Private Rented Sector Strategy 2020 – 2024:

Draft for consultation

Analysis of the consultation responses

Consultation period: 21 September-25 October 2020

City of Westminster

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The headlines

Overview

- c400 stakeholders were consulted by email. Hard copy feedback forms were left in libraries
- **91 responses** were received (88 through the online survey, three by email)
- The analysis of the findings was completed by the council's Research and Insight team
- **The largest group** of respondents were **private tenants (34%)**, then private landlords (24%)
- Two online workshops were held, which were attended by 12 people from outside the council
- All the proposals received between **62% - 86% support**

Proposal 1: Improve conditions in the private rented sector and ensure lawful practices

•With 4C, Proposal 1C: 'Raise awareness of our services which tackle poor quality properties and unlawful practices and continue to address issues through negotiation and enforcement' was the most supported proposal overall (86% agreement)

•The least supported proposal overall was 1B: 'Keep the case for other types of discretionary licensing under review' (62% agreed)

Proposal 2: Support and engage with tenants, landlords and lettings agents

- Most supported, was 2B: 'Provide better advice and signposting for private tenants on our website' (82% agreed)
- Least supported was 2C: 'Continue to run and develop the landlords/lettings agents' forum (66% agreed)

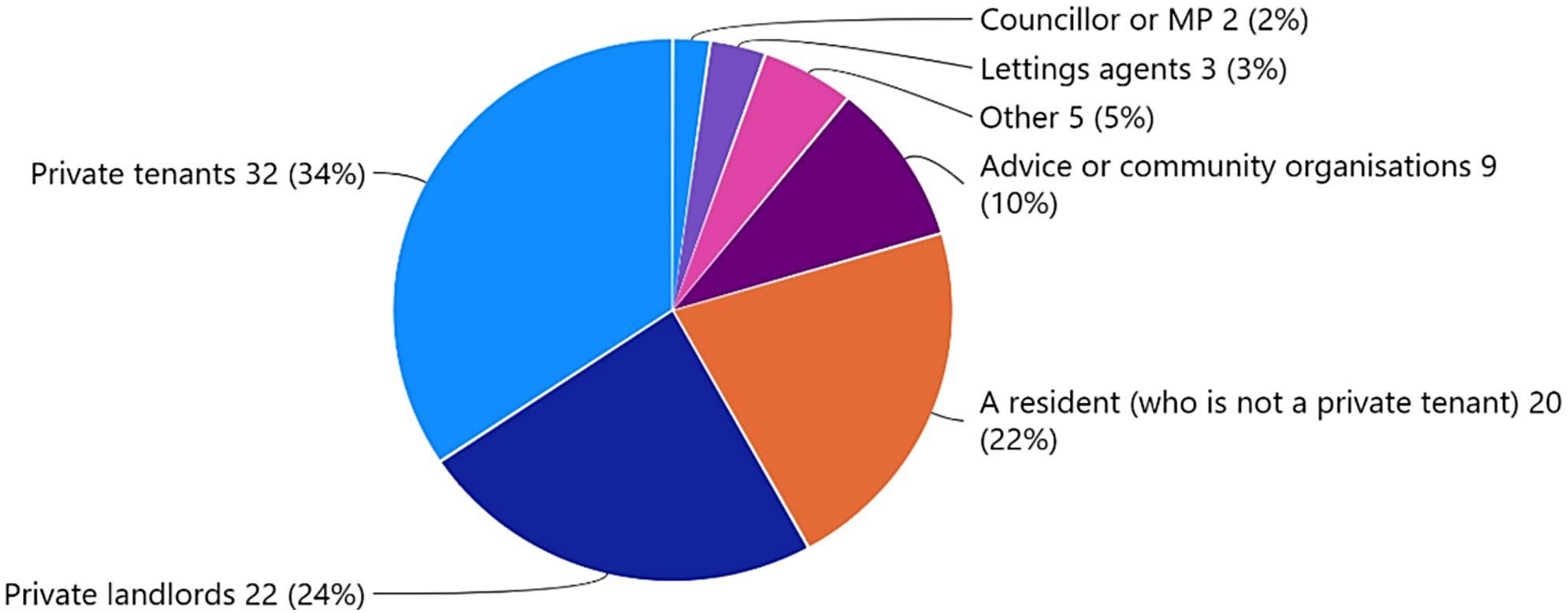
Proposal 3: Improve knowledge and intelligence about the sector and work with other organisations that give advice and support to tenants

- Most supported was 3C: 'Improve the way we work with advice agencies supporting private tenants, such as by looking at which in which they can get follow up information when they have referred a case to us' (77% agreed)
- Least supported was 3A: 'Embed the approach taken by the Housing Standards Taskforce in our everyday service i.e. using intelligence and data to coordinate our work' (70% agreed)

Proposal 4: Help to shape the sector (proposals for national changes)

- Most supported was 4C: 'Tenants' rights are explained as part of their tenancy agreement or license agreement in an accessible way, so they are easily available and understandable' (86% agreed). Along with Proposal 1C, this was the most supported proposal overall
- Least supported was 4B: 'Changes to the national Rogue Landlord Database' (64% agreed)

The respondents



Views on the proposals

Proposal 1: Improve conditions in the private rented sector and ensure lawful practices	Agree	Disagree	Neither agree or disagree
1A: Carry out a formal consultation on a proposal to introduce a discretionary licensing scheme across Westminster for all houses in multiple occupation (HMOs)	70%	13%	16%
1B: Keep the case for other types of discretionary licensing under review	62%	18%	20%
1C: Raise awareness of our services which tackle poor quality properties and unlawful practices and continue to address issues through negotiation and enforcement	86%	5%	7%
1D: Review our Enforcement Policy for the private rented sector	74%	9%	16%
1E: Do more to publicise successful legal action against landlords and agents	77%	8%	13%
1F: Work with the sector to increase the number of landlords and agents that are accredited with the London Landlords Accreditation Scheme	71%	12%	14%

Proposal 2: Support and engage with tenants, landlords and lettings agents	Agree	Disagree	Neither agree or disagree
2A: Continue to work with organisations like Safer Renting that provide specialist support to tenants	77%	9%	14%
2B: Provide better advice and signposting for private tenants on our website	82%	7%	11%
2C: Continue to run and develop the landlords/lettings agents' forum	66%	7%	28%
2D: Explore funding opportunities to improve the energy efficiency of private sector homes	79%	9%	12%

Views on the proposals

Proposal 3: Improve knowledge and intelligence about the sector and work with other organisations that give advice and support to tenants	Agree	Disagree	Neither agree or disagree
3A: Embed the approach taken by the Housing Standards Taskforce into our everyday service i.e. using intelligence and data to coordinate our work	70%	9%	21%
3B: Establish a new private rented sector strategy group, bringing together organisations from across the city with an interest in the sector	71%	13%	16%
3C: Improve the way we work with advice agencies supporting private tenants, such as by looking at ways in which they can get follow up information when they have referred a case to us	77%	8%	16%

Proposal 4: Help to shape the sector	Agree	Disagree	Neither agree or disagree
4A: A national register of landlords and lettings agents	67%	10%	14%
4B: Changes to the national Rogue Landlord Database	64%		33%
4C: Tenants' rights are explained as part of their tenancy agreement or license in an accessible way, so they are easily available and understandable	86%		11%
4D: Changes to the Housing, Health and Safety Rating System so it is simpler, easier and quicker to implement and explain	83%	2%	14%

Views of different respondents

Private landlords

- Proposal 2D: ‘Explore funding opportunities to improve energy efficiency of private sector homes’ had the most support (77% agreed)
- Proposal 4A had the least support (30%): Make the case for ‘A national register of landlords and lettings agents’

Private tenants

- Proposal 4D had the most support: Make the case for ‘Changes to the Housing, Health and Safety Rating System so it is simpler, easier and quicker to implement and explain’ (100% agreed)
- Proposal 2C had the least support: ‘Continue to run and develop the landlords/lettings agents' forum’ (47% agreed)

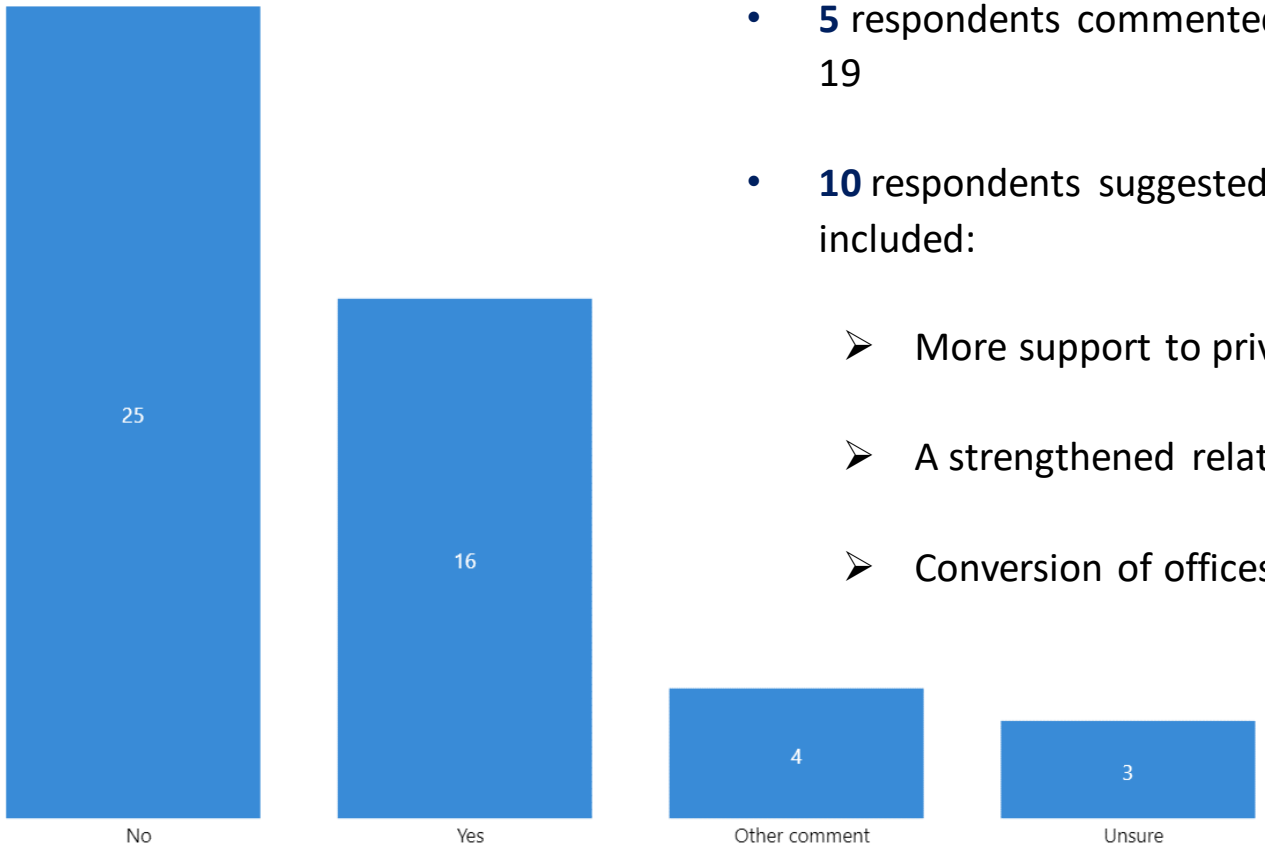
Other Residents

- Proposal 1C had the most support: ‘Raise awareness of our services which tackle poor quality properties and unlawful practices and continue to address issues through negotiation and enforcement’ (100% agreed)
- Proposal 4A had the least support: ‘Make the case for a national register of landlords and lettings agents’ (70% agreed)

Advice and community organisations

- Proposals 1A: ‘Carry out a formal consultation on a proposal to introduce a discretionary licensing scheme across Westminster for all houses in multiple occupation’, and 1D: ‘Review our Enforcement Policy for the private rented sector’ had the most support (100% agreed)
- Proposal 3B had the least support: ‘Establish a new private rented sector strategy group, bringing organisations together from across the city with an interest in the sector’ (56% agreed)

Views on if any changes should be made to the strategy as a result of COVID-19



- **5** respondents commented that the strategy should be delayed or stopped due to COVID-19
- **10** respondents suggested changes, although there were no common themes, ideas included:
  - More support to private tenants
  - A strengthened relationship with the police as illegal evictions will increase
  - Conversion of offices to residential

General comments on the strategy and is anything missing?

Respondents were asked if they had any general comments about the draft strategy and if anything was missing

General comments

Areas where the same issue was mentioned three times or more, included

- There needing to be a balance between the needs of tenants and landlords in the strategy (mentioned eight times)
- Opposition to the proposal to consult on licensing houses in multiple occupation (mentioned four times)
- Support for the proposal to consult on licensing houses in multiple occupation (mentioned three times)

Things missing

Areas where the same theme was raised three times for more, included:

- Short lets should be included (mentioned six times)
- Measures to increase housing supply (mentioned three times)
- Further proposals to change the sector: there were a number of ideas with no common themes (mentioned five times)