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Janice Thompson
Clerk to the Committee for Communities

Mail to:
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Dear Janice

Private Tenancies Bill

Thank you for your letter dated 22 October 2021 on behalf of the Committee regarding the Private Tenancies Bill.

In relation to the Bill, Members noted the commitment in New Decade, New Approach for a new Energy Strategy for NI, which will set targets and actions for the transition to a zero-carbon society.

The Committee requested a written update from DfE on the progress of the strategy as part of its evidence gathering on the Bill.

Response

As you are aware the Department for the Economy is leading the development of the new Energy Strategy for Northern Ireland. An options consultation, on potential policies to be included in the strategy, closed on 2 July and work is ongoing to finalise the document, which the Minister will then table for NI Executive approval.

The strategy envisages a whole system approach to support the achievement of our climate objectives. It will cover almost 60% of greenhouse gas emissions in Northern Ireland, and will detail plans for low carbon networks, new technologies, buildings, vehicles, industry and infrastructure. Its overall goal is to achieve net zero carbon no later than 2050, and to ensure that everyone has access to affordable energy.

A key element of the strategy is to 'do more with less' which includes reducing the amount of energy that is consumed in the built environment. Implementing energy efficiency measures in homes and businesses will lessen carbon emissions, alleviate

financial pressures from increasing fuel bills and can improve health outcomes for the most vulnerable.

Setting Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards will play an integral role in delivering reduced energy use in our building stock, and a working group has been set up to consider what and how standards should be set. The group includes representatives from a number of departments and public sector organisations, including the Department for Communities, given their responsibilities for housing and the private rented sector. The group will consider how best to drive compliance in standards across different building and tenure types and how metrics, such as Energy Performance Certificates, can be used to drive the improvements required.

I hope this information is helpful. I am copying this reply to the Clerk, Committee for the Economy.

Yours sincerely,

Sharon Smyth
Departmental Assembly Liaison Officer