

MINUTES OF THE LANDLORDS' MEETINGS

WEDNESDAY – 17 JUNE 2009 – 10:00

&

THURSDAY – 18 JUNE – 18:00

THE HIVE

Present - 17.06.09

Allison, Tim	NFS	Langley, Glenis	Popely, Barry	
Amery, Alistair	NCC	Langley, Nigel	Popely, Diane	
Armer, Brian	NFS	Lessiter, Matt	Reeve, Ivan	
Calow, Nigel		Lord, M	Richardson, Julian	UEA
Chase, Paul		Martin, Helena	INTO Sothisrihari, B	
Crawshaw, Ruth	INTO	McGrath, Rachel	SU Sothisrihari, K	
Dowding, Wendy		Murty, Alex	Spiro, Jo	SU
Evans, Jan		Newbury, Nolan	Summers, Janet	
Gudgin, Jo		Norman, Natasha	NCC Sutton, Allan	
Headden, Lydia	SU	Osborne, Alan	CNC Sutton, Penny	
Hindle, John		Parry, Enid	Wellingham, J	
Langford, Kara	SU	Peters, Carol	Whittaker, Alan	
			Wing, Ruth	SU

Present - 18.06.09

Allison, Tim	NFS	Illesley, John	Martin, Helena	INTO
Amery, Alistair	NCC	Ives, Kathryn	Moore, S	
Armer, Brian	NFS	Ives, Michael	Nicholson, Philip	
Ashworth, Duncan		Jackson, Martin	Nicholson, Rosalie	NCC
Bailey, Paul	UEA	Kingwell, Mandy	Norman, Natasha	CNC
Crowcombe, Janine		Kirkham, Helen	Osborne, Alan	
Headden, Lydia	SU	Langford, Kara	SU Parker, James	
Hebditch, Rosemary		Linnel, Carol	Smith, Susan	SU
Hebditch, Suzanna		Linnell, David	Spiro, Jo	SU
Holmes, Peter		Macdonald, Douglas	Sutton, Tom	
			Tovey, John	

Apologies

Brown, Caryl	Green, Robin	Massey, Robin
Brown, Richard	Lord, Robert	

Meeting commenced at 10:15 (problems Re. car parking) and 18:10.

1. Student Support Services – Jo Spiro – Welcome

SU Staff were introduced and housekeeping pointed out.

2. UEA Accommodation – Julian Richardson / Paul Bailey - Update

Handout <http://www.uea.ac.uk/accommodation/studentswithfamilies/costs>

UEA Accommodation has 3500 residences, (rent includes utilities and has a 38-week licence), 46 family houses, of which there is a shortage. LLs may wish to consider renting to families.

The Blackdale site has been acquired by UEA, but there are no plans to build student accommodation there.

3. INTO – Helena Martin

Presentation (a) Attached

Norwich INTO is the first of their facilities to include custom-built accommodation, comprising 410 rooms (220 premium and 190 standard) it was completed in September 2008. There are 527 students attending INTO courses, some of whom are students with families who require good quality private sector accommodation, often for more than one year. They are referred to Home Run. Main intakes are during September, January, March and June, with monthly intakes for English courses.

4. Home Run – Kara Langford –

Presentations (b + c) Attached

Although nationally rent levels have decreased over the past 12 months, HR rents have increased to an average £240 - £245 pppcm. The Local Housing Allowance is approximately £245 pppcm for a room in a private sector house with shared facilities (this figure varies from month to month). This is the maximum eligibility for the majority of students. Student lets should be lower than this, especially given the fact that there is an over-supply.

On 01.06.09 Home Run had 222 registered landlords with 606 properties / 2490 bed spaces.

KL re-iterated that NCC was offering a bulky items collection service for £15.00 – open to both LLs and students. (HR landlords had received a flyer in May/June)

Since 01.04.09 CAPITA had taken over from C O R G I as regulators of gas safety under the name of Gas Safe Register. They also regulate TV licensing and will be enforcing registration. C O R G I stationery is still valid until March 2010, by which time it will be phased out and engineers may use un-headed paper as at present there are no plans for Gas Safe Register to produce customised forms.

KL reminded LLs to ensure they paid the correct postage on mail as failure to do so caused delays and the Post Office charged a £1 handling fee as well as the difference to correct postage which is passed onto landlords.

KL explained in future the organisation of the housing list would reflect the date the fully completed registration form (with payment and certificates) was received. This would ensure landlords who return forms promptly in the run up to the release of the annual list would come at the top of the bedroom listing. There was a positive response to this from landlords present.

LL Questions:

When would the Housing Fair 2010 be?

We as always will try to maintain a balance between student expectations, the timing of Easter and UEA vacation and Letting Agents releasing details of properties.

Why could registration not be on line – including certification – dispensing with sending original hard copies?

Until it is standard practice for all certification to be stored in PDF format on a central database accessible by HR this would not be practicable to administrate.

5. Fire Safety in Rented Accommodation

a) Norwich City Council – Alistair Amery

Presentation (d) – slides 1-5

AA ran through the definition of an HMO. He then explained that local Fire Standards were enforced by three main agencies – prime responsibility is with NCC to monitor health and safety, in conjunction with the Fire Service, who cover risk assessment and inspections and CNC for building regulations. All information was guidance, not law.

b) Fire Service – Tim Allison – Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005

Presentation (e)

Resident Landlords should refer to booklet 'Do you have paying guests?' on link:

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/fire/payingguests>

c) Fire Service – Brian Armer – Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order in partnership with Housing Act 2004

Presentation (f)

BA stressed the need to carry out full Fire Risk Assessments (FRA) and review at least annually – documenting and keeping records – posting a copy in the property for the tenants' information. It is not necessary to submit a copy to NCC.

The Fire Service / Norwich City Council Fire Risk Assessments form can be found on P21 of document:

http://www.norwich.gov.uk/intranet_docs/A-Z/Housing/2007/Fire_Precaution_Standards.pdf

Note: 'peep' = personal emergency evacuation plan.

Emergency lighting should also be tested monthly by isolating units and annually by turning the power off completely. Equipment should be kept clean to maintain efficiency.

LL Questions:

How to deal with Tenants who littered with paper and cardboard both inside and outside the property causing a fire risk?

Advised to document concerns by letter to the students and retain copies as part of an on-going FRA.

How to combat smoking in bedrooms?

The Fire Service can enforce measures in communal areas only – not bedrooms and there is no law to prevent this. However, no smoking could be written in to any tenancy agreement and enforced by eviction.

What about soft furnishings brought in to a property?

Notes should be made in the FRA.

Are battery operated smoke alarms adequate – as supplied free by the Fire Service?

In any HMO the fire alarm system should be mains-wired-interlinked with a battery back up.

The free Fire Service alarms are for domestic dwellings. There are 10-year sealed battery powered wirelessly connected alarms on the market at a cost of £87.00 per unit. Any FRA has to justify that the system in use is equal to or better than a mains-wired-interlinked system.

d) Norwich City Council – Alistair Amery

Presentation (d) – slides 7 – 18

Floor Plans were discussed, which type of alarm was needed and where it should be situated, exit routes, fire doors.

LL Questions:

Would it be acceptable, where a bedroom is part of the fire escape egress, to have a key in a glass box for emergency use?

This would not be ideal. The door could be blocked from the inside; the glass box could be obstructed. An alternative escape route would be preferable.

In older houses where fire doors are not in keeping with the décor, is it acceptable to use fire proof paint on existing doors?
If the paint is not properly applied it is ineffective. Replacing with fire proof doors is more cost effective and safer.

What is the maximum distance between fire doors?
9m.

Can the Fire Service assist with FRAs at the premises?
Generally yes, with sufficient notice and dependant on workload.

What is the view on window locks?
Those that lock with a key are not recommended (the key could be mislaid), but there are press-button-lock windows available.

e) CNC Building Control – Alan Osborne

Handout (g)

There are many grey areas in respect of fire, and there is no differentiation in building regulations between a private dwelling and a rental building. Therefore a new build property / altered building is not automatically suitable for rental. FRAs still need to be completed, even for holiday lets. If a tenant is known to have a disability this needs to be written in to any FRA.

Note: There are different types of door sealing strips. Smoke seals are not recommended for bedrooms if there is no alarm actually sited inside the bedroom (the ability to smell smoke being a warning). Intumescent seals should be used instead. Smoke seals should be used on kitchen doors where there is a heat sensor.

Any basement conversion to accommodation needs to be tanked and have an alternative fire escape.

Sound insulation in partition walls should be 40db – floor sound proofing in rental accommodation is also well worth carrying out.

A simple fire precaution is to ensure rubbish bins are stored away from windows and eaves, which could catch alight if a fire were started inside the bin.

AO recommended LLs refer to the Rugg Report:

<http://www.york.ac.uk/inst/chp/publications/PDF/prsreviewweb.pdf>

AO also brought to LLs attention the CLG consultation document 'Houses in Multiple Occupation and possible planning responses'. Responses to this document are due by 7th August 2009. JS advised that both UUEAS and NUS will be responding to this document.

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/planningandbuilding/housesmultipleconsultation>

6. Private Sector Support - Natasha Norman

NN introduced herself as the Private Sector Projects Officer covering Norwich / South Norfolk / Broadland council areas, and her primary objective was to enhance communication and act as liaison between the LLs and local authorities.

Her contact details are: tel: 01603 212849 and email: natashanorman@norwich.gov.uk

Another part of NN's remit was to manage the LL Accreditation scheme in conjunction with ELA. Incentives included training courses and the Norwich warm let scheme, with grants of up to £6,000 per property available. Further details can be found on the norwich.gov.uk website.

Another useful website to refer to was: www.propertyinfopoint.co.uk

7. Advice Issues – Jo Spiro

Since April 2007 the law states that deposits taken for an Assured Shorthold Tenancy must be lodged in a Tenancy Deposit Protection Scheme. Unless using the scheme that requires a lead tenant (**my deposits**) it would be preferable to protect them individually to avoid problems at the end of the tenancy.

When AWs become involved in matters with LLs it is because, for whatever reason, the student(s) had approached the Advice Centre for assistance. It would be appreciated if LLs understood this and were not confrontational about their involvement, but worked together for a mutual conclusion.

Apologies were made at the AM meeting re. car parking problems – for future meetings we would contact Estates to ensure no major events were taking place on-campus necessitating use of the car park.

The next Housing Fair would probably be held earlier than 2009 as Easter was on 02.04.10 and term ended 19.03.10.

The next LL meeting is planned for January 2010.

Thanks were extended to all for attending, especially speakers.

The meetings ended at 13:35 and 20:50.

LTHH
29.06.09