

From: David Polley

By email - SteeleSara@BelfastCity.gov.uk

Your Ref: SS.CLL.01.03.2021

Ms Sara Steele
Democratic Services Officer
Legal and Civic Services Department
Belfast City Council
City Hall
Belfast BT1 5GS

Dear Ms Steele

**Level 9
Causeway Exchange
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BT2 7EG**

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Our ref: CORR-0538-2021

Date: 19 March 2021

APPLICATION FEES IN THE PRIVATE RENTED SECTOR

Thank you for your correspondence of 10th March to the Minister regarding the motion passed by the Council at its meeting on 1st March 2021. I have been asked to reply

The court ruling you have referred to was based on Department of Finance legislation - The Commission on Disposals of Land (Northern Ireland) Order 1986 and I understand you have written separately to that Department on the matter.

As you are aware this legislation prohibits letting agents from charging a tenant any fee for a service that should be paid by the landlord. We welcome the protection this provides to private tenants, and we have taken steps to advise those living in the sector of their rights under the Department of Finance legislation. This included issuing a communication to private tenants through the Tenant Deposit Scheme managers, publication of an article in our Landlord Newsletter and as you have noted

in your correspondence to us, the Minister issued a joint communique along with the Finance Minister within 2 months of taking up her post.

Further to this the 2017 Review of the Role and Regulation of the Private Rented Sector examined the broader issue of introducing a regulatory framework for all letting agents. The Minister has recently recommitted to this work and the Department will pursue this objective in the longer term.

It is worrying that some letting agents are continuing to charge these fees and it is important therefore that anyone who may have been adversely impacted seeks advice and they can visit the Housing Rights website at <http://housingrights.org.uk/news/letting-agents-ordered-court-repay-fees-charged-tenants> or call the Housing Rights helpline on 028 9024 5640 for more information.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'David Polley', is centered within a light grey rectangular box.

David Polley

Director Housing Supply Policy and Delivery