



**PLYMOUTH**  
CITY COUNCIL

# PLAN FOR PRIVATE RENTED HOUSING



Housing Services



# FOREWORD

Poor standards of private rented housing are a massive issue in Plymouth. Over a third of all private rented housing is classed as 'Non Decent' – this means over 7,500 households are living in accommodation of varying poor condition, some of which will be so bad they are deemed unfit for habitation.



As a member of the Fairness Commission I visited private rented housing in many wards across the city, including my own ward and saw first-hand the difficulties people face. This plan sets out our response to the Fairness Commission report and recommendations.

The City is committed to improving private rented housing, to make sure both landlords and tenants get a better deal. We have worked with our partners to develop a Charter for Private Rented Housing. Our Plan for Private Rented Housing responds to this, aims to improve the quality of private rented housing and take action against rogue landlords.

I look forward to working with tenants, landlords, agents and partners to ensure that people living in private sector rented housing in Plymouth are able to enjoy good quality homes.

**Councillor Chris Penberthy**

**Cabinet Member for Co-operatives, Housing and Community Safety**

# INTRODUCTION

The private rented sector represents around 20% of all housing in Plymouth. It is a growing sector and is increasingly the tenure of choice for many whilst also being housing of last resort for others, many of whom are vulnerable residents. Whilst there are many high quality private rented homes, the sector also has the poorest standards which can impact adversely on living conditions and quality of life for many of Plymouth's citizens.

The Fairness Commission has recommended that the Council develop a comprehensive and resourced response to raising standards in the private rented housing sector\*. In turn, the Council has pledged to develop a programme to improve the quality of private rented housing and take action against rogue landlords\*\*. This Plan for Private Rented Housing responds to the Fairness Commission recommendations and the Council pledge.

The Council has responsibilities and duties that it must undertake but it cannot improve private rented housing alone. To achieve measurable success, we need the full support of and a close working partnership with landlords, letting agents, tenants, investors, the University and Colleges, Student Unions and housing support agencies.

The first action of the Plan is to promote the Plymouth Charter for Private Rented Housing. The Charter sets out our key values and aims which we believe will bring about sustainable improvements in Plymouth's private rented housing.

The Council wants to make this a true 'Plymouth Charter' with the full backing and support of the key agencies, organisations and individuals involved in the sector.

Working together, we want to improve conditions by supporting good landlords, by helping to bring more landlords up to the standards of the best and by taking robust action against those that do not meet what is required of them. Tenants have rights and responsibilities and we want to work with tenants and tenant representatives to make both clear. We also want to increase the supply of good quality accommodation.



\* Creating the Conditions for Fairness – The Plymouth Fairness Commission Final Report March 2014

\*\* Our Pledges for a Better Plymouth (April 2014)

# PLAN FOR PRIVATE RENTED HOUSING

1	We will work with partners to promote the Plymouth Charter for the Private Rented Sector.
2	We will support the delivery of training and accreditation of landlords and agents working in the city.
3	We will promote best practice in contracts for private renting and the standards required to manage the tenancy.
4	We will explore the viability of a 'Virtual' Tenants' Forum linked to advice on the rights and responsibilities of landlords and tenants.
5	We will develop a 'Healthy Homes Guide' which clearly sets out what the minimum standard for a safe and healthy home is.
6	We will explore the best way of tackling substandard houses in multiple occupation across the city.
7	We will ensure that tenants have the information they need to understand the energy costs of their accommodation and know how to achieve a healthy environment.
8	We will ensure tenants are aware of their responsibilities as well as their rights and understand how to manage their tenancies.
9	We will respond quickly to complaints about housing standards, poor management, harassment, illegal eviction and unfair or aggressive practices.
10	We will invest in the development of the HouseLet and EasyLet Schemes to help provide housing solutions.
11	We will support the Plan for Empty Homes which seeks to reduce the nuisance caused by long term empty properties and bring properties back into use.
12	We will develop opportunities for institutional investment to create new private rented accommodation, helping to increase competition, and widen choice.

The Plan for Private Rented Housing will help deliver Policy 18 of the Plymouth Plan, in particular by targeting intervention and resources to improve the standard and quality of private sector housing.





## **CONTACT**

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