



Selective & Additional (HMO) Licensing Proposal for Sefton

Summary of the Housing
Licensing Consultation Document
9 May to 31 July 2022



Introduction

In Sefton there are different house types. Some people rent a property and some people own a property. There are differences across Sefton:

- People who do not live in Bootle and Netherton are more likely to own their own home.
- House prices tend to be higher in central Sefton and the north of the borough, than homes in the south of the borough.
- There is less choice in south Sefton where there are more terraced houses, and more homes owned by housing associations or private landlords.

There are also lots of things that affect where people live and the type of property they live in:

- In Bootle, Central Southport, and parts of Waterloo/Seaforth there tends to be poorer housing conditions along with higher levels of crime and anti-social behaviour.
- Many guest houses and small hotels in Southport have had to sell up or become flats or bedsits
- There are more people in Waterloo/Seaforth and Southport wanting to rent from a private landlord and may live in a house of multiple occupancy.

What is a Landlord Licensing scheme?

While many landlords in Sefton do a good job looking after their properties and tenants, there are people renting their home in Sefton who live in poor housing conditions. Although they pay their rent, their landlords do not carry out essential maintenance to keep them warm and safe.

Through Sefton Council's Landlord Licensing scheme, private rented houses are regulated. This means the Council, can act when concerns are raised, to make sure that rented properties meet the standards expected.

Sefton has had a private licensing scheme since March 2018 and would like to continue these schemes, to make further improvements to housing conditions for residents in the private rented sector.

Licensing since 2018 has seen landlords and agents change the way they look after property. It has also improved their engagement and relationship with Sefton Council.

Between March 2018 – August 2021 there have been:

- 288 licensable properties that have had serious Category 1 health and safety hazards removed relating to fire safety, electrical hazards, damp & mould and excess cold;
- 570 inspection visits took place and 58% of properties did not meet the standards at the first visit.
- After the first visit, 98% of properties had made improvements

Benefits to landlords of having a licence include:

- sharing information and support to help tackle antisocial behaviour
- providing support and training to help them improve
- increased knowledge and help to comply with the law
- improved rental income
- higher property value

Benefits to tenants include:

- more landlords providing good quality homes
- landlords having a clear set of rules they must all follow
- less chance of people becoming homeless
- ensuring private landlords manage and maintain their properties
- minimum standards for rented housing leading to better health and wellbeing.

Benefits to the community include:

- increased housing demand
- reduced crime and Anti-Social Behaviour, such as graffiti and fly-tipping
- more people want to live in the area
- improved security
- fewer empty properties
- protection for vulnerable people who may currently be living in poorly maintained properties.

The Housing Act 2004 says that Sefton Council can identify areas for Landlord Licensing provided that the identified area meets one or more of the following:

- low housing demand (or is likely to become such an area)
- a significant and persistent problem caused by anti-social behaviour (ASB)
- poor property conditions
- high levels of migration
- high level of deprivation (poverty)
- high levels of crime

The Housing Act 2004 (Section 56) allows Sefton Council to extend the Mandatory Houses in Multiple Occupation licensing scheme to include other types of Houses in Multiple Occupation.

Sefton Council would like to include all Houses of Multiple Occupation in the Additional licensing schemes. This includes all properties mentioned in Section 257 of the Housing Act, such as converted blocks of flats.

The law says that any decision to put in place a landlord licensing scheme must be joined up with the Local Authority's Housing Strategy. It must also work with other agencies for dealing with homelessness, empty homes, and anti-social behaviour.

Sefton Council has looked at lots of Housing standards service requests and other evidence. Before deciding on the proposal, the Council also looked at other ideas, which were:

- Property Accreditation – The Council will continue to offer licence fee discounts for members of Sefton's Property Accreditation Scheme. Only 4.2% of properties have signed up to the Accreditation Scheme.
- Having a Sefton-wide Licensing Scheme.

Property Accreditation is not thought to be a successful alternative to licensing and there is not yet enough evidence to have a Sefton-wide Licensing Scheme.

How will Housing Licensing link to other Sefton Strategies?

Licensing will work alongside other Council Strategies to benefit residents of Sefton to live in safe and healthy homes. It will assist with achieving the aims of the Housing Strategy, Empty Homes Plan and reduce anti-social behaviour. It will also help to reduce the levels of Homelessness.

How will the schemes be delivered?

A Licensing Scheme can only be in place for a maximum of 5 years. Sefton Council can decide to grant the licence for a shorter time.

All properties that need a licence should be inspected during the period of the schemes. Sefton Council will provide advice and support to landlords to help to bring property conditions up to the required standards and make sure that landlords meet the laws.

Landlords will need to follow a set of rules as part of their licence. These rules will be set following feedback from this consultation process.

Proposed Landlords Licensing Fees

If Licensing is re-introduced, it means that private landlords in the areas identified must have a licence.

To cover the costs of arranging the Licensing Scheme, Sefton Council would need to charge landlords a fee to apply for a licence. The cost is reviewed each year.

The proposed fee for the Landlords Licensing scheme in Bootle is £695 to cover for up to 5 years. This works out at £139 per year or £2.67 per week.

The proposed fee for the Landlords Additional licensing scheme for Houses of Multiple Occupancy is £950 to cover up to 5 years. This works out at £190 per year or £3.65 per week

It is also proposed that if any landlords have more than one unit of accommodation in the same building, that they are charged the full licence fee for the first unit of accommodation and then only £30 for every other unit.

If the landlord is a member of the Sefton Property Accreditation Scheme, the fee would be £150 less

If the landlord has been accredited by the National Residential Landlords Association, the fee would be £150 less.

People who manage properties on behalf of other people (if they are the proposed licence holder), could get a £200 discount if they are part of Sefton's Managing Agent Accreditation Scheme.

The consultation

The existing Landlords licensing schemes will run out in February 2023.

Sefton must decide if the Selective licensing scheme for Bootle and the Additional licensing schemes for the Houses of Multiple Occupancy in parts of Waterloo, Seaforth, Brighton-Le-Sands, and central Southport should be renewed.

We want to know what you think.

Please complete the consultation to give us your views.

