



**Prosperous Committee**

**19<sup>th</sup> March 2024**

## **Private Rented Sector Commitment**

Report by:

Director of Change Management, ICT & Regulatory Services

Contact Officer:

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Purpose / Summary:

To seek approval from committee for the Private Rented Sector Commitment

### **RECOMMENDATION(S):**

#### **Committee are asked to;**

- a) Approve the Private Rented Sector Commitment as shown in appendix 1.
- b) Approve that the Private Rented Sector Commitment is scheduled for review at Prosperous Communities Committee in 24 months.
- c) Approve that the £35k made available to Prosperous Communities Committee for selective licensing work, as agreed at Corporate Policy and Resources Committee on 11th November 2021, can now be made available to support the work within the Private Rented Sector Commitment. Any balance remaining at year end 2023/2024 be carried forward into 2024/2025.

## IMPLICATIONS

### **Legal:**

The Council have legal obligations to ensure that the private rented sector is regulated under the Housing Act 1984. Alongside this there are various other legislative and statutory requirements that are place on the Council regards the sector.

The Renters Reform Bill will provide the Council with further obligations, subject to it being confirmed by the Government.

### **Financial : FIN/153/24/PC/SSC**

This report is proposing to use of reserves and revenue budget to support the Private Rented Sector commitments.

Approval for the revenue budget of £35k made available for selective licensing work, as agreed at Corporate Policy and Resources Committee on 11th November 2021 can now be made available to support the work within the Private Rented Sector Commitment. Any balance remaining at year end 2023/2024 be carried forward into 2024/2025.

In addition to the above approval there is £19.1k held in the Enforcement Reserve, which can be utilised for this purpose via the existing officer delegations.

This will result in a total of £54.1k being made available to support this work.

### **Staffing :**

There are no staffing implications. The measures proposed within the report can be delivered within the existing resources available to the Council and where additional resources may be required the requested funding from reserves may be utilised.

### **Equality and Diversity including Human Rights :**

The report does not seek to discriminate against any individual groups as it sets out, in the main, how the Council will seek to deliver its statutory obligations and address issues related to the private rented sector and improve it for those using it.

### **Data Protection Implications :**

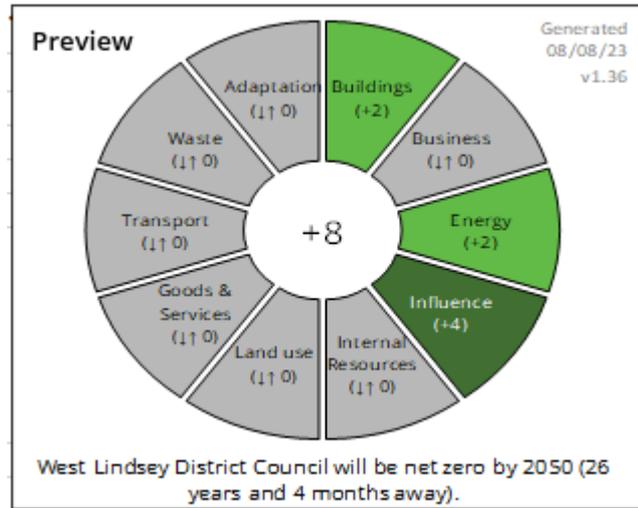
None noted.

### Climate Related Risks and Opportunities:

The improvement of housing standards has a direct impact in regard to carbon reductions and helping to minimise energy usage for persons living in any properties.

Specific regulations such as MEES (Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards) focus directly on improving the energy performance ratings of homes and are regulations that the Council currently enforces.

A CESIA wheel has been completed for this report below, outlining the areas where improving housing standards can have a positive environmental impact.



### Section 17 Crime and Disorder Considerations:

There are specific areas of West Lindsey where the levels of ASB and deprivation are significantly high, and these areas generally have greater number of private rented sector tenancies. (see WLDC Metastreet Housing Stressors Report).

Steps to improve the sector therefore could have a direct impact on the levels of crime, disorder and ASB that are recorded.

### Health Implications:

It is broadly accepted that improving the condition of and safety of housing contributes to the improved health and wellbeing of the persons residing within it.

The role of homes and buildings in levelling up health and wellbeing  
<https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cdp-2022-0170/>

**Title and Location of any Background Papers used in the preparation of this report:**

Prosperous Communities Committee meeting of 12<sup>th</sup> September 2023., item 32: Private Rented Sector Proposals.

<https://democracy.west-lindsey.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=176&MId=3432&Ver=4>

**Risk Assessment :**

**Call in and Urgency:**

**Is the decision one which Rule 14.7 of the Scrutiny Procedure Rules apply?**

i.e. is the report exempt from being called in due to urgency (in consultation with C&I chairman)

**Yes**

**No**

**Key Decision:**

A matter which affects two or more wards, or has significant financial implications

**Yes**

**No**

**1. Introduction**

1.1. At its meeting in September 2023 the Prosperous Communities Committee agreed a number of recommendations in relation to how it can seek to improve the Private Rented Sector (PRS).

1.2. This report seeks to deal with recommendation (f), that a Private Sector Housing Renewal Policy be developed for approval at this committee.

1.3. In West Lindsey, it is recognised that the Private Rented Sector (PRS) plays a key role in ensuring that our residents have suitable and safe accommodation, which meets the needs of its occupants. The PRS within West Lindsey currently accounts for around 20% of the overall households.

## **2. Context**

2.1. Following on from the meeting of the Prosperous Communities Committee in September a meeting was held with the Chairs and Vice-Chairs to specifically consider what their requirements were. At the September 2023 committee meeting, there was not a detailed discussion in relation to recommendation (f), therefore direction was needed in order to determine what would be presented to committee in March 2024.

2.2. The meeting with the Chair and Vice-Chairs took place in December 2023 and considered the most appropriate approach moving forward. At this meeting it was confirmed that some form of action plan was required to create objectives for the coming 12 months and potentially beyond.

2.3. This timescale and approach also acknowledges that the West Lindsey Housing Strategy is due to be refreshed during 2024 and it can then reflect the commitments made within this report and review the current position.

## **3. Private Rented Sector Commitment**

3.1. There are four main themes included within the PRS Commitment (Appendix 1). These are communication and education, tenancy support, regulatory reform and enforcement and standards.

3.2. The commitment seeks to bring together the positive work that is currently being undertaken and seek to extend this to make broader improvements within the PRS.

3.3. For communication and education, there are obvious positive outcomes in further engagement and discussions with tenants and landlords, particularly in relation the up-and-coming regulatory reforms which will have significant impacts on both parties.

3.4. Widespread regulatory reform is due to commence in 2024 within the PRS and with this will come additional legislative powers for the Council, which will need to be understood and adhered to by landlords. There are unknown elements of this reform, which the Council will seek to understand in the coming months.

3.5. Tenancy support is a key strand of the commitment and demonstrates that the Council are keen to look at working with landlords and tenants

to ensure that tenancies can be sustained. Through this work we will look to engage more directly with landlords and tenants on the ground.

3.6. The Council already has an effective enforcement and standards regime and the commitment provides focus to this so that this can continue and develop across all areas of the district. The council will continue to deliver this function in line with its legislative responsibilities and local policies.

3.7. It is proposed that the commitment is brought back to committee in around 18 months for a review and update.

#### 4. Financial Information

4.1. There is likely to be a requirement for additional funding to be needed to deliver specific elements of the commitment, alongside what can be delivered via existing resources. Existing resources will be utilised to deliver a significant proportion of the activities.

4.2. Alongside this there is £19.1k available in the Enforcement Reserve in addition to a revenue budget of £35k available for selective licensing work, as agreed at Corporate Policy and Resources Committee on 11th November 2021.

4.3. The level of funding required is not specifically known at this point as there is still a significant unknown in relation to the Renters Reform Bill and the level of any new burdens funding that can be expected. Examples of what may need to be funded are as follows:

<b>Item</b>	<b>Type of Activity</b>	<b>Est. Cost</b>
Training programme for landlords and tenants	Series of online and face to face sessions delivered by the industry (to include seeking possession, dealing with ASB, Tax implications etc)	£5k to £10k
Comms campaign relating to legislative reform (or other initiatives)	Extensive and varied comms campaign targeted at landlords and tenants using various media. Inc. creation of "Tenants Guide"	£3k
"Call Before You Serve" Pilot Scheme	Initial feasibility consultation with a known provider. Can be extended to a full consultancy for delivery.	£1k to £10k
Extension and expansion of existing proactive Energy Performance Project.	Additional resources to increase the number of inspections undertaken	£15k to £20k

4.4. It is proposed that both sources of funding are utilised as required to support any additional work relating to the Private Rented Sector Commitment.

## **5. Regulatory Reforms**

5.1. There is still no timetable proposed for the introduction of the regulatory changes set out in the Renters Reform Bill. The Bill is still making its way through parliament and elements of it have been delayed.

5.2. The Council will respond to these reforms accordingly as they arise and is engaging with the Government in regard to the impact that they may have and any additional resources that will be required to deliver them.

5.3. The Council have also been formally invited to participate in the Governments Health Homes Project, which is looking at testing different approaches to dealing with damp and mould in the PRS. The project will look to boost the capacity of enforcement teams and gather data on what works when enforcing against this issue. 90 Local Authorities have been selected to participate based on the following data;

- Proportion of non-decent housing in the PRS;
- Average deprivation score across the Local Authority Area;
- Proportion of LSOAs falling in the worst 10% most deprived in England;
- Premature respiratory mortality rate;
- Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) mortality; and,
- Emergency Admissions for COPD

5.4. To Council intends to participate in the project and have expressed an interest in doing so. Participation will mean that either the Council will receive funding to carry out a targeted intervention project (for additional resources, data collection and communications) or the Council will receive a much smaller amount of funding to provide data returns to support the evaluation of the project. The option given to the Council will be chosen at random by the Government.

5.5. The Healthy Homes Project will be delivered between mid-May 2024 and March 2025 and updates on progress in regard to it will be provided to Councillors.

**END**