

Notice of Motion (Full Council)

Title of Motion: **Devolving Powers for Local Rent Controls**

Date of Council meeting the motion is to be submitted to: 17 March 2026

Proposer: **Councillor William Gill**

Seconder: **Councillor Richard Jeffcoat**

Motion:

“Council notes that according to the 2021 Census, 24,237 households in Sandwell rent privately – 18.6% of all households and that our private rented sector has grown sharply over time: 4.6% (2001) → 12.0% (2011) → 18.6% (2021). The average monthly private rent in Sandwell was £845 in January 2025, up from £822 in January 2024 (+2.8%).

Council further notes that Sandwell is a high-need borough: it is ranked 12th most deprived local authority (out of 317) on the Index of Multiple Deprivation (2019), with 60% of neighbourhoods in the 20% most deprived nationally. The pressure private rents place on homelessness services is already visible locally: in November 2024, Sandwell reported 220 households in temporary accommodation (up from 44 in March 2021) and spending £2.5m in the previous year on temporary accommodation. The Council’s own evidence base recognises that Local Housing Allowance (LHA) has not kept pace with rents, forcing many residents to cover the shortfall, contributing to debt, rent arrears and homelessness.

Council recognises that local authorities elsewhere have explicitly called for stronger rent regulation powers, including the Mayor of London who has requested powers to introduce rent control, Bristol City Council has debated and backed calls for rent controls, despite lacking the legal power to implement them currently. In Scotland, legislation has moved toward a system that allows government to designate rent control areas/zones with caps linked to inflation (subject to rules and exemptions).

Council acknowledges that national public support for rent controls is strong: an Ipsos poll (June 2024) found 71% of people in England support rent controls linked to inflation.

Council recognises Government proposals to extend minimum standards in the private rented sector (including a Decent Homes Standard for PRS) and expectations around higher energy efficiency can create upward cost pressures, but that there is potential that landlords may seek to pass on through rent rises unless costs are managed fairly.

Council believes that housing costs are a central driver of the cost-of-living crisis in Sandwell, particularly given the borough's high deprivation and the rapid growth of private renting. Without improving affordability, many residents will continue to face worsening hardship, arrears, and housing insecurity. A range of measures that may include rent controls or indexing local housing allowances should be available to Councils to sit alongside supply, standards enforcement, and homelessness prevention help stabilise costs, reduce displacement, and protect residents while longer-term housing solutions are delivered.

Council therefore calls on the Leader and Cabinet to write to the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government setting out the terms of this Motion and asking that they legislate to allow local authorities to introduce additional measures relating to rent levels in the private rented sector, with local discretion to design schemes that are:

- evidence-led and targeted (linked to inflation or defined “rent pressure” conditions),
- compatible with improving standards (Decent Homes / enforcement),
- designed to protect supply while preventing unreasonable rent escalation. (GOV.UK)”