

# Council warns landlords over Airbnb rules

Council officials have sent out dozens of “impact warning letters” to properties thought to be operating as Airbnb-style short term lets against planning rules – as the city’s housing chief has urged people to “think very carefully” before running properties commercially.

The warning comes as analysis from the Chartered Institute of Housing reveals that there are now “two Airbnb lets for every 13 homes within the city centre ward”.

A report to councillors warns that “there were over 12,000 registered Airbnb properties in Edinburgh in 2018” – a rise of around 3,000 within the space of a year.

Council officials have now written to 40 owners of flats at Western Harbour, “highlight the permissions and other various legal requirements they may be breaching and requiring that the use cease.” The council says that “early indications are that the trial may be worth continuing”.

Housing and economy convener, Cllr Kate Campbell, has spoken out about the explosion of short term lets in the Capital, accusing the trend of “hollowing out communities and taking homes out of housing supply which drives up rents”.

She said: “As a city we’ve been saying for some time that we need the right powers to properly get to grips with this problem. So obviously we’re delighted that the Scottish Government has launched a consultation and we’d encourage

residents who share our concerns to take part.

“What we really need is a licensing regime so that, instead using planning powers which limit us to reacting to problems as they arise, we can take a proactive approach and make strategic decisions about limiting the number, concentration and type of property that can be used, and make sure that landlords are fit and proper.”

Cllr Campbell has appealed for those operating short term lets commercially to think about the knock-on effects it can have on the city’s housing market.

She said: “We want to send a message that if you have a property which is mainly or solely being used as a short term let you need planning permission. And the planning guidance that we have around short term lets is clear about the type of properties that are, and are not, suitable.

“We want people in the city who are considering what the long term plans are for a second home to think very carefully before deciding on operating a commercial short term let. Apart from the fact that many properties won’t be suitable, we also have a high level of housing need in the city and I would hope people would want to keep houses as homes for residents.”

Conservative group leader, Cllr Iain Whyte, raised concerns that removing key safes could impact on health and social care services that often rely on them for access.

Cllr Whyte said: “While I do understand they are used by some short term letting properties, key safes are also used quite extensively throughout the city by care organisations to allow carers access to a key to enter a property.

“If we are taking block action to ban these, that seems to be perhaps causing a problem for our care staff.”

The council has piloted enforcement action against key safes on listed buildings and 11 were removed from a listed building at Upper Bow, labelled a “fairly extreme example” by the council’s regulatory service manager, Andrew Mitchell.

He added: “For the vast majority of these cases, it’s unlikely

we would take enforcement action.”



Edinburgh City Chambers