

Private Housing (Tenancies) (Scotland) Bill

Written submission to the Infrastructure and Capital investment Committee

The Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA)

1. COSLA, the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities, is the representative voice of Scottish local government, lobbying on behalf of our members – 28 out of 32 councils in Scotland. Together Scotland's councils represent over 5 million people, spend around £12 billion a year on local services, and employ over 260,000 people.
2. We welcome the opportunity to comment on the high level principles of this Bill. Our members considered the first draft and the general intentions of the Bill in May this year and expressed their support for these.
3. In order to meet Scotland's housing needs, there is a requirement for a strong and buoyant private rented sector (PRS), with good tenant protection, weighted up against potential loss of PRS stock.
4. We wish to highlight that the public sector is under immense pressure, due to reduced finance available on the one hand, and increasing demand on services on the other. Therefore, any new demands on local government need to be fully funded.
5. We note that where provisions for the PRS are failing, local government is frequently required to meet resulting needs. This can, for example, be in the form of advice and housing needs, leading to increased pressure on homelessness services and/or the social housing stock more generally.
6. We are aware that some of the provisions in the Bill could have unintended consequences, for example where people are being deprived of their tenancies through no fault of their own. We would like to explore such provisions further to identify alternatives or better solutions.
7. Our response to the draft Financial Memorandum (FM) submitted last week highlighted that the FM does not take account of the set-up costs in local government, associated with the need to respond to public/landlord/tenant enquiries and up-skilling a wide range of teams and advice services (Private Sector Housing Teams as well as staff working in Homelessness and Housing Options, Legal Services, Advice Services, Housing Benefits Teams, Social Care, Youth Services and Antisocial Behaviour Teams.)
8. Existing work of councils, possibly in aligned areas of activity concerning standards in the PRS, would need to be discontinued if this work were to be prioritised without the necessary funding in place.

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