

Greater Manchester Combined Authority

Date: 12 July 2024

Subject: The Greater Manchester Good Landlord Charter

Report of: Councillor Gerald Cooney, Portfolio Lead for Housing and Steve Rumbelow,
Portfolio Lead Chief Executive for Place Based Regeneration & Housing

Purpose of Report

This report sets out the detail of the Good Landlord Charter and how it will be delivered by an independent implementation unit.

Recommendations:

The GMCA is requested to:

1. Comment on and approve the design in the paper of the Good Landlord Charter and the associated activity to implement the charter, including the proposal not to charge a fee to landlords for participation in the charter.
2. Approve the utilisation of £250,000 from retained business rates in 2024/25 to procure an independent implementation unit for the charter, with future years' funding to come through the budget setting process.

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Equalities Impact, Carbon and Sustainability Assessment:

Recommendation - Key points for decision-makers

1. Comment on and approve design in the paper the Good Landlord Charter and associated activity to implement the charter, including the proposal not to charge a fee to landlords for participation in the charter
2. Approve the utilisation of £250,000 from retained business rates in 2024/25 to procure an independent implementation unit for the charter, with future years' funding to come through the budget setting process

Impacts Questionnaire

Impact Indicator	Result	Justification/Mitigation
Equality and Inclusion	G	A full equalities impact assessment for the Good Landlord Charter was completed to support the public consultation. This demonstrated significant differences in experiences of renting with people and households with certain protected characteristics currently over-represented as renters or having a worse renting experience. The Good Landlord Charter will disproportionately benefit these households. The equalities impact assessment also included the anticipated impact on households at risk of social economic disadvantage, anticipating that these households would be more likely to benefit. This assessment showed, for example, that households at risk of social economic disadvantage were significantly overrepresented in the social renting population and that they were significantly more likely to struggle to pay their rent if private renting.
Health	G	The charter includes several member criteria that will help to ensure that homes are not negatively affecting renters' health. This includes member criteria to ensure that landlords are proactively inspecting homes to ensure that they are decent, that repairs should be carried out by a qualified or competent person, space standards and amenities, as well as a requirement to publish and meet response times. Together these should help ensure homes are decent and that when problems occur, they are effectively addressed. In addition, for households who require specific adaptations, a member criterion has been included to require landlords to make or facilitate adaptations In addition to measures to support physical health, several of the charter characteristics are intended to support better mental health. These include criteria that will help to reduce the stress if renters find it hard to pay their rent, including a requirement for landlords to give tenants a fair amount of time and for social landlords not to use the mandatory rent arrears eviction ground. The charter also includes member criteria to give renters a greater sense of privacy, including that any access should be by agreement except in an emergency, and peace of mind that their landlord is a fit and proper person. Overall, it is anticipated that the approach of the charter will increase renters' confidence in their housing situation, by giving them greater transparency about the commitments that their landlord has made and a route to independently complain if those commitments are not met.
Resilience and Adaptation	G	The Covid-19 pandemic and lockdown demonstrated the importance of people's homes in the event of major disruption. By improving the quality of housing and people's renting experience it is possible that the capacity to withstand or recover from disruption will be increased. Comments about including flood risk in member criteria on advertising / viewing standards and information for renters will be taken forward as the approach to assessment is developed.
Housing	G	People in rented housing, particularly those living in poor conditions, are at greater risk of losing their homes and becoming homeless. By improving the quality of rented housing, the risk to those households will be reduced. The purpose of the Good Landlord Charter is to make it easier for tenants identify properties where the landlord is committed to providing a good quality home and good practice Several member criteria will support maintaining and improving existing homes, including: the requirement to have an effective approach to inspection, the requirement to publish and comply with response times for repairs, and the requirement to bring homes up to EPC C The charter is a voluntary scheme
Economy		
Mobility and Connectivity		
Carbon, Nature and Environment	G	The charter includes a member criterion of bringing homes up to EPC C within reasonable time limits, improving the energy efficiency of existing rented homes and reducing carbon emissions. This should help to accelerate the number of homes in the social sector -- where landlords are under a regulatory requirement to bring homes up to EPC C by 2030 -- and the private rented sector -- where the regulatory requirement to bring homes up to EPC C has been abandoned.
Consumption and Production		
Contribution to achieving the GM Carbon Neutral 2038 target		The charter includes a member criterion of bringing homes up to EPC C within reasonable time limits, improving the energy efficiency of existing rented homes and reducing carbon emissions. This should help to accelerate the number of homes in the social sector -- where landlords are under a regulatory requirement to bring homes up to EPC C by 2030 -- and the private rented sector -- where the regulatory requirement to bring homes up to EPC C has been abandoned. To increase the contribution the charter makes to decarbonising the conurbation consideration could be given to how the charter could be used in conjunction with grant funding or finance for retrofit and guidance on retrofit. As the charter develops, further consideration could be given to whether to include additional member criteria associated with decarbonisation.
Overall	G	Positive impacts overall, whether long or short term.
	A	Mix of positive and negative impacts. Trade-offs to consider.
	R	Mostly negative, with at least one positive aspect. Trade-offs to consider.
	RR	Negative impacts overall.

Carbon Assessment

Overall Score				
Buildings	Result	Justification/Mitigation		
New Build residential	N/A			
Residential building(s) renovation/maintenance		<p>Social rented homes are the most efficient with 69% rated A-C. Only 45% of private rented homes are rated above D. The member criterion on energy efficiency will require homes to meet a C rating. This will not be possible with all homes, for example those that are listed. However, it is anticipated that the overwhelming majority of homes will be brought up to at least a C rating</p> <p>There is no specific member criterion related to heating systems</p> <p>The member criteria will apply to a high level of a landlord's stock and practice and this level of detail is not included</p> <p>The member criteria will apply to a high level of a landlord's stock and practice and this level of detail is not included</p> <p>The intention of the member criterion is that EPC C will be attained for the overwhelming majority of homes operated by members</p> <p>N/A</p> <p>The member criteria will apply to a high level of a landlord's stock and practice and this level of detail is not included</p>		
New build non-residential (including public) buildings	N/A			
Transport				
Active travel and public transport	N/A			
Roads, Parking and Vehicle Access	N/A			
Access to amenities	N/A			
Vehicle procurement	N/A			
Land Use				
Land use	N/A			
No associated carbon impacts expected.	High standard in terms of practice and awareness on carbon.	Mostly best practice with a good level of awareness on carbon.	Partially meets best practice/ awareness, significant room to improve.	Not best practice and/ or insufficient awareness of carbon impacts.

Risk Management

N/A

Legal Considerations

N/A

Financial Consequences – Revenue

See recommendation 2.

Financial Consequences – Capital

N/A

Number of attachments to the report: 2

Background Papers

- Public consultation document - Good Landlord Charter
- Greater Manchester Private Rented Sector Tenant Survey - August 2023

Tracking/ Process

Does this report relate to a major strategic decision, as set out in the GMCA Constitution

No

Exemption from call in

Are there any aspects in this report which means it should be considered to be exempt from call in by the relevant Scrutiny Committee on the grounds of urgency?

No

Comments/recommendations from Overview & Scrutiny Committee

N/A

1. Introduction/Background

- 1.1 This report sets out proposals for a new Good Landlord Charter for Greater Manchester and an approach to implementing the charter. Renters across Greater Manchester are facing a period of acute stress; rents in both the private and social sectors have been rising at historically high rates, as part of the broader cost of living crisis, with welfare support – particularly for private tenants – struggling to keep up, leading to deteriorating affordability. At the same time, in some areas, the supply of new homes and new lettings is significantly outstripped by need and demand in both the private and social sectors, while the need for specialist housing, like temporary and asylum accommodation has spiralled.
- 1.2 New attention is being paid to poor conditions and the threat that damp and mould poses to health, particularly the health of young children. All of this is happening at a time of significant period of regulatory change and uncertainty, following the passage of the Social Housing Regulation Act and the commitment of the new government to bring back equivalent legislation on private renting to the Renters (Reform) Bill.
- 1.3 In this highly dynamic context, the objective of the charter is to improve renting, in all forms of rented accommodation, including private and social rented housing and specialist accommodation. Enforcement is the primary and essential way that GM currently works to achieve this objective, by requiring bad housing to be improved and punishing bad landlords. GM will enhance enforcement capacity by developing a new right for a property check for renting residents and new enforcement capability operating across the conurbation as part of a proposed new Housing First Unit. The charter will complement this enforcement work by setting an unashamedly ambitious voluntary standard for landlords and supporting them to meet it, together taking a more systematic approach in line with the Mayor’s manifesto pledge to adopt a more integrated ‘Housing First’ philosophy.
- 1.4 In taking this approach, the charter will follow in the footsteps of the GM Good Employment Charter. This approach – open to all forms of residential landlords and focused on going above legal minimum requirements – will make the charter the first of its kind.
- 1.5 The proposed charter was developed through significant engagement and consultation with stakeholders and the public. Its central features were developed with a coordinating group that met throughout 2023, including social and private tenants, landlords, trade bodies, existing accreditation schemes and industry experts. GMCA officers worked with the group to develop a proposal for the charter for public

consultation, with the consultation taking place at the beginning of 2024. A summary of responses to the public consultation on the charter, and a series of focus groups that ran alongside the consultation, are included as annexes to this report.

- 1.6 The design of the charter and the proposals for implementation that are set out in this report respond to the public consultation, with several significant decisions recommended, namely:
 2. Procuring an independent implementation unit to run the charter;
 3. Exploring with local authorities the possibility of creating an incentive offer to landlords for participation in the charter that is uniform across GM;
 4. Not charging landlords a fee to participate in the Good Landlord Charter, but exploring opportunities to raise revenue with the implementation unit; A
 5. Amending the member criteria, including to add an additional criterion that landlords should have an effective approach to property inspection.

6. The GM Good Landlord Charter

- 2.1 The Good Landlord Charter will work to raise renting standards across Greater Manchester by supporting landlords to aim for higher standards than the minimum they are required to meet by law. It will be open to all residential landlords, raising expectations of what renting can be like across GM and helping tenants find a landlord who is committed to setting an example to show that renting can be better.
- 2.2 The charter starts from the principle that a renting experience cannot be considered 'good' unless it is:
- Affordable – a tenant should understand how their rent and other charges are set and should not be overcharged.
 - Inclusive – a tenant should not have a worse renting experience because of who they are.
 - Private and secure – a tenant should be reasonably free to enjoy their home and make it their own.
 - Responsive – a landlord should respond satisfactorily to requests for repairs, correspondence and complaints.
 - Safe and decent – a tenant should be able to live free from physical or psychological discomfort in their home.
 - Supportive – a tenant should have essential information about renting their home and be helped to access extra support if they need it.
 - Well managed – a landlord should be competent or use a competent managing agent.
- 2.3 These characteristics are the vision for how renting in GM should be that the charter will work to achieve.
- 2.4 The charter will deliver on these characteristics in practice by setting specific member criteria for participating landlords to work towards and implement. These member criteria seek to strike a realistic balance with what can be achieved by a voluntary scheme within the current context. They may be subject to change over time, as standards rise, and they may be applied in different ways in different types of rented housing, although differences will be minimized as much as possible.

2.5 The founding 21 member criteria are:

- Affordable:
 - Clear and fair rent review or setting process
 - Giving a fair amount of time to tenants who struggle to pay their rent
 - Properties meet EPC C as a minimum, within achievable timescales
 - Not using mandatory rent arrears ground (social landlords only)
- Inclusive
 - Make or facilitate reasonable adaptations to properties, where needed by the tenant, and where applicable join an adaptations register
 - Make a demonstrable commitment to accepting tenants from any background
- Private and secure
 - Tenants are able to make reasonable changes to their home
 - Access to a tenant's home should be by agreement, except in an emergency
- Responsive
 - Published, timely, target response times
 - Clear complaints policy, with an independent stage
- Safe and decent
 - Effective approach to property inspection
 - Fit and proper person check
 - Any work/repairs done by a qualified or competent person
 - Adopt standards on what should happen at the start of a tenancy
 - Space standards and amenities

- Supportive
 - 'Commitment to Refer' tenants at risk of homelessness to council
 - Transparent, easy to understand contracts
 - Adopting advertising / viewing standards
 - Providing / signposting tenants to useful information
- Well managed
 - Landlord must be able to demonstrate accreditation or training, or use an accredited managing agent
 - Clear start and end-of-tenancy process

2.6 There will be two levels of participation in the charter. Landlords who are committed to working towards the member criteria will be able to join as supporters. The charter is intended to be a journey of improvement where landlords are aided to achieve challenging criteria, so all landlords who participate will initially become supporters. Once a landlord has achieved all the member criteria, they will be able to put themselves forward for assessment for full membership status.

2.7 Adhering to legal requirements will be a precondition of any participation in the charter, either at a supporter or member level. Landlords that seriously or persistently fail to meet their legal responsibilities will not be able to start or continue their participation in the charter until they demonstrate legal compliance. Likewise, members of the charter that fail to live by their commitments in practice will risk losing their membership.

2.8 In addition to raising standards of practice, the charter is intended to help tenants find landlords who are committed to those higher standards. As such, landlords who participate in the charter will also be expected to publicise their status and be open to publicity by the charter itself, such as a public list of charter supporters and members.

7. Implementing the charter

- 3.1 Several significant challenges will need to be overcome as the charter is implemented in practice. These challenges include developing a detailed approach to assessing compliance with the membership criteria, dovetailing the charter's approach to complaints with the existing regulatory framework, developing effective approaches to landlord recruitment and support services for participating landlords. Officers are making several significant recommendations related to the approach to implementation to overcome these challenges.
- 3.2 The first of these recommendations is to procure an independent implementation unit externally to continue the charter's development and deliver it in operation, with the unit's work overseen by a programme board chaired by GMCA. This mirrors the approach taken to implementing the Good Employment Charter, reflects feedback to the public consultation that stressed the importance of the charter's independence and will ensure a team with the requisite skills and dedicated capacity. GMCA officers anticipate that the cost of the independent implementation unit will be equivalent to the cost of the Good Employment Charter implementation unit.
- 3.3 The charter will be the first of its kind due to its explicit focus on raising standards above the legal minimum and the fact that it will be open to all forms of residential landlords, big or small, social or private, public, charitable or profit-making. While this innovative approach focusses on delivering for all forms of renters, it adds complexity to determining how the member criteria will be demonstrated and assessed. Systems and evidential requirements that may be reasonable to expect of a large landlord may not be the same as a small one. Likewise, a single failing in a portfolio of a thousand homes may not indicate the same poor practice as the same failing in a portfolio of two homes. An independent implementation unit will be best placed to bring in the external skills to work through this complexity with those landlords who are keen to become the charter's first supporters. While no existing organisation has experience of working across all these forms of landlord, there are providers who have significant experience of acting independently between renters and landlords to drive up standards and provide support.
- 3.4 Officers have held early discussions with the Housing Ombudsman, Regulator of Social Housing and local authority colleagues. However, another key task for the independent implementation unit will be determining with them how the charter will dovetail with the existing regulatory and enforcement framework. All partners are determined to avoid making the system more complex for renters by adding an

additional stage or otherwise delaying complaints from going to the appropriate regulatory body. This will be particularly important if proposals in the Renters (Reform) Bill to require all private landlords to register with an ombudsman are resurrected by the new government. In addition, although landlords joining the charter will be making a commitment to going beyond legal standards, it is possible that the increased awareness of rights amongst renters will grow the number of requests for support from local authority enforcement teams. Any such impact on local authority enforcement teams would be kept under review as the charter is implemented, with consideration given to any additional resource requirements for enforcement arising from the charter.

- 3.5 A further key task of the implementation unit will be recruiting landlords to participate as supporters and members of the charter. The Greater Manchester Housing Providers partnership (GMHP), representing GM's largest social landlords, were key partners in the development of the charter and have committed their support to the charter, meaning that a significant proportion of GM's social landlords will take part. However, it has historically proved difficult to recruit large proportions of private landlords to similar voluntary schemes, making recruitment of private landlords a key challenge for the implementation unit.
- 3.6 GMCA officers are making two significant recommendations related to the landlord recruitment side of implementation, which would both have financial implications for the charter's ongoing operation. These recommendations are not to charge a fee to landlords for participation in the charter, but to explore opportunities for other ways to raise revenue through the implementation unit, and to formally explore possible incentives for participation with local authority colleagues.
- 3.7 Responses to the public consultation were mixed on the question of whether to charge landlords a fee for participation in the charter. Some respondents who opposed charging a fee believed that it would dissuade participation in the charter or were concerned that the fee may be passed on to tenants. Others were in favour of a fee, however, believing that this would ensure that the charter was appropriately resourced and mean that participants properly valued taking part. The recommendation by GMCA officers not to charge a fee for participation largely rests on concern that this would negatively impact participation. This is particularly as several of the member criteria are likely to have associated costs, such as bringing homes up to EPC C rating, taking part in training or being part of an existing accreditation scheme. Additionally, for private landlords, the charter may be rolled out at a similar time as private landlords face other new registration fees, if provisions in

the Renters (Reform) Bill are revisited by the new government, including not only the ombudsman requirement but also a requirement to register on a new 'property portal'. Similar concerns led to the decision not to charge employers a fee to participate in the Good Employment Charter. Notwithstanding the recommendation not to charge a fee for participation in the Good Landlord Charter, the independent implementation unit may be able to seek sources of revenue, for example by charging for services like training.

- 3.8 In light of the challenges of recruiting private landlords to take part in previous schemes to improve renting standards, the public consultation asked respondents' views on potential incentives to take part. The challenge of recruiting landlords is likely to be particularly great at a time when private rents have been rising by record levels and demand for new lettings coming onto the market significantly outstrips the supply of new lettings in some areas.
- 3.9 Consultation responses suggested incentives such as peer networks and support, as well as ways of recognising landlords for good practice, alongside suggestions such as grants and discounts on services. GMCA officers have held preliminary discussions with colleagues working at a GM level to scope potential incentives that could be offered, such as priority access to grants for retrofit. However, the consultation responses also discussed the potential for using variations in property licensing fees (i.e. HMO and / or selective licensing fees), which are charged by local authorities, or streamlined application processes for licensing. This is consistent with other schemes encouraging good practice in the private rented sector, but would need to be supported and implemented by GM's councils. As such, officers will work with local authorities on potential incentives that could be offered uniformly across GM.

8. Public consultation and response

- 4.1 This section summarises the main ways that the design of the Good Landlord Charter has been changed in response to feedback from the public consultation, other than the changes described above. The overwhelming response to the consultation was broadly positive about the proposed approach, with particular support for the proposal to focus on supporting landlords to go above minimum standards, for the characteristics and several of the member criteria. However, feedback from the public consultation has also helped refine and improve the final design.
- 4.2 The public consultation ran from 8th January to 26th February 2024. It included 42 questions covering all aspects of the design of the charter. More than 270 formal responses were received. Alongside the written consultation, several focus groups were commissioned to proactively seek the views of people who were likely to have been underrepresented in the written consultation, with 116 people attending these sessions. A full summary of consultation responses and feedback from the focus groups are included as annexes to this report, including both a quantitative and qualitative summary of responses.
- 4.3 The largest part of the consultation focused on the characteristics of good renting and member criteria. While there was overwhelming general support for the characteristics and criteria, a large number of additional points were raised in qualitative feedback, which have been considered by officers and have resulted in changes to the design of the member criteria. These include the addition of a new member criterion, an amendment to two existing member criteria, and considerations for how several member criteria should be assessed as the charter develops. Several other suggestions were made for the amendment of member criteria that officers are not recommending integrating into the charter design.
- 4.4 The member criterion 'effective approach to property inspection' has been added under the safe and decent characteristic in response to several points of feedback. These fall into two broad categories. The first relates to aspects of property condition that are currently covered by legal requirements or will be when the Decent Homes Standard is extended to the private rented sector. These include feedback that:

- a. The security characteristic should include physical security
- b. The safe and decent characteristic should include property fabric and condition overall
- c. The safe and decent characteristic should include standards in relation to noise

- 4.5 Each of these points is either covered by a hazard in the Housing Health and Safety Rating System, or by the Decent Homes Standard, or by both. As such, introducing specific new criteria related to them would not be in keeping with the focus of the criteria on going above existing legal requirements. However, there is no existing legal requirement for a landlord to proactively check or inspect properties to ensure that the homes they rent out actually meet the standards and an additional criterion to have an effective approach to inspection will help to ensure that homes meet the standards they are required to by law.
- 4.6 Other comments that support the additional member criterion relate to queries about how safety and decency would be assured as part of the charter, with several respondents proposing independent inspections or submitting documentation, such as gas safety certificates to the charter. GMHP's involvement in the charter will mean that, in prospect, more than 200,000 social rented homes will be covered by the charter, even before other social landlords and private landlords are considered. In practice, it would not be possible for independent inspection of anything but a small minority of such a large housing stock, meaning that landlords' own inspections would be essential for ensuring safety and decency, even if independently inspecting some homes or requiring other evidence forms a part of the charter assurance process.
- 4.7 Changes have been made to two existing member criteria in response to feedback from the public consultation. The first is to clarify that the member criterion to bring homes up to EPC C should be done over a reasonable timescale and would have reasonable exceptions. Until last year the government had intended to increase the minimum energy performance of homes in the private rented sector to EPC C with a deadline of 2028, with reasonable exceptions for homes that cannot practically be brought up to the standard (such as listed buildings) and with a cost cap. There is still a national target of bringing all social rented homes up to EPC C by 2030. The inclusion of 'within achievable timescales' in the new criterion reflects the fact that

bringing homes up to EPC C will take time and that it will not be possible for some homes to reach the standard.

- 4.8 The member criterion relating to who will make repairs has also been updated in response to the consultation. Feedback suggested that the original drafting 'any work/repairs done by a qualified tradesperson' was overly onerous and may significantly increase the cost of repairs, particularly minor repairs in the context of a shortage of qualified tradespeople. The updated drafting 'any work/repairs done by a qualified or competent person' makes allowances for, e.g. smaller jobs to be completed by a person with the requisite skills but with no formal qualification in a relevant trade, while having the same aim of ensuring repairs are completed by someone who is able to do a good job.
- 4.9 Additional points raised as part of the consultation have not resulted in a change to the member criteria, but will need to be considered as the approach to assessing criteria is developed. There was a significant amount of feedback on the criterion 'clear and fair rent review or setting process'. These included comments, from both tenants and landlords, that the criterion should include an index-linked limit on rent increases or, alternatively, a proscription on very large rent increases, e.g. of above 30%. Other comments took the opposite view, that the charter should not limit rent increases, and it is clear there will be significant disagreement about how the criterion should be assessed as it is developed. However, the existing criterion gives sufficient room for these views to be taken forward for consideration without amendment.
- 4.10 Other feedback that will be taken forward as the approach to assessment for existing criteria includes feedback on:
- a. Smart meters – concern about refusing the installation of smart meters will be considered as part of the 'Tenants are able to make reasonable changes to their home' criterion
 - b. Flood risk – concern about advertising flood risk and supporting tenants to protect against floods will be considered as part of the 'Adopting advertising / viewing standards' and 'Providing / signposting tenants to useful information'
 - c. Pre-action protocol – a desire to see the pre-action protocol for evictions used by social landlords extended to private landlords will be considered under the 'Giving a fair amount of time to tenants who struggle to pay their rent' criterion
 - d. Broadband connectivity – concern about connection to broadband will be considered under the 'Adopting advertising / viewing standards' and 'Space standards and amenities' criteria

- e. DBS checks – consideration of making links between landlords and supporting those fleeing domestic abuse will be considered as part of the ‘Fit and proper person check’ criterion

- 4.11 The public consultation delivered a large amount of additional rich evidence and opinions on how the member criteria should be assessed and all these responses will be considered as assessment is developed.
- 4.12 A number of other responses to the consultation suggested changes that are not planned to be part of the member criteria or how they are assessed at this time. Included in these were suggestions to introduce elements of the Renters (Reform) Bill – such as repealing Section 21, proscribing blanket bans on pets and proscribing discrimination against tenants on benefits – through the member criteria prior to their legal introduction. *The Renters (Reform) Bill fell following the dissolution of parliament for the 2024 General Election, after the consultation closed, although the new government has committed to repealing Section 21. Given the commitment to repeal Section 21 as a matter of urgency, officers recommend not including it in the charter at this time.* reform. In addition, asks for member criteria on tackling anti-social behaviour (ASB) and providing data on rents are not recommended at this time. The charter is initially expected to cover a minority of the private rented market, meaning data on rents are unlikely to be representative and may be misleading. While ASB can pose a very serious risk to the mental health of those subject to it, the charter is more likely to make a positive impact by supporting participating landlords to manage ASB than setting a prescriptive approach.
- 4.13 Feedback was sought in the public consultation about whether the charter should take a different approach to applying the member criteria for landlords of different sizes. The majority of respondents somewhat disagreed with this approach, although sizeable minorities thought strongly that size should be taken into account. This appears to demonstrate clear commitment to the principle that the renter experience is what matters, rather than the nature of the landlord. However, the approach to landlords of different sizes is likely to be continuously considered by the implementation unit as it develops the approach to assessing compliance with the member criteria.
- 4.14 The other major areas of feedback in the consultation were the approach to specialist housing, the role of letting / managing agents and the approach to governance. A significant majority of respondents strongly agreed with the proposed approach to specialist housing, which GMCA will now seek to implement. A significant majority also agreed with the proposed approach to agents’ role, which was one of charter

champion rather than admitting agents as members themselves (except insofar that they also act as a landlord).

4.15 GMCA proposed establishing governance structures for the Good Landlord Charter that mirror the Good Employment Charter's, including a programme board to oversee the charter as a whole and a technical review panel to take the final decision on membership. The majority of respondents to the consultation agreed with the approach, and qualitative feedback included comments on representation and balance on the programme board. This included recommendations for a tenant majority on the board and the presence of independent members. GMCA will work with the members of the coordinating group that met to develop the charter proposal to establish a board with an appropriate balance of tenant, landlord, agent and other members.

9. Recommendations and next steps

5.1 The GMCA is requested to:

- Comment on and approve the design in the paper for the Good Landlord Charter and the associated activity to implement the charter, including the proposal not to charge a fee to landlords for participation in the charter.
- Approve the utilisation of £250,000 from retained business rates in 2024/25 to procure an independent implementation unit for the charter, with future years' funding to come through the budget setting process.

5.2 Subject to the recommendations in this report being accepted, the proposed next steps include the following:

- a. Beginning a procurement process for an external implementation unit to continue the development of the charter and implement it. Officers would seek to procure an external partner on a three-year contract, with an equivalent value to the Good Employment Charter implementation unit. This would give sufficient time to fully develop and implement the charter with a period of operation. Due to the size of the contract this would need to be a full public procurement process, meaning that it would take approximately two to three months to appoint a provider.
- b. Officers will submit a further report to the GMCA in due course setting out the approach to operationalising the Charter for approval before implementation.
- c. Open expressions of interest for landlord participants in the charter. The charter implementation unit would work with the group of landlords to develop the approach to member criteria assessment, support, etc.
- d. Opening conversations with GM local authorities about possible incentives for landlords to participate in the charter and the development of a uniform offer across the conurbation.