**LHS Private Sector Consultation: Private Sector Tenants Report**

**Introduction**

This report presents the findings from Falkirk Councils private sector tenants’ consultation for the Local Housing Strategy (LHS) 2023-2028, which ran from 26/10/22 until 31/1/23. The survey was highlighted via a selected mailing, through our People’s Panel, internally via staff/ services, drop-in sessions, online and through social media.

The survey contained 25 private rented sector questions. The questions sought to gather information about their decisions to rent, future housing aspirations, experiences of Falkirk’s private rented sector, affordability, regulations and support awareness, property conditions standards as well as how Falkirk Council can help private sector tenants. We also asked questions about digital connectivity and equality as part of the survey.

85 responses were received for this consultation: one was received from a council tenant.

Key findings, the results for each private rented sector question, a summary of the digital connectivity and equality findings along with a list of all questions asked are detailed below. Please note that due to rounding, figures may not always add up to 100%. Care also needs to be taken when interpreting these findings as they represent a response rate of 1.3%.

We do not have an active communication list for private sector tenants however, to help validate the findings, we will offer residents the opportunity to feedback their views on these findings when this report is published.

Survey findings have been fed into the development of the first Private Rented Sector section within our Local Housing Strategy, due early 2024. The LHS outlines the actions we plan to take over the next 5 years and aims to address actions highlighted below.

**Private Sector Tenants Survey - Key Findings**

* 85 responses received
* 64% have let for up to 5 years, 36% for over 5 years
* 65% found accommodation online
* 66% live in a flat
* 55% lived in a 2 bedroom, 24% lived in a 3 bedroom, 21% lived in a 1 bedroom property
* 73% of private tenants rated property condition as good/ very good, 22% as fair, 5% as poor
* 61% of private tenants confirmed a positive experience with their landlord, 23% had a mixed experience, 6% had a negative experience
* 39% confirmed a positive experience with a letting agent, 21% had a mixed experience, 8% had a negative experience
* 81% let their current property at the advertised rate
* 42% let privately as couldn’t afford mortgage & or a deposit, 29% were unsuccessful for council housing so far, 17% rent because of the right location/ flexibility
* 80% can afford their rent
* 97% of responses to the question confirmed they had a device
* 97% of responses to the question confirmed they had internet
* High “can do” online capacity

**Results: All Questions:**

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| **Question 1** | **How long have you lived in private rented accommodation?** |
|  | 64% had let in the private rented sector for up to 5 years, with 36% letting for 5 years or more. |
| **Question 2** | **How did you find the private rented accommodation you currently live in?** |
|  | 65% found their current accommodation online, 18% through a letting agent, 12% by word of mouth, 6% stated Other, which included knew landlord and via a friend. |
| **Question 3** | **What type of property do you live in?** |
|  | 66% live in a flat, 14% in a semi-detached property, 13% in a terraced property, 6% in a bungalow/ detached house, 1% stated Other (sheltered). |
| **Question 4** | **How many bedrooms does your current accommodation have?** |
|  | 55% live in a 2 bedroom, 24% live in a 3 bedroom and 21% live in a 1 bedroom property. |
| **Question 5** | **Why did you move into the private rented sector?** |
|  | 29% advised they were living in the private rented sector as they were unsuccessful for council housing so far, 22% couldn’t afford a mortgage, 20% didn’t have the mortgage deposit yet, 17% advised it was the right location/ flexible, 12% stated Other, which included personal circumstances and downsizing. |
| **Question 6** | **Did you receive a Tenant Information Pack (for Assured/ Short Assured Tenancies) or an Easy Read Tenant Notes (for Private Residential Tenancies) from your landlord or letting agent when you started your tenancy?** |
|  | 56% confirmed they had received the Tenant Information Pack, 31% couldn’t remember, 13% said no. |
| **Question 7** | **How would you rate the condition of the property you currently let?** |
|  | 73% rated their current property in a good/ very good condition, 22% as fair, 5% as poor. |

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| **Question 8** | **What has been your experience of dealing with a private landlord, if applicable?** |
|  | 61% confirmed their experience had been positive, 23% had a mixed experience, 6% had a negative experience, 10% confirmed Other or not applicable, this may account for tenants who only deal with a letting agent. |
| **Question 9** | **What do you think makes a good landlord?** |
|  | Tenants believed the following makes a good landlord:   1. Repairs & improves property 2. Charges a reasonable rent 3. Good communication/ contactable 4. Reliable and fair 5. Values and listens to tenants 6. Legislation awareness & compliance 7. Market Knowledge |
| **Question 10** | What has been your experience of dealing with a Letting Agent, if applicable? |
|  | 39% confirmed their experience had been positive, 21% had a mixed experience, 8% had a negative experience, 31% confirmed not applicable, this may account for tenants who only deal with a landlord. |
| **Question 11** | **What do you think makes a good Letting Agent? (Please select all that apply)** |
|  | Tenants believed the following makes a good letting agent:   1. Good Communication/ contactable 2. Undertakes repairs timeously 3. Values and listens to landlords & tenants 4. Reliable & fair 5. Professional & cares 6. Legislation awareness & compliance 7. Market Knowledge |
| **Question 12** | **If you experienced problem with your landlord or Letting Agent, where would you go to get help?** |
|  | Tenants would go to the following sources for help:   1. Citizens Advice Scotland 2. Private Sector Team 3. Online 4. Housing and Property Chamber 5. Other 6. Other council department 7. Shelter Scotland   Comments mentioned under Other included: don’t know, talking to landlord, talking to family or Living Rent. |
| **Question 13** | **How aware are you of the following:** |
|  | Private sector tenants confirmed they were very aware/ aware of the following factors, which have been ranked in order of awareness:   1. Tenancy Deposit Schemes in Scotland 2. Your rights & Responsibilities as a Private Sector Tenant 3. Landlord Register 4. Letting Agent Register 5. The Repairing Standard 6. Unlawful fees 7. Housing Options (Falkirk Council) 8. Housing & Property Chamber 9. Homelessness (Falkirk Council) 10. Private Sector Team |
| **Question 14** | **Did you let your current property for the advertised rent?** |
|  | 81% confirmed they paid the advertised rent, 11% had their rent increased, 5% confirmed Other, 3% had their rent reduced. Comments made under Other included: not applicable or mutually agreed. |
| **Question 15** | How do you pay your rent? |
|  | 90% confirmed they paid full rent, 6% received help via Housing Benefit/ Universal Credit, 2% had rent fully covered by Housing Benefit/ Universal Credit, 1% stated Other, confirming it was paid by another benefit. |
| **Question 16** | How much is your current month rent? |
|  | 50% paid between £301 and £500 in rent per month, 43% paid between £501 and £700, 9% paid over £701. |
| **Question 17** | Has your rent been increased in the last 12 months? |
|  | 66% confirmed their rent had not increased in the last 12 months, 27% had experienced an increase, stayed and paid the extra, 5% didn’t know/ confirmed it was not applicable, 2% moved to another property due to affordability. |

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| **Question 18** | **Can you afford your current rent?** |
|  | 80% confirmed that they could afford their rent, 9% advised they could not, 11% advised Other which included, yes for now and that they were making sacrifices elsewhere. |
| **Question 19** | **Are you aware that you can challenge an increase in rent?** |
|  | 61% were not aware they could challenge a rent increase, 38% were aware but had never appealed, 1% advised they had appealed but were unsuccessful. |
| **Question 20** | **Do you know where to get help if you cannot afford your rent?** |
|  | 60% did not know where to get help, 40% did know. Information was provided within the survey for reference. |
| **Question 21** | **Where do you think you will be living in 5 years’ time?** |
|  | 31% thought they would be in the same property, 27% wanted to be a homeowner, 15% wanted to be in another private let, 14% wanted to be in social housing (council or housing association), 12% advised Other which included a mixture of the above options. |
| **Question 22** | **Which housing tenure do you want to live in?** |
|  | 53% wanted homeownership, 24% wanted social housing, 15% wanted to remain in the private rented sector, 8% advised Other, which included a mixture of the above options as well as wanting safety and affordability. |
| **Question 23** | **What can Falkirk Council's PST do to help PS Tenants?** |
|  | Private tenants ranked the following help as very important/ important:   1. Be more visible 2. Extend online information 3. Tenants Forum/ Virtual Forum 4. Video Calling 5. Other (included raising awareness, information, communication and better Falkirk council tenant management) |

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| **Question 24 a** | Do you have any other comments about renting private accommodation? |
|  | The top four comments were:   1. Like living in their property 2. Good landlord 3. Rents too high 4. Standards of PRS properties poor 5. Need more social housing 6. Demand for PST housing really high   Other comments included: differing management and property standards, demand for accommodation, landlords leaving sector, rental costs, security, need for adapted properties, flexibility and pet friendly. |
| **Question 24 b** | Do you have any other comments about housing in general? |
|  | The following trends were noted from the feedback:  * Affordability * Availability of the right size/ type of properties * Good properties in good areas * Information and help * Worried about mobility in the future * Management of council tenants * Good experience of PRS |

**Digital Connectivity – Key and relevant findings**

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|  | * 97% confirmed they had a device * 97% confirmed they had internet * High “can do” online capacity. Highest area of “unsure how/ need full help” related to accessing Digital Café’s (21%) as well as Online Security (11%) |

**Equality – Key and relevant findings**

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|  | * 59% female, 40% male, 1% other * 45% (25-44), 28% (45 -64), 18% (65 or over), 9% (16-24) * 83% white, 5% Polish, 2% mixed or multiple ethnic groups, 2% Indian, 2% African, 2% none of the above, 1% Pakistani, 1% Arab, Arab Scottish or Arab British * 15 had a disability * 28 had a condition with day-to-day impact * Majority of respondents were from the Falkirk submarket area, followed by Larbert/ Stenhousemuir/ Rural North, then Denny/ Bonnybridge, with remainder split across the other 3 submarket areas. |

**Appendix A**

**Private Rented Sector Questions**

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| **1** | How long have you lived in private rented accommodation? |
| **2** | How did you find the private rented accommodation you currently live in? |
| **3** | What type of property do you live in? |
| **4** | How many bedrooms does your current accommodation have? |
| **5** | Why did you move into the private rented sector? |
| **6** | Did you receive a Tenant Information Pack (for Assured/ Short Assured Tenancies) or an Easy Read Tenant Notes (for Private Residential Tenancies) from your landlord or letting agent when you started your tenancy? |
| **7** | How would you rate the condition of the property you currently let? |
| **8** | What has been your experience of dealing with a private landlord, if applicable? |
| **9** | What do you think makes a good landlord? |
| **10** | What has been your experience of dealing with a Letting Agent, if applicable? |
| **11** | What do you think makes a good Letting Agent? (Please select all that apply) |
| **12** | If you experienced problem with your landlord or Letting Agent, where would you go to get help? |
| **13** | How aware are you of the following |
| **14** | Did you let your current property for the advertised rent? |
| **15** | How do you pay your rent? |
| **16** | How much is your current month rent? |
| **17** | Has your rent been increased in the last 12 months? |
| **18** | Can you afford your current rent? |
| **19** | Are you aware that you can challenge an increase in rent? |
| **20** | Do you know where to get help if you cannot afford your rent? |
| **21** | Where do you think you will be living in 5 years’ time? |
| **22** | Which housing tenure do you want to live in? |
| **23** | What can Falkirk Council's PST do to help PS Tenants? |
| **24a** | Do you have any other comments about renting private accommodation? |
| **24b** | Do you have any other comments about housing in general? |

**Digital Connectivity Questions**

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| **1** | Do you own a device that can access the internet in your home? |
| **2** | Do you have access to the internet at home either Home or Mobile? |
| **3** | Using online Services *(they were asked to rate a range of actions e.g. Accessing the internet, using online services…)* |
| **4** | In your day-to-day life, how do you feel about? *(they were asked to rate different digital home options e.g. having Alexa, Siri, Google in your home, having a connected home…)* |
| **5** | What types of digital assistance would help you most? |

**Equality Questions**

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| **1** | What area do you live in? |
| **2** | How best would you describe your own housing circumstances? |
| **3** | What is your gender? |
| **4** | Do you consider yourself to be trans or have a trans history? |
| **5** | What is your age? |
| **6** | Do you consider yourself to be disabled? |
| **7** | Do you have a physical or mental health condition or illness, or a learning disability, which you expect to last for 12 months or more? |
| **8** | Do any of these conditions or illnesses affect you in any of the following areas? |
| **9** | If yes, does your condition or illness reduce your ability to carry out day-to-day activities? |
| **10** | What is your ethnic group? |