

Council: 25 July 2017

Agenda Item 14.5 – Opposition amendment in the name of Cllr Ross Houston

Opposition Motion in the name of Cllr Ross Houston – Standards in the private rented sector

Delete all and replace with (changes in bold):

Council is appalled that 72 Conservative MPs, who are also private landlords, voted to oppose Labour's amendment to the Housing & Planning Bill **on 12 January 2016** requiring private landlords to make their homes safe and "fit for human habitation".

Council is further appalled that two of these MPs were Mike Freer (Finchley & Golders Green) and Theresa Villiers (Chipping Barnet).

Council notes the Conservatives also blocked Karen Buck MP's Homes (Fitness for Human Habitation) Bill, through a filibuster by another Conservative landlord, Philip Davies MP.

Council notes that this Bill didn't replicate existing standards or add new duties to landlords it simply gave better redress to tenants, and it would have enabled tenants to enforce against landlords directly rather than relying on local authorities.

Council notes that local authorities can't enforce against themselves.

Council also notes that the Bill would have put into effect a recommendation from the Law Commission in the 1990's, which was strongly backed by the court of Appeal.

Council further notes that the Law Society and Housing Law Practitioners Association supported this Bill, and a new version has now received backing by Shelter, the Chartered Institute of Environmental Health Officers and the Residential Landlords Association.

Council notes that since April 2015, local authorities are now required to obtain Secretary of State confirmation for any selective licensing scheme affecting more than 20% of private landlords in their area.

Council believes this is designed to prevent local authorities from introducing borough-wide licensing schemes that would help strengthen the working relationship between private landlords and councils, improve poor standards in the private rented sector, and ensure good landlords are supported.

Council believes that local authorities should have the freedom and flexibility to use all available tools and powers at their disposal to ensure that private rented homes are safe and "fit for human habitation", **and that, in the absence of a national scheme, local authorities are best placed to decide whether or not to introduce a selective or borough wide scheme in their area.**

Council therefore requests that the Leader of the Council and the Leader of the Opposition write to the Secretary of State calling for local authorities to either be allowed to introduce schemes or that Government introduce a national scheme.