

**MINUTES OF THE LANDLORDS' OPEN MEETING HELD ON**  
**FRIDAY 7 JANUARY 2005**  
**L C R - UNION HOUSE, UEA**

Those present:

Bell, Richard	Gudgin, Joanne	Massey, Rob	Summers, David
Bell, Susan	Havers, Janet	Piper, Anita	Summers, Janet
			Wellingham,
Blasby, Jon	Headden, Lydia	Popely, Barry	Bernard
Bothma, Elize	Hindle, John	Popely, Diana	Wellingham, Pat
Brown, Caryll	Howe, Christopher	Smith, David	Wing, Ruth
Brown, Richard	Jackson, Martin	Spiro, Jo	Wright, Jo
	MacDonald,		
Bye, Louise	Douglas	Stretton, Roger	
Cox, Helen	MacDonald, Sam	Stretton, Stephanie	

Apologies:

Burren, Andy	Graver, Robert	Langley, Nigel	Van de Colff, Adri
Gleeson, Jan	Langley, Glenis	Massey, Rob	

1. Welcome & Introductions

JS welcomed those attending, wishing all a Happy New Year, and introduced herself as Manager of Student Support Services, LB – Home Run Administrator, LD – from Accommodation Office, LH – taking the minutes, RW – Advice Worker and JW – Welfare Officer. She then handed the chair to LB.

2. Housing Event March 2005

LB informed the meeting that this was to be held on Thursday, 10<sup>th</sup> March 2005 in Lecture Theatre 1 from 18H00 to 19H30. The purpose of the Housing Event was explained as giving students information on safety as well as distribution of the Housing List. Correspondence about this event will be sent to Landlords by 15<sup>th</sup> January 2005, including registration forms, requests for up-to-date gas and electricity certificates (if not already held), and the closing date for return of this information in order to be included on the Housing List is Friday, 4<sup>th</sup> March 2005.

3. Delays in Renewing Safety Certificates

LB once again reinforced the importance of renewing certificates in time. Gaps of up to 3 months have elapsed, which apart from being potentially dangerous, is illegal in the case of gas. It is also very time consuming to remove and re-activate properties on the Home Run list.

4. Registration of All Properties

LB and JS stressed the necessity of registering **all** properties in which students are tenants in order that gas and electricity certificates were kept up-to-date to ensure safety. Landlords who offer non-registered properties to students will be considered for suspension.

5. Return of Deposits

The Advice Centre is still dealing with on-going deposit disputes from the summer of 2004 and has carried out several home visits during the last 12 months. In order to protect both the Landlord and Tenant it was advised a thorough inventory should be agreed by both parties prior to signing of any agreement which should help alleviate disputes at the end of the tenancy.

JS stated that where Advice Workers had been asked to assist in disputes, a service offered by the Student Union, sometimes the Landlord's attitude had been very negative. It is expected, because of the natural cross-over between Home Run and the Advice Centre, that any intervention by Advisors is accepted without hostility.

Communication is the key to any good working relationship. A Landlord stated that it was far better to report accidents at the time they happened instead of leaving it until the end of the tenancy and they could be dealt with, perhaps whilst still under guarantee. One tenant had knocked the knobs off a cooker, reported it soon afterwards, and fortunately the item was still under warranty. If this had been left until the end of his tenancy the repairs would have been charged to him. Water damage was an area that all Landlords would prefer to be informed of immediately.

The problem of payment of utility bills was an area of concern, and some Landlords were retaining deposits until final settlement of these. JS stated that this was not what damage deposits were for and that utility bills were an agreement between the tenant and the supplier – the Landlord should not be involved. One Landlord reported that due to non-payment of bills a gas meter was removed by the supplier and a charge of £125.00 levied for re-installation. Several suggestions were made to overcome this problem – evidence that the final bill has been paid – evidence that final readings have been taken and the agreement terminated – meter readings agreed between the Landlord and Tenant. JS re-iterated that deposits were **not** for utilities, non-payment was not a common problem and students were informed at the Housing Event that utilities were their responsibility. Some Landlords agree with the tenants who will pay which utility on signature of the agreement and inform the utility company themselves.

The Housing Act makes reference to Tenancy Deposits Schemes and suggests that with all ASTs (Assured Shorthold Tenancies) it will be illegal to take a deposit outside an approved scheme. We await further updates on this.

Another Landlord reported that retention of deposits was a good lever between tenants settling any money problems between themselves – until they were sorted out no-one had their deposits returned.

Some students withhold their last month of rental to safeguard themselves against non-return of their deposits. JS stated that the Advice Centre did not condone this at all, and advised against it. Most tenants' parents are guarantors and therefore the majority of tenants do pay. One Landlord overcame this problem by charging rent quarterly in advance. Generally rent is charged monthly.

The meeting was informed that membership of the Eastern Landlords' Association is £60.00 per annum, giving support and guidance in many matters – contact number 01603 767101.

## 6. Ongoing Repairs and Building Works at Properties

This is a very serious problem and has resulted in a Landlord being suspended from the Home Run list. Works should be carried out whilst properties are vacant. One property had major works going on whilst tenants were resident from September 2004, with the heating not being fitted until November 2004. They had been without hot water for that period, and even though it was agreed they would live there rent and utility bill free, their lives were disrupted. This was not acceptable.

## 7. Rent Levels – 2005/2006

The rent levels last year increased above the rate of inflation, and then during the course of the year reduced in order to fill properties. LB reported there were 166 bed spaces on the Home Run list at present, and the average rent before Christmas of all properties advertised was £203.15, exclusive, per month. JS confirmed that due to supply exceeding demand, students were shopping around. It was thought that £200 to £220 per month was a reasonable rent.

## 8. UEA Accommodation

LD gave a quick update of plans for accommodation by the UEA over the next few years.

During 2003 there had been a large influx of international students which had fallen for 2004. The plan was to maintain steady growth for both international and home students, but that it is unlikely that the guaranteed places would change. The actual number of students in residence at UEA as at 31.01.05 was 2987.

Colman House had been completed in September 2004, giving 400 new beds. New residences were being built near Bluebell Road, and these should be ready for use by students in September/December 2005. Waveney Terrace was being demolished during Summer 2005, and Suffolk

Terrace was being re-furnished during 2006, therefore the net effect was little change in student numbers and number of rooms available on campus.

The University policy is to house all new students, International PG students for their first year only and International UG students for the whole of their stay.

A Landlord asked LD what standard of accommodation was offered. He reported there are a variety of accommodations offered, some en-suite which were proving very popular, with a choice of prices ranging from £48.50 to £78.00 inclusive of bills – all of which can be viewed on the web-site. No deposit was charged and the licence was for 38-weeks. At present there are discounted rents for those students living near the building works to compensate for any disturbance. All rooms are fitted with internet access. When agreed, the new University rents can be viewed on the web-site – [www.uea.ac.uk/accom](http://www.uea.ac.uk/accom)

It was suggested Landlords make appointments to view rooms for themselves, but LD stated this was not possible as it was disruptive for the students, pictures were available on the web-site.

A question was asked about deposits and damage in residences. LD reported there were positive aspects to not charging deposits in that they only had to deal with problems, of which there were few, by sending an invoice. The student had a range of payment options to settle an invoice – direct debit, termly, monthly, cash, and cheque. Administration and paperwork were reduced by not charging deposits.

Wire-less internet installation by NTL can be fitted for approximately £60.00, the meeting was informed by a Landlord.

#### 9. Students being more security conscious

PC Bell, based at Earlham Road Police Station, which had responsibility covering students both on and off campus, was introduced by LB. At the beginning of each academic year the Police give a talk to all freshers on security and crime prevention – there are approximately 50 student burglaries/annum. Crime Prevention welcome packs are also distributed, which include a UV pen, to mark equipment with their **home** postcode in order that recovery of stolen goods can be returned. It was asked whether UV markings could be erased, but PCB assured the meeting that this was rarely the case, with burglars of this type often interested in a quick turn-round of goods for cash. Tamper-proof stickers could be used also. The vulnerability of students as targets was emphasised, and the possibility of several expensive pieces of equipment (lap-tops, computers, stereos, per student) all under one roof made targeting students' houses more beneficial from a criminal point of view.

PCB stated that the Home Office issued full funding to install alley-gates, which were a good deterrent for opportunist burglars. JW raised the point that if a student was in a ground floor room next to the alley they could be disturbed by the gate being banged shut. The possibility of siting the gate at the rear of the alley was discussed, but generally it was not felt a viable option, as any lock could easily be broken off the gate out of immediate sight of the road.

PCB offered all Landlords a Crime Prevention Survey for their properties, which would take approximately one hour to conduct, free of charge. The recommendations would then be discussed with them and the tenants (e.g. window and door locks). He left cards with his contact number at the rear of the meeting. He also asked that if anyone wished to sponsor the UV pens, displaying their logo, it would be at a cost of 20-50p per pen and ended by stressing the importance of Landlords ensuring Home Run had e-mail addresses for contact purposes.

#### 10. AOB

The Housing Act passed in November 2004 would be enforced in August 2005; this would mean that licensing extended to properties of three stories or more containing at least five people. A proportion of student housing will now become HMO (houses of multiple occupancy/occupation) under the new definition. Recruitment and training for NCC officers was still to be arranged. Health and Safety Risk Assessments would be one area of their work. Regrettably, Paul Swanborough from Norwich City Council was unable to attend, but will hopefully be present at the summer meeting.

The Tenancy Deposit Scheme (TDS) has been disbanded and the Tenancy Deposit Scheme for Registered Agents (TDSRA) is now operating. Only properties registered with Agents who were members of ARLA (Association of Residential Letting Agents), RICS (Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors) or NAEA (National Association of Estate Agents) could apply for membership. In Norwich members who also rent to students are:

1. Brown & Co.
2. Bush Management
3. Howards.

Bush Management and Elliots have an agreement with UEA to waive agency fees for students.

From January 2005 a new NICEIC ruling came into force called 'Part P' and stipulates that bathroom radiators and showers need to be earthed. Also all new and altered electrical work has to be verified or carried out by a competent electrician and Part P needs to supplement the NICEIC certificate. Full details can be accessed from the NICEIC website on [www.niceic.org.uk](http://www.niceic.org.uk).

Relevant aspects of Part P are that it:

**Applies to:**

- Dwelling houses and flats
- Common areas in blocks of flats such as corridors and staircases.

**Electrical installations are:**

Any fixed cables or fixed equipment located on the client's side of the supply meter, including low-voltage and extra-low voltage.

Work to be carried out by a defined competent person who is registered with a **Part P Self Certification Scheme**.

**Competent Scheme Members:**

- British Standard Institution
- Members of National Inspection Council for Electrical Installation Contracting (NICEIC)
- The Electrical Installation Self-Assessment Scheme – A person registered by BRE Certification Limited, British Standards Institution
- The National Association of Professional Inspectors and Testers
- The Electrical Contractors Association

**The next meeting will take place on Monday, 4<sup>th</sup> July 2005, 10 for 10.30am in the LCR.**

**Please note that we are trying to reduce the amount of paper sent out to landlords and would appreciate it if you can provide Home Run with your email address: [homerun@uea.ac.uk](mailto:homerun@uea.ac.uk)  
JS/LTHH**