

Meeting Cabinet
Portfolio Area Environment, Transport and Planning
Date 10th June 2026



RENTERS RIGHTS ACT 2025 – ENFORCEMENT POLICY

NON-KEY DECISION

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1 PURPOSE

- 1.1 To consider the Renters' Rights Act 2025 Enforcement Policy.
- 1.2 To note the recommendation of the Council's General Purposes Committee to adopt the Policy at their meeting on 14th April 2026.
- 1.3 The Renters' Rights Bill was introduced to Parliament on 11 September 2024 and gained Royal Assent on 27th October 2025, becoming the Renters' Rights Act 2025 ('the Act'). The Act makes substantial changes to the law concerning privately rented homes, abolishing fixed term assured tenancies and evictions under Section 21 of the Housing Act 1988, known as 'no fault' evictions, providing increased security for tenants. The Act provides additional rights and protections for tenants, including protection from discrimination in the rental market and the practice of 'rental bidding.'
- 1.4 The Act is being brought into effect in stages and the Government has published an implementation timetable. Part 1 of the Act, which gives effect to the abolishment of fixed-term tenancies and 'no fault' evictions, came into force on 1st May 2026.
- 1.5 Local Housing Authorities have been given new powers and duties to enforce the Act. The Renters' Rights Act 2025 Enforcement Policy sets out how the Council will fulfil its new enforcement duty and take effective regulatory action to address non-compliance.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That Cabinet agrees the proposed Renters' Rights Act 2025 Enforcement Policy attached as **Appendix A**.
- 2.2 That Cabinet recommends the Policy to Council for adoption.

3 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The Act was introduced to strengthen the rights and protections for tenants in the private rented sector. Among the key changes are the abolition of fixed-term tenancies and Section 21 'no fault eviction' notices. Prior to Part 1 of the Act coming into force, tenants in the private rented sector would typically occupy a dwelling on an assured shorthold tenancy lasting either six months or 12 months. Tenants could be asked by their landlord to leave the property on expiry of the fixed-term tenancy or at any time thereafter, with two months' notice, and landlords would not be required to give a reason for seeking possession.
- 3.2 As of the 1st May 2026, new and existing assured tenancies are open-ended and landlords can only seek possession on specified grounds. Tenants can end a tenancy at any point by providing two months' notice. This Act therefore provides increased security of tenure while providing tenants with increased flexibility should their circumstances change.
- 3.3 The Act is also intended to empower tenants to seek redress where property conditions are substandard, without fear of retaliatory eviction. Other provisions of the Act are designed to address unfair property marketing practices, such as discrimination on the grounds that a prospective tenant receives benefits or has children, while still allowing landlords to consider the affordability and suitability of a property. In addition, landlords must now provide written tenancy agreements and provide tenants with prescribed information about their rights.
- 3.4 The Act places a statutory duty on local housing authorities to enforce the 'landlord legislation' as defined under the Act and confers on them new investigatory and enforcement powers.
- 3.5 The policy sets out how Stevenage Borough Council will enforce the new provisions and apply the new regulatory powers under the Act. The aims of this policy are to:
 - Ensure that effective regulatory action is taken where landlords are not complying with their legal obligations.
 - Ensure that enforcement powers are applied in a fair, transparent, proportionate and consistent manner.
 - Provide clarity to tenants, landlords and other interested parties on how the Council will enforce the new legislation.
- 3.6 The policy has been developed having regard to statutory enforcement guidance for regulators which has been published by the Government.
- 3.7 The policy relates to those provisions of the Act which came into effect on 1st May 2026. Provisions still to take effect include a requirement for landlords to register with a new Private Rented Sector Database and redress scheme, in

respect of which secondary legislation and statutory guidance is yet to be published. The policy makes provision for future updates to be made by the Director for Planning and Regulation in consultation with the portfolio holder for Housing and Housing Development.

- 3.8 Appendix B summarises how the Renter's Rights Act 2025 Enforcement Policy interacts with the revised Civil Penalty Policy and existing related housing enforcement policy.
- 3.9 The private rented sector in Stevenage accounts for 15% of the total housing stock. The impact of the new legislation in Stevenage will therefore be substantial. A summary of the profile of the private rented sector is given in **Appendix C**.

4 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDED COURSE OF ACTION

- 4.1 Section 107 of the Act places a duty on the Council to enforce the defined 'landlord legislation.' Implementation of the policy will enable an enforcement approach that is consistent, complies with the statutory enforcement guidance and provides assurance to tenants and those operating rental businesses as to the approach that the Council will take.
- 4.2 A key consideration for local housing authorities in setting enforcement policy is the stage at which enforcement action should be initiated after non-compliance is identified. The statutory enforcement guidance makes clear that the Regulator's Code does not apply to the Act and a 'graduated' approach to enforcement, whereby informal action is taken first, is not required. This is addressed in the policy content (section 6) which, in summary, sets out the position as follows:
 - Landlords are expected to conduct their rental business in a professional manner and in full compliance with the law.
 - The statutory enforcement guidance makes clear that local housing authorities:
 - (a) Need not take informal steps to address non-compliance before commencing formal action (issuing a civil penalty notice or prosecuting).
 - (b) Should take account of the need for effective deterrence and punishment and what is in the best interests of tenants.
 - Where non-compliance with the landlord legislation is established, the Council will normally take formal action.
 - Informal action may be taken to achieve compliance in the first instance where there are good reasons for doing so which outweigh the considerations in favour of immediate formal action, having regard to the reasons for non-compliance and the other relevant circumstances of the case.
 - Where a decision is made to take informal action first, clear timescales for compliance will be given to the landlord. The investigating officer will then follow up promptly to determine whether the non-compliance has ceased and will proceed to formal action if necessary.

- 4.3 The approach outlined above is intended to balance the key policy aims of ensuring a fair and consistent approach to enforcement with the protection of tenants and the safeguarding of their rights.
- 4.4 In this regard, steps have been taken to promote the changes under the Act concerning the strengthening of tenants' rights and landlords' new responsibilities and to ensure the availability of timely and up-to-date housing advice and support, as summarised in **Appendix D**. As part of this process, the Housing Options service has reviewed and updated its service plan in relation to assistance and advice for both tenants and landlords and homelessness prevention.
- 4.5 Internal consultation took place within the Environmental Health and Licensing and Housing Options services, which are responsible, respectively, for enforcing the legislation and providing advice and assistance to tenants. No changes to the policy were required as a result of the internal consultation.
- 4.6 A public consultation exercise was not considered necessary as much of the policy content relates to matters prescribed by the legislation and statutory guidance. The Council has a legal duty to enforce the Act. The policy sets out how the Council will fulfil its functions within the framework established by the legislation and statutory guidance.
- 4.7 The Council's General Purposes Committee considered the policy at its meeting on 14th April 2026. The Committee agreed to recommend the proposed Stevenage Borough Council Renters' Rights Act 2025 Enforcement Policy to Cabinet. No additional points or suggestions were made.

5 IMPLICATIONS

Financial

- 5.1 The need to increase the enforcement capacity of the Environmental Health and Licensing Service has been identified, to fulfil the Council's new regulatory functions under the Act, which is estimated to cost £72,780 (1.1 FTE Environmental Health Officers).
- 5.2 New burdens funding of £60,000 was received in 2026/27 to enable all local housing authorities to recruit at least one new dedicated staff member. The government has indicated that new burdens funding will be supported throughout the current funding period, with the ultimate aim of establishing a sustainable funding system for PRS enforcement over the long term based on future Private Rented Sector Database fee revenues.
- 5.3 Based on the 2026/27 level of funding the Cabinet is requested to approve a supplementary estimate for the remaining funding of £12,780 which is within the amount delegated to the Cabinet to approve.
- 5.4 The Council also received £66,760 for the Renters Rights Act included in the Homeless, Rough Sleeping and Domestic Abuse core funding however this is for homeless prevention rather than enforcement.

- 5.5 The Renters' Rights Act 2025 is being implemented in phases as set out in the Government's published implementation timetable. Phase 2 will include the roll out of the Private Rented Sector Database, from Autumn 2026. The impact on regulatory demand and consequent resource need will be reviewed in line with the implementation stage of Phase 2. It is possible that additional resource requiring a growth bid may be needed after 2026/27.

Legal

- 5.6 The Council has a statutory duty under Section 107 of the Act to enforce the landlord legislation and must have regard to the statutory enforcement guidance. The policy has been developed with reference to this guidance.
- 5.7 The changes made by the Act to strengthen rights and protections for tenants have had a high profile, including in national media. There is significant interest among organisations which have campaigned for the changes. The Council's performance in implementing the new legislation is therefore likely to be subject to public scrutiny. The Act includes a statutory requirement for local housing authorities to report to the Government on their housing enforcement activity, on a quarterly and annual basis. Data requests from interested parties under the Freedom of Information Act are likely. Local authorities may face adverse publicity and legal challenges where they are perceived as failing to meet their enforcement duties.

Equalities

- 5.8 An Equalities Impact Assessment, attached as **Appendix E**, was carried out in March 2026 and concluded that the policy supports a consistent and transparent enforcement approach that will apply equally to landlords, rental businesses and other persons acting on a landlord's behalf.
- 5.9 The assessment further concluded that the policy will promote confidence that the Council's approach to enforcement is fair and applied on an equal and impartial basis.
- 5.10 The strengthened rights and protections for tenants within the private rented sector is expected to have an overall positive effect for those in disadvantaged groups or with certain protected characteristics.

6 BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

[Renters' Rights Act: guidance for local authorities and councils - GOV.UK](#)

[Renters' Rights Act 2025](#)

7 APPENDICES

- A Renters' Rights Act 2025 Enforcement Policy**
- B Interaction of the RRA 2025 Enforcement Policy with Related Policies**
- C Summary Profile of the Private Rented Sector in Stevenage**
- D Preparing for Implementation – Housing Advice and Support**
- E Equalities Impact Assessment**