me if I would be affected by this License. I own 1 house in Litherland (xxx) and I own 4 flats in Seafouth (xxx) Would this even effect me ?

As well as the goverment from today 06/04/17 restricting interest on mortgage payments meaning Landlords will now be heavenly taxed I think the council have got a major problem on their hands as many Landlords are looking to sell and leave the market because it just isn't worth it no more with all these extra charges and increase in tax bills.

I look forward to your response.

Response 8

Email response

I would like to be involved in this process I am happy to be part of a scheme but the should be no more than £70.00 per year as a landlord and not tax every property buy a large fee this can only take money I use to improve and maintain my property's the the points in this proposal are already set up in Sefton council i e antisocial behaviour hosing options Landlords should not have to foot the bill we all ready pay for this in our council tax and our tenants council tax a better scheme would be to work with landlords associations we have already paid a fee and are up to date with landlords responsibilitys.

Response 9

Email response

26.05.2017

RE. Consultation on HMO's

I am writing to you with reference to proposals to place more restrictions on HMO schemes.

I feel that these [HMOs] are totally unsuitable for residential areas occupied mainly by families and seem to me to be a route more and more landlords are taking in order to make the maximum amount of income from the minimum amount of space with little regard for the ethos of the neighbourhood.

I am unfortunate enough to live next door to an HMO and if planning permission had been required when this family home was converted, myself and my neighbours would certainly have put in the strongest of objections. I certainly would not consider buying a house next door to an HMO and feel that it adversely affects property prices.

Response 10

Email response

Thanks for sending me the leaflet about above mentioned issue.

Frankly, I am bewildered and surprised you haven't brought similar measures re: licensing landlords sooner. Private landlords were up to now getting away with all sorts. They have a responsibility towards their occupiers, not only collecting for rent. But maintaining their own properties, so people do not live in mouldy or otherwise unsuitable environment....They are ultimately responsible. Human nature is such, if you do not reign (license) their behavior, they will do for all sorts, leaving occupiers with quandary...Never mind spirit of free enterprise, abuse, more likely...Exploitation is the name of the game..., if allowed to carry on WITHOUT licensing...

Sooner you implement it, the better.

Response 11

Email response

June 1st 2017

Dear Sir/Madam,

Licensing of Landlords proposals

Comments

Once again, more proposed burgeoning and costly legislation is proposed against landlords, the majority of whom are decent people running ethical businesses and wanting to get on well with their tenants.

Over the years the regulations have been mounting to the point whereby one wonders if the objective is to drive the private landlord out of business- the latest and most onerous being housing rents paid direct to tenants, and the Council reducing the 6 month void period-whereby a property becoming empty would not be eligible to Council Tax over that period- reduced to only one month, thereby giving little time to effect improvements, which are normally costly after a tenancy ends (especially in the event of actions by a rogue tenant).

There similarly appears to be a general suggestion that the word 'landlord' has become a dirty word synonymous mainly with money grabbing racketeers whose properties are all unhealthy death traps, and, of course, there are such characters in the business, who can easily be 'flushed out' and prosecuted under the current Health and Safety legislation.

As there is urgent need for rental accommodation, to further burden the industry with even more legislative licensing is going to drive decent landlords away, with rents rising accordingly in the remaining sector.

In Liverpool it has been brought in using the excuse of the very large numbers on students renting, and with the associated stresses placed on the infrastructure as a result- the reality is though it is clearly and specifically a cynical fund raising exercise introduced via Councillor Anne O'Byrne. Once again, the legislation has always been in place to use against rogue landlords, but it must also be said there appears to be somewhat less sympathy offered to landlords damaged by rogue/criminal tenants who vastly outnumber the bad landlords, damage property and move on untouched.

In summary, it is suggested perhaps, for once, matters should be left as prevailing, with funds raised via other avenues, and the possibility considered of the return to the 6 month no Council Tax due on empty properties, or the crisis of homeless on the streets will surely spiral.

Regards

Response 12

Response taken verbally by the council

Concerned that once we have these schemes running we will introduce more schemes in other areas of Sefton

- Absence of co-regulation is a big mistake. If our scheme is not big enough for co-regulation we shouldn't be running the scheme.
- We should wait and see if this government or a labour government introduce national selective licensing
- The reason that the cost of a license is so high is because the scheme is too small
- Private Sector housing is over regulated. We have other enforcement tools that we should be using instead of licensing.
- Due to Council cuts, the Council are introducing licensing to retain staff
- He was critical of other LAs not being ready at the start of licensing schemes.

Response 13

Email response

Quote " a number of landlords providing poorly managed and unsafe homes"

What number? It insinuates its a high number and that isnt the case

Why is your intent to licence in certain geographical areas only?....it doesn't seem a worked through plan. Waterloo is mentioned but not Crosby where is the boundary line in your mind?

Wondering if this 'consultation' is just a fig leaf to cover what SMBC have already decided?

The external research company who are **paid** to give you advice will give you the advice you want to hear ie charge Landlords.

If after all yours /their input you decide not to charge landlords for Licences it would be the hock of the century.

Consultants borrow Sefton's clock, tell you the time and charge you for the borrowing and telling

The unintended consequences will be

- that potentially decent landlord will be put off going through proposed bureaucracy so there could be fewer properties so higher rents
- that if extra expense is incurred by existing landlords they will probably add this onto rent increases so the tenant will pay

Its challenging enough for landlords dealing with

- rent arrears
- damage to property
- ongoing repairs/ maintenance.

I think you are just copying Liverpool CC and where is the evidence that schemes reduce the Criminal element?

You should crack down on those rather than use a sledgehammer on all,