FENLAND DISTRICT COUNCIL
PRESS RELEASE
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Council adopts new enforcement policy to tackle rogue landlords

“If you’re a good landlord you should have nothing to fear.” That was the message today as councillors backed new powers which could see rogue landlords who ignore their legal responsibilities fined up to £30,000.

Fenland District Council has voted to adopt a new Housing Enforcement Policy to help drive up standards in the private rental sector and get tough on those renting substandard and unsafe accommodation.

The civil penalties for the worst offenders will be used as an alternative and quicker way to launching criminal prosecutions in cases of serious housing offences.

Cllr Dee Laws, the Council’s Portfolio Holder responsible for private sector housing, said:
“Our approach will ensure prevention and intervention before enforcement action wherever possible. We will continue to work with and support landlords to ensure their properties are safe and in a good condition, but we will be tough with those who break the rules.

“By driving unscrupulous landlords who profit from providing poor quality and dangerous homes out of business, we can raise standards and give tenants the protection they need. If you’re a good landlord you should have nothing to fear.”

The new policy comes after the government introduced the civil penalties as part of its clamp down on criminal landlords, with local authorities now having the option to decide whether to prosecute or issue a penalty. Fines could be imposed for offences such as failing to comply with improvement notices and overcrowding.

The policy was adopted at a full Council meeting on Thursday, July 19, alongside an overarching Corporate Enforcement Policy which outlines the authority’s approach to all its regulatory services enforcement.

The Housing Enforcement Policy also incorporates new powers that allow the Council to recover the costs of enforcement from landlords whose properties are not up to scratch, such as charging for the issuing of some notices, like housing improvement notices.

A report to the Council said this will “help ensure that landlords who do comply with the law and the wider Council Tax payer do not have to meet all the costs of housing regulation.”

Other key features of the policy include:
- Use of rent repayment orders for certain housing offences. These orders can require a landlord to repay rent back to the tenant or, in the case of rent through benefits, to the local authority.
- New powers to prevent housing with poor energy efficiency ratings being rented out as well as the requirement to improve safety through the installation of smoke and carbon monoxide detectors. Failure to comply could result in fines of up to £5,000.
In addition, from October, new property licensing rules will also mean landlords who rent out houses of multiple occupation (HMOs) where there are five or more people sharing, will have to apply to the council for a property licence to operate lawfully. Failure to secure a licence could result in a fine of up to £30,000 or prosecution.

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For more information contact Fenland District Council press office on 01354 622226