

## **Decent Homes for All – Speech by Will Sandry 26/09/12**

Good morning Conference,

The number of homes in the private rented sector in my ward has increased threefold in the last decade.

In some streets 95% of the homes are rented, more than 50% per street is now common.

It frustrates me to see people in my community living in poor quality housing, owned by amateur investors who leave it to unregulated letting agents to look after the property for them.

I am delighted to tell you that our Liberal Democrats led council is currently consulting on introducing an additional licensing scheme in my ward.

If implemented this will fulfil a local manifesto promise I made to my community to improve both the management and quality of rented homes.

Current requirements for introducing licensing schemes are time consuming and costly for Councils. I support reducing restrictions on local authorities and enabling them to set up targeted licencing schemes in areas they know to be appropriate.

I do not believe it appropriate or deliverable to extend licensing to all rented properties.

A Housing Officer can be reasonably expected to improve 30 homes per year. If we chose option B and set ourselves a five year target to improve all 4 million homes in the private rented sector, local authorities nationally would need to employ in the region of 27,000 housing officers.

This is not deliverable, or affordable, so I do not support option B in the policy motion.

Moving on to the unregulated letting agents, there are a few good ones and many rouges!

My ward is popular with students, and the letting agents are on to a nice little earner.

Depending on the Agent there are administration fees of between £66 and £250 per person sharing - in addition to the first month's rent in advance - and at least 4 weeks rent as a deposit.

Only one letting agent charges no admin fees. He tells me the fees are largely unjustifiable.

All letting agents charge landlords Administration charges. That's the rip off. The unregulated letting agents do something once, and charge for it twice.

I am pleased that option A includes a licencing scheme for all managing agents. This long overdue, and it will stop abuses by the rogue agents.

This option also gives local councils the power to implement licensing schemes where necessary and will give people in our communities a better standard of home to live in.

Conference, please support the motion and option A.