

Carl Sargeant AC/AM

Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros Gymunedau a Phlant
Cabinet Secretary for Communities and Children



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Ein cyf/Our ref: MA - L/CS/0496/17

John Griffiths AM
Chair
Equalities, Local Government and Communities Committee
National Assembly for Wales

12th September 2017

Dear John

ABOLITION OF THE RIGHT TO BUY AND ASSOCIATED RIGHTS (WALES) BILL

I am writing to thank you and your colleagues on the Equalities, Local Government and Communities Committee for your consideration of the Abolition of the Right to Buy and Associated Rights (Wales) Bill during Stage 1 scrutiny.

I have considered the Committee's recommendations with a view to responding positively, to as many as possible, either through Government amendments or by other means, such as the provision of guidance. My response to the individual recommendations is set out below:

Recommendation 1. We recommend that the Assembly supports the general principles of the Bill. One Member of the Committee did not agree.

I welcome the Committee's support for the general principles of the Bill and their detailed scrutiny of the proposed legislation.

Recommendation 2. We recommend that the Cabinet Secretary amends the Bill at Stage 2 to require the Welsh Ministers to provide other relevant organisations with a copy of the information document.

I share the Committee's wish to ensure that all relevant organisations, such as advice services and tenants' bodies, have a copy of the information document when it's issued to social landlords. I accept the recommendation and will bring forward an amendment at Stage 2 accordingly.

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Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

Recommendation 3. We recommend that the Cabinet Secretary amends the Bill at Stage 2 to specify the information that qualifying landlords must provide to all its relevant tenants in order to discharge their duties under section 8(3)(a). For example, the dates on which the restrictions and full abolition will take effect.

I accept the Committee's recommendation. I share the concern that some tenants may not be as well informed as others and I intend to bring forward an amendment at Stage 2 to specify the minimum information about the effects of the Bill which all social landlords must provide to tenants.

Recommendation 4. We recommend that the Cabinet Secretary makes provision in the Bill to ensure that qualifying landlords communicate the information required under section 8(3) to tenants in the most appropriate and accessible way to meet their varying needs.

I appreciate the Committee's concern that the Information for Tenants document should be made available to tenants in whatever ways necessary to meet their needs and I agree with the principle behind this recommendation.

However, I do not consider it necessary to make provision for this in the Bill as landlords are already very effective in engaging with their tenants. I included a question on appropriate and accessible communication with tenants as part of the consultation launched in July on the provision of information for tenants. I will also provide advice to social landlords on disseminating the information if the Bill is passed by the National Assembly.

Recommendation 5. We recommend that the Cabinet Secretary works with relevant advice services to monitor and review the impact of the Bill on demand for services with a view to providing additional financial support ahead of the abolition, if the need arises.

The Welsh Government will work with the advice services and monitor the impact of the Bill.

I do not anticipate the need for extra resources, but I am happy to keep this under review.

Recommendation 6. We recommend that the Cabinet Secretary tests the draft information document with tenants before it is finalised to ensure that it is fit for purpose.

I share the Committee's wish that the information document is as clear as possible to meet the needs of tenants and I launched a consultation on the document on 19 July.

As part of the consultation, Tenant Participation Advisory Service Cymru have hosted a series of tenant engagement events to gauge tenants' views and feed back the results to us. Following the consultation, we will consider the responses and amend the information document, as appropriate, to ensure it is fit for purpose.

In conclusion, I hope this letter is helpful in setting out the Welsh Government's response to the Committee's report and I would like to repeat my thanks to Members for their detailed consideration of the Bill.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Carl Sargeant', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Carl Sargeant AC/AM

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Cabinet Secretary for Communities and Children