



Decision with Statement of Reasons of the First-tier Tribunal for Scotland (Housing and Property Chamber) under Section 51 of the Private Housing Tenancies (Scotland) Act 2016

Chamber Ref: FTS/HPC/EV/23/0054

Re: Property at 105 Methil Brae, Methil, Fife, KY8 3LS (“the Property”)

Parties:

Mrs Senga Hodgson, 35 Main Street, Upper Largo, Fife, KY8 6EN (“the Applicant”)

Miss Billie Kerr, 105 Methil Brae, Methil, Fife, KY8 3LS (“the Respondent”)

Tribunal Members:

Ruth O’Hare (Legal Member) and Elizabeth Dickson (Ordinary Member)

Decision (in absence of the Respondent)

The First-tier Tribunal for Scotland (Housing and Property Chamber) (“the Tribunal”) determined to make an eviction order

Background

1 By application to the Tribunal the Applicant sought an eviction order against the Respondent in respect of the Property under section 51 of the Private Housing (Tenancies) (Scotland) Act 2016 (“the 2016 Act”). In support of the application the Applicant provided the following documentation:-

- (i) Private Residential Tenancy Agreement between the parties;
- (ii) Notice to Leave dated 28 September 2022 stating that proceedings for possession will commence no earlier than 1 November 2022 and citing ground 12, together with proof of service on the Respondent by recorded delivery mail;
- (iii) Notice under section 11 of the Homelessness (Scotland) Act 2003 to Fife Council; and

(iv) Rent Statement;

2 By Notice of Acceptance of Application the Legal Member with delegated powers of the Chamber President intimated that there were no grounds on which to reject the application. A Case Management Discussion was therefore assigned for the 22nd March 2023 to take place by teleconference. A copy of the application paperwork together with notification of the date and time of the Case Management Discussion and instructions on how to join the teleconference was intimated to the Respondent by Sheriff Officers.

Case Management Discussion

3 The Case Management Discussion took place by teleconference on 22nd March 2023. The Applicant was represented by Miss Lynn Herbert, Solicitor. The Respondent was not in attendance. The Tribunal noted that she had been served with the application paperwork together with the date and time of the Case Management Discussion and instructions for joining the teleconference, and therefore determined to proceed in her absence.

4 The Tribunal then explained the legal test and asked Miss Herbert to address the Tribunal on the Applicants' position regarding the matter.

5 Miss Herbert advised that the Applicant sought an eviction order on the basis of rent having not been paid. The tenancy had commenced in 2020 and arrears had accrued at an early stage. In December 2020 an agreement was reached between the Applicant and Respondent whereby the Applicant received rent by way of universal credit, with an additional £29.71 per month towards the arrears. At that time the arrears were £1030. The arrangement had continued until May 2022, when the Applicant advised the Respondent that she was considering selling the property. The Respondent had then cancelled the universal credit payments. No rent had been received since then. The arrears now stood at £4040.78. The Applicant was therefore keen to recover the property as soon as possible.

6 Miss Herbert advised that the Respondent had attended her office on a couple of occasions, most recently following service of the application paperwork from the Tribunal. She had spoken with Miss Herbert's secretary and had been quite cross and abusive. She did not appear to have any intention of making payments. Miss Herbert advised that the Respondent did not appear to be in employment and had failed to do anything to rectify her arrears. The Applicant therefore considered it reasonable for an eviction order to be granted at this stage. Miss Herbert confirmed that the Respondent lived in the property alone. The Applicant owned another property in addition to this one. Miss Herbert further advised that there had been complaints from neighbours regarding the Respondent's conduct of the tenancy, albeit these were not the basis for the application. In response to questions from the Tribunal, Miss Herbert confirmed that there had been no contact from the local authority. The Respondent had however telephoned her office in January 2023 to request a copy of her tenancy agreement for a universal credit appointment. However

no payments had been forthcoming and there had been no further contact from the Respondent.

Relevant Legislation

- 7 The legislation the Tribunal must apply in its determination of the application are the following provisions of the Private Housing Tenancies (Scotland) Act 2016, as amended by the Coronavirus (Scotland) Act 2020, the Coronavirus (Scotland) Act 2020 (Eviction from Dwelling-houses) (Notice Periods) Modification Regulations 2020 and the Coronavirus (Extension and Expiry) (Scotland) Act 2021:-

1 - Meaning of private residential tenancy

1) A tenancy is a private residential tenancy where—

(a) the tenancy is one under which a property is let to an individual (“the tenant”) as a separate dwelling,

(b) the tenant occupies the property (or any part of it) as the tenant’s only or principal home, and

(c) the tenancy is not one which schedule 1 states cannot be a private residential tenancy.

(2) A tenancy which is a private residential tenancy does not cease to be one by reason only of the fact that subsection (1)(b) is no longer satisfied.

51 First-tier Tribunal's power to issue an eviction order

(1) The First-tier Tribunal is to issue an eviction order against the tenant under a private residential tenancy if, on an application by the landlord, it finds that one of the eviction grounds named in schedule 3 applies.

(2) The provisions of schedule 3 stating the circumstances in which the Tribunal may find that an eviction ground applies are exhaustive of the circumstances in which the Tribunal is entitled to find that the ground in question applies.

(3) The Tribunal must state in an eviction order the eviction ground, or grounds, on the basis of which it is issuing the order.

(4) An eviction order brings a tenancy which is a private residential tenancy to an end on the day specified by the Tribunal in the order.

52 Applications for eviction orders and consideration of them

(1) In a case where two or more persons jointly are the landlord under a tenancy, an application for an eviction order may be made by any one of those persons.

(2) The Tribunal is not to entertain an application for an eviction order if it is made in breach of—

(a) subsection (3), or

(b) any of sections 54 to 56 (but see subsection (4)).

(3) An application for an eviction order against a tenant must be accompanied by a copy of a notice to leave which has been given to the tenant.

(4) Despite subsection (2)(b), the Tribunal may entertain an application made in breach of section 54 if the Tribunal considers that it is reasonable to do so.

(5) The Tribunal may not consider whether an eviction ground applies unless it is a ground which—

(a) is stated in the notice to leave accompanying the landlord's application in accordance with subsection (3), or

(b) has been included with the Tribunal's permission in the landlord's application as a stated basis on which an eviction order is sought.

54 Restriction on applying during the notice period

(1) A landlord may not make an application to the First-tier Tribunal for an eviction order against a tenant using a copy of a notice to leave until the expiry of the relevant period in relation to that notice.

(2) The relevant period in relation to a notice to leave—

(a) begins on the day the tenant receives the notice to leave from the landlord, and

(b) in the case of a notice served before 3 October 2020 expires on the day falling—

(i) 28 days after it begins if subsection (3) applies,

(ii) three months after it begins if subsection (3A) applies,

(iii) six months after it begins if neither subsection (3) nor (3A) applies.

(c) in the case of a notice served on or after 3 October 2020, expires on the day falling—

(i) 28 days after it begins if subsection (3B) applies,

(ii) three months after it begins if subsection (3C) applies,

(iii) six months after it begins if neither subsection (3B) nor (3C) applies

(3) This subsection applies if the only eviction ground stated in the notice to leave is that the tenant is not occupying the let property as the tenant's home. [ground 10]

(3A) This subsection applies if—

(a) the only eviction ground, or grounds, stated in the notice to leave is, or are, one or more of the following—

(i) that the landlord intends to live in the let property, [ground 4]

(ii) that a member of the landlord's family intends to live in the let property, [ground 5]

(iii) that the tenant has a relevant conviction, [ground 13]

(iv) that the tenant has engaged in relevant anti-social behaviour, [ground 14]

(v) that the tenant associates in the let property with a person who has a relevant conviction or has engaged in relevant anti-social behaviour, [ground 15]

(vi) that the landlord is not registered by the relevant local authority under the Antisocial Behaviour etc. (Scotland) Act 2004, [ground 16]

(vii) that the let property or associated living accommodation is in multiple occupation and not licensed under Part 5 of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2006, [ground 17] or

(b) the only eviction grounds stated in the notice to leave are—

(i) the eviction ground mentioned in subsection (3), and

(ii) an eviction ground, or grounds, mentioned in paragraph (a)

(3B) This subsection applies if the only eviction ground, or grounds, stated in the notice to leave is, or are, one or more of the following—

(a) that the tenant is not occupying the let property as the tenant's home, [ground 10]

(b) that the tenant has a relevant conviction, [ground 13]

(c) that the tenant has engaged in relevant anti-social behaviour, or [ground 14]

(d) that the tenant associates in the let property with a person who has a relevant conviction or has engaged in relevant anti-social behaviour. [ground 15]

(3C) This subsection applies if—

(a) the only eviction ground, or grounds, stated in the notice to leave is, or are, one or more of the following—

(i) that the landlord intends to live in the let property, [ground 4]

(ii) that a member of the landlord's family intends to live in the let property, [ground 5]

(iii) that the landlord is not registered by the relevant local authority under the Antisocial Behaviour etc. (Scotland) Act 2004, [ground 16]

(iv) that the let property or associated living accommodation is in multiple occupation and not licensed under Part 5 of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2006, or [ground 17]

(b) the only eviction grounds stated in the notice to leave are—

(i) an eviction ground, or grounds, mentioned in subsection (3B), and

(ii) an eviction ground, or grounds, mentioned in paragraph (a).

62 Meaning of notice to leave and stated eviction ground

(1) References in this Part to a notice to leave are to a notice which—

(a) is in writing,

(b) specifies the day on which the landlord under the tenancy in question expects to become entitled to make an application for an eviction order to the First-tier Tribunal,

(c) states the eviction ground, or grounds, on the basis of which the landlord proposes to seek an eviction order in the event that the tenant does not vacate the let property before the end of the day specified in accordance with paragraph (b), and

(d) fulfils any other requirements prescribed by the Scottish Ministers in regulations.

(2) In a case where two or more persons jointly are the landlord under a tenancy, references in this Part to the tenant receiving a notice to leave from the landlord are to the tenant receiving one from any of those persons.

(3) References in this Part to the eviction ground, or grounds, stated in a notice to leave are to the ground, or grounds, stated in it in accordance with subsection (1)(c).

(4) The day to be specified in accordance with subsection (1)(b) is the day falling after the day on which the notice period defined in section 54(2) will expire.

(5) For the purpose of subsection (4), it is to be assumed that the tenant will receive the notice to leave 48 hours after it is sent.

Schedule 3, Part 12

(1) It is an eviction ground that the tenant has been in rent arrears for three or more consecutive months. ...

(3) The First-tier Tribunal may find that the ground named by subparagraph (1) applies if— (a) for three or more consecutive months the tenant has been in arrears of rent, and (b) the Tribunal is satisfied that it is reasonable on account of that fact to issue an eviction order. (4) In deciding under subparagraph (3) whether it is reasonable to issue an eviction order, the Tribunal is to consider whether the tenant's being in arrears of rent over the period in question is wholly or partly a consequence of a delay or failure in the payment of a relevant benefit.

- 8 The Rent Arrears Pre-Action Requirements (Coronavirus) (Scotland) Regulations 2020 are also relevant to this application. The Cost of Living (Tenant Protection) (Scotland) Act 2022 is also relevant to this application, which was received by the Tribunal on 7 January 2023.

Findings in Fact and Law

- 9 The parties entered into a Private Residential Tenancy Agreement which commenced on 6 April 2020.
- 10 The tenancy between the parties was a private residential tenancy as defined by section 1 of the 2016 Act.
- 11 On 29 September 2022 the Applicant delivered a Notice to Leave to the Respondent by recorded delivery mail. The Notice to Leave cited ground 12 of

Schedule 3 of the 2016 Act and confirmed that proceedings would not be raised any earlier than 1st November 2022.

- 12 The Notice to Leave is in the format prescribed by the Private Residential Tenancies (Prescribed Notices and Forms) (Scotland) Regulations 2017.
- 13 In terms of Clause 2 of the said Tenancy Agreement the Respondent undertook to make payment of rent at the rate of £350 per calendar month.
- 14 As at the date of service of the Notice to Leave arrears in the sum of £1400 were outstanding.
- 15 As at the date of the Case Management Discussion arrears in the sum of £4040.78 were outstanding.
- 16 The last payment to the rent account by the Respondent was in May 2022.
- 17 The Applicant has sought to assist the Respondent by offering to enter into payment arrangements and by advising her of the outstanding arrears and rent due.
- 18 The Respondent agreed a payment arrangement in December 2020 whereby the rent would be paid by universal credit with an additional £29.71 towards the arrears.
- 19 The Respondent ceased said payments in May 2022 after being advised by the Applicant that she was considering selling the property.
- 20 The Respondent resides in the property alone.
- 21 It is reasonable to make the order sought by the Applicant.
- 22 The provisions of ground 12 of Schedule 3 of the 2016 Act have been met.

Reasons for Decision

- 23 The Tribunal was satisfied at the Case Management Discussion that it had sufficient information upon which to make a decision and that to do so would not be prejudicial to the interests of the parties. There were no substantive facts in dispute therefore the Tribunal did not consider there to be any requirement to fix a hearing in the matter as there were no issues to be resolved that required the hearing of evidence. The Respondent had been given the opportunity to participate in the proceedings but had chosen not to do so.

- 24 The application before the Tribunal was accompanied by a Notice to Leave which confirmed the Applicants intention to rely upon ground 12 of Schedule 3 of the 2016 Act. The Tribunal was satisfied that the required notice had been given to the Respondent and therefore that application could be entertained.
- 25 The Tribunal accepted that there were rent arrears outstanding in the sum of £4040.78. The lack of ongoing payments to the rent account had resulted in a significant balance of arrears. On that basis the Tribunal was satisfied that ground 12 had been met, in that rent had gone unpaid for three or more months and there was at least one month's rent arrears outstanding as at the date of the Case Management Discussion.
- 26 The Tribunal then considered the question of reasonableness. The Tribunal accepted the submissions from the Applicant's representative at the Case Management Discussion. It was clear that efforts had been made to address the arrears when they initially began to accrue through the establishment of a payment arrangement reliant upon universal credit payments. The Respondent had however chosen to stop said payments upon being advised that the Applicant was considering selling the property and the arrears had almost quadrupled as a result. Whilst the Applicant had not fully complied with the pre-action requirements, the Tribunal was satisfied that attempts had been made to assist the Respondent prior to making the application to the Tribunal. The Tribunal noted the Respondent's personal circumstances, namely that she was believed to be unemployed and resided alone. Whilst the Tribunal did have some concerns regarding her situation, ultimately without the making of an eviction order it was likely that arrears would continue to accrue to the detriment of the Applicant.
- 27 The Tribunal also noted that the Respondent had previously been in receipt of universal credit. However in the absence of any information regarding her current entitlement the Tribunal was unable to conclude that the arrears as at the date of the Case Management Discussion were a result of any failure or delay in the payment of a relevant benefit. There was nothing before the Tribunal to contradict the position put forward by the Applicant.
- 28 Accordingly, having regard to the significant level of arrears, the efforts by the Applicant to assist the Respondent by entering into a payment arrangement, the ongoing financial impact on the Applicant, and the Respondent's personal circumstances, the Tribunal ultimately concluded that it would be reasonable in all the circumstances of the case to make an eviction order.
- 29 The Tribunal therefore determined to make an order for eviction against the Respondents. The decision of the Tribunal was unanimous.

Right of Appeal

In terms of Section 46 of the Tribunal (Scotland) Act 2014, a party aggrieved by the decision of the Tribunal may appeal to the Upper Tribunal for Scotland on a point of law only. Before an appeal can be made to the Upper Tribunal, the party must first seek permission to appeal from the First-tier Tribunal. That party must seek permission to appeal within 30 days of the date the decision was sent to them.

Ruth O'Hare

24 March 2023

Legal Member/Chair

Date