

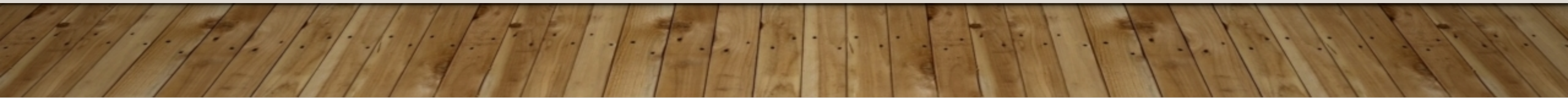
COST OF RENTING SURVEY

SOUTHAMPTON TENANTS UNION



Who are our respondents?

- Overwhelmingly employed, mostly full-time, less than 25% are unemployed or retired.
- Majority are female
- Postcode areas from urban areas of Southampton, SO14, SO15, SO16, SO17, SO18, SO19
- Majority is renting privately (over 80%)
- Out of these are 40% in shared accommodation.
- Those who are not sharing are nearly all renting 2-4 bedroom houses or flats.

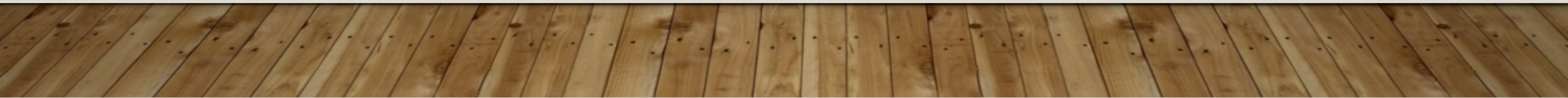


Who are our respondents?

- The majority is renting privately (over 80%)
- Out of these private renters 40% are in shared accommodation.
- Those who are not sharing, are mostly renting 2-4 bedroom houses or flats.
- These households are typically small, 1-2 people, only around 17% are bigger households.

How do the rent costs change?

- Over 80% reported an increase in their rent in the recent past or has been notified about an imminent rent rise.
- About half of the rent rises stayed at under £100/month, typically £50, those that rose some reported £300-400/month rent rises, the typical being around £200-250/month.



How affordable rents are?

- We think that no more than 30% of a person's or household's income should be spent on rent alone.
- About 20% reported an affordability of 30% or below. The majority have said between 35-50%, some as much as 60%.
- Interestingly, the majority, about 75% of our respondents still think their rent is affordable, but some of them were forced to move because of their rent rise.

Comments

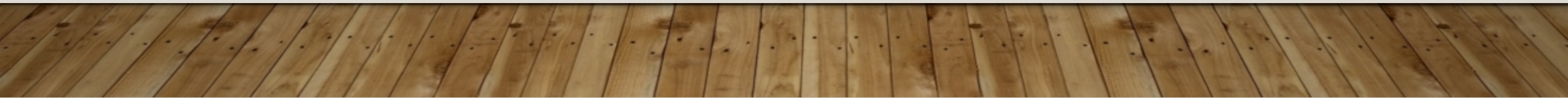
“I think the cost of rent when also factoring the cost of other bills is not proportionate to the wages people are receiving, meaning it is possible to rent and pay bills from your wage, but besides that, there is nothing leftover to help towards any savings/necessities/repairs or other advice costs needed.”

(Private tenant, 3 people share two bedrooms. They didn't give us rent amounts but they spend 46% of their income on rent alone.)

Comments

“I am trapped in my situation, unable to save money. My house is in a poor state of repair but I'm worried about being too assertive with my landlord as I wouldn't be able to find another place to live. My wages barely cover my rent so I am dependent on universal credit.”

(Family of 6 people living in a 4 bed property, privately rented, £250 rent rise.)



Comments

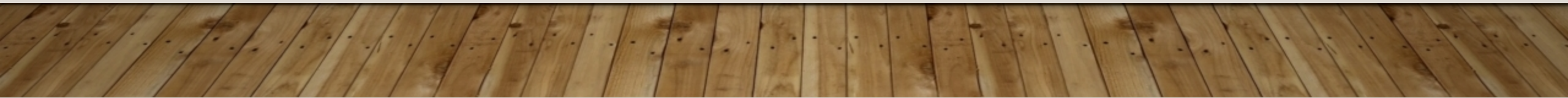
“My rent is going from 875 to 1,170 due to mortgage rate increase my UC will only cover 775 for a 2 bed house I work nearly full time have a son at home at college I can't afford this increase even though I know its the rate for a 2 bed benefits need to go up to help reflect the realistic price of rent.”

Imminent £300 rent rise in a privately rented 2 bed property, the tenant is forced to move as they can't afford it.

Comments

“Landlord tried to increase rent again by another £50 but negotiated no increase due to lack of timely response to repairs. Agreed for 6 months.”

(Self-employed respondent, 2 people in 2 bedrooms, spend 37% of their income on rent.)

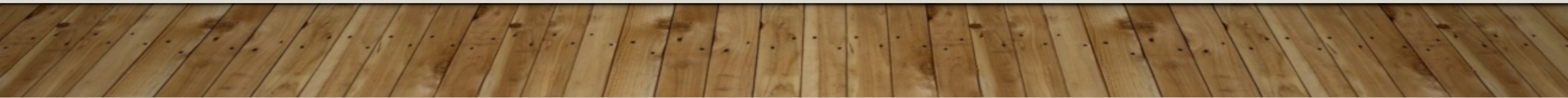


Comments

“We were given a section 21 because the rent was not worth the property the landlord decided to sell the property. We were nearly made homeless and ended up with the same size property for £400 more than what we were paying previously. That was the cheapest property that met our needs.

Housing element only cover £925 of that, substantially lower than the cost of the £1300 rent. We barely make the shortfall and have no choice but to pay it as other rents are much much higher.”

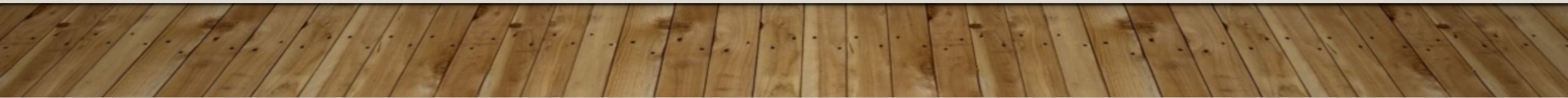
(Family of 4 or 5 living in a 3 bed property, they spend 60% of their income on rent.)



Comments

“People should not be paying this much for such basic stuff, such poor conditions are not worth the money. Its like living in slums, run by slumlords, charged through the roof and living hell but somehow it's allowed.”

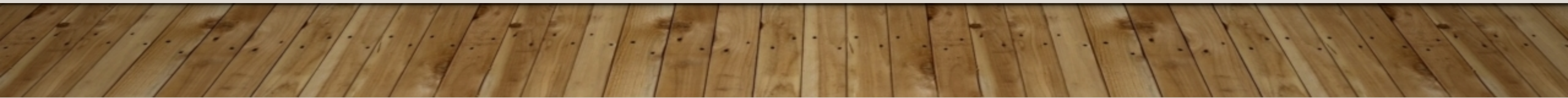
(Self-employed respondent, in a 2 persons household, spend 50% of their income on rent.)



Comments

“I am close to not being able to afford my rent. Almost no headroom. Any unexpected cost to render me non-viable.”

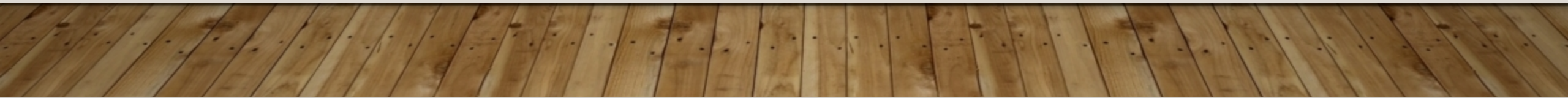
(Retired housing association tenant paying 46% of their income on rent.)



Comments

“Southampton Council Rent is excellent value for money & they provide an excellent service for the Rent.”

(Council tenant, one bedroom single, in full-time employment.)



Comments

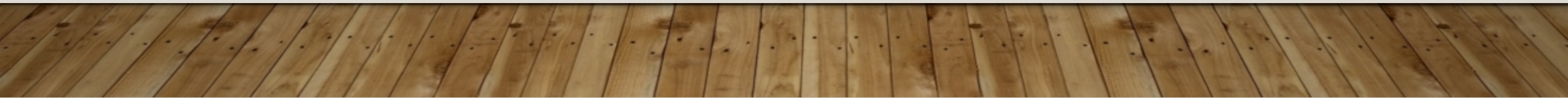
“I should explain that my data is accurate - I'm in full employment but on long term sick at present, income is £680 pcm, rent is £350pcm.”

(Single council tenant.)

Comments

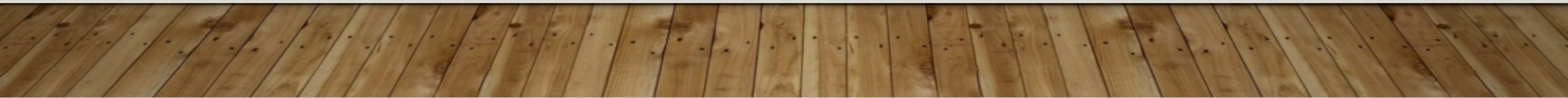
“I have very little headroom in my cash flow. I am managing to pay my rent but could very easily become insolvent.”

(Housing association tenant, single, retired.)



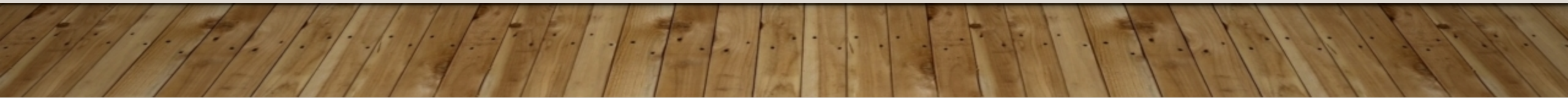
Statement

> The results of this survey are in line with much of what we hear and see around our city as the leading organisation by-and-for tenants. Rental costs are simply much too high, and the burden is not evenly distributed. While things are bad enough for the average renter, they are significantly worse for those at the bottom end of the rental market, who live in constant fear of being totally squeezed out and becoming homeless, and who literally subsist by working long hours simply to pay rent and bills and have nothing or less than nothing left over at the end of the month.



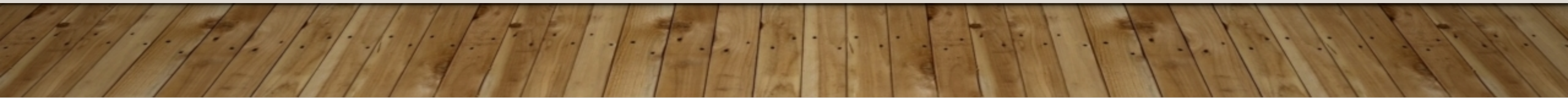
Statement

> These are not simply numbers on a spreadsheet but real human lives we're talking about. These are mothers and fathers, and their children; they're newly married couples; students trying to attain their education; people being denied an opportunity to live their lives because the cost of housing takes up the vast majority of their income. These people are the lifeblood of our city and they not just deserve, but need better.



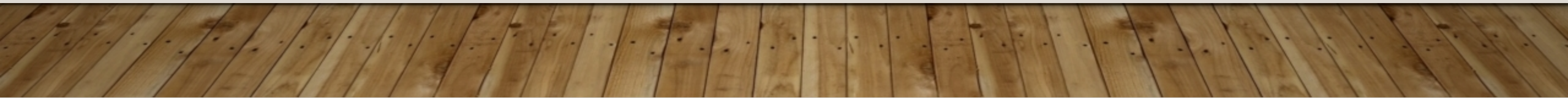
Statement

I am saying this not just in the interest of those I represent but also in the interest of the whole city – what kind of city can survive, after all, with a huge proportion of its population unable to make ends meet, and fearing homelessness at the end of every month? What will Southampton look like in five years if rents continue to rise unabated, and more and more people find themselves squeezed into poverty?



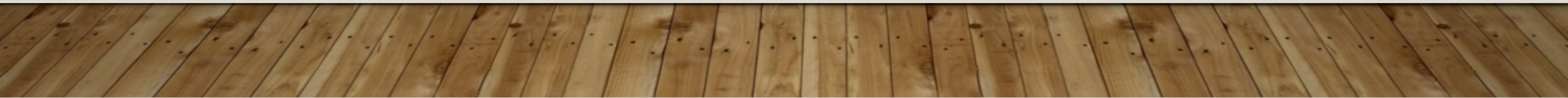
Statement

> In light of this crisis, the continual failure of the council to ensure that a significant enough proportion of new-build properties are earmarked for social or low-cost housing is particularly concerning. Short-term interventions are necessary to stop the bleeding but the only long-term solution is for the council to ensure that a proper supply of social housing is provided to meet the social need; we cannot continue to surrender control of our city's housing supply to the whims and self-destructive habits of the free market.



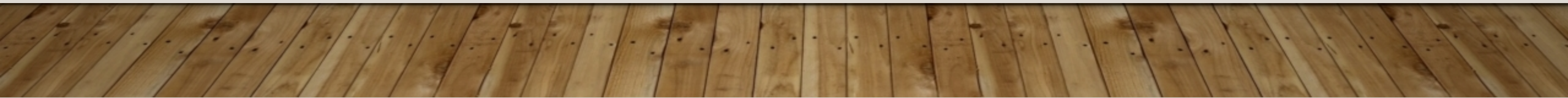
Statement

In addition to this we need firm but fair controls on rent to rein in the market, we need a public register of rents charged, and we need to talk about whether it's fair for a tenant living in a property they don't even own to pay the council tax on that property. Such a programme of intervention may seem like a big step to take, but these actually constitute the minimum that must be done to prevent an absolute catastrophe in our city. Figures recently released showed that a majority of Southampton's residents are now renters, not owners. All of these people suffer when rents rise.



Statement

More and more of them are being squeezed into poverty every day by rising costs, of which housing is the largest. If nothing is done to arrest this course then we will quickly find ourselves in a situation where a plurality, or even a majority, of our city's residents lurch from paycheque to paycheque and cannot truly live their lives. It is bad enough that so many of us already live this way. We need bold change, now, and this is the council's opportunity to deliver that.



Thank you!