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4.4.16 .

Dear Howard,

Housing and Planning Bill: Provision of Housing Tenure Information

During the debate in Committee on 9 February, I signaled the Government's intention to establish a working group to explore the issues raised in the new clause you proposed to require local authorities to use council tax registration forms to collect information on housing tenure to identify and tackle rogue landlords.

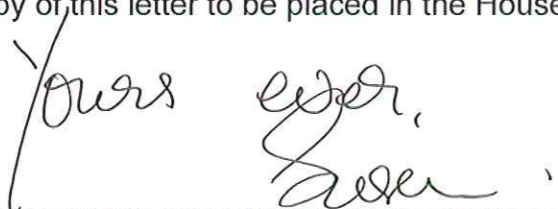
I can confirm that Dame Angela Watkinson MP has agreed to chair the working group, given her strong interest in this area. The group's main objectives will be to assess the extent to which local authorities are using their existing powers to seek information on housing tenure through the Local Government Finance Act 1992 and Housing Act 2004 when collecting information for the purposes of council tax administration, and examining how information on housing tenure collected in this way would help local authorities to tackle rogue landlords in the Private Rented Sector.

The group's members will include representatives from the Local Government Association (LGA), the Residential Landlords Association and a selection of individual local authority representatives.

The working group will meet in April and will report to Ministers in June. In advance of the first meeting, I have asked my officials to work with the LGA to develop a short survey to local authorities to gather evidence on the extent to which authorities currently collect tenure information via council tax registration forms; whether they collect landlord details; and how they use the information received to tackle rogue landlords.

I am copying this letter to Earl Cathcart, the Earl of Lytton, Lords Campbell-Savours, Greaves, O'Shaughnessy, Beecham, Foster and Baroness Hollis of Heigham.

I will also arrange for a copy of this letter to be placed in the House library.


BARONESS WILLIAMS OF TRAFFORD