



<b>Subject:</b>	Transfer of Landlord Registration Scheme to Local Councils
<b>Date:</b>	4 <sup>th</sup> February 2025
<b>Reporting Officer:</b>	Siobhan Toland, Director of City Services
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	Claire O'Neill Principal Environmental Health Officer Vivienne Donnelly City Protection Manager

<b>Restricted Reports</b>	
<b>Is this report restricted?</b>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<b>If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?</b>	
<b>After Committee Decision</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>After Council Decision</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Some time in the future</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Never</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>

<b>Call-in</b>	
<b>Is the decision eligible for Call-in?</b>	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>

<b>1.0</b>	<b>Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues</b>
1.1	The Landlord Registration Scheme was introduced on the 25 <sup>th</sup> February 2014 <a href="http://www.internalminutes/documents/s20802/Update%20on%20Landlord%20Registration%20Scheme%20Regulations%20Northern%20Ireland%202014.pdf">http://www.internalminutes/documents/s20802/Update%20on%20Landlord%20Registration%20Scheme%20Regulations%20Northern%20Ireland%202014.pdf</a> This created a single database of private landlords in Northern Ireland, allowing relevant and up to date information to be held about the landlords and their properties. The Department for Communities (DfC) has responsibility for management of the current database and Councils are responsible for enforcement of the regulations.
1.2	Following consideration of a report from the Department for Communities by SOLACE in 2023, outlining the benefits of transferring the functions of Landlord Registration Scheme to Councils, Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council (LCCC) agreed to act as the lead Council in

	the preparation for and transfer of the functions under the Landlord Registration Scheme within Northern Ireland.
1.3	This report outlines the transfer arrangements from the Department for Communities to Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council who will administer the Landlord Registration Scheme within Northern Ireland on behalf of Councils.
1.4	There is no change in the current enforcement arrangements as each Council will continue to undertake any enforcement action in accordance the relevant regulations when a landlord fails to register a tenancy within their district.
<b>2.0</b>	<b>Recommendations</b>
2.1	The members of the Committee are asked to note the update provided in this report concerning the transfer arrangements of the landlord registration function from the Department for Communities to Councils which will be administered by Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council.
<b>3.0</b>	<b>Main report</b>
3.1	<b><u>Background and Key Issues</u></b>
3.2	Landlord Registration was introduced <i>through 'The Landlord Registration Scheme Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2014'</i> to create a single database of landlords who rent within the Private Rented Sector. The Scheme is currently managed by a Landlord Registrar and small team that sits within the Department for Communities. Councils have enforcement powers to act against non-compliant landlords.
3.3	In 2023, SOLACE considered a report from the Department for Communities outlining the benefits of transferring the functions of Landlord Registration Scheme to Councils and in March 2023, Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council agreed to act as the lead Council in the preparation for and transfer of the functions under the Landlord Registration Scheme within Northern Ireland.
3.4	In September 2023, a Programme Board was established to oversee the delivery of the project with representatives from Department for Communities, Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council and an independent SOLACE representative to oversee the transfer of these functions from the Department for Communities to Councils by March 2025.
3.5	Engagement has been ongoing with Councils and other stakeholders throughout the lifetime of this project including various all Councils' group including Environmental Health NI

	(EHNI), IT officers', Head of Communications and Information Governance groups. Other stakeholders have included landlords, agents, tenants, DfC, PropertyPal and those who have contracts with the current scheme.
3.6	This Landlord Registration Scheme operates on a cost neutral basis with all services offered by this scheme being funded from the registration fee only.
3.7	<p><b>New Website and Registration Portal:</b></p> <p>Following an open procurement exercise conducted by Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council in March 2024, an IT software company was awarded the contract for the build and management of a new dedicated website and registration portal. Currently, this system is going through the User Acceptance Testing stage which once finalised in early February will allow the data stored on the current system to be migrated over.</p>
3.8	The transfer of the landlord registration functions to Councils will occur on Saturday 1 <sup>st</sup> March 2025 with a 'go live' date for the new system on Monday 3 <sup>rd</sup> March 2025. This will see the completion of Phase 1. Phase 2 will commence shortly after that date with all additional functionality completed by June 2025.
3.9	All landlords who let properties must register their properties every three years and will pay one fee regardless of the number of properties rented. The fee to register is £70 for an online application and £80 for a paper registration.
3.10	Full training, including user guides for employees who will access the database, will be provided to all Councils and other users to maximise the benefits of the new system.
3.11	<p><b>Appointment of New Landlord Registration Team:</b></p> <p>A recruitment exercise for a new landlord registration team was completed by Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council in 2024 and a team of three positions have now been filled, including the appointment of a new Landlord Registrar.</p>
3.12	This team is funded wholly from the income received from the landlord fee with no cost to any Council.
3.13	<p><b>Communications Plan:</b></p> <p>The Department for Communities have developed an advertising campaign as part of a wider communications plan associated with the transfer of functions. This includes radio and social media advertisements that will go live from February 2025. These advertisements will</p>

	<p>focus on the need of any landlords within the private rented sector to register with the scheme with updates being provided by email or letter to those already registered about the changes. Post-transfer any campaigns will be led by the Landlord Registrar and shared with all other Councils for their social media channels.</p>
3.14	<p><b>Governance Structures Post Transfer:</b></p> <p>The Programme Board will formally agree an MOU, new operational model and a timeline for regulation change being brought forward by Department for Communities prior to the transfer. These documents will provide clarity to the Council on the governance structures for the scheme post transfer and will provide proposals on how the Landlord Registration Scheme can become more meaningful to Councils and landlords in the long term.</p>
3.15	<p>The transfer of the landlord registration data base from the Department for Communities to Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council will have no impact on current working arrangements undertaken by BCC Environmental Health Officers to enforce the provisions of the landlord registration scheme, however, work will continue on proposed improvements to the Scheme, post transfer which will assist with better regulation of the private rented sector with the overall aim of improving housing standards.</p>
3.16	<p><b>Financial and Resource Implications</b></p> <p>There is no financial implication to any Council. All funding for the project to date has been funded by the Department for Communities. Post transfer of functions, all staffing costs, contracts and future initiatives will be funded through the registration fee. There will be no cost to any Council.</p>
3.17	<p><b>Equality or Good Relations Implication</b></p> <p>On-going by Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council.</p>
<b>4.0</b>	<b>Appendices</b>
	None