

MINUTES OF THE LANDLORDS' MEETINGS

TUESDAY- 06 JANUARY 2009 - 18:00
&
WEDNESDAY- 07 JANUARY 2009 - 10:00

THE HIVE

Present - 06.01.09

Bolitho, Jill	UEA	Holmes, Peter	Parker, Helen	
Brown, Caryll		Illesley, John	Parker, James	
Brown, Richard		Ives, Kathryn	Prewer, Elaine	
Cox, Helen		Ives, Michael	Spiro, Jo	SU
Crowcombe, Janine		Jackson, Martin	Stern, Monica	
Darrah, Richard		Kelly, Jim	Sutton, Tom	SU
Eastoe, Julie		Langford, Kara	Symonds, Roger	
Eastoe, Malcolm		McGrath, Rachel	Warne, Jon	
Faircloth, Andrew		Nicholson, Philip	Whitney-Long, Lila	
Faircloth, Judith		Nicholson, Rosalie	Whitney-Long, Simon	
Headden, Lydia	SU	Osborne, Alan	CNC	

Meeting commenced at 18:05 and ended at 19:40.

Present - 07.01.09

Bolitho, Jill	UEA	Lambe, S	Pierce, Liz	
Calow, Nigel		Langford, Kara	Popely, Barry	
Chadbon, Stephen	N			
Fire		Lessiter, Matt	Popely, Diane	
Chase, Paul		MacDonald, Dave	Ramjeet, Mohit	
Devlukia, Kailesh		MacDonald, Douglas	Richardson, Julian	UEA
Dowding, Wendy		Massey, Rob	Spencer, Martha	
Green, Robin		Matthews, Sally	Spiro, Jo	SU
Gudgin, Jo		Osborne, Alan	Summers, David	
Hanington, David		Palmer, Janice	Summers, Janet	
Hastings, Vicky		Palmer, Richard	Sutton, Allan	
Headden, Lydia	SU	Parker, Ian	Sutton, Tom	SU
Hebditch, Rosemary		Parker, Pam	Wellingham, Bernard	
Hindle, John		Parkes, Penny	Wing, Ruth	SU
Lambe, Carl		Parry, Enid		

Apologies:

Calow, Melanie	Hebditch, Suzanna	Lord, Hazel
Edmonds, Jack	Kingwell, Mandy	MacDonald, Jane

Meeting commenced at 10:10 and ended at 11:35.

1. Jo Spiro – Student Support Services Manager – Welcome

Apologies 06.01.09 from S Chadbon (Fire Service) and J Richardson (UEA Accommodation).

2. Kara Langford – Home Run Administrator – Update

Handout attached (a).

P 1 – Registered Properties - Bedspace Comparison

2008	Sharp rise Week 9	Housing Event Feb 26
	Dips weeks 20 and 34	Ring-rounds to LLs checking availability
	Dip week 43	EPC legislation – non-compliance Oct 1

KL stressed the importance of keeping HR informed of any changes to status of property in order that information is up-to-date and accurate.

P 2 - Bedspace 'Take Up' Per Property 2008

4-bedroomed properties have the greatest take up figures, followed by 3-bedroomed.

P 3 & 4 - Bedspace Availability August 18 – October 13 (start of academic year)

Shows a steady uptake.

P 5 - All Properties Registered – Average Exclusive Rent Comparison

Mean rent = £240 / Mode rent = £250 (3, 4 and 5-bed properties).
Note: Average agency student rent next academic year = £225 pppcm.

P 6 - Properties Available to Let – Average Exclusive Rent Comparison

Rents have decreased during the period shown.

P 7 - Total Annual Rent Expenditure

Generally it is cheaper to live on-campus as rents are inclusive of all bills, internet connection and cleaning and there is no deposit payable.

At week commencing 05.01.09:

- 651 properties were registered with Home Run
- 2613 bedspaces
- 118 bedspaces were available to let with a further
- 117 available to let but not advertised pending receipt of certificates.

Thanks were extended to all LLs who had returned their 2009 Housing Fair Registration Forms and necessary documentation (reference number is sufficient for EPC).

A LL asked for the percentage of students who use HR.

We will try to make these figures available for our next meeting.

3. Jill Bolitho – Student Services Manager (DoS) – Community Issues

JB outlined her main role as the first point of contact at UEA for any complaints in respect of student noise. After ascertaining the complaint relates to UEA students referrals are made to the Anti-social Behaviour Officer (noise) at Norwich City Council or Environmental Health (rubbish / gardens) and a letter sent to the students making them aware of the complaint and also reminding them that they are members of the community.

Usually any problem is then resolved. However, if a further complaint ensues students would be called to a meeting. Fortunately this has not happened so far this academic year.

Future plans include raising the profile of 'good' students, continuing to develop relationships with Norwich City Council, the Police, Local Community Groups and HR LLs. Together with TS (Welfare Officer) they hope to produce a leaflet for distribution to new tenants after the Housing Fair, outlining their obligations to neighbours, re-cycling, good community relationships, etc. Also hoping to site skips in student 'hot-spots' at end of tenancy periods / summer to reduce waste / rubbish problems. Fortunately Norwich does not suffer from 'summer student ghetto / ghost town' syndrome as HR and student properties are spread throughout the city. Complaints about gardens / rubbish are a larger issue than noise and can be reduced by LLs maintaining the outside of their properties and gardens (not simply laying concrete), generally establishing good relationships with residents and helping to solve any problems.

The DoS also assist students who have complaints re. their neighbours.

4. Julian Richardson – UEA Accommodation – Update

Handout attached (b).

It was noted that the large building at the Bluebell Road end of campus is not UEA but INTO – a separate facility in partnership with UEA. This offers International students pre-session courses, which hopefully lead to their transfer to UEA or other educational establishments, at which time they also transfer to UEA or private accommodation. INTO has 400 bedspaces, some of which (approx 20) are offered to UEA students, but to date there is little uptake due to the more expensive cost.

There are approximately 900 international students in UEA accommodation.

Academic Year	2006 / 2007		2007 / 2008	
Full and Part-time students	14981		14854	
Home and EU students	13565		13223	
International students	1416	(9.45%)	1631	(10.98%)

5. Stephen Chadbon – Local Risk Manager – Fire Service

All HMOs should have a fire risk assessment. Leaflets were available as follows:

Fire Safety for people in shared or rented accommodation (product code Fire Rent 04) and Fire Safety in the Home (these can be sourced on www.firekills.gov.uk).

Free Fire Risk Assessments are offered by the Fire Service for both LLs and tenants by telephoning 0800 9178137 or emailing community.safety@fire.norfolk.gov.uk

Alternatively Stephen can be contacted directly by telephoning 01603 621461 ext. 7340 or emailing stephen.chadbon@fire.norfolk.gov.uk). The Fire Service also provide and install free smoke alarms in shared facilities (not individual facilities – i.e. bedsits).

6. Alan Osborne – Head of Operations – CNC Building Control

CNC Building Control is an amalgamation of Norwich City Council / Broadland District Council / South Norfolk District Council. If there is any doubt as to whether building regulation approval is required contact CNC and ask for advice – telephone 01603 430130. They can also provide written confirmation for your records if approval is not required.

Booklet 'Building Regulations – Explanatory Booklet' was available and can be downloaded at www.communities.gov.uk/explanatory-booklet

Information attached (c).

7. Jo Spiro – Home Run Issues

JS advised that she had contacted two large Norwich student accommodation agencies and their average rental for the next academic year was £225 pppcm. There was still an over-supply in the student market. One way of making a property more attractive to tenants was to create more living / shared space by using a bedroom, which also reduced the number sharing bathrooms / kitchens.

Last year there had been discrimination against groups of all males. This is not tolerated by the Union of UEA Students and could result in suspension from Home Run.

If students need to leave accommodation and find replacement tenants Home Run offers the House Share Message Board and Pink Card Student to Student facilities. LLs were asked to recommend this to students rather than the use of other network sites where some students had lost considerable amounts of money. Landlords were also asked, wherever possible, to try to negotiate on any outstanding rent owed in what can be a very distressing time for a student.

8. Kara Langford – Housing Fair – 10.02.09 from 10:00

In response to student demand and competition from other student accommodation letting agencies, the event was being staged earlier this year. This is also in line with other universities. Historically during January student groups visit the Advice Centre with details of agents' properties, despite encouragement to wait for HR event and pointing out the pitfalls of rushing.

This year the event is an all-day fair to maximise accessibility to students. It is being held in the Union's LCR and details were publicised prior to the Christmas break. Various relevant agencies (non-commercial) will attend on stalls including Council representatives, Fire Service, Police, Safety organisations as well as SU Staff. The housing list will be on-line only, therefore any updates / amendments can be made quickly and the available information should be up-to-date. The list will be released during the morning of 10.02.09; therefore LLs should expect calls during the course of the day. The fair is targeted at making information available to students and LL fliers / LLs are not permitted.

276 invitations to register for the Housing Fair 2009 had been sent, some of which had been returned – for which thanks were voiced. The deadline for registration was 30.01.09, (larger portfolios 23.01.09), but earlier receipt would be appreciated if possible. Where documentation was submitted late HR would endeavour to include details but could not guarantee this. If LLs were unsure whether their present tenants were staying for the next academic year KL stressed it was better to register the property with current documentation / certification as it was easier to remove listings than enter them. Regulations state that an EPC is required at change of tenancy, unless individual agreements were issued.

A new website is being considered. At present there is no control over the order of the listings – a reference number is allocated on input.

There will be new passwords for Home Run access on 10.02.09.

9. Jo Spiro – Advice Issues

Gas Regulation

From 01.04.09 CAPITA will be the new gas regulatory body (at present CORGI). On 31st March all contractors currently registered with CORGI have to register with gas safe – www.gassaferegister.co.uk

Gas Safe Register will replace CORGI gas registration in Great Britain on 1 April 2009. It will be the official industry stamp for gas safety. The Health and Safety Executive, who is responsible for regulating gas safety in Great Britain, will oversee Gas Safe Register. Contact number: 0800-408-5577.

Deposit Protection

All deposits must be protected in one of the three Tenancy Deposit Protection Schemes and tenants informed within 14 days of the deposit being taken which scheme the money is held in and other prescribed information. This is mandatory and failure to comply has led to cases, including after the tenants vacated, where courts ruled repayment of deposit plus 3 times the amount of the deposit to tenants from LLs. A handout reminder for students is already available and it will be updated.

Lead tenants – students are informed of the implications and responsibilities when they attend Tenancy Agreement appointments. This information is also publicised on the website.

Property Registration

ALL student properties **MUST** be registered, even if unavailable. Students / parents / UEA expect this, and failure to do so will result in suspension from Home Run.

Where students need to leave their tenancy please facilitate this wherever possible by assisting in finding a replacement tenant and reminding them of Home Run's services.

Wherever possible please issue single tenancies, avoiding a contrived / sham agreement if someone does leave part way through the term and a replacement is found. (A new agreement should be issued.) LL pointed out that some mortgage terms do not allow single tenancies – only joint and severally liable.

10. A O B

Rents – Home Run mode rent = £250 (3, 4 and 5-bed properties). This is higher than agency rents, where often properties are of better quality. It is important that Home Run remains competitive.

Lead tenants – students are informed of the implications and responsibilities when they attend Tenancy Agreement appointments. This information is also publicised on the website and will be shown in a video-clip at the Housing Fair.

Amended AST now available.

11. Next Meetings

Wednesday 17.06.09 at 10:00 and Thursday 18.06.09 at 18:00 in the Hive.

JS/LTHH
06.03.09