

# Hackney Property Licensing Consultation – Landlords & Letting Agents Online Session Q&A

Wednesday 16 July 2025, 6–7.30pm

## Summary of event

This online session formed part of Hackney Council's consultation on proposals to introduce new borough-wide property licensing schemes. Officers from Hackney Council and Public Perspectives gave a presentation and answered questions from landlords, letting agents and residents.

The consultation proposes:

- An **Additional Licensing Scheme** for all HMOs borough-wide.
- A **Selective Licensing Scheme** for all other private rented homes in 17 of Hackney's 21 wards.

You can read the full proposals and respond to the consultation at:

[bit.ly/Hackney-Licensing](https://bit.ly/Hackney-Licensing)

Consultation closes: **21 September 2025**.

## Q&A

### Q1. How should anti-social behaviour from tenants be reported as part of the property licensing system?

As part of the consultation on property licensing in Hackney, the Council is exploring how best to support landlords, tenants, and neighbours in addressing anti-social behaviour (ASB) linked to private rented properties. The proposals for both selective and additional licensing include potential licence conditions that would require landlords to take reasonable steps to manage and reduce ASB caused by their tenants or visitors.

If introduced, the scheme would not change how individuals report ASB in general, complaints about noise, waste, or other nuisance behaviour would still be made through existing routes such as Hackney Council's ASB team or the police. However, licensing could enable the Council to follow up more effectively with landlords where ASB is linked to a specific rented property.

In other boroughs with similar licensing schemes, landlords are typically expected to:

- Respond to complaints of ASB within a set timeframe (e.g. 21 days);
- Keep written records of action taken (such as issuing warnings or engaging with tenants);
- Work with the Council or police in serious or repeated cases;
- Ensure tenancy agreements make clear that ASB may lead to eviction if unresolved.

Hackney's draft licensing conditions reflect these kinds of responsibilities, though the final approach may differ depending on the outcome of this consultation.

We're particularly keen to hear from residents, landlords and managing agents on this issue, including how ASB reporting and enforcement could be improved as part of any future licensing scheme.

## **Q2. If we have tenants causing anti-social behaviour, how can we evict them?**

Eviction remains a legal process governed by national legislation, and any landlord considering it must follow the correct procedures under housing law. A future licensing scheme would not create new powers to evict tenants — but it could help clarify expectations for how landlords should manage anti-social behaviour (ASB) and what steps they might be expected to take before considering eviction.

In boroughs that already operate licensing schemes, licence conditions often require landlords to:

- Act promptly when notified of ASB;
- Keep written records of complaints and correspondence;
- Issue warnings to tenants about their behaviour;
- Cooperate with the Council and police where formal action is being taken.

Where these steps are taken and documented, landlords may be better placed to build a case for possession if eviction becomes necessary. In turn, licensing can support a more consistent standard of tenancy management and offer guidance for landlords who are unsure how to handle these situations.

As part of this consultation, we're exploring what kind of conditions or support might be most useful to landlords dealing with difficult situations — including how to balance tenant rights with the need to protect neighbours and local communities.

We would welcome views on this through the consultation.

## **Q3. With this new scheme, is there a specific time between applying and being issued with a licence?**

We recognise that during Hackney's previous pilot licensing scheme, there were significant delays in processing some applications, in some cases, licences were not issued for several months after submission. We know this caused frustration, particularly where landlords needed confirmation of a licence to satisfy mortgage lenders or finalise tenancy arrangements.

That experience has informed how we are approaching this new proposed scheme. If approved, we intend to set up a dedicated licensing service to manage applications, inspections, enforcement, and landlord support from the outset. This would be

properly resourced and designed to handle the expected volume of applications in a timely way.

While the consultation is still ongoing and no final decision has been made, one of the key lessons from the previous scheme is the need to set clearer expectations around processing times. Best practice suggests that applications should be assessed and licences issued within around three months, assuming all required information is supplied promptly and the case is straightforward. We're keen to hear from landlords during the consultation about what timescales would be workable and what support would help smooth the process.

#### **Q4. Why has the licence fee increased from £500 to £925?**

We understand that the proposed fee of £925 for a selective licence is a significant increase from the £500 fee charged during Hackney's earlier pilot scheme. It's a fair question, and part of the reason we are consulting is to test whether the proposed fee structure feels proportionate to the aims of the scheme.

The proposed fee reflects the full cost of running a much more robust and better-resourced licensing system. Building on the experience of the previous scheme, which operated with limited staffing and enforcement capacity, the new proposals involve setting up a dedicated service to:

- process and assess licence applications,
- carry out inspections,
- respond to complaints,
- take enforcement action where needed,
- and support landlords to comply with conditions and raise standards.

The [proposed fee is split into two parts](#):

- **Part A (£555)** covers the cost of processing the application and determining eligibility.
- **Part B (£370)** covers the cost of managing and enforcing the licence once granted.

Importantly, the Council is not allowed to make a profit from licensing. The fee is based on recovering the actual cost of delivering the service over the full five-year licence period. This includes officer time, system costs, and inspection work, which were underfunded in the earlier trial.

[We are also proposing discounts to help reduce the fee in some circumstances](#). These include discounts for accredited landlords, energy-efficient properties (EPC rated C or above), and applications involving multiple units in the same building. These can reduce the cost by up to £200 per property, depending on eligibility.

Through this consultation, we are inviting views on whether the proposed fee is fair and proportionate, and whether the discount options work for different types of landlords.

We have also heard feedback about the importance of transparency. If the scheme is introduced, the Council will consider how best to provide regular updates on progress, delivery, and how funds are being used. We are keen to hear through the consultation what kind of reporting and accountability measures landlords and others would find most useful.

#### **Q5. How will the Council monitor whether landlords are taking up the licence?**

If the proposed licensing scheme goes ahead, the Council would be responsible for ensuring that all landlords operating within the designated areas apply for a licence where required. We know from experience — in Hackney and elsewhere — that monitoring and enforcement are crucial to the effectiveness of any scheme. To address concerns from the previous pilot, where some landlords operated without a licence for extended periods, we're proposing to put in place a more proactive compliance and enforcement function. This would include:

- Cross-referencing licensing data with Council Tax, Housing Benefit, Planning, and Tenancy Deposit Scheme records to identify properties that may require a licence but haven't applied;
- Data matching with national databases, such as the EPC Register, Companies House, and Rightmove listings, to identify rented properties within the designated area;
- Targeted inspections and enforcement for high-risk properties or landlords who have previously failed to licence;
- Community intelligence, including reports from tenants, neighbours, and letting agents, which would help us identify unlicensed properties.

This approach is informed by good practice in other boroughs, such as Newham and Waltham Forest, where strong enforcement teams and data tools have been key to improving conditions in the private rented sector.

The aim is to create a level playing field, so that compliant landlords aren't undercut by those ignoring the rules, and to focus our resources where they can make the biggest impact.

That said, we're still shaping the detail of how this would work, and welcome feedback through the consultation on how best to encourage take-up and ensure compliance.

**Q6. Where has the cost-benefit analysis been published in line with consultation procedures?**

There is no statutory requirement under current legislation for councils to publish a formal economic cost-benefit analysis when consulting on property licensing schemes. However, as part of the consultation process, we have published an [Evidence Pack](#) that sets out the rationale for the proposed licensing designations, the expected benefits of the schemes, and the issues they are intended to address – including poor housing conditions, anti-social behaviour, and ineffective property management within the private rented sector.

To ensure transparency and support informed consultation responses, we have also published:

- [A proposed Fee Schedule \(Appendix 4\)](#), which sets out the proposed licence fees, including how they would be split between application and enforcement costs, along with details of any discounts offered.
- An [Equality Review \(Appendix 5\)](#), which assesses the groups most likely to be affected by the proposals and considers how any disproportionate impacts can be mitigated.

The proposed fees have been developed through internal financial modelling, designed to reflect the anticipated cost of setting up and delivering the schemes. This ensures the schemes are compliant with legal requirements, which stipulate that fees must be set on a cost-recovery basis only. Councils are not permitted to generate surplus income or make a profit from licensing.

While the detailed financial models are not published due to their commercially sensitive nature, they are based on established principles of fairness, sustainability, and alignment with the objectives of the proposed schemes.

We continue to assess the wider potential impacts of the proposals – including both costs and benefits – and feedback received through the consultation will help shape any final recommendations to Cabinet later this year. We welcome views from all stakeholders on whether the proposals are proportionate and whether they present a clear case for action.

**Q7. Do council-owned properties get inspected under this scheme? If not, why not?**

Council-owned properties are not included in the proposed licensing scheme — and this is consistent with national legislation. Under the **Housing Act 2004**, licensing applies only to private landlords. Properties owned and managed by local authorities are not subject to the same licensing requirements because councils are already subject to different regulatory and inspection regimes.

That said, we understand the concern about fairness and accountability. While council homes are not part of this scheme, Hackney Council does have legal responsibilities as a landlord and is subject to the Regulator of Social Housing, tenant

satisfaction measures, and new consumer standards introduced under the **Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023**. These frameworks include performance inspections, tenant rights to repairs, and routes to escalate complaints, all of which are legally enforceable.

The proposed licensing scheme is specifically aimed at addressing problems in the private rented sector, where conditions are less regulated and tenants may have fewer protections or more difficulty raising issues. [The evidence shows](#) that a significant proportion of private rented homes in Hackney are affected by serious hazards or poor management, and that enforcement is more reactive and fragmented than in the social housing sector.

Through this consultation, we welcome views on how to ensure consistency and fairness across housing sectors, even where legal duties differ.

**Q8. If the licensing scheme is about making the Private Rented Sector fairer, where is the evidence that it is currently unfair or has failed?**

The proposed licensing scheme is based on detailed evidence that the private rented sector (PRS) in Hackney, while essential to meeting housing need, is not working equally well for everyone. Many landlords operate responsibly, and we want to support that, but the data shows that a significant proportion of PRS homes in Hackney fall below safe and legal standards, and tenants often struggle to get issues resolved.

Some of the key evidence includes:

- **Nearly 20%** of PRS homes in Hackney are estimated to contain serious hazards (category 1 under the Housing Health and Safety Rating System), based on national modelling applied to local housing stock.
- Council enforcement teams dealt with **over 4,000 serious housing condition complaints** in the PRS between 2018 and 2023, often responding to damp, mould, fire risks, and overcrowding.
- **Anti-social behaviour**, including persistent noise and waste issues, is disproportionately associated with PRS homes in some parts of the borough, with over **12,500 ASB incidents** recorded in PRS properties over a five-year period.
- In parts of the borough like Cazenove, the rate of poor housing conditions is nearly 180% higher than the national average of 10%. Yet the Council has no formal visibility or proactive powers to inspect unless a tenant complains.

The intention behind the proposed scheme is not to label all private landlords as problematic, but to bring more transparency, consistency, and accountability to a sector that remains under-regulated compared to social housing or owner-occupied homes. Licensing can help ensure all landlords, not just the good ones, meet the minimum legal standards, while also giving tenants more confidence and routes to resolve problems.

The consultation is an opportunity to test this evidence and hear from landlords, tenants and others about whether the proposed scheme strikes the right balance. We welcome feedback on whether the case for intervention is strong enough, and what alternative measures might work if not.

**Q9. If an inspection leads to improvement requirements, how long do landlords have to make those changes?**

If the proposed licensing scheme is introduced, inspections would be one of the ways the Council monitors compliance with licensing conditions and wider housing standards. However, the length of time landlords would have to carry out improvements would depend on what's found and the legal or enforcement route taken.

At this stage, the exact timescales have not been set, but we anticipate a graduated approach based on the severity of the issue. For example:

- **Minor issues** identified under licensing conditions, such as waste management failures, pest control problems, etc, could result in a warning letter with a set timescale to comply, typically around **21 days**, in line with conditions proposed in both the [selective](#) and [additional](#) licensing schemes.
- **Serious hazards**, such as damp and mould, faulty electrics, or fire risks, may require formal enforcement under the Housing Act 2004. In those cases, landlords would receive a legal notice (such as an Improvement Notice) which comes into effect after 21 days. The compliance period to complete the works then begins and can be as short as 14 days, but is more typically around three months — and longer if the works are extensive.
- In practice, officers would be expected to take a reasonable and proportionate approach, especially where landlords are responsive and working in good faith to resolve the issue.

Importantly, licensing does not override existing housing enforcement law — rather, it gives the Council clearer powers to proactively inspect and follow up. Through this consultation, we're exploring how to ensure that compliance expectations are fair, transparent, and manageable for landlords, while ensuring tenants are not left living in unsafe or substandard conditions.

We welcome feedback on how best to structure these timescales and whether different approaches should apply for different kinds of issues.

**Q10. What metric would define success for this scheme – fewer landlords, fewer tenants, reduced rent inflation?**

The goal of this proposed licensing scheme is not to reduce the number of landlords or tenants, nor is it designed to influence rent levels directly. It's about improving standards, safety, and accountability in the private rented sector, particularly in areas where the evidence shows tenants are more likely to be living in hazardous or poorly managed homes.



A successful scheme would not be measured by how many people leave the sector, but rather by:

- **Fewer serious hazards** in licensed properties (e.g. less damp, mould, overcrowding or fire risk)
- **Faster resolution** of complaints from tenants and neighbours
- **Higher compliance rates** among landlords with legal and licensing requirements
- **Stronger enforcement outcomes** where landlords fail to meet their responsibilities
- And over time, **increased tenant satisfaction** and confidence in their housing conditions.

In line with these outcomes, we have also heard calls for clearer reporting to track progress and measure the impact of the scheme. If the scheme is introduced, the Council will explore how best to report back on delivery, outcomes, and areas for improvement.

We also want to see more **support for responsible landlords**, including clear guidance, faster processing of applications, and discounts for those who already meet high standards.

While we recognise that changes to regulation can affect the housing market, there is no evidence from other boroughs that well-managed licensing schemes lead to a significant loss of landlords or sustained rent increases. In fact, tenants consistently tell us they are willing to pay fair rent if it means living in a safe and decent home.

Through this consultation, we're inviting feedback on what success should look like, and how to make sure the scheme focuses on raising standards without placing unnecessary burdens on those already doing the right thing.

**Q11. How will the Council ensure the proposed scheme can be effectively enforced across 17 wards, given the challenges experienced during the previous three-ward scheme?**

We understand the concern, and it is one of the most important questions we are considering through this consultation. The earlier licensing scheme in Hackney, which covered three wards, did face resourcing challenges, particularly in managing high application volumes, carrying out inspections, and responding to breaches in a timely way.

If a wider scheme is approved, it would not be delivered in the same way. We are proposing to establish a dedicated licensing service with the right staffing, systems, and enforcement capacity in place from the outset. This would allow for:

- Additional inspection and enforcement officers recruited specifically to cover the expanded area



- Proactive identification of unlicensed properties in line with approaches used by other London councils, making use of external data sources and specialist investigation tools.
- A prioritised enforcement model, focusing first on the highest-risk landlords and properties, rather than attempting to inspect every home immediately.

The proposed fees have been designed to cover the full cost of running the scheme over a five-year period. This means it would be properly resourced and able to deliver on its aims.

That said, the ability to scale up effectively will depend on the final design of the scheme. We are using the consultation to test whether this approach feels workable and to hear from landlords, tenants and others about what would make it deliverable in practice.

**Q12. Has the Council carried out an affordability survey to assess how this might affect renters in the PRS?**

No, the Council has not carried out a standalone affordability survey specifically looking at the impact of licensing on private renters. However, the likely impacts on tenants, including those related to affordability and financial vulnerability, have been considered through the equality review and the evidence base supporting this consultation.

[The Equality Review \(Appendix 5\)](#) identifies that renters on low incomes are disproportionately represented in the private rented sector and are more likely to live in homes with serious hazards or poor management. It also notes that these groups are more vulnerable to rent increases, housing insecurity and disrepair, and that licensing must be designed to avoid unintended consequences for them.

To address this, the proposed scheme includes:

- Targeted engagement with tenants during the consultation, including through voluntary sector groups and community events
- An emphasis on landlord responsibility, with licensing fees set on a cost-recovery basis and not passed directly to tenants through the Council
- A focus on enforcement of minimum standards, which should in principle improve conditions for renters without requiring them to pay more for basic safety and maintenance.

While we recognise that rent levels are shaped by a range of wider market factors, such as mortgage rates, supply and demand, we are keen to monitor how the scheme, if approved, might influence affordability for tenants. Feedback from renters during the consultation is an important part of that picture.

If there is demand, the Council may explore additional research in future to better understand the affordability experience of renters in Hackney and how it links to property licensing and housing quality. While we recognise that rent levels are

shaped by wider market factors, such as mortgage rates, supply and demand, there is no evidence from other boroughs that licensing fees are routinely passed directly on to tenants. The fee is modest when spread over the full five-year licence period, and we expect landlords to absorb this as part of their normal operating costs.

**Q13. How will the Council know who isn't licensed?**

As noted in the answer to Q5, if the proposed licensing scheme is approved, the Council would encourage as many landlords as possible to come forward and apply, and would use a combination of data and proactive investigation to identify properties that may require a licence but have not yet applied.

This includes cross-referencing internal records, using national data sources, gathering community intelligence, and carrying out targeted inspections in high-risk areas. These methods have been used effectively in other boroughs, such as Newham and Waltham Forest, and we are exploring how similar approaches could work in Hackney.

We are also considering how best to phase the rollout of the scheme, if approved, to ensure that resources can focus on both processing applications and identifying properties that may be operating without a licence.

Feedback through the consultation will help shape how this enforcement work is prioritised and resourced.

**Q14. Will Council properties be subject to the new licensing scheme as well?**

As set out in the answer to Q7, national legislation exempts local authority housing from property licensing, meaning Council-owned homes are not part of the proposed scheme. However, council housing is subject to separate and robust regulatory regimes, including the Regulator of Social Housing and the Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023, which ensure high standards, legal obligations around repairs, and performance monitoring.

That said, Hackney Council recognises the need to maintain high standards across all housing types. Tenants in council homes have access to clear complaint processes and escalation routes, and performance is monitored by both internal teams and external regulators.

**Q15. Could a renewal discount be introduced for landlords with a long history of compliance or multiple licences?**

This is something we are open to exploring, and we recognise the principle behind the question. Many landlords in Hackney operate responsibly, and it is reasonable to ask whether long-standing compliance could be reflected in how future fees are structured.

At this stage, no decisions have been made about renewal fees or discounts beyond those already proposed for accredited landlords, energy-efficient properties (EPC C or above), and multiple units in the same block. These were included to reward good practice and efficiency where clear criteria could be applied.

Introducing a renewal discount for compliant landlords could offer an incentive to maintain high standards over time. However, it would also need to be carefully balanced against the legal requirement for the Council to recover the full costs of administering and enforcing the scheme, licensing schemes must not generate profit and must remain fair and transparent to all landlords.

We would welcome feedback on this idea as part of the consultation. Any future approach to renewals would need to take into account the cost of processing repeat applications, verifying continued compliance, and ensuring that standards are still being met.

**Q16. What happens to landlords who previously paid for licences when the old scheme was paused? Are refunds available?**

We are aware that some landlords still hold licences from the previous scheme. The council will be in touch with affected licence holders once the consultation has closed and the next steps have been confirmed.

**Q17. Will the new scheme lead to rent increases and reduced affordability for tenants?**

As explained in Q12, there is no clear evidence from other boroughs that licensing schemes directly lead to widespread rent increases or long-term affordability issues. While landlords may set rents according to wider market conditions, the proposed fees are designed on a cost-recovery basis only and are paid by landlords. Licensing is intended to improve standards and tenant protections, not to raise rents.

At the same time, tenants have told us they are concerned about paying rent for unsafe or poorly maintained properties. Licensing is intended to create more consistent standards, make landlord responsibilities clearer, and give the Council stronger powers to act when things go wrong.

**Q18. Will compliant landlords end up paying to help the Council identify non-compliant ones?**

The intention of the proposed licensing scheme is not to penalise compliant landlords, but to create a level playing field where all landlords meet the same minimum standards. That includes identifying and addressing non-compliant or rogue landlords who may otherwise continue to operate without oversight.

Under the proposed model, licence fees are set on a cost-recovery basis, in line with national legislation. This means the cost of issuing a licence (Part A) and managing compliance and enforcement for that specific licence (Part B) is paid by the licence holder, not spread across others. Compliant landlords would not be subsidising enforcement against those who fail to apply.

However, part of the Council's wider role in administering the scheme would involve identifying unlicensed properties and taking enforcement action. The cost of this work would not be covered by the licence fees paid by complaint landlords. Instead, it would be recovered through civil penalties and additional charges imposed on landlords who apply late or are found to be operating without a licence.

We are also proposing discounts for landlords who demonstrate good practice, such as through accreditation, energy efficiency, or applying for multiple properties at the same time. These measures are intended to ensure that responsible landlords are recognised and supported.

We welcome views through the consultation on whether the proposed fee structure feels fair, and how we can ensure the focus remains on improving standards where they are most needed.

**Q19. Does the Council genuinely intend to act on consultation feedback, or is this a box-ticking exercise?**

This consultation is not a box-ticking exercise. While there is a legal requirement to consult for a minimum of 10 weeks before introducing a selective or additional licensing scheme, Hackney Council has chosen to run this consultation for a full 14 weeks. This was a deliberate decision to give residents, landlords, tenants, and other stakeholders more time to understand the proposals and contribute meaningfully.

The law does not require councils to consult on every detail of a licensing scheme or its operation. However, we believe that these kinds of powers should only be used if they are informed by both the views and experiences of the people affected and the supporting evidence. That includes those who rent privately, those who provide homes, and those who live in neighbourhoods impacted by poor housing conditions or management.

All feedback received during the consultation will be analysed independently and reported in full. The findings will be shared with councillors and senior officers before any decision is made. Councillors will be accountable for deciding whether the scheme should go ahead, whether changes are needed, or whether an alternative approach is more appropriate.

We are also committed to publishing a clear summary of what we heard and how that feedback influenced the final recommendations. Whether you agree with the proposals or have concerns, this is your chance to help shape how the private rented sector is managed in Hackney.

## Q20. Will licensing costs lead to more frequent rent reviews or increases?

This is closely linked to Q12 and Q17. As noted there, there is no strong evidence that licensing causes rent increases or more frequent rent reviews. In most cases, broader market factors such as mortgage rates and demand drive rent changes. The proposed licence fee is modest when spread over five years, and landlords are expected to absorb it as part of their normal operating costs.

We welcome feedback on this issue through the consultation, particularly from tenants and voluntary sector groups who may be seeing changes in real time.

## Q21. What are the actual benefits of licensing for landlords who already meet legal standards?

We recognise that many landlords in Hackney already meet their legal responsibilities and take pride in providing well-managed, decent homes. For these landlords, the benefits of licensing may not lie in changing how they operate, but in how the overall system is made fairer and more consistent.

Some of the potential benefits for compliant landlords include:

- **A level playing field.** Licensing helps ensure that all landlords — not just the responsible ones — are meeting basic standards. This reduces the risk of being undercut by operators who ignore legal requirements or manage unsafe properties.
- **Recognition of good practice.** The proposed scheme includes discounts for landlords who are accredited, have energy-efficient properties (EPC C or above), or manage multiple units in the same block. We are also considering how to recognise consistent compliance at renewal stage.
- **Clarity and consistency.** Licensing can help streamline communication between landlords and the Council. It offers a clear set of expectations and reduces uncertainty around what is required to remain compliant.
- **Faster issue resolution.** Where disputes arise with tenants or neighbours — for example over anti-social behaviour, repairs, or waste — licensing provides a clearer enforcement route and structure for action, including support from the Council where appropriate.
- **Stronger local enforcement.** By identifying and addressing the small minority of landlords who put tenants at risk or ignore legal standards, licensing can improve the overall reputation of the sector and reduce neighbourhood complaints.

If introduced, we are keen to make sure the scheme works with, not against, responsible landlords. Feedback during this consultation will help shape how that balance is struck, and how we can make sure good landlords feel supported, not burdened, by a scheme.

**Q22. What protections are in place for tenants who report landlords, particularly around fear of eviction?**

We understand that some tenants may worry about being evicted or facing other consequences if they report problems with their landlord or the condition of their home. This is a real concern, especially in areas where housing demand is high and secure tenancies can feel precarious.

If the proposed licensing scheme is approved, it would strengthen the Council's ability to investigate issues without always relying on tenants to come forward. By proactively inspecting properties and using data to identify problem homes, the Council can reduce the burden on individual tenants and make enforcement more systematic.

Where tenants do report issues, there are some important legal protections already in place:

- Under **retaliatory eviction rules** introduced in the Deregulation Act 2015, a landlord cannot legally serve a Section 21 eviction notice within six months of the Council issuing an improvement notice or certain other types of enforcement action. This helps protect tenants who report serious hazards.
- The Council will treat reports of poor conditions or illegal eviction confidentially wherever possible, and officers are trained to act sensitively when dealing with complaints from tenants who may be at risk.
- Licensing gives the Council stronger oversight of landlords and managing agents. Where harassment or illegal eviction is suspected, enforcement teams can investigate and take action under housing and tenancy law.

The proposed scheme also includes licence conditions that require landlords to respond to disrepair, provide safe homes, and manage anti-social behaviour fairly. These give the Council more tools to intervene early and protect tenants from both poor conditions and potential retaliation.

We welcome feedback on how we can make sure the scheme gives tenants the confidence to raise concerns safely, and how best to involve tenant support organisations in that process.

**Q23. Could licensing reduce the number of private rental properties in Hackney?**

The proposed licensing scheme is not designed to reduce the number of private rented homes in Hackney. Its purpose is to improve conditions, increase accountability, and ensure that all landlords meet the minimum legal standards expected of the sector.

We understand there is concern that some landlords may choose to exit the market due to the additional responsibilities or costs of licensing. However, there is **no clear evidence** from other boroughs that licensing schemes lead to a significant or sustained reduction in the number of private rental properties. In areas like Newham

and Waltham Forest, licensing has been in place for years and the private rented sector has remained strong.

Rent levels and landlord participation tend to be shaped more by wider factors, such as mortgage rates, demand, property prices and tax policy, than by local licensing schemes alone.

In Hackney, the private rented sector plays a critical role in meeting housing need, and there is no intention to reduce its size through licensing. Instead, the goal is to ensure that every privately rented home is safe, decent and well-managed, and that tenants and neighbours are protected from poor practice.

Through this consultation, we are inviting feedback on whether the proposals strike the right balance between improving standards and supporting a well-functioning rental market.

**Q24. Has the Council addressed the administrative failings from the previous scheme (e.g. long waits, data errors)?**

Yes, the Council is actively working to address the issues that affected the delivery of the previous licensing scheme. We recognise that there were **long waits for licences to be processed, delays in communication, and data handling problems** during the earlier programme. These caused frustration for many landlords and undermined confidence in how the scheme was run.

These experiences have directly informed how the proposed new scheme would be delivered if approved. In particular, we are planning to:

- Increase the dedicated licensing team with clear staffing, systems and resources from the start.
- Explore improvements to how applications are managed and compliance monitored.
- Improve internal data management and make more effective use of available intelligence, while working in a joined-up way with relevant Council services and external bodies where appropriate.
- Monitor and publish **service standards**, including response times for processing applications and issuing licences
- Provide **clearer guidance and communication** for landlords and agents throughout the application and inspection process

While no system can eliminate all delays, we are designing this scheme to avoid the problems that occurred in the past. Feedback from landlords and agents during the consultation is helping to shape the proposals, and we will continue to review our internal procedures to ensure the system is as efficient and fair as possible.



**Q26. Why is the focus on PRS landlords when local and national government have missed housing targets?**

We recognise that the shortage of affordable and secure housing is a major concern, and that both national and local governments have struggled to meet housebuilding targets. More homes are urgently needed, particularly social and genuinely affordable housing, and Hackney Council continues to push for the powers and funding required to deliver them.

However, **building new homes alone will not address the full picture**. In the meantime, tens of thousands of Hackney residents rely on the **existing private rented sector (PRS)**, which makes up around one in three homes in the borough. Many of these tenants face poor conditions, insecure management, and limited options for redress.

The evidence for this is clear. Nearly 20% of PRS homes in Hackney are estimated to contain serious hazards, and the Council receives thousands of complaints about disrepair, overcrowding, fire safety and anti-social behaviour in private rented homes. These are not issues that can wait for new housing supply to catch up.

The proposed licensing scheme is about raising standards in the homes people are already living in. It would give the Council more tools to proactively inspect properties, hold landlords to account, and support tenants who would otherwise have little protection.

This is not about blaming private landlords for wider housing shortages. Many landlords provide good homes and manage them responsibly. But licensing helps ensure all landlords are operating to the same standard, and that tenants are not left in unsafe or poorly maintained properties simply because enforcement is too reactive or inconsistent.

Improving the quality of the existing PRS and building more housing are not competing goals. Both are necessary — and both need to happen in parallel if we are serious about tackling the housing crisis.

**Q27. Is this scheme primarily about raising revenue for the Council?**

No, the proposed licensing scheme is **not designed to raise revenue** for the Council. Under national legislation, councils are only permitted to charge licence fees on a **cost-recovery basis**. This means that the income from fees can only be used to cover the actual costs of running the scheme, including processing applications, carrying out inspections, supporting landlords to comply, and taking enforcement action where needed.

The Council **cannot make a profit** from licensing. This principle has been confirmed through case law and is central to how the scheme has been designed. The proposed fees — such as £925 for a selective licence — have been calculated based

on the expected cost of delivering the scheme over a five-year period, including a more proactive and properly resourced service than the previous pilot.

The intention is to build a system that improves standards, protects tenants, and supports good landlords. Any enforcement activity that results in civil penalties or fines must also be ringfenced and reinvested in private sector housing enforcement — not used for general council funding.

We understand that the cost of licensing is a concern for some landlords, which is why we are proposing **targeted discounts** for those who are accredited, energy-efficient, or managing multiple properties in the same building. We are also inviting feedback through this consultation on whether the proposed fees and approach feel fair and proportionate.

#### **Q28. Will councillors and senior officers attend future consultations to hear concerns directly?**

While councillors and senior officers may not be present at every consultation event in person, they are fully involved in the process and kept informed of all feedback that is shared. This includes detailed summaries of consultation responses, written Q&As such as this one, and thematic reports capturing the views and concerns raised by landlords, tenants, residents and stakeholders.

Councillors play a key role in shaping the scheme and will be responsible for reviewing the consultation findings and deciding whether and how the scheme should go ahead. Senior officers are closely involved in reviewing the evidence, helping to develop responses, and ensuring that feedback informs the final recommendations.

To support transparency and impartiality, the Council has commissioned Public Perspectives, an independent research and engagement specialist, to design and manage the consultation events and analyse the results. This helps ensure that participants' views are captured accurately and reported back without bias.

The consultation has been designed to ensure that people can speak freely and raise concerns in a variety of ways, including events, the online survey, email and written submissions. All feedback received will be taken into account and shared with decision-makers in full.

If the scheme is approved, there may be further opportunities for councillors and officers to engage with residents and landlords during the implementation and review stages. The current focus is on gathering a broad range of views to help shape the proposals before any final decision is made.

**Q29. Is it fair or realistic to expect tenants to help enforce the scheme by reporting rogue landlords?**

Tenants should not be expected to act as enforcers. The responsibility for complying with licensing conditions rests entirely with landlords and managing agents, not with the people renting the property.

That said, tenants often have the clearest view of what is happening inside a home, whether that is serious disrepair, safety risks, or poor management. Their experiences can be an important part of identifying problems the Council might not otherwise see.

The proposed licensing scheme is designed to strengthen the Council's ability to act without relying solely on tenant complaints. This includes:

- Proactive inspections of licensed properties.
- Improved data management within the licensing service, supported by proportionate collaboration with other relevant Council teams or external bodies where this can help address issues in the private rented sector.
- Targeted follow-up in areas where there are known issues.

Tenant reports would be one source of information, not the only one. Where tenants do raise concerns, the Council is committed to treating these reports confidentially where possible, offering support, and taking action where there is evidence of non-compliance.

We also understand that some tenants may feel afraid to report problems, particularly if they are worried about eviction or losing their home. That is why licensing aims to improve protections for renters and give the Council clearer powers to intervene when things go wrong.

The goal is to create a system where tenants feel safe to speak up, but where the responsibility for maintaining safe, legal homes sits firmly with landlords and the Council's enforcement team.

**Q30. Will the Council commit to a maximum turnaround time (e.g. 6 weeks) for issuing licences in future?**

We recognise that delays in issuing licences during the previous scheme caused significant frustration, particularly for landlords needing proof of a licence for mortgage applications or tenancy agreements. This is something we are determined to improve.

If the proposed scheme goes ahead, the Council aims to introduce clearer **service standards** for processing applications. However, we are not currently in a position to commit to a fixed maximum turnaround time, such as six weeks, across all cases.

The time needed to issue a licence can vary depending on:

- Whether all required documents are submitted in full
- Whether further checks or inspections are needed
- The complexity of the property or management arrangements
- Demand levels at particular times, especially during initial rollout

That said, we are designing the licensing system to be far more efficient than before. This includes better staffing, new digital systems, and clearer processes to reduce unnecessary delays. We are also considering how to phase application processing across the designated area, so that demand can be managed more effectively. Feedback from landlords during the consultation will help us understand what they want in terms of turnaround times and updates during the application process. While this will inform our approach, what is ultimately achievable will also depend on operational capacity and other constraints. We are committed to learning from past experience and building a system that is fair, transparent, and timely.

### **Q31. What specific powers will be used to pursue landlords who don't engage with the scheme?**

If the proposed licensing scheme is approved, landlords who fail to apply for a licence where required would be in breach of the **Housing Act 2004**. This gives the Council a number of enforcement powers to take action against those who do not engage with the scheme or deliberately operate outside the law.

These powers include:

- **Civil penalties of up to £30,000 per offence**, issued without going to court (landlords have the right to appeal these to the First-tier Tribunal)
- **Prosecution** through the magistrates' court, which may result in a criminal record and an unlimited fine
- **Rent Repayment Orders**, which can allow the Council or tenants to reclaim up to 12 months of rent paid for a property where the landlord has committed certain offences, such as failing to apply for a licence when required.
- **Banning Orders**, which can prevent landlords or agents from operating if they have committed serious or repeated offences
- Entry and inspection powers under housing law, particularly where there is a concern about safety or compliance

While enforcement is an important part of the scheme, the focus would be on encouraging compliance and supporting landlords to meet their legal responsibilities. We are aiming to build a fair and proportionate system that targets enforcement where it is most needed — particularly against those who put tenants at risk or ignore repeated warnings.

Feedback from landlords, tenants and stakeholders will help shape how these powers are used in practice, and how best to balance support, communication and enforcement.

**Q32. Isn't there a risk of duplication with the Renters' Reform Bill?**

The [Renters' Rights Bill](#) is currently progressing through Parliament and may introduce a range of national reforms to improve conditions and protections in the private rented sector. However, it is not yet law, and many of its proposals are still under development.

The proposed licensing scheme in Hackney is intended to complement national reforms rather than duplicate them. Local licensing gives councils specific powers to inspect properties, enforce standards, and support both landlords and tenants in a way that responds directly to local issues.

While national legislation sets out minimum standards, local licensing can be tailored to address the particular challenges affecting Hackney's private rented sector. This includes enabling the Council to identify and act on a range of housing condition and management issues through inspections, helping to ensure tenants' safety, comfort and wellbeing where problems are found.

We welcome feedback through the consultation on how the proposed licensing scheme can best align with national changes and meet the specific needs of Hackney's residents and landlords.

**Q33. Why are discounts proposed for EPC-rated properties, and what if my property can't achieve EPC C?**

The Council is proposing a discount for properties with an EPC rating of C or above. This recognises the value of better energy efficiency for tenants and the environment, as well as the time and investment required from landlords to achieve this standard.

We recognise that some older or traditionally constructed properties in Hackney may find it more difficult or costly to reach EPC C, particularly where the housing stock is historic or physically constrained. That is why meeting this standard is not a requirement for obtaining a licence.

Instead, we are proposing a licence fee discount for properties that meet EPC C or above, alongside other possible discounts. These are designed to incentivise good practice.

The aim is to encourage improvements where feasible, while keeping the scheme fair and flexible. We welcome feedback through the consultation on whether this approach feels fair, proportionate and achievable. We are also exploring how best to support landlords in improving energy performance, and whether future licensing schemes could take account of a broader range of energy efficiency improvements beyond EPC banding.