

Responses from local Councillors

Date	Name	Method – phone / letter / email	Query / Comment / Response
21.04.2017	Moss Side Councillors	Email	<p>The Moss Side Councillors support Selective Landlord Licensing, and welcome the scheme to Moss Side and our neighbouring ward of Rusholme. As Moss Side Councillors, our feedback is mostly on the Moss Side area of the pilot, but we have spoken to Rusholme residents as well, and the housing issues we address do cross ward boundaries.</p> <p>As Councillors, we recognise the benefit of the private rented sector to Moss Side, and the positive contributions that many landlords make to our ward. We recognise that there needs to be a variety of housing stock to support the diverse and ever-changing needs of residents, and that the private rented sector can provide flexible accommodation that meets both short and long term needs.</p> <p>However, it is inescapable that there are tenants in Moss Side who do not have a positive experience. Poor standard or unsafe accommodation, insecure tenancies, and a lack of landlord accountability are all very real issues encountered by private tenants. We receive casework with concerns about internal and external property conditions, particularly damp, mould, and inadequate kitchen and bathroom facilities. It can be a struggle to get repairs completed, as tenants do not know who their landlord is or who is responsible for completing repairs.</p> <p>Tenants sometimes do not know their rights or their own responsibilities, most commonly on waste and recycling, removal of bulky items, or keeping their outside or communal spaces clean and tidy.</p> <p>Residents who own their properties can struggle with high turn over of tenants as neighbours, rubbish and recycling issues, and anti-social behaviour. Absentee landlords can cause the housing stock to become dilapidated and unsafe, causing problems with neighbouring houses. As Councillors, we have a duty to take all available opportunities to address these problems.</p> <p>We believe that the scheme will be beneficial to tenants and residents of Moss Side, and will be an effective tool to address some of the problems above. We believe that residents have a right to live in a safe and secure environment, and that the internal and external condition of the properties should be of a high standard.</p> <p>We believe that the licence scheme should be beneficial to landlords, as well as the tenants. While the scheme should help to increase landlord accountability and presence, we recognise that there are genuine concerns from landlords about the scheme and the benefits to them, which we hope to address.</p> <p>Geographical Boundaries</p> <p>We have had strong and positive feedback from residents asking for the boundaries to be moved or extended.</p>

We recognise that the pilot boundaries had to be drawn somewhere, and that the Moss Side/Rusholme pilot area is by far the largest. However, should there be any opportunity to redraw the boundaries, we ask for the area to include the houses to Kippax Street.

We have been contacted by individual residents and Residents Associations who have asked that the scheme cover their areas. Ultimately, we believe that there are many areas of Moss Side which can be improved by Selective Landlord Licensing, and will seek all opportunities to improve the living conditions for Moss Side residents.

Conditions/Standards

The below lists capture the main problems that residents contact us with, and we would like to see them included in the scheme.

External

We have reports of problems with the external conditions of houses in the pilot area, and therefore believe that the licence criteria should include external stipulations including:

- Roof/roof tiles are in place, secure, and safe
- Chimneys are secure, maintained, and safe
- Pointing and external brick work is in good condition
- Windows are secure and undamaged/not broken
- Window and door frames are secure and undamaged/not broken
- External walls not connected to house (eg garden) are in good condition/secure
- External damp (house and garden) is treated and resolved
- Problems that could reoccur are dealt with fully, to prevent recurrences (e.g. damp, climbing plants)
- Space for bins, and tenants will be made aware of the bin collection schedule
- Area immediately around house to be kept clean, and tenants to be made aware of their responsibility to do this and inform the Council of issues where appropriate
 - Where relevant, alley gate keys are issued and tenants
 - Any external painting to be refreshed and maintained
 - Property should be secure
 - Pest infestations to be fully addressed and resolved
 - Proactive attempts to maintain the appearance of the neighbourhood and streets

Internal

- Sufficient kitchen space and amenities, including cupboard spaces
 - Modern cooking facilities for tenant needs
 - Modern bathroom and sanitary facilities for tenant needs
 - Damp, rot, and other recurring issues to be addressed, with the intention of fixing the cause of the problem so that it does not recur
 - Walls, ceilings, and floors should be free from cracks and structural issues
- addressed
- Kitchen and bathroom fixtures should be properly sealed and in good working order
 - Decor should be well maintained and appropriate

- Adequate lighting and heating for tenant needs

However, we're concerned that an exhaustive or definitive list may mean that the Council cannot act if an unlisted problem emerges. We suggest that the council retains the right to review or amend the list if a change in the standards is required, and that the intention of the scheme is adhered to.

Some of these issues are covered in the statutory obligations, the Manchester Renting Pledge, and current Manchester City Council standards for private rented sector accommodation. We suggest that a supplementary, easy to read guide on acceptable standards of accommodation would be helpful. This could be used by landlords to demonstrate their adherence to the scheme to tenants.

Incentives for Landlords

The scheme is clearly of benefit to tenants and residents, but we believe that the scheme should have clear benefits to landlords. While there are built in, long term benefits (such as fewer empty properties and improved condition of the area) we felt that there should be scope for more tangible benefits.

These could include:

- Publication of searchable inspection reports, promoting landlords whose properties are up to or above the criteria
- An award 'scale' to recognise landlords who go above the licence criteria.
- Free tenant checks and referencing
- Access to commercial waste disposal facilities
- Council run training and development/accreditation for landlords
- Attractive licence certificates which can be displayed in the properties.

North Tyneside Council has worked with the National Landlord Association to support professionalism in the Private Rented Sector, and we would welcome the exploration of this type of partnership for our scheme.

Publication of accounts and licence information

The scheme is self-funding, and as Councillors we ask that the financial information and accounts for the scheme can be made public, so that we can demonstrate this. Additionally, publication of the results of inspections would mean both tenants and landlords can see the positive impact the scheme is having.

Resident feedback

We have conducted door knocking sessions in the pilot area, and engaged with residents at meetings and individually. Overall, the feedback has been positive and supportive of the scheme.

In brief, residents ask:

- for the scheme to be extended to cover their area
- that the licence criteria be robust and stringent
- that the internal and external standards of privately rented houses are high
- that 'good' landlords are not punished or discouraged

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - that there is some way 'bad' landlords are publicised - for support to be given to owner/occupiers to improve their properties to the same standard – for an incentive for landlords as part of the scheme <p>Landlord feedback We have spoken to local landlords and people involved in the private rented sector, and have heard from residents that the scheme is a selling point for the private rented sector in Moss Side.</p> <p>In brief, landlords ask:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - that there be a tangible benefit for them from the scheme - that the scheme have a sliding scale, rather than a pass or fail - that there be a sliding scale of fines/sanctions, proportionate to the breach. - for the responsibilities of tenants be highlighted - for the Council work on the causes of the problems the scheme is trying to address - that the scheme improve the appearance and saleability for the area – for the certificate/award to be attractive <p>Conclusion As Councillors, we do understand that there are concerns from landlords about the scheme, and think it is important to build in a tangible and immediate benefit for landlords. However, we believe that the scheme will provide huge benefits to Moss Side residents, and that we have a duty to make sure that we use every available tool to ensure that Moss Side is a positive place to live, and that the well-being of our residents is protected.</p>
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In addition to the above representations the following common queries were noted at the consultation drop-in events:

15.02.2017 – Trinity House, Grove Close, Manchester

- Resident wishes to go travelling and let property out for 12 months only to fund trip, will they have to pay for a licence?
- A Trust manages two asylum seeker properties in the area and queried are they exempt, if not who applies, the Trust or Owner?
- Would MCC consider phased payments for landlords with many properties
- There used to be a landlord forum in the town hall can this be re-introduced?
- Properties should be inspected by MCC before they are let out by landlords
- Can the area be extended (popular requests for all of Acomb St and Crofton St) - conditions are worse near the Curry Mile, and top of Fallowfield where students are.
- Remove Thornton, Brompton and Horton streets as they are the nicest in the area
- Landlords feel like they are border control (Right to Rent)
- Will licensing mean the visual appearance of the area is improved, in particular issues with litter, fly-tipping, communal containers (alley-way) and street cleansing?
- Builders often fly tip in the area
- Lots of people queried why this areas has been chosen when the immediate neighbouring areas (Walmer St, Acomb St, Crofton, top of Fallowfield, Curry Mile area) are considered to be in worse condition. Top end of proposed area is primarily social housing.

- Residents and landlords both agree that the council's decision to place communal bins for residents to use in none gated alleyways has added to the problem. They believe it should have been individual bins for households in none gated properties and communal bins in gated properties. So they didn't believe SL would tackle the issue of rubbish in the area.

15.03.2017 – Millennium Powerhouse, Raby St, Manchester

- Council needs to support landlords and take action against empty properties
- Rents will increase
- Licensing should be extended to near shops on Wilmslow Rd
- Who should apply for the licence – managing agent or landlord
- Difficult getting references for students sometimes as its their first property
- Queries around proposals for extended mandatory HMO licensing (2 storey)
- Builders always dumping rubbish in the area
- Queries around cost of licence
- Scheme will need to be effectively resourced to take enforcement action to work
- Area does not meet conditions for Selective Licensing – Hayden St and Ruskin Ave
- Right To Rent – unclear what documents are sufficient as residential permits are sometimes time limited, majority of landlords don't know about this requirement.
- Older landlords may not maintain properties as the investment is their pension
- Regular updates to landlords about legislative changes and updates would be useful
- Will licensing address street cleansing and litter in area. Environmental quality of the area determines resident's health and sustainability of the area.

13.04.2017 – Birch Community Centre, Brighton Grove, Manchester

- Will impact investors and letting properties in the area
- Other legislation exists which has had an impact on landlords e.g. stamp duty for second homes, tax on mortgage interest, tenancy deposit scheme
- Additional cost and regulations
- Area doesn't suffer with the issues that have been the driving force for Selective Licensing
- There is a real sense of community in the area
- Rogue landlords only should be targeted
- Residents agreed issues in the area are with waste management, transiency, poorly managed rented houses and poor housing conditions
- Rents will increase
- Queries around cost of licence
- Scheme will need to be effectively resourced to take enforcement action to work