

**Subject: Scrutiny Report: Private Sector Agents****Date of Meeting: 15<sup>th</sup> December 2011****Report of: Strategic Director Resources****Contact Officer:** Name: Tom Hook Tel: 29-1110

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**Wards Affected:** All**FOR GENERAL RELEASE****1. SUMMARY AND POLICY CONTEXT:**

- 1.1 The Council's Constitution requires that the findings of scrutiny panels, along with the executive response, be reported to Full Council for information.
- 1.2 This report presents the Private Sector Agents Scrutiny Panel findings and recommendations (Appendix 1) along with the Cabinet Member response (Appendix 2).

**2. RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- 2.1 That Member's note Appendices 1 and 2.

**3. BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

- 3.1 A Notice of Motion regarding the fees charged by private sector letting agents was considered by Full Council on 18 March 2010, where it was decided that a cross-party members' working group should be formed to examine the issue in detail. This group agreed to refer the matter to scrutiny. The Adult Social Care and Housing Overview & Scrutiny Committee (ASCHOSC) subsequently decided to establish a scrutiny panel to investigate the matter in depth.
- 3.2 The scrutiny panel focused on the issue of letting agents' fees, and more specifically on the 'additional' fees many agents charge tenants for checking credit history or references, for renewing tenancies, taking inventories etc.
- 3.3 In the course of its investigations, the panel talked to city letting agents; to council housing and trading standards officers; to Brighton Housing Trust and the local Citizens Advice Bureau; to the Southern Landlords' Association and to private sector tenants. The full scrutiny panel report along with the evidence base is available in Members rooms and on the overview and scrutiny webpages.

**4. CONSULTATION**

4.1 No formal consultation has been undertaken in relation to this report. The Scrutiny Review undertook extensive consultation.

## **5. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:**

### Financial Implications:

5.1 No specific implications as this report is purely for the Council to note.

### Legal Implications:

5.2 As indicated in paragraphs 1.1 and 2.1 above, and in accordance with the council's procedure rules on overview and scrutiny, this report is purely for Council to note. There are no further legal implications arising directly from the report.

Lawyer consulted: Oliver Dixon

Date: 29 November 2011

### Equalities Implications:

5.3 No specific implications as this report is purely for the Council to note.

### Sustainability Implications:

5.4 No specific implications as this report is purely for the Council to note.

### Crime & Disorder Implications:

5.5 No specific implications as this report is purely for the Council to note.

### Risk and Opportunity Management Implications:

5.6 No specific implications as this report is purely for the Council to note.

### Corporate / Citywide Implications:

5.7 No specific implications as this report is purely for the Council to note.

## **SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION**

### **Appendices:**

1. Summary of the Letting Agents scrutiny review.
2. Executive response to the scrutiny recommendations.

### **Documents in Members' Rooms:**

1. Full Scrutiny Panel report and evidence base