

Hackney Property Licensing Consultation – Tenants & Residents Online Session Q&A

Tuesday 9 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 tenants 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

Consultation closes: **21 September 2025**.

Q&A

Q. Are licences issued after the previous scheme ended legally enforceable?

The Council is currently seeking legal advice on this matter to confirm the status of any licences that may have been issued around the time the previous scheme was withdrawn.. Further guidance will be provided directly to affected licence holders once this is confirmed.

Q. Who is responsible for addressing disrepair, anti-social behaviour and street safety?

A. Right now, responsibility depends on the type of home you live in and the nature of the issue, and we know that can sometimes make it difficult to know who to contact.

At the moment:

- **Private renters** can report serious disrepair, poor conditions or unlicensed properties to Hackney Council's Private Sector Housing team by emailing privatesectorhousing@hackney.gov.uk or calling 020 8356 4866.
- **Council tenants** should contact their neighbourhood housing team or call 020 8356 3691 for repairs and tenancy issues.
- **Housing association tenants** need to report issues directly to their landlord using their housing provider's contact details.
- **Anti-social behaviour** can be reported to the Council's ASB team by emailing asb.housing@hackney.gov.uk or calling 020 8356 3310.
- **Street safety concerns**, such as poor lighting or unsafe public spaces, can be reported via the [Report a Problem page](#) on the Council's website.

If the proposed licensing schemes are adopted:

Licensing would give the Council more powers and resources to act, especially in private rented homes where we know conditions can be poor and tenants often struggle to get problems resolved. It would also allow us to proactively inspect properties and take action where we see patterns of complaints, disrepair, or anti-social behaviour linked to particular landlords or addresses.

The aim is to make sure more renters are protected, more landlords are held accountable, and the quality of housing across Hackney improves, particularly in areas where problems have been raised most often.

Q. Does this have any implications for single occupancy homes?

A. Yes. If the proposed selective licensing scheme is introduced, it would apply to most privately rented homes in the designated parts of the borough, including single occupancy properties.

This means that if you rent a whole property on your own, and it is not already covered by mandatory or additional HMO licensing, your landlord would still need a licence if the property is within one of the proposed 17 wards.

The aim is to improve standards across all types of privately rented homes, not just shared houses. Licensing would help the Council identify issues more quickly, take action where needed, and ensure all landlords are meeting basic legal standards, regardless of how many people live in a property.

Q. What happens if a landlord does not get a licence when they should?

If the proposed licensing schemes are introduced, landlords in the designated areas would be legally required to apply for a licence. If a landlord fails to get a licence for a property that needs one, they could face enforcement action.

Based on how similar schemes operate in other boroughs, this could include:

- **Fines or prosecution** for renting out a property without a licence

- **Repayment Orders**, where tenants or the Council may be able to claim back rent paid during the unlicensed period
- **Banning Orders** for the most serious or repeat offences

In most cases, the Council would aim to work with landlords to help them meet the standards required. There may also be options to issue shorter licences where improvements are needed. But if a landlord ignores the rules completely, enforcement powers could be used.

The goal is to raise standards in the sector, not to penalise landlords who are willing to engage. If the scheme goes ahead, clear information would be provided to landlords on how to comply, and to tenants on what their rights are if a property is not licensed.

Q. What is the ‘fit and proper person’ criteria for landlords?

If a licensing scheme is introduced, all landlords applying for a licence would need to pass what is known as the fit and proper person test, as set out in national regulations.

This test is already a requirement under the Housing Act 2004 and is referenced in Hackney’s evidence base. It includes checks to ensure that a landlord:

- **Has not committed serious criminal offences**, such as fraud, violence, drug offences or housing-related crimes
- **Has not breached housing laws or landlord and tenant legislation**
- **Has not been involved in unlawful discrimination in housing**
- **Has managed properties in a way that does not cause concern**

This test helps councils decide whether a landlord is suitable to hold a licence. In cases where someone fails the test, the Council may refuse to issue a licence, or place additional conditions on it.

As noted in the evidence base, the aim is to improve the management and safety of private rented homes across Hackney, by ensuring landlords are responsible and meet basic legal obligations.

Q. What is the length of time a temporary licence may be issued for?

Hackney Council does not issue separate “temporary licences.” However, if the proposed licensing schemes are adopted, the Council may issue a licence for a **shorter durations**, typically **one year** instead of the standard five, in certain circumstances.

A one-year licence may be issued where there are concerns about the management of a property. For example, this could apply if there has been **previous formal enforcement action** against a landlord or if the Council is not satisfied that the property is being managed to an acceptable standard.

A shorter license period allows the Council to monitor the situation more closely. If improvements are made and management concerns are addressed, a longer licence could be considered in future.

Full guidance would be published if the scheme is adopted, setting out how licence durations are decided and what landlords need to do to be eligible for a longer-term licence.

Q. Will there be a structure in place to manage the new schemes effectively?

A. If the proposed licensing schemes are adopted, the Council would put in place a dedicated structure to manage them. The licensing fee is designed to cover the cost of running the schemes, which means funding would be in place to support the staff, systems and enforcement needed.

The evidence base sets out how the Council would use the income from licence fees to carry out inspections, respond to complaints, take enforcement action where needed, and ensure landlords are meeting their legal duties. This would include a mix of proactive and reactive work, focused particularly on areas where conditions are known to be poor.

A final decision on the structure would follow once the consultation closes and the scheme design is confirmed. However, the intention is to ensure the right teams and processes are in place to deliver a well-run, fair and transparent licensing programme.

Q. Will licensing lead to rent increases for tenants, and is there any protection, especially for sharers or young renters in HMOs?

We understand that many renters – particularly young people and sharers living in HMOs – are concerned about rising rents and whether licensing will make housing less affordable.

Licensing schemes are not designed to increase rents. They are intended to improve the safety, condition and management of private rented homes, and give the Council stronger powers to act where landlords fail to meet acceptable standards. For tenants, this means better quality housing, clearer rights, and more support when things go wrong.

The licence fee represents a single charge covering up to five years. For administrative reasons, it is collected in two parts. When broken down, it equates to around £3 per week. There is little to no evidence from other boroughs that licensing leads to widespread rent increases, and if introduced, we expect landlords to absorb this cost as part of their normal operating expenses. Rent levels are shaped by a wide range of factors, such as location, demand and property condition – not individual costs like licensing.

Licensing does not give landlords an automatic right to raise rents. Any rent increases must still follow national rules, including notice periods and the terms of fixed-term agreements. If you are concerned about a rent increase or want to understand your rights, you can contact an independent advice service such as the [Hackney Advice Network](#) or visit the [Council's housing advice pages](#).

If the scheme goes ahead, the Council will monitor how it is working in practice – including any impact on rent levels – to make sure it delivers real improvements for renters without adding unnecessary financial pressure.

Q. How will this new scheme be implemented differently from the previous one?

The proposed new scheme has been designed to build on lessons learned and improve how licensing is delivered across the borough. If adopted, key changes in how the scheme would be implemented include:

- **Stronger enforcement and compliance checks:** The Council would carry out more proactive inspections and follow-up activity throughout the licensing period to make sure landlords are meeting their obligations.
- **Better use of data:** Improved systems would support more detailed analysis of complaints, property conditions and licensing information to help target enforcement where it is most needed.
- **More staffing and resources:** Additional staff would be in place to manage applications, carry out inspections and respond to issues more quickly and effectively.
- **Clearer guidance and support for landlords:** The council will provide updated guidance and accessible information to help landlords understand their responsibilities and meet the required standards.

The aim is to improve housing conditions, protect tenants and support responsible landlords in a more consistent and effective way than before.

Q. Isn't the only real solution to affordability just building more housing?

A. Building more genuinely affordable homes is a vital part of tackling the housing crisis, Hackney is committed to doing exactly that. You can read more about our housebuilding programme at hackney.gov.uk/building.

But we also know that building new homes takes time, and won't solve every issue in the private rented sector on its own. That's why we're also focused on improving the quality of existing homes, raising standards for private renters, and protecting tenants from poor conditions or bad management.

If the proposed licensing schemes are introduced, they would work alongside Hackney's housing delivery and regeneration programmes, helping to improve day-to-day housing conditions now, while we continue to invest in long-term solutions like new social rent and affordable homes.

Tackling affordability requires action on multiple fronts. That includes building new homes, regulating the sector, supporting renters, and holding landlords to account where needed.

Q. Can tenants be supported through regulation without needing to directly confront their landlords?

A. Yes. That is one of the key reasons licensing is being proposed.

Many tenants feel unable to challenge poor conditions or unfair treatment because they are worried about losing their home or damaging the relationship with their landlord. Licensing can help shift that burden by giving the Council more power to step in, identify problems and take action, without the tenant needing to raise it themselves.

If the new schemes are adopted, landlords would have to meet clear standards around property conditions and management. The Council would have more resource to carry out inspections, respond to complaints more effectively and take enforcement action where needed. Licensing also creates a clearer paper trail, which can make it easier to deal with issues anonymously or through a third party.

This means tenants could have better protection and support without having to take on the responsibility alone. You can always contact the Council's **Private Sector Housing team** at privatesectorhousing@hackney.gov.uk or call **020 8356 4866** if you are unsure what to do or need advice on your rights.

Q. Is there a coordinated approach across London boroughs for licensing schemes?

A. Licensing schemes are developed and consulted on by each council individually, based on local evidence and housing conditions. That means there is no single, London-wide approach, but many boroughs face similar challenges and are using licensing to try and address them.

Over 20 London boroughs have introduced some form of additional or selective licensing, and more are exploring or consulting on new schemes. This includes places like Newham, Waltham Forest, Brent, Southwark, and Tower Hamlets. While the details vary, the aim is broadly the same: to raise standards in the private rented sector and ensure landlords are meeting their legal responsibilities.

There is also a growing national focus on the role of licensing. The Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities has acknowledged the importance of regulation in the private rented sector, including through proposed reforms in the [Renters Rights Bill](#), which highlights property conditions, enforcement and support for tenants. Licensing is one of the tools councils can use to help deliver those aims, especially while national reforms are still being developed.

Hackney's proposed schemes are designed to reflect local housing conditions, but we are also learning from how other boroughs have implemented licensing. Including what has worked well and what could be improved. If adopted, the scheme would sit alongside broader efforts across London to push for a better-regulated, fairer rental market.