

MINUTES OF THE LANDLORDS' OPEN MEETING HELD ON
FRIDAY, 30 JUNE 2006
BLUE BAR – UNION HOUSE, UEA

Those Present:

Bailey, Paul	UEA	Iver, B	Prewer, Elaine	
Bell, S		Jackson, Marie	Richards, M	UEA
Bothma, Elize		Kelly, Emma	Smart, Rhod	
Brown, Richard		Lambert, C	Smith, Dave	
Bye, Louise	SU	Langley, Nigel	Smith, Patsy	
Chase, Paul		Larwood, PC 1179	Spencer, Ellen	
Cox, Helen		Marriott, Ros	Spencer, Ellen	NCC
Derham, Rupert		Massey, Rob	Spencer, M	
Dowding, W		Matthews, Sally	Spiro, Jo	SU
Edwards, Jack		Parker, Ian	Summers, David	
Eves, PC 773		Parker, Pam	Summers, Janet	
Gill, Howard		Parker, Penny	Sutton, Allan	
Gleeson, Jan		Parry, E	Verney, K	
Hawes, Lesley		Pearson, Dan	Wing, Ruth	SU
Headden, Lydia	SU	Popely, D	Wymer, L	
Howell, Tom		Popely, S		

Apologies:

Brown, Elizabeth	Grimwood, Anita	MacDonald, Jane
Faustino-Kemp, Teresa	Hindle, Jo	Stanton, Carla
Fieldhouse, Anne	Hindle, John	Wellingham, Bernard
Fox, Kathy	MacDonald, Douglas	

1. Welcome & Introductions – Jo Spiro – Manager – Student Support Services

The meeting commenced at 10H30 and a welcome was extended to all attendees by JS, Student Support Services Manager, responsible for Home Run as part of the services offered. JS then introduced Ellen Spencer - Private Sector Housing, Norwich City Council, LH – Administrator taking the minutes, LB – Home Run Administrator, RW – Advice Worker, RM – Advice Worker, DP – Academic Officer.

2. HMO Update – Ellen Spencer – Norwich City Council

ES informed the meeting that the deadline for registering properties that are Licensable HMOs was July 3rd (this is also the deadline for applications to be received in order to be granted a free Licence) Licences should be issued in approximately 8-weeks. Licence Application Forms could be obtained from NCC.

Current classifications are:

an HMO is classified as 2 + people sharing a house and facilities who are not related to each other.

and

A property is defined as a Licensable HMO if it is 3 storeys or more **AND** occupied by 5 persons or more

Fees would be waived for LLs whose correctly completed applications were received within the deadline (July 3rd) and required no follow up work
Otherwise the cost is £270.00 per property, incl. VAT. Licences would be for a period of 5-years – during which time all properties would be visited, unless there were complaints, in which case NCC had a duty to investigate. LLs who do not meet the Government laid down criteria will be issued with shorter licences and are expected to comply within 6-months, or have plans in place to rectify any problems.

If a licensed property was found to be unsafe with ensuing enforcement action charges to visit would be made.

A LL stated she had a 2 storey property with 4 tenants. ES clarified that this was an HMO, but not a Licensable HMO, and needed to comply with the 2004 Housing Act, the property needed to be kept clean and safe and required adequate fire detection in common areas. If windows could be opened for escape and there were no other risks fire doors were not essential. The regulations are available from HMO bookshops and NCC is providing an easy guide on www.norwich.gov.uk in the near future.

Clarification was sought by a LL on the ruling for toilets/bathrooms and hand-basins in each bedroom for Licensable HMOs. NCC is allowing 3-years for compliance, during which time Government policy could alter.

JS reported that Southend were levying HMO Licence charges of £650.00 for 5-years in comparison to NCC £270.00.

JS informed the meeting that the Home Run Minimum Standards had altered to include a requirement to sight a Licence or a Licence Application if required for the property.

JS thanked ES for attending and noted that PC Eves and PC Larwood were in attendance at the rear of the meeting should anyone wish to speak to them.

3. Advice Centre Issues

1) JS stressed the importance that Registration of Property details were accurate and only owners/agents signed the form.

2) There had been discrimination from several LLs against all male groups of students. The Student Union cannot allow any form of discrimination and if properties are not offered to all perhaps Home Run was not a suitable place to advertise.

3) The Advice Centre had several reports soon after the Housing Event of LLs pressurising students for cash deposits very soon after viewing. One male group had been asked for £1200.00 one hour after seeing a property, not even having met the LL. Other LLs had been reported as telling students that there was a shortage of the type of property they were viewing to pressure them in to agreeing to sign quickly. These scare tactics are unnecessary and the Advice Centre warns against it and this type of LL.

A LL justified requesting deposits soon after viewing as a gentleman's agreement is often made and students will then find an alternative property, leaving the LL to start afresh seeking tenants.

4) Some LLs tell tenants that their Tenancy Agreement has been approved by the Advice Centre. The only Assured Shorthold Tenancy Agreement approved by the Advice Centre is the one approved by Home Run. Advice Workers may see other agreements and view unfair or unreasonable terms and inform the student, but this is not the same as approving the agreement.

The Home Run Assured Shorthold Tenancy Agreement 2003 is to be reviewed and the updated copy will be available for use by Home Run registered LLs.

5) JS reported that HR LLs charge higher rents than Agents. A quick survey showed that in January 2006 the average agency rent was £220/person in a 4/5/6 bed house whereas many HR LLs were charging in excess of this. During May agents reported that many of their LLs were further reducing their rents. JS suggested that perhaps LLs could consider reducing their rents to remain competitive, especially as they do not pay agency fees. The AC promotes the HR list, but has a duty to advise students to also look at other sources if rents are high. Many students had lived on-campus with excellent facilities, where the rental licence was 38 weeks versus 52 weeks for private rental in many cases, and this was their basis for comparison. She also reminded LLs that the introduction of £3,000.00 fees would be in force from September 2006, making students and their parents more discerning. A LL requested the percentage of properties let with all inclusive bills. JS responded that generally these were properties with Resident LLs – the majority listed were exclusive of bills. JS will compile a similar rental report prior to the next LL meeting, before the Housing Event.

Several LLs replied that comparisons were unfair – their after care service was usually much better than agents' (problems remedied quickly) and their facilities were often superior. JS responded the AC was requesting that LLs consider their rent levels prior to the HE and cited a property recently seen which included a sauna at £250/month. Another LL stated that it was a free market and students would vote with their feet.

6) The AC had conducted several successful mediation sessions, mostly between tenants, with problems including finding a compromise with heating levels and housemates not getting on. When LLs also become involved this is very positive, and thanks were extended. However, occasionally LLs were hostile to AWs becoming involved, JS explained that some tenants lack the confidence to deal directly with LLs – the AC assists both.

7) If major building works were planned for a property landlords should advise incoming tenants. Failure to do so could result in tenants' "quiet enjoyment" being affected and a breach in the tenancy.

4. Paul Bailey – Update from UEA Residences

JS introduced PB and Mark Richards. PB briefly ran through the report circulated to the meeting – copy attached.

A LL asked what the average size of an on-campus room was. PB responded rooms were quite large, mostly en-suite. A LL remarked that many private sector rooms were larger and had the advantage of less people sharing a kitchen and having a separate lounge area. Another commented it was not fair to compare UEA and private sector accommodation/rents/period of rental agreement – UEA rented rooms to visitors, conference attendees during holidays. PB stressed UEA set rents relative to other universities, not the local market. MR stated that rents could also decrease in the future when loans were repaid, 8,000 bed spaces in addition to those at UEA were needed and PG students stayed for 50 weeks. JS reminded the meeting that students were interested in what they pay per annum, and when setting their rents perhaps LLs could bear this in mind.

Annual rent paid by a UEA student on campus – ranges from £2066.82 to £3306.38 for a 38 week period. All bills included and no deposit required.

Home Run - monthly rent	£210.00 = £2520.00	per annum exclusive
	£250.00 = £3000.00	per annum exclusive
	£275.00 = £3300.00	per annum exclusive

JS was asked if HR were considering rent capping - not at present, but HR was considering a front page to the website and paper list advising of average rents for rooms.

5. Home Run & Housing Event Update

Copy of bed space report attached.

LB reported there had been a good uptake of beds after the HE, 75% of listed rooms had been let after 4 months, with PGs still looking. She reminded LLs the importance of informing her when rooms were let in order that the list was accurate.

6. Home Run Charges

JS stated that Registration would cost £25.00 per property per annum, £15.00 for resident landlords. Most LLs agreed this is a reasonable charge – some had expected £100.00. These charges become effective from 01.07.06 for new LLs – 01.08.06 for current LLs. If properties are already registered charges will be made at the time of the Housing Event even if LLs have students remaining in their property. JS stressed that this was a Registration Fee – not an advertising fee – and re-iterated the benefits of registering with HR – mail outs, meetings, Housing Event, copies of Tenancy Agreements; access to the website, HR is considered an Accredited Scheme by NCC. Until now the Student Union had totally subsidised HR, but the Student Union Executive had decided it could no longer do so. A LL asked if HR would be inspecting properties, to which JS replied we did not have sufficient resources. Registration fees had been kept low as HR wanted to retain their LLs and ensure they still registered their properties with the scheme. However, visits would continue to be made if problems were reported.

A LL asked if the meeting could vote on the charges issue but JS informed them that the decision had been made. However, she would welcome discussion/feedback. Another LL asked if there were plans to escalate charges. DP responded that there could be no guarantee, but at present there was no intention of increases. However, there was the possibility that in future years this could happen.

A LL asked if payment could be made by Direct Debit rather than cash or cheque. JS to investigate.

7. Landlord Issues

A LL reported that he had been renting for 10 years, but had found recently that tenants were behaving more and more irresponsibly, annoying neighbours; cigarette smokers burning carpets and furniture. He asked if other LLs had encountered similar problems or was he just unlucky? It was generally felt that he was unlucky – another LL reported he had been unlucky one year with tenants pulling out of the agreement and falling out with each other.

JS commented the AC had received a few calls about bad student behaviour by their neighbours. It is positive if LLs get involved directly with these problems, advising their tenants that they may be in breach of their Tenancy Agreement and that they can enforce action. The main problems with tenants were bills and tenants falling out. A LL asked if AWs could stress to tenants the need to communicate with LLs. JS confirmed this was already in practice.

8. Housing Event 2007

Possible date 05.02.07 as Easter/end of term falls early in 2007.

Easter Break 16.03.07 – 15.04.07. The final date hinged on the venue availability and avoidance of Reading Weeks.

A LL thought having the event earlier was more difficult for students – risks of falling out, etc., but JS responded the majority preferred it earlier – before Easter and exams, with sufficient time for viewings and getting TAs looked at. A quick vote from LLs showed they would prefer the event later – start of March. The final decision is with the Officers of the Student Union.

9. Next Landlords' Meeting

Provisionally 12.01.07.

10. A O B

LL suggested that prior to the HE the number of 2/3/4 bed houses available for the forthcoming academic year should be noted on the website to avoid panic. Agreed to action.

JS stressed the importance for LL's if claiming against Damage Deposits to give thorough details to tenants of costs and provide invoices.

PC Eves and PC Larwood had been called away from the meeting but confirmed there had been a rise in anti-social behaviour and that a LL has responsibility for their property and tenants. The police will work closely with NCC and UEA to minimise this problem.

A LL requested that they be informed of semester dates in order that they have warning of when students may leave – some do so with no warning.

June 16 th 2006	Academic Year ends
September 25 th	Academic Year starts majority of students
December 15 th	Autumn semester ends
January 15 th 2007	Spring semester begins
March 16 th	Spring semester teaching ends
April 16 th	Spring semester teaching continues
May 4 th	Spring semester ends
June 15 th	Academic Year ends

JS thanked all for attending.

JS/LTHH
15.08.06

Attachments: UEA Residences Report / Home Run Bed Space Report

UEA RESIDENCES REPORT

Prices Room Availability 2006-2007

	Entire Campus	Ensuite University Village	Standard Campus/City Centre	Standard Norfolk Terrace	Standard Suffolk Terrace	Paired Unit Campus
Cost per week 2006-2007	£87.01	£75.18	£54.39	£57.96/£41.44pp	£65.94/£48.09pp	£77.98
Number of rooms	1550	700	200	150	250	150
Room type	Ensuite single	Ensuite single	Standard single	Standard single/Twin to share	Standard single/Twin to share	Paired Unit Single
Location	On Campus	Adjacent to Campus	On Campus/City Centre	On Campus	On Campus	On Campus
Bathroom facilities	Own ensuite shower room	Own ensuite showerpod	Shared toilets and showers	Shared showers and toilets. Own washbasin	Shared showers and toilets. Own washbasin	Shower room shared between the two

Prices include utilities. Network connections are provided at no extra cost. Residents should purchase insurance for their own belongings.

Number of student rooms for 2006-2007

We will be accommodating about 3000 students in 2006-2007 in our residences. Broadly, we guarantee accommodation for all 1st year undergraduate students, returning international undergraduate students and all 1st year international postgraduate students.

Licence Lengths

Each of our student residents is given a 'Licence to Occupy Residential Premises' rather than a tenancy agreement. The standard licence period is 38 weeks long to coincide the length of the academic year.

Further information: www.uea.ac.uk/accom

HOME RUN BED SPACE REPORT

Property Breakdown since the Housing Event (2 March 2006)

02-Mar	07-Mar	20-Mar	03-Apr	07-Apr	20-Apr
35 x 1	30 x 1	29 x 1	30 x 1	30 x 1	31 x 1
11 x 2	12 x 2	12 x 2	16 x 2	15 x 2	15 x 2
87 x 3	65 x 3	38 x 3	36 x 3	26 x 3	24 x 3
132 x 4	125 x 4	107 x 4	96 x 4	72 x 4	63 x 4
64 x 5	38 x 5	24 x 5	22 x 5	12 x 5	14 x 5
25 x 6	14 x 6	7 x 6	4 x 6	4 x 6	3 x 6
4 x 7	3 x 7	2 x 7	1 x 7		1 x 7
1 x 8	1 x 8				
1 x 9	1 x 9				
1 x 11	1 x 11	1 x 11	1 x 11		
1372 bed- spaces	1072 bed spaces	766 bed spaces	706 bed spaces	510 bed spaces	511 bed spaces
324 properties	290 properties	220 properties	205 properties	159 properties	151 properties

22-May	01-Jun	07-Jun	20-Jun	26-Jun	29-Jun
37 x 1	40 x 1	40 x 1	40 x 1	39 x 1	36 x 1
9 x 2	8 x 2	8 x 2	11 x 2	13 x 2	6 x 2
23 x 3	24 x 3	24 x 3	23 x 3	23 x 3	20 x 3
43 x 4	43 x 4	43 x 4	45 x 4	43 x 4	33 x 4
10 x 5	10 x 5	10 x 5	9 x 5	9 x 5	7 x 5
6 x 6	6 x 6	6 x 6	6 x 6	6 x 6	4 x 6
1 x 7	1 x 7	2 x 7	2 x 7	2 x 7	1 x 7
	1 x 8	1 x 8	1 x 8	1 x 8	1 x 8
389 bed spaces	401 bed spaces	408 bed spaces	414 bed spaces	409 bed spaces	314 bed spaces
129 properties	133 properties	134 properties	137 properties	136 properties	108 properties