



Public Accounts Committee

Jeremy Pocklington CB
Permanent Secretary
Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities
2 Marshal Street
London
SW1P 4DF

3 November 2022

Treasury Minute response- Regulation of Private Renting (49th Report Session 2021-22)

Dear Permanent Secretary,

Thank you for the [Government's response](#) to the Committee's 49th Report of Session 2021-22 entitled, [Regulation of Private Renting](#). I am grateful for the work already underway, and the other commitments you have made as part of the Fairer Private Rented Sector White Paper, to improve the experiences of renters.

The response overall, however, did not give us enough confidence that the changes you are making will address our concerns over the ability of local authorities to regulate effectively. This is particularly the case for the two recommendations that you rejected regarding local councils' capacity, capability and licensing arrangements. I am also concerned that the cost-of-living crisis will only make things harder for councils, renters and indeed landlords.

Our specific concerns are:

- [Recommendation 2](#) (not accepted): on assessing the resources needed for local authorities to regulate effectively. Your response refers to new tools for local authorities, such as a Private Rented Property Portal which will provide information on landlords. Separately, in response to recommendation 3, you refer to changes such as new financial investigative powers. While these developments are welcome and may offer additional tools for councils, it does not address the Committee's concern that councils will not have the capacity and capability to make good use of these tools, resulting in further inconsistent protection for renters.
- [Recommendation 4](#) (not accepted): on local authorities being constrained by the Department's approach to licensing landlords. While I appreciate efforts to simplify the selective licensing application form and introduce a new property portal, this does not change the Committee's view that the Department should, at an appropriate time, review whether the arrangements are working effectively and efficiently.
- [Recommendation 5](#): on data strategy and evaluation. While I am grateful for your work to develop your approach to data, your response did not give us confidence that this work will strengthen the Department's understanding of the rented sector's problems in a systematic



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way. Your response also does not address our request to provide the Committee with a coherent data strategy once this is complete.

I appreciate that considerable work is ongoing, the impact of which remains to be seen. I would therefore be grateful if you could provide me with a **comprehensive update before the 2023 February recess** setting out the progress you are making, the effect on local councils' capacity and capability to regulate, and how you are addressing any impacts of the cost-of-living crisis.

I am copying this letter to the Comptroller and Auditor General, the Treasury Officer of Accounts and the Chair of the Levelling Up, Housing & Communities Committee.

Yours sincerely.

DAME MEG HILLIER MP
CHAIR OF THE COMMITTEE OF PUBLIC ACCOUNTS