29/09/2020



Minutes - Meeting of the Landlords Liaison Group

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## Introductions – including guidance on using Teams during the meeting

The meeting organised in the form of an online conference took place on 29th Sept 2020 at 18:00.

### Participants:

**Landlords:**

**Christopher Sharp**

**Claire Speakman**

**Suyanto Suyanto**

**Colin Davis**

**Andrew Paris**

**Armadeep Singh Barmi**

**Paul Dermody**

**Premvir Johal**

**Council representatives**

**Pete Mitchell –** Head of the Safer Housing

**David Hobbs –** Selective licensing Manager

**Graham Demax –** Housing Partnership Manag

**Helen Foster –** Development Officer

**Jean Cope –** Leadership Support Officer

**Julie Liversidge –** Licensing Manager

**Cllr Linda Woodings –** Portfolio Holder

**Lisa Allison -** Comms

**Paul Greevy –** Homelesness Prev Manag

**Robert Skwierawski –** Business Support

**Parners:**

**Linda Cobb -** DASH

**Matt Allison - Unipol**

**Giles Inman -** EMPO

### Apologies:

**Jakub Pietruszewski** – Unipol

**Margaret Gretton**

## Welcome – the reason behind this group

*Pete Mitchell* greeted everyone and introduced himself as a new Head of the Licensing, Permits, and Regulation. He emphasised that the reason for the group is to have feedback for the council so that improvements can be made.

## What is expected? Rules of the groups

The landlords invited for the meeting represent all the different types of the Private Renting Sector – housing benefit landlords, student, larger portfolio, one man band, professional let. There are representatives of the council to make sure that all the departments can receive directly useful feedback, coordinate their efforts and respond according to their specific work area.

The idea of the forum is to have everyone’s voice heard. The forum, however, is not a place for making individual complaints. The council awaits suggestions for improvement, expects constructive criticism.

## Coronavirus – effects on Managing Agents and the council

*Cllr Linda Woodings* presented briefly the current housing situation in Nottingham and the challenges related to the pandemic. She mentioned the actions of the council to mitigate the dangers of pandemic. Rough sleepers were taken from the streets and accommodated, section 21 suspended to the great relief of many, however this created other problems where in some places people were abused by their neighbours whose behaviour was difficult to control.

*Colin Davis* noticed that the suspension of section 21 created catastrophic situation not only for some landlords, but also tenants.

## Present issues for Landlords – how can we help you?

The landlords were asked to bring out the issues that need to be addressed by the council.

* *Giles Inman* stated that what the council needs is a consistent approach in dealing with licensing, anti-social behaviour, evictions. There is not enough investigation and support for the landlords, just a heavy hand approach in the form of issuing notices and imposing fines. (Action 1)
* Another issue raised up by the participants is the importance of support for the housing benefit landlords. Currently there is an unprecedented amount of people on housing lists. Housing benefit tenancies must receive support to create more accommodation and avoid evictions. (Action 2)
* *Paul Greevy* suggested creating a clearer pathway between housing enforcement and housing benefit landlords. Because of suspended evictions there appeared very poor conduct of some tenants, landlords need to receive help from the council in such situations. (Action 3 )
* *Andrew Paris* noticed that suspension of evictions created the situation that there are inhabitants that are upset by the behaviour of other tenants but with no action to take, this refers to dirt, sanitary threats, taking other people’s food, aggressive behaviour. Even minor things, if accumulated, can be very distressful.
* *Cllr Woodings* stated that the communication with tenants should emphasise their responsibilities and consequences of non-compromising. She referred to the known case of a student being fined £10,000 for organising illegal party. Community Protection Officers visited the property three times before the police had to be asked to help. The fine was imposed by the police and actually it serves now as an effective deterrent. (Action 4)
* The council reacts to new ASB problems, recently there has been created a fast response team within Community Protection with a vehicle. The team can take action at a night time.
* *Giles Inman* remarked that there are known addresses for notorious overnight student’s parties therefore this should be easier to curb the issues. (Action 5)
* *Julie Liversidge* proposed that in order to successfully curb the issues, the notices and other correspondence which is usually ignored by the students, should be sent to their guarantors (usually these are the parents)( Action6).
* *Colin Davis* asked about the bollards in the streets of Lenton, is they purpose to restrict the traffic, and who decided to place them. Whilst this is not in the remit of the Safer Housing team, Pete Mitchell said he would raise it with highways. (Action 7)

## How the groups will work? What each party hopes to get from these meetings? / What the council can improve

* Andrew Paris – asked about enforcements against bad landlords, eg those having illegal HMOs – it is a part of the Council’s ASB policy. (Action 13)
* *Armadeep Singh* finds it unfair to have properties in selective licence areas, whereas the others do not need to pay licensing fees. David Hobbs explained that the scheme is kept in the areas of high proportion of rented properties and following consultations comprises smaller area than originally planned. Cllr Woodings added that the areas for selective licensing were also established on the basis of the results of the reports concerning substandard landlords.
* *Andrew Paris* stated that any successful actions should be highlighted to give positive reception of the scheme. This actually is what the council has been doing recently. (Action 8)
* The issue of addressing the tenants directly in order to tackle the problems and anti-social behaviour was raised. It is difficult to target people, they usually do not sign up electoral roll. The problem is that the council does not have an easy access to the list of occupants of a given property, therefore correspondence is often addressed – to the occupier, and therefore usually treated as a junk mail. The council are already try to prevent by working with universities to reach particular occupants. Also correspondence is directed to landlords so that they can pass it directly to their tenants. *Suyanto* suggested that electronic media, particularly direct emails are more effective to letters.
* *Cllr Woodings and Lisa Allison* presented the idea of online forum for the landlords where many people can meet at the same time on Zoom platform. Our liaison meeting will be a working group and then the ideas presented to a larger forum. (Action 9)
* *Giles Inman* suggested Liaison meetings to be a platform for the council to share the policies and a forum to discuss serious issues, like excessive bureaucracy while dealing with the council, parking permits, support and encouragement for landlords who wish to accommodate vulnerable people.
* *Julie Liversidge* suggested creating a list of top problems with the properties and top problems with making applications. Everybody is encouraged to present feedback. (Action 10)
* Another action to undertake is to improve consistency. Particular cases of licensing process where landlord experienced problems or even had contradictory information, should be picked up and analysed. NPRAS conducted similar survey, the results can be shared. (Action 11)
* Helen Foster gave a positive example of landlords’ cooperation and understanding the difficult pandemic situation, where majority of repayment plans for the tenants facing financial difficulties, were positively accepted.
* *Giles Inman* stressed the fact that no landlord wants to terminate the tenancy and they are supportive. However in case of tenants deliberately avoiding payments the council should provide support for the landlord especially if they presented the evidence of anti-social behaviour. In such a case eviction should be imposed. Does the council have a power to impose eviction in such cases even if section 21 is suspended?

## Communications, GDPR – how people can contact representatives

*Lisa Allison* said that the minutes of today’s meeting and the action points will be presented in the newsletter and sent to members directly. She encouraged participants to keep in touch by email correspondence in between the meetings and to send any queries and items for discussion at the next meeting to *Robert Skwierawski*.

In terms of GDPR, the landlords are requested to share their email addresses and names, other data including home address, phone number will not be shared. A form will be sent by email to express consent.

## AOB

*Andrew Paris* enquired if Nottingham Standard is still in operation. He was assured this is the case. The Nottingham Standard brings unity to accreditation in the city by incorporating DASH and Unipol, under one certification mark. Landlords already accredited through DASH or Unipol are able to use the Nottingham Standard accreditation mark.

*Lisa Allison* encouraged again the participants to send their ideas, suggestions and propose issues to be discussed at the next meeting.

The members of the group were thanked for the presence and active participation.

The next meeting will take place online on 14/01/2021 at 18:00

Action: send out the minutes and the schedule of the meetings in 2021 to the landlords (only council workers received the schedule) (Action 12)

Action: send out Unipol ASB guidance once received from Matt Allison (Action 13)