

MINUTES OF THE LANDLORDS' OPEN MEETING
HELD ON TUESDAY, 19 JUNE 2007
HIVE – UNION HOUSE – UEA

Those Present:

Anderson, Fiona	Ives, Kathryn	Pate, Pam
Bailey, Paul (UEA)	Ives, Michael	Peters, Carol
Barnes, Jim	Kambli, Raj (Nfk.Constabulary)	Popely, DD
Bell, SM	Kelly, J	Prewer, Elaine
Birch, Kathy	Langley, Glenis	Sherlock, Roy
Bishop, Fran	Langley, Nigel	Sherlock, Sheila
Brown, Matthew	Lessiter, Matt	Smith, Sue
Brown, Richard	Lofting, Laura	Smith, Sue (NCC)
Bye, Louise (SU)	Lord, Hazel	Spencer, G
Chase, Mr	MacDonald, Douglas	Spiro, Jo (SU)
Cook, C	MacDonald, Jane	Summers, David
Cox, H	MacDonald, Sam	Summers, Janet
Dowding, C	Marriott, Ros	Sutton, Alan
Green, Robin	Matthews, Sally	Turner, Roger
Headden, Lydia (SU)	Newbury, Nolan	Verney, Kate
Howell, T	Parry, Enid	Watermead, S
Iver, Bridget	Pate, Ian	Wing, Ruth (SU)

Apologies:

Barnes, Peter	Grime, H	Smith, Patricia
Bennett, Lizzie	Parker, Gail	Thompson, Yvonne
Bennett, Richard	Parker, John	

1. Welcome and Introductions – Jo Spiro – Student Support Services

JS opened the meeting at 10H05 and introduced Advice Centre Team members L Bye (Home Run Administrator), L Headden (taking minutes) and R Wing (Advice Worker). She also informed the meeting that Susan Tilson (Advice Worker) would be retiring at the end of August.

2. Crime Prevention – Raj Kambli

RK is based at Earlham Police Station and is the University Liaison Officer, responsible for crime prevention and off campus incidences involving students, liaising with Norwich County Council. There has been a huge decrease in the number of on campus burglary, but an increase in student targeted burglary off campus. He encouraged Landlords to contact him and arrange a Crime Prevention Survey on their properties, FOC, for cost effective suggestions on improving security. Contact cards were left – Raj Kambli, Police Community Support Officer 8183, UEA Liaison Officer, Norfolk Constabulary, Earlham Police Station, 422 Earlham Road, Norwich. NR4 7HQ. Telephone: 01603 276824 Fax: 01603 276820 Non-emergency : 0845 456 4567
Email: kambli@norfolk.pnn.police.uk

3. UEA Accommodation Update – Paul Bailey

Please see attached (A). The 120 new rooms will be en-suite.

4. HMO & NCC Update – Susan Smith – Private Sector Housing

Licensable HMO classification was re-iterated as 3 or more storeys with 5 or more people sharing facilities. To date NCC had issued 87 HMO licences and were chasing 38 Landlords for completion of their applications (submission of fire, gas, electrical certificates, omitted signatures). There were 3 temporary exemptions. Landlords were being given approximately 3 years to comply with the regulation requiring a wash basin in every room.

The Regulatory Reform Order 2005 required all public premises to undergo a fire risk assessment, and this included all rented accommodation, carried out by a responsible person (usually the Landlord). NCC is liaising with Norfolk Fire Service and local councils as to protocol for rented properties. Guides and sheets were available at the meeting, but can also be downloaded from www.communities.gov.uk/fire. The risk assessment must be available for the Fire Officer showing a safe route of escape for all tenants. This should be updated regularly – after building works or if a fire has occurred.

Smoking Ban in Public Places – this does not apply to shared rented accommodation, (as long as the landlord permits smoking) but smoke detection is necessary.

5. Tenancy Deposit Schemes

Please see attached (B). This has been mandatory since 06.04.07. An explanatory leaflet ‘Letting? Are you protecting your tenant’s deposit?’ can be obtained by telephoning 0845 609 0696 or at www.direct.gov.uk/tenancydeposit.

The three schemes are:

The Deposit Protection Service (the DPS) – www.depositprotection.com

Tenancy Deposit Solutions Limited (TDSL) - www.mydeposits.co.uk

The Tenancy Deposit Scheme (TDS) - www.tds.gb.com

Under these schemes a Landlord can apply to the holder of the deposit for payment of unpaid rent.

A lead tenant is a requirement for DPS – all correspondence is sent to that person. This carries less/different responsibilities to having one tenant on an AST where other occupiers are sub-tenants, and should not be confused.

6. Housing Event/Home Run Update – Louise Bye

Landlords were thanked for registering their properties with Home Run. The following was reported:

Property	Housing Event 07.02.07		Housing Event 2002/2003
		18.06.07	
3 beds	61	18	56
4 beds	132	42	73
5 beds	74	21	30
Total list	334	128	187
Total list bed-spaces	1329	399	692

Figures illustrate how Home Run has grown and how effective it is for Landlords. Average rent at time of Housing Event - £239 excl./month.

There will be demand for rooms during the months of July and August and Landlords may wish to consider renting individual rooms.

During the summer months (July & August) some Landlords charge no rent or reduced rent, which is a definite advantage for students, and worth stating in listings.

There have been several cases of insufficient postage paid on envelopes to Home Run, resulting in delay and accruing a charge for delivery. Landlords were urged to ensure the correct postage was paid to avoid possible loss of documents.

The website access password has changed to 'registered' – 'landlords' is still username.

It was requested that the log in be more prominent on the website.

Landlords were reminded to ensure Home Run is informed when properties are let in order that the Housing List is accurate.

UEA has no plans to build accommodation on Blackdale school playing field.

7. Electrical Testing

At present Home Run policy accepts NICEIC certification only. It is to be proposed to Management Committee that Home Run also accept certification from NAPIT and ELECSA. Report costs are comparable to NICEIC.

This proposal was accepted and Home Run will now allow the following certification:

NICEIC National Inspection Council for the Electrical Installation Contracting
www.niceic.org.uk
Periodic Inspection Report

ELECSA www.elecsa.org.uk
Periodic Inspection Report

NAPIT National Association of Professional Inspectors and Testers
www.napit.org.uk
Periodic Report

8. Advice Centre Issues

Deposits – Landlords were asked to write to tenants informing them of final inspections, listing what furniture, white goods, etc. needed to be moved and cleaned thoroughly. Any works charged to students must be accounted for with quotes and invoices and Landlords' own charges must be fair. Approximately £10.00/hour is reasonable for cleaning.

It was suggested that the incoming Welfare Officer write a leaflet of typical house maintenance works – de-frosting 'fridge, cleaning filters in washing machines, vacuum cleaners, etc..

Where utility bills are billed to the Landlord, dependant on whichever deposit scheme is used and as long as it is clear in the tenancy agreement, it is reasonable for Landlords to retain the deposit until bills are settled.

3-month Lets – There was a need for Erasmus, PG and exchange students. Landlords asked to consider 3-month let.

Advisors Contacting Landlords – Generally relationships were good, with Landlords becoming involved in inter-tenant disputes, attending mediation. It is hoped that landlords do not feel aggrieved if contacted by students.

9. Landlords Agenda Items

Alley gating – Home Office funding had ceased, therefore this would have to be privately funded.

How to deal with a tenant not paying last months' rent – Advice Workers do not suggest withholding this against the deposit – it is a breach of tenancy. When the rent is overdue Landlords should write to the tenant, then approach the guarantor – if a joint and severally liable tenancy approach the other tenants, and if all else fails, pursue through the Small Claims Court.

Smoking in communal areas – i.e. kitchens – if the Landlord permits smoking this is not a breach of the Smoking Legislation.

The timing of the Housing Event was discussed – early = more time for tenants to change their minds. The timing is very much governed by Easter, when teaching ends, availability of Lecture Theatres, and would probably take place mid February 2008. Students prefer the event to be held at this time, and some use agencies even earlier to ensure renting a property.

10. Information

Minimum Standards changes due to go to Management to include wording:

“Any landlord or agent suspected of redirecting students to non-registered properties may have their registration with Home Run suspended without notice.”

The Home Run fee is reasonable compared to other forms of advertising; it gives excellent exposure and is recommended by UEA in all publications. A direct website link from UEA Accommodation to Home Run was requested. Home Run has to meet the expectations of students and parents that **ALL** listed landlord's properties are registered and meet Minimum Standards. Current negotiations with NCC re. passporting Home Run Landlords for accreditation are progressing. The penalty for non-compliance with Registering for home Run was agreed – ban/suspend Landlord from registering with Home Run for 2 years plus possible surcharge to recover costs.

The Advice Centre has prepaid Council Tax Office envelopes for students' exemption certificates, use of which should alleviate administration chasing tenants in student housing. If there are no tenants renting a house the Landlord is liable for Council Tax.

The Advice Centre Reception and Home Run will be re-locating to the old Student Union Book Shop during 2007. This should give better visibility/promotion for new students and parents.

A short break was taken.

11. New AST discussion

Please see attached (C). The present Student Union Advice Centre AST was formulated in 2003.

JS referred to the Office of Fair Trading Guidance on unfair terms in tenancy agreements, and recommended Landlords obtain a copy FOC – 0800 389 3158 or email oft@exgroup.uk.com.

To Include: Point 6 - it was suggested stating 'generally coinciding with annual housing event and the last 30 days of tenancy'.

Landlord suggestion to include 'To clean the house regularly' cannot be stipulated – it must be clean at the end of the tenancy.

Fair wear and tear does not include wine stains or cigarette burns – they can be classed as damage.

Guarantor's details should be included as an appendix.

Tenants are not responsible for insuring Landlords' property, only their own.

The new draft AST agreement will be with Advice Centre solicitors shortly, and in the meantime Landlords should use the present edition and append Tenancy Deposit Protection details. It is planned to have the new AST on line as a read only document, together with the revised Minimum Standards and Complaints Procedure. Hard copies of the new AST will be available for registered Landlords to copy and use. Additional clauses should be included on a separate sheet.

Note: We will add an appendix when the new AST is received.

Notice to visit property should be given in writing/letter, signed, dated and timed, not by text or email.

The meeting closed at 12H30.

Next Landlords Meeting – Tuesday January 8th 2008, 10H00, Hive, Union House.

JS/LTHH
02.08.07