

Cross Party Group for Rented Housing and Leasehold Properties

9th December 2022, 10am – 11am
Virtual meeting

Senedd Members: Mike Hedges, Jane Dodds, Carolyn Thomas, Rhianon Passmore

Senedd staff: Dan Rose (Office of Carolyn Thomas), Sion Trewyn (Office of Sioned Williams), Ryland Doyle (Office of Mike Hedges)

Secretariat: William Ward (Consultant to the NRLA), Richard Robinson (Consultant to the NRLA) Chris Norris (NRLA), Kayleigh Buckingham (NRLA), Joshua Lovell (NRLA)

Speakers: Dr Robert Smith, Collaborative Centre for Housing Evidence (CaCHE)

External members: David Wilton (TPAS Cymru), Ceri Cryer (Age Wales), Sam Rees (RICS), Ruth Power (Shelter), Jim McKirdle (Welsh LGA), David Rowlands, Alicja Zeleinska (Tai Pawb), Mark Harris, Matthew Dicks (CIH Cymru)

AGM

- Mike Hedges was unanimously elected as Chair of the Group.
- Jane Dodds, Carolyn Thomas and Sioned Williams were identified as members of the Group.
- The NRLA was confirmed as the Secretariat and mentioned that a co-secretariat with a background on social rented housing was being sought.

Dr Robert Smith, CaCHE

- Talked about some of the key issues for housing policy in Wales with evidence from research undertaken, referencing a report he authored available [here](#).
- Dr Smith referred to six themes as follows:
 - Affordable housing supply. This affects all tenures and there is a general mismatch between supply and demand.
 - The Private Rented Sector (PRS) has grown considerably in Wales and has doubled in size over the past few years. There are issues around regulation of the PRS and improving the quality of the PRS. He mentioned that rent control is a significant issue in Wales, and he believed there maybe a consultation Green Paper in 2023 in the Senedd.
 - Homelessness remains a key long-term issue in Wales, particularly in the social rented sector. There is a real need to improve access to housing.
 - Tenant engagement with the social and private rented sector is a really important issue to address. There has been declining support for tenant engagement, which is very disappointing.
 - Creating sustainable housing, that is energy is efficient is also vitally important.
 - Also, very important to emphasise the linkages between housing and physical heal and mental health of people in Wales.

Other topics mentioned by Dr Smith included:

- Leasehold perceptions, remediation work being done to leasehold properties.
- Ageing and housing quality – there are significant problems with quality especially within the PRS.

- Decarbonisation of the existing housing stock.
- Continuing work being undertaken at UK level, with a report coming out next year on inequalities in housing. This will certainly be relevant to Wales.
- On social housing, there is the need to look at where allocations are being made. Knowledge of this is not as good as it should be.
- Through CaCHE there is lots of ongoing work concerning the environment and decarbonisation.
- There is a lack of robust good quality data as the NRLA have previously alluded to regarding the private sector.
- With the cost-of-living crisis, this means that there can be rapid changes that we should all be aware of.

Mike Hedges, MS

- Agreed very much on the housing and health priorities.
- Also raised the issue of Sheltered Housing, very popular with elderly people.
- He has questions around Airbnb.

Matthew Dicks

- Questioned the Terms of Reference (ToR) of the Group. Mike confirmed that the ToR will come to the next meeting.

Ruth Power

- Talked about affordability in housing and how crucial as an issue this is.
- Also important for all forums to measure success by what outcomes they make, with the same for this group.

David Wilton

- Mentioned that the Bevan Foundation have undertaken some excellent work on Airbnb.

Robert Smith

- Mentioned that the House of Lords are looking at short term lets including Airbnb.
- He also mentioned with regards to data – the importance of looking at things locally and systematically. For example housing issues in South Wales, may be very different to parts of North Wales (very important to acknowledge this).
- Important that this group does not replicate what others are doing.

Jane Dodds MS

- Raised the issue of licensing schemes.
- Also said that she represents a largely rural area and that the group must consider the challenges this area faces and in particular with the PRS provision.
- Is very interested in rent controls.
- She wanted to know what concrete proposals this group can make and take back to the Senedd.

Carolyn Thomas MS

- Thinks that Airbnb will have to formally register.

- Asked why the group had not heard yet from the tenant's perspective.
- Talked generally about the lack of homes for people, and that this should be a primary focus for this group.
- In North Wales she referred to the lack of housing with some councils retaining their stock in-house, whilst others don't.

Sam Rees

- Acknowledged clearly that there is a supply issue.
- Airbnb may not be as big a challenge as people first think. There is a grey area surrounding those properties let out for 365 days a year, compared to those available just for a couple of weeks, or even days.
- There is a shortage of supply within the PRS.
- There are a distinct lack of initiatives towards the PRS.
- He has been communicating with landlords who have left the market. Reasons for this have been varied, overbearing regulations, changing tax rates.
- Landlords do care from his experience for tenant welfare.

David Wilton

- The rent cap is largely well accepted.
- Service charges are also very important to tackle as they are a key issue for tenants.
- Talked about seeing new build properties with damp and mould, so this should not be seen as an isolated incident that hit the national headlines a few weeks ago.

Sion Trewyn

- Suggested we invite Acorn to the next meeting.

Chris Norris

- Talked about the supply issue and Airbnb.
- Mentioned that NRLA do have various data sets. Some on landlords exiting the PRS but there is uncertainty about where are they then going.
- On Positive Input Ventilation (PIV) – NRLA are pushing their members towards this. He would like to know how widely these are being used.

Alicja Zeleinska

- Need to make sure this group does not duplicate what others do.

Ruth Power

- On social housing supply, queried which Cross Party Group is best placed to deal with this.
- Acquisition of private property and bringing this and lost into social ownership are really important areas this group could discuss.

Robert Smith

- Housing debate in Wales varied and interesting.

- Supply and affordability in both the social and the PRS are issues that are very important and worth considering going forward.
- Evidence to inform policy absolutely crucial. Wales does have as mentioned before, a lack of good data.
- Important to consider Welsh only housing problems, without ignoring what is happening in wider part of UK.

Mike Hedges

- Terms of References need to be prepared ahead of the next meeting.
- Also need to ask the Welsh government, questions around Airbnb, and we need specific data on this.