

So far as the substantive issue is concerned, our view is that it's not at all clear that these regulations are having the intended impact in either the private or social housing sectors. There is a general feeling amongst our members that the debt thresholds for action on rent arrears in both sectors are too high and do little more than increase the rent outstanding at the point of eviction rather than reducing evictions themselves.

Similarly, it is not clear that the cap on rent increases for private tenants is offering any substantial protection to tenants in most areas and considerable concern that it is having the effect of reducing investment in private renting, particularly in the more professional and better quality "build to rent" sector. There is certainly some evidence that private landlords are starting to sell up and the sector overall is shrinking. In some cases, tenants are being evicted as a result. Far from protecting existing tenants the legislation could well be pushing them into higher levels of debt or resulting in them losing their homes.

The PRS in particular is a complex sector, it plays a number of key roles in the wider housing system and economy, including meeting the particular needs of students, the tourism sector, those moving between areas and jobs and those living and working in a particular area for shorter periods. But it is also a sector that has clear and well documented links to serious and organised crime and provides housing to a significant number of vulnerable and low income households.

The current legal framework, including the tenancy regime and regulatory system is simply inadequate to drive the improvements required or the protection (from both bad landlords and poor condition properties) that tenants are entitled to expect.

In the light of this our view is that the Cost of Living (Tenant protection) (Scotland) Act 2022 should be withdrawn rather than extended.

We would go a little further and suggest tht the Scottish Government's (now ten year old) Private Rented Sector Strategy (<https://www.gov.scot/binaries/content/documents/govscot/publications/strategy-plan/2013/05/place-stay-place-call-home-strategy-private-rented-sector-scotland/documents/00423336-pdf/00423336-pdf/govscot%3Adocument/00423336.pdf> ) needs to be reviewed and updated to take account of the significant changes in both legislation and wider market context that have taken place over the past ten years. The revised strategy needs to set out a clear role for the private rented sector in the context of Housing to 2040 as the basis for further reform and development of the regulatory and enforcement regime.

I hope that is helpful. We are, of course happy to discuss and develop these views further for the committee if that would be helpful.