

Full Council: 13 December, 2016

Administration Motion: Cllr Gabriel Rozenberg

Letting Agent Fees

Council notes that sustaining quality in the private rented sector is a key priority of the borough, as set out in Barnet's Housing Strategy 2015-2025. Within 10 years, half of the properties in Barnet are likely to be rented, and the Council's strategy includes helping deprived households with rising housing costs in both the social rented and private rented sector.

In that context, Council welcomes the statement by the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Philip Hammond, that the Conservative Government intends to ban the practice of landlords requiring tenants to pay letting agent fees.

Council notes that under a system where landlords pay agency fees, landlords have the ability to shop around for the lowest-cost provider and therefore keep their expenses under control. By contrast, renters have no choice of letting agents. When renters pay, agencies have the ability to raise their fees indefinitely.

Council notes that, according to data from Citizens Advice, agent fees have risen from an average of £125 in 2009-10 to £200 in 2014-15, with some fees as much as £700 per person.

Council therefore agrees with Shelter, the Resolution Foundation, Citizens Advice and other respected bodies that the time has come to ban letting agent fees being imposed on tenants.

Council believes that this policy will directly improve the lives of Barnet residents who rent. It will complement Barnet's approach of raising standards across the private rented sector via the landlord forum run by Barnet Homes and other means.

Noting that the proposed ban is currently open to consultation, Council therefore mandates the Leader of the Council to write to the Chancellor of the Exchequer expressing Council's support for this welcome proposal.

Under Full Council Procedure Rule 23.5: if my item is not dealt with by the end of the meeting I ask that it be voted upon at the Council meeting