

AGENDA MANAGEMENT SHEET

Report Title: Establishment of a Rugby Landlord Forum

Name of Committee: Cabinet

Date of Meeting: 21 January 2025

Report Director: Chief Officer - Regulation and Safety

Portfolio: Communities and Homes, Regulation and Safety

Ward Relevance: All

Prior Consultation: Portfolio holder and Liberal Democrat spokesperson; Ward Councillors for wards with high numbers of rented properties; National Residential Landlord Association

Contact Officer: Verna Zinclair, Environmental Health Manager

Public or Private: Public

Report Subject to Call-In: Yes

Report En-Bloc: No

Forward Plan: Yes

Corporate Priorities: This report relates to the following priority(ies):
 A Healthier Rugby – To support people to live healthier, longer, and more independent lives.
 A Thriving Rugby – To deliver a thriving economy which brings Borough-wide investment and regenerates Rugby Town Centre.
 A Greener Rugby – To protect the environment and ensure the Borough adapts to climate change.
 A Fairer Rugby – To reduce inequalities and improve housing across the Borough.
[Corporate Strategy 2025-2035](#)
 This report does not specifically relate to any Council priorities but

Summary: The Council is a regulator for the private rented housing sector. Many councils have a landlord forum allowing effective communication with landlords. Rugby Borough Council had one until around 2015 where popularity dropped. However, with increasing numbers of rented properties,

including houses in multiple occupation, a revised landlord forum is considered important.

Financial Implications:

Administration of the forum, supported by the National Residential Landlords Association, and web site updates are considered to be possible within existing budgets. Recommended actions from the forum might involve future bids for funding.

Risk Management/Health and Safety Implications:

The increasing size of the private rented sector locally, along with new legislation from the Renters Rights Bill, means that we need to improve our communication with landlords, and this is considered best practice by many councils.

Environmental Implications:

No direct implications. However, agenda items that the forum could consider include improved energy efficiency. See Appendix 3.

Legal Implications:

There is no legal requirement for councils to establish landlord forums, but many councils have them and they are considered best practice. The forum is likely to make recommendations regarding policies, but the Council will remain the decision maker.

Equality and Diversity:

No direct implications. However, the private rented sector includes those on low incomes, vulnerable and migrant workers. The forum will have regard to this in decision making. See Appendix 2.

Options:

- (1) Continue without a landlord forum;
- (2) Create a physical landlord forum, supported by the Council website;
- (3) Create a website only virtual landlord forum

Recommendation:

IT BE RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL THAT:

- 1. the establishment of a new Rugby Landlord Forum be supported; and
- 2. the Chief Officer for Regulation and Safety be given delegated authority to establish the Forum and its structure.

Reasons for Recommendation:

To improve the effectiveness of the council as a regulator. To improve relationships with landlords. To improve the conditions for tenants. As originally a notice of motion, the establishment of a landlord forum requires Council approval.

Cabinet - 21 January 2025

Establishment of a Rugby Landlord Forum

Public Report of the Chief Officer - Regulation and Safety

Recommendation

IT BE RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL THAT:

- (1) the establishment of a new Rugby Landlord Forum be supported; and
- (2) the Chief Officer for Regulation and Safety be given delegated authority to establish the Forum and its structure.

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 Rugby Borough Council is a regulator of the private rented housing sector. It is important to ensure effective communication and discussion with landlords to support this important sector and improve the welfare and conditions of tenants.
- 1.2 The majority of landlords provide high-quality services, and a landlord forum improves the communication and discussion with landlords, and can also be used to encourage poor landlords to improve.
- 1.3 Landlord forums are considered good practice.
- 1.4 The aim of this report is to establish a new Rugby Landlord Forum.
- 1.5 The landlord forum is a commitment in the Council's new Corporate Strategy. Ambitious targets will be set to ensure the forum is a success and meets all the diverse needs of those who are landlords.

2. Background

- 2.1 The Council had worked with the National Landlord Association (now the National Residential Landlord Forum) on a Rugby landlord forum until 2015 where reducing numbers of landlords attending the meetings meant it was no longer effective or efficient to have a landlord forum.
- 2.2 However, advice continued to be made available to landlords and tenants through the Council website.
- 2.3 Councillors Slinger and Moran put forward a Notice of Motion at full Council on 23rd November 2022 (see Background papers) and this was agreed and passed to Scrutiny Committee who considered the issue at its meeting on 30th January

2023 (see Background papers). A task and finish group was established and were asked to carry out research of examples of successful landlord forums that operate elsewhere, to meet with relevant representatives, to consider a draft terms of reference for a landlord forum, to consider a licensing scheme for private rented properties and to consider the creation of a separate website for landlords and tenants to access information.

2.4 The task and finish group first met on 6th September 2023 and held a number of meetings where officers presented details of local landlord forums (see Appendix 1), and they also had presentations from the chair of the Warwick and Stratford landlord forum and the local representative of the National Residential Landlord Association.

2.5 The task and finish group identified that the advantages of setting up a landlord forum included:

- Provides an opportunity to reach more landlords through both virtual and physical means.
- Offers an opportunity for a two-way exchange.
- It builds relationships with private sector landlords.
- It would be used to influence council policy.

2.6 One disadvantage was that only a small percentage of landlords were involved, as shown in examples of other landlord forums.

2.7 There are around 6,000 privately rented properties in Rugby, but only a small minority of landlords own more than five properties. The majority are landlords with only one or a small number of properties and landlord forums tended to be biased towards landlords with larger portfolios of properties.

2.8 Unfortunately, due to various reasons the task and finish group did not report back to Scrutiny Committee, which has now been reformed.

2.9 It is therefore suggested that Cabinet consider the establishment of a new landlord forum as a landlord forum and an updated private rented sector Charter are priorities in the Council's new Corporate Strategy 2025-2035.

2.10 As part of its role in a forum, the Council should be seeking to promote and encourage best practice. The Council acts on intelligence and information gathering would be key to understanding the issues.

2.11 The landlord forum would act as a point of information for private sector landlords. The Council will aim to encourage and support good landlords to continue to provide a good service and safe, and decent and well-maintained homes for their tenants through the policies it creates.

2.12 One area for a landlord forum to address should be to review the Private Rented Sector Charter which was adopted by the Council, but currently not well supported ([https://www.rugby.gov.uk/w/rugby-private-sector-housing-charter-and-the-rugby-private-renters-charter?p I back url=%2Fsearch%3Fq%3Dcharter](https://www.rugby.gov.uk/w/rugby-private-sector-housing-charter-and-the-rugby-private-renters-charter?p%20back_url=%2Fsearch%3Fq%3Dcharter)).

- 2.13 The Council has previously carried out enforcement work towards raising the standard of tenanted properties. In general landlords had responded well to the actions required. The current Charter was, therefore, based on a statement of intent and is supported by a guidance document aimed at landlords and tenants. Other charter models include a reward system for those landlords who sign the charter, but that was unpopular with landlords when the current Charter was approved by Council.
- 2.14 Around 2000-3000 residents live in houses of multiple occupation (HMOs). Some do not require licensing. Larger HMOs do require a licence and are regularly inspected. HMOs provide important housing and there is limited alternative housing if these were no longer available. One role of the forum could be to consider improvements to HMOs and potentially licensing of smaller HMOs to ensure high standards.
- 2.15 Some leasehold properties are managed by managing agents and these should also be members.
- 2.16 The main aim of the forum will be to better support landlords and tenants, but there is always the risk of poor landlords putting tenants at risk, therefore, the Council will reserve the right to take appropriate and proportionate action against any poor landlords.
- 2.17 Measures of success will be produced and monitored and will consider issues such as number of members, completion of the terms of reference, and setting an annual workplan. The workplan is likely to include work on the government's new Renters' Rights Bill, which could have significant impacts on landlords and tenants.
- 2.18 As an initial target, officers will commit to working with the NRLA to use our combined knowledge of local landlords to encourage at least 50 landlords to attend the launch event, and to have within 6 months at least 100 landlords actively involved in the forum. To maximise success we will work with landlords to identify their needs, to identify landlords who are less likely to engage, and work with them, and to use modern methods of meeting e.g. Teams or live streaming meetings. A small sub-group made up of council officers, the NRLA local representative, key landlords we already work with, and landlord agents, will be used to find ways to maximise meeting the diverse needs of the landlords and encouraging them to get involved.
- 2.19 The forum can also support other key housing work in the council including the housing strategy and homelessness strategy.

3. Conclusion

- 3.1 There has been cross party support for a Rugby Landlord Forum which offers a number of advantages.
- 3.2 The National Residential Landlord Association, which is a national organisation, has offered to support, maximising the opportunity for a successful landlord forum.

- 3.3 Landlord forums are considered good practice and are common with local authorities, with most borough and district councils in Warwickshire having a landlord forum.
- 3.4. The forum has the opportunity to provide useful advice and feedback on key Council initiatives such as updating the Charter, and reducing poverty and improving conditions for private rented sector tenants, for example through licensing of small HMOs or private sector housing surveys to determine priorities.
- 3.5 The Chief Officer Regulation and Safety will work closely with the Communities, Homes, Regulation and Safety Portfolio holder to establish the forum and develop the workplans.
- 3.6 The council will work with the National Residential Landlord Forum to establish the landlord forum and to use best practice.
- 3.7 The landlord forum should consist of Rugby Borough Council Councillors and officers (how many and whom to be determined), the National Residential Landlords Association, local landlords and local letting agents.
- 3.8 Work will be carried out by officers to make sure that as many landlords as practical can access and input into the forum, including those with multiple properties, and those with only single properties.
- 3.9 The landlord forum will be tasked with looking at a terms of reference, a review of the Charter, a review of HMO regulation and advising on the Private Renters Bill when it becomes law.
- 3.10 The Forum will involve physical meetings and support from the Council website

Name of Meeting: Cabinet

Date of Meeting: 21 January 2025

Subject Matter: Establishment of a Rugby Landlord Forum

Originating Department: Regulation and Safety

DO ANY BACKGROUND PAPERS APPLY **YES** **NO**

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

Doc No	Title of Document and Hyperlink
01	Council 23 rd November 2022 agenda and minutes https://www.rugby.gov.uk/web/guest/l/6641295
02	Scrutiny Committee 30 th January 2023 agenda and minutes https://www.rugby.gov.uk/web/guest/l/6641079
03	Council Corporate Strategy 2025-2035 https://www.rugby.gov.uk/web/guest/l/7291443
04	Renters' Rights Bill https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guide-to-the-renters-rights-bill/82ffc7fb-64b0-4af5-a72e-c24701a5f12a

The background papers relating to reports on planning applications and which are open to public inspection under Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972, consist of the planning applications, referred to in the reports, and all written responses to consultations made by the Local Planning Authority, in connection with those applications.

Exempt information is contained in the following documents:

Doc No	Relevant Paragraph of Schedule 12A

Landlord Forums

Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council

<https://www.nuneatonandbedworth.gov.uk/private-landlords/landlord-forum-newsletter>

Warwick District Council

https://www.warwickdc.gov.uk/info/20163/private_housing/178/private_landlords/2

Stratford-on-Avon District Council

<https://www.stratford.gov.uk/homes-properties/landlords-and-letting-agents-information.cfm>

Coventry City Council

<https://www.coventry.gov.uk/housing-enforcement/landlord-forum-archive>

Birmingham City Council

https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/info/20175/private_housing/477/private_landlords/8

East Staffordshire

<https://www.eaststaffsbc.gov.uk/housing-and-property/landlords/landlord-forum>

Useful partners

National Residential Landlords Association

<https://www.nrla.org.uk/>

British Landlord Association

<https://thebla.co.uk/>

EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT (EqIA)

Context

1. The Public Sector Equality Duty as set out under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 requires Rugby Borough Council when making decisions to have due regard to the following:
 - eliminating unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation, and other conduct prohibited by the Act,
 - advancing equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not,
 - fostering good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not, including tackling prejudice and promoting understanding.
2. The characteristics protected by the Equality Act are:
 - age
 - disability
 - gender reassignment
 - marriage/civil partnership
 - pregnancy/maternity
 - race
 - religion/belief
 - sex/gender
 - sexual orientation
3. In addition to the above-protected characteristics, you should consider the crosscutting elements of the proposed policy, such as impact on social inequalities and impact on carers who look after older people or people with disabilities as part of this assessment.
4. The Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) document is a tool that enables RBC to test and analyse the nature and impact of what it is currently doing or is planning to do in the future. It can be used flexibly for reviewing existing arrangements but in particular should enable identification where further consultation, engagement and data is required.
5. The questions will enable you to record your findings.
6. Where the EqIA relates to a continuing project, it must be reviewed and updated at each stage of the decision.
7. Once completed and signed off the EqIA will be published online.
8. An EqIA must accompany all **Key Decisions** and **Cabinet Reports**.
9. For further information, refer to the EqIA guidance for staff.
10. For advice and support, contact:
Rebecca Ewers
Corporate Equality and Diversity Officer
rebecca.ewers@rugby.gov.uk
01788 533509

Equality Impact Assessment

Service Area	Environmental Health
Policy/Service being assessed	Private rented residential properties
Is this a new or existing policy/service? If existing policy/service please state date of last assessment	New for landlord forum, revision for the Charter.
EqlA Review Team – List of members	Chief Officer Regulation and Safety
Date of this assessment	08/11/2024
Signature of responsible officer (to be signed after the EqlA has been completed)	D. Burrows

A copy of this Equality Impact Assessment report, including relevant data and information to be forwarded to the Corporate Equality and Diversity Officer.

Details of Strategy/ Service/ Policy to be analysed

<u>Stage 1 – Scoping and Defining</u>	
(1) Describe the main aims, objectives and purpose of the Strategy/Service/Policy (or decision)?	To provide better communication and policy development for private landlords and private tenants.
(2) How does it fit with Rugby Borough Council's Corporate priorities and your service area priorities?	A Fairer Rugby – specific action.
(3) What are the expected outcomes you are hoping to achieve?	To provide a physical regular meeting with landlords and an improved website to give advice to landlords and tenants, to improve communication between landlords, tenants and the council as regulator, to support good landlords, to identify and take action against poor landlords, and to ensure private sector properties meet minimum standards, but also encourage higher standards.
(4) Does or will the policy or decision affect: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Customers • Employees • Wider community or groups 	Customers and wider community.
<u>Stage 2 - Information Gathering</u>	As a minimum you must consider what is known about the population likely to be affected which will support your understanding of the impact of the policy, e.g. service uptake/usage, customer satisfaction surveys, staffing data, performance data, research information (national, regional and local data sources).

<p>(1) What does the information tell you about those groups identified?</p>	<p>The Council is a regulator for the private rented domestic property sector and has extensive experience in managing local issues and identifying key areas for improvement. The demographics of landlords is available in the English Private Landlord Survey 2021. 43% of landlords owned one rental property; further 39% owned two to for rental properties; 95% of landlords operate as individuals, not companies or organisations. There are an estimated 6000 rented properties in the Borough. The data suggests the majority are using the rented properties for extra income. There is limited demographic information on tenants. Local data does suggest that the most popular tenancy is 2 bed, with room only 5%, 1 bed 22%, 2 bed 39%, 3 bed 28% and 4+ 8%. 84% of landlords said they would not let to those with a history of rent arrears. While areas like the Benn Ward and New Bilton Ward with high levels of smaller terraced properties are popular with private sector landlords, this shows there is also demand in other areas including new build homes and larger properties.</p>		
<p>(2) Have you consulted or involved those groups that are likely to be affected by the strategy/ service/policy you want to implement? If yes, what were their views and how have their views influenced your decision?</p>	<p>Consultation will start with landlords and tenants once the landlord forum is approved.</p>		
<p>(3) If you have not consulted or engaged with communities that are likely to be affected by the policy or decision, give details about when you intend to carry out consultation or provide reasons for why you feel this is not necessary.</p>	<p>See (2).</p>		
<p><u>Stage 3 – Analysis of impact</u></p>			
<p>(1) <u>Protected Characteristics</u> From your data and consultations is there any positive, adverse or negative impact identified</p>	<p>RACE</p>	<p>DISABILITY</p>	<p>GENDER</p>

for any particular group, which could amount to discrimination?	MARRIAGE/CIVIL PARTNERSHIP	AGE	GENDER REASSIGNMENT
If yes, identify the groups and how they are affected.	RELIGION/BELIEF	PREGNANCY MATERNITY	SEXUAL ORIENTATION
<p>(2) <u>Cross cutting themes</u></p> <p>(a) Are your proposals likely to impact on social inequalities e.g. child poverty, geographically disadvantaged communities? If yes, please explain how?</p> <p>(b) Are your proposals likely to impact on a carer who looks after older people or people with disabilities? If yes, please explain how?</p>	<p>Yes. While many rented properties are for higher income people or families, there are about 6000 rental properties in the Borough and are often found in areas with higher levels of social inequality (e.g. Benn Ward, New Bilton Ward, Newbold and Brownsover Ward). If successful, the landlord forum will help improve conditions for tenants and have a positive impact on reducing levels of social inequality.</p> <p>Not specifically.</p>		
(3) If there is an adverse impact, can this be justified?	Impact should be positive.		
(4) What actions are going to be taken to reduce or eliminate negative or adverse impact? (This should form part of your action plan under Stage 4.)	One of the main functions of the landlord forum will be to advise the Council on an action plan and strategy.		
(5) How does the strategy/service/policy contribute to the promotion of equality? If not, what can be done?	Maintaining or improving the living conditions of those in rented properties.		
(6) How does the strategy/service/policy promote good relations between groups? If not, what can be done?	The landlord forum is more likely to affect those in rented properties rather than groups.		

(7) Are there any obvious barriers to accessing the service? If yes how can they be overcome?	No. The aim is to reduce barriers for landlords and tenants. Meetings will be held in venues with disabled access. The Council will also consider translating documents into other languages to improve inclusion. The council website meets accessibility standards. However, it is recognised that there might be landlords and tenants who could be excluded and so the council will work with partners to identify groups and to include them. This could include community associations within areas of high numbers of rented properties.
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<u>Stage 4 – Action Planning, Review and Monitoring</u>																														
<p>If No Further Action is required then go to – Review and Monitoring</p> <p>(1) Action Planning – Specify any changes or improvements that can be made to the service or policy to mitigate or eradicate negative or adverse impact on specific groups, including resource implications.</p>	<p>Action plan to be developed when landlord forum set up.</p> <p>EqlA Action Plan</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="875 794 2110 1029"> <thead> <tr> <th data-bbox="875 794 1120 874">Action</th> <th data-bbox="1120 794 1364 874">Lead Officer</th> <th data-bbox="1364 794 1615 874">Date for completion</th> <th data-bbox="1615 794 1865 874">Resource requirements</th> <th data-bbox="1865 794 2110 874">Comments</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> </tbody> </table>					Action	Lead Officer	Date for completion	Resource requirements	Comments																				
Action	Lead Officer	Date for completion	Resource requirements	Comments																										
(2) Review and Monitoring State how and when you will monitor policy and Action Plan	To be determined by the landlord forum.																													

Please annotate your policy with the following statement:

‘An Equality Impact Assessment on this policy was undertaken on (date of assessment) and will be reviewed on (insert review date).’

Appendix 3 Rugby Borough Council

Climate Change and Environmental Impact Assessment

CONTEXT

In 2019 the UK Parliament set a commitment in law to reach net zero carbon emissions by 2050. Achieving this target will require considerable effort with public bodies, private sector organisations, the third sector and individuals working together to take action. Rugby Borough Council declared a climate emergency in 2019, in doing so committed to:

- To move the Council's operations towards Carbon Neutrality by 2030.
- To establish action to tackle climate change as a key driver of all decision-making.
- To provide community leadership in reducing the impact of Climate Change.
- To take action to mitigate the impact of climate change on a Borough wide basis and beyond, through adaptation.

The Council's Corporate Strategy (2021-2024) [link](#) sets ambitious outcomes in relation to Climate Change. These ambitions must now be progressed through the decisions which the Council makes.

It is therefore important that Rugby Borough Council gives due regard to climate change when making decisions. In the context of the Council's business, Climate Change includes carbon emissions, biodiversity, habitat loss and environmental destruction. When putting forward recommendations for decision, officers must assess how these recommendations are likely to influence our climate change commitments by completing the following Climate Change and Environmental Impact Assessment.

A copy of this Climate Change and Environmental Impact Assessment, including relevant data and information should be forwarded to the Deputy Chief Executive.

If you require help, advice and support to complete the form, please contact Dan Green, Deputy Chief Executive.

SECTION 1: OVERVIEW

Portfolio and Service Area	Communities, Homes, Regulation and Safety Environmental Health
Policy/Service/Change being assessed	Landlord forum and review of Charter.
Is this a new or existing Policy/Service/Change?	New landlord forum, review of Charter.
If existing policy/service please state date of last assessment	
Ward Specific Impacts	All wards, but some wards known to have higher levels of rented properties, e.g. Benn Ward.
Summary of assessment Briefly summarise the policy/service/change and potential impacts	The landlord forum is designed to mainly support landlords and tenants to improve communication with the Council as regulator, and to improve conditions for tenants and support landlords.
Completed By	Chief Officer Regulation and Safety
Authorised By	Chief Officer Regulation and Safety
Date of Assessment	08/11/2024

SECTION 2: IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Climate Change and Environmental Impacts	No Impact	Positive	Negative	Description of impact	Any actions or mitigation to reduce negative impacts	Action owner	Timescales
Energy usage	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Support the council in policies to improve rented properties.		Landlord forum and Council	To be determined.
Fleet usage	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Sustainable Transport/Travel (customers and staff)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Sustainable procurement	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Community leadership	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Expected that landlord forum will have a positive impact on improving rented domestic properties.		Landlord forum and Council	To be determined.
Biodiversity and habitats	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Adaptation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Improvements should include better insulation and reduced energy use.		Landlord forum and Council	To be determined.
Impact on other providers/partners	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				

SECTION 3: REVIEW

Where a negative impact is identified, the proposal and/or implementation can be adapted or changed; meaning there is a need for regular review. This review may also be needed to reflect additional data and evidence for a fuller assessment (proportionate to the decision in question). Please state the agreed review timescale for the identified impacts of the policy implementation or service change.

Review date	08/11/2025 after creation of landlord forum.
Key points to be considered through review	While the forum is to generally improve rented properties, insulation, energy reduction and reducing damp and mould are expected to be priorities.
Person responsible for review	Chief Officer Regulation and Safety
Authorised by	Chief Officer Regulation and Safety