

| | | | |
|--|-----|-----|-----|
| HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES DEPARTMENT | | | |
| 3 0 JUN 2010 | | | |
| DHES | | | BSM |
| HCI | HBC | HEH | HWM |
| Reference: SW07/06 | | | |



Northern Ireland
Assembly

COMMITTEE FOR SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Room 412
Parliament Buildings
Ballymiscaw
BELFAST
BT4 3XX

E-mail: peter.mccallion@niassembly.gov.uk

Tel: 028 9052 1864

Fax: 028 9052 1667

23 June 2010

The Clerk/Chief Executive
Belfast City Council
City Hall
Belfast
BT1 5GS

Dear Sir/Madam

| | | |
|--------------------------|------------|-----------|
| Chief Executive's Office | | |
| Date | 24-6-10 | |
| Seen by | C.S. | |
| Referred to | | |
| ACX | Corp Comms | Dem Serv |
| GR | SPP | Bus Supp. |
| Dev | F&R | H&ES |
| P&L | P&P | Other |
| Ref | MCC/10/10 | |

Housing (Amendment) (No.2) Bill

The Housing (Amendment) (No.2) Bill was formally introduced to the Northern Ireland Assembly on 22 June 2010. The Bill is expected to be referred to the Committee for Social Development for the Committee Stage on 30 June 2010.

The stated purpose of the Bill is to enable better regulation of the private rented sector, provide new tools to tackle fuel poverty, promote effective housing management and clarify existing law in respect of homelessness.

The Bill appears to include the following provisions:

- the introduction of regulations to require private landlords to include a statement of tenancy terms in a tenant's rent book and the abolition of the corresponding requirement for private landlords to provide tenants with a separate statement of tenancy terms;
- the introduction of rent deposit schemes for private tenants – similar to those in use in England and Wales. The provisions are to allow for the introduction of a number of different insurance-based and custodial tenancy deposit schemes which include dispute resolution mechanisms and a mandatory requirement for landlord participation with fines for failure to comply;
- the conferment of powers of entry to district councils for private tenures to carry out fitness inspections;
- the facility to allow the Department to alter, through secondary legislation, its powers in respect of setting certain private sector rents;

- the introduction of a mandatory registration scheme for private landlords and fines for landlords providing false information. The mandatory landlord registration scheme is described as "light touch";
- a power to allow the Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE) to obtain information on the family relationships of those occupying a possible unregistered House in Multiple Occupation (HMO);
- a power to allow social landlords to withhold consent for the exchange of tenancies where an injunction or anti-social behaviour order is in force;
- powers to allow individuals to disclose information to a registered Housing Association or NIHE in respect of injunctions; anti-social behaviour orders and orders for possession where such information may be used to determine whether a tenant can exchange a tenancy or exercise their right to buy their social home;
- the removal of what is described as a "legal anomaly" in respect of the requirement for NIHE to provide assistance to an ineligible homeless individual;
- the introduction of a power which allows NIHE to devise an energy brokering scheme for its tenants; and
- the introduction of a power to allow district councils to promote energy efficiency in residential accommodation in their own districts.

The Committee invites you to submit written evidence on behalf of your organisation for the Committee Stage of the Housing (Amendment) (No.2) Bill and for inclusion in the Committee's Report on the Bill. **Your evidence should be structured to address specific clauses of the Bill.** If appropriate, it would be helpful if you could suggest alternative or additional wording to clauses - this would assist the Committee's consideration of the need for any amendments to the Bill.

The Committee may choose to receive oral evidence in autumn 2010. The Committee's Report on the Bill - including recommendations for amendment if appropriate - will be published at the conclusion of the Committee Stage and will inform the Consideration Stage of the Bill.

A copy of the Bill and Explanatory and Financial Memorandum can be obtained from the Assembly's website at the following link:

http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/legislation/primary/2009/nia32_09.htm

I should be grateful if you would forward any written evidence to the Committee, preferably by e-mail (in the MS Word format), to committee.socialdevelopment@niassembly.gov.uk by **Monday 23 August 2010 at 4pm.**

Sir/Madam

If you do not have access to the internet or e mail facilities or you have any other enquiries please contact the Committee Clerk on 028 9052 1864.

Yours sincerely



Peter McCallion
Committee Clerk