

TFG Recommendation	Response
<p>5.1. Recommendation 1- Enhancing the Council's PRS webpage</p> <p>The Council should redesign sections of its website that provide information to renters and landlords to ensure the information is clearer, better-organised and easily accessible for both groups. Non-functional links should be fixed, and missing contact details added. A dedicated FAQ page should be created, guiding residents on where to seek help when faced with different housing issues. All content should be accessible, and the Council should explore translation services to ensure information is available in multiple languages.</p>	<p>A tenant facing page has already been created to provide clear information about tenant rights, including sign posting and links to external organisations which provide comprehensive guidance and support around tenant's rights, such as Shelter. We will regularly review our website to ensure that all content is accurate, relevant, and well-organised. Translation services are available via Language Line through our telephone line.</p>
<p>5.2. Recommendation 2- Training Councillors to support PRS residents</p> <p>With the selective licensing scheme increasing the Council's interaction with PRS residents, Lewisham Councillors should receive training to understand when and how they can assist residents. This training can be delivered through collaboration between Council officers and an external housing advice organisation such as Shelter.</p>	<p>We have delivered presentations to Councillors and are eager to continue supporting them in their role. Briefings can be organised on topics such as private sector housing enforcement powers and how the Council assists tenants and landlords.</p>
<p>5.3. Recommendation 3- Enhanced communication with landlords</p> <p>Regular and effective communication with landlords in the PRS is essential for maintaining a safe and secure PRS. To improve its communication with landlords, the Council should-</p> <p>a) Establish a Landlord Forum that meets regularly.</p> <p>b) Request that landlords sign-up for e-bulletins when they apply for property licences and develop a comprehensive database of landlords. The e-bulletins should be used to share information, such as updates on legislative changes or regulatory requirements.</p>	<p>a) The Council currently holds twice-yearly landlord forums to engage with local landlords and provide key updates. The most recent forum took place on 4th November 2024 and was attended by 85 landlords. The event featured presentations by a mix of internal and external speakers, as well as a 'market hall' style set up where landlords can ask questions directly. Presentations delivered included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - An update from the Council's Private Sector Housing Team on licensing schemes within the borough. - A presentation by Strategic Waste on waste and recycling responsibilities for landlords. - Guidance on fire safety in HMOs from the London Fire Brigade. - Support for landlords and tenant to improve energy efficiency from South East London Community Energy. - Regulatory and legislative changes within the sector from the NRLA, with a focus on the Renter's Rights Bill. <p>b) We will ensure that all landlords in our database receive timely and relevant information and updates. For those landlords</p>

	<p>who are unable to attend our forums, we will make sure they receive all the information shared during these events, ensuring they stay informed and up-to-date.</p>
<p>5.4. Recommendation 4- Publicising enforcement actions To publicise enforcement actions taken against rogue landlords, the Council should a) publicise any enforcement action against rogue landlords on its website, social media channels, and via landlord e-bulletins; and b) regularly update the GLA's Rogue Landlord Checker with information about any identified rogue landlords.</p>	<p>We work closely with the Communications team to publicise successful prosecutions against criminal landlords through our website, social media channels, and emails. Regular updates are made to the GLA's rogue landlord tracker for relevant fines and convictions, and we will continue to follow established procedures.</p>
<p>5.5. Recommendation 5- Collaboration with the NRLA The Council should foster a closer working relationship with the NRLA and leverage their influence in disseminating important information to landlords. Additionally, the NRLA can assist in organising the Council's Landlord Forum meetings. In partnership with the NRLA, the Council should also host training and information events tailored for landlords.</p>	<p>We value our strong working relationship with the NRLA. Their involvement in our landlord forums has been instrumental, with their latest contribution including updates on regulatory and legislative changes in the sector. We will continue leveraging the NRLA's platform to communicate key messages and explore additional training and event opportunities for landlords.</p>

<p>5.6. Recommendation 6- Improving communication with tenant support organisations</p> <p>The Council should designate a dedicated officer or establish a monitored email inbox for key tenant advocacy organisations. This would facilitate the timely escalation of urgent cases and strengthen the Council’s collaborative efforts with these essential organisations .</p>	<p>The Council works closely with tenant advocacy groups to ensure timely and effective outcomes for tenants. While we do not currently have a dedicated inbox for advocacy groups, our triaging process ensures that urgent cases - whether raised by tenants directly or via advocacy groups - are prioritised. To maintain fairness, all cases are treated equitably. We continue to strengthen relationships with key organisations, such as Justice for Tenants, and signpost tenants to available support.</p>
<p>5.7. Recommendation 7- Defining the role of the Cabinet Advisor for the PRS</p> <p>The Task and Finish Group supports the appointment of the Cabinet Advisor for the Private Rented Sector, which reflects the Executive’s commitment to addressing issues in Lewisham’s PRS. The TFG recommends that a detailed role profile with specific focus areas should be developed for this position. The Cabinet Advisor should play a key role in raising the profile of PRS issues within the Council and the wider Lewisham community. Additionally, the TFG recommends that the Cabinet Advisor be actively involved in monitoring the implementation of the recommendations outlined in this report.</p>	<p>Officers will work with the Cabinet Advisor on the Private Rented Sector and other stakeholders to take forward the recommendations of the Task and Finish Group.</p>
<p>5.8. Recommendation 8- Ongoing monitoring and reporting</p> <p>The Housing Select Committee should monitor the implementation of this report’s recommendations. Along with monitoring progress against these recommendations, the Committee should include a dedicated PRS performance report in its work programme. This report should track some key performance indicators related to the PRS, such as the number of enforcement fines issued, the volume of service requests received, etc.</p>	<p>We will work with the Housing Select Committee to agree on KPIs and a reporting schedule to monitor the implementation of these recommendations. The Council already tracks many private sector housing related metrics, some of which are published in the Corporate Performance Report, and is well placed to integrate this into a formal reporting process.</p>
<p>5.9. Recommendation 9- Establish a Lewisham PRS Stakeholder Forum</p> <p>The Council should establish a ‘Lewisham PRS Stakeholder Forum’. This should involve all key stakeholders such as Council officers and relevant Cabinet Members; key tenant advocacy organisations such as Shelter, Generation Rent, Renters Rights London, Citizen Advice etc.; key landlord advocacy organisations such as NRLA; and wider stakeholders such as the MET Police, housing services from Goldsmiths, etc. This forum</p>	<p>The private sector housing team already meets regularly with many of our stakeholders, including the Metropolitan Police, Fire Services, tenant advocacy organisations, and housing providers. Recognising the importance of collaboration, we are committed to exploring opportunities to expand our work in this area. By strengthening these partnerships, we aim to enhance our collective efforts in addressing the challenges within the private rented sector.</p>

<p>should hold regular in-person meetings to share intelligence, discuss local PRS issues and improve partnership working.</p>	
<p>5.10. Recommendation 10- Tenant Rights: Awareness Campaign The Council should develop and launch a comprehensive communications campaign to educate private renters about their rights and responsibilities, as well as about the services available to them from the Council. This campaign should include strategies to reach all communities and ensure the information is accessible to everyone.</p>	<p>Materials with information and signposting for support can be produced and shared across various communication channels to reach all communities. Our website is currently being updated with links to external websites offering information and support for tenants in the private rented sector.</p>
<p>5.11. Recommendation 11- Engaging private renters The Council should intensify its efforts to connect with private renters by adopting more informal, community-based approaches to tenant engagement. Leveraging existing community events frequented by PRS tenants provides an opportunity to distribute information about Council services more effectively. The Council should collaborate with faith groups and charities in Lewisham, as well as with Lewisham Health and Wellbeing Community Champions, and disseminate information through these trusted channels.</p>	<p>The Council currently engages tenants through ward assemblies and collaboration with other departments and we will explore further opportunities to contribute to community events. We will produce additional materials to distribute through community channels, such as faith groups, charities, and health settings. Referral systems, such as those through the Health and Housing Coordinators working in Lewisham Hospital are already in place and can be expanded.</p>
<p>5.12. Recommendation 12- Resources for community leaders and other organisations providing advice The Council should equip staff, volunteers, and members of various community and faith groups as well as non-housing charities in Lewisham, with PRS-specific signposting materials so they can direct tenants to relevant resources when the opportunity arises.</p>	<p>We are happy to develop private rented sector signposting materials for community leaders, faith groups, and non-housing charities to help them support private tenants. This initiative can be combined with recommendations 1,9, 10 & 11 to ensure a coordinated approach.</p>
<p>5.13. Recommendation 13- Establishing a PRS telephone helpline The Council should develop plans for a telephone helpline dedicated to residents in the private rented sector, providing easy access to advice .</p>	<p>The Council operates a general telephone line for all private sector housing matters - 020 8314 6420.</p> <p>We also operate a dedicated inbox for private sector housing – PSHE@Lewisham.gov.uk</p>

<p>5.14. Recommendation 14- Introducing some face-to-face services</p> <p>The Council should offer some element of face-to-face service for PRS residents who are seeking to make homelessness applications or are facing Section 21 evictions. This would provide a more accessible support option, particularly for vulnerable residents who may struggle with digital or telephone-based services.</p>	<p>We recognise the importance of face-to-face support for vulnerable residents. The Council currently offers in-person services for homeless applicants and other critical housing issues.</p>
<p>5.15. Recommendation 15- Enhancing property inspections</p> <p>The Council should explore a long-term strategy for achieving 100% inspection of licensable properties in Lewisham within the lifespan of the property licence. The TFG acknowledges that this presents significant resourcing challenges, and achieving this may not be possible in the first iteration of the selective licensing scheme. However, it is important for the Council to have a clear plan in place to work towards a 100% inspection rate in the future.</p>	<p>The Council is committed to inspecting 100% of HMOs before a licence is issued due to the higher risks associated with these properties. For Selective Licensing, we aim to inspect 60% of the total licensable properties, prioritising high risk cases for inspection prior to licence issue. We are introducing a new application linked to our licensing software to improve inspection efficiency and will explore resource requirements to achieve a 100% inspection rate in future schemes.</p>
<p>5.16. Recommendation 16- Promoting cross-departmental collaboration</p> <p>Private rented sector housing issues are interconnected with many other areas such as healthcare, education, planning etc. To ensure a holistic approach to PRS challenges, more cross-departmental collaboration within the Council was necessary. The Council should develop a plan to enhance cross-departmental co-ordination, ensuring that PRS issues are considered across all relevant areas of Council work.</p>	<p>We actively collaborate with other departments, including Housing Needs, Adult Social Care, and Planning, and have developed referral pathways for joint working. Housing Licensing and Enforcement officers have received training from other departments and external organisations, and referral pathways exist to report concerns found on inspections, such as Modern Day Slavery. We attend regular internal meetings with other departments, such as the Joint Enforcement Group, as well as multi-agency meetings such as MARAC. Training on licensing and housing enforcement has been delivered to internal teams, and we aim to expand this to ensure private rented sector issues are considered holistically across Council functions.</p>
<p>5.17. Recommendation 17- Developing a standalone PRS strategy</p> <p>The Council should develop a standalone PRS strategy. The strategy should provide a focused framework for addressing the unique challenges and opportunities within the PRS, ensuring that the sector is managed effectively and that tenants and landlords receive the support they need. It should help align Council resources and initiatives specifically to improve</p>	<p>While the Council's combined Housing Strategy allows for a holistic approach, we recognise the increasing importance of the private rented sector in meeting the housing needs of our residents. We will explore enhancing the private rented section of the existing Housing Strategy to provide greater focus on private rented specific challenges and opportunities.</p>

<p>conditions in the PRS, leading to better outcomes for residents.</p>	
<p>5.18. Recommendation 18- Informed advocacy The Council should consider and utilise the key findings from this report to guide its future responses to any consultations on national or local legislative changes relating to the private rented sector.</p>	<p>The Council will use the findings of this report to inform responses to consultations on national and local legislative changes affecting the private rented sector. We are committed to ensuring our advocacy efforts are evidence based and reflective of local needs.</p>