

MINUTES OF LANDLORDS FORUM MEETING

HELD ON 13th May 2009 (Lister room) 2pm – 4pm

Present: Hafsa Begum, Lisa Duxbury, Ben Uihendu, Adrian Howe, Ahmed Choudhury, Lisa Lindo, Haroon Siddiq, Russell Hawkes, James Bolt, Amraaj Sanhu, Abdul Khalik, David Brenner, Jacob Endzweig, Gregory Phillip, M Ali, Khalid Chowdry, Mr&Mrs Hanson, Maria Barnes, Nihat-Hussein, Ahmet-Husseyin, Adnan-Ghauri, Saadia-Mahmood, M-Ashraf-Din, Amit-Sangar, Alfred, Shailesh Patel, Amarjit Chaggar, Charanjit Singh, F Adeniyi, Imran, Sara Watson, Lionel Vonde, Rose Giwa, Mrs Chawdhry, Mukith Uddin, R Turner, P Brown .

London
Borough of
Newham

(LBN): Speakers : Ronjon Bagchi –Choice Homes Marketing and Media Production Manager, Fred Baxter-Housing Options Manager, David Bingham-Senior Council Tax and Benefits Manager, Ian Dick-Housing Service Standards Strategic Manager, Moses Nyaunu-Principal Prevention & Advice Manager.

Chaired by: Fred Baxter – Housing Options Manager

Minutes by: Rajesh Patel – Landlord & Initiatives Officer

Apologies: Sharon Webb – Initiative Team Manager
Modesta Anucha – Strategic Housing Needs Manager

Minutes will be Posted on the Newham Website

<p><u>Introduction</u> The meeting started at 2.00pm and was chaired by Fred Baxter who introduced himself followed by other officers that were present.</p> <p><u>Matters arising from previous Meetings</u></p> <p>None</p>	<p><u>ACTION</u></p> <p>All</p>
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<p><u>ChoiceHomes UK – a partnership with choice – Ronjon Bagchi – Marketing and Media Production Manager.</u></p> <p>Ronjon Bagchi introduced himself. He talked about the Overview of ChoiceHomes UK</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 26,000 bids a week made though our system • 1117,000 registrants • Partners <p>How CHUK could increase private landlords profile to their target audience</p> <p>Various options available -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • magazine • web • all property adverts are the same in format just differently branded with contact details <p>Team members of ChoiceHomes UK – Hafsa Begum & Lisa Duxbury went round during the coffee break and collected contact details of landlords.</p>	
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<p><u>Housing Benefits Updates by David Bingham – Senior Council Tax and Benefits Manager</u></p> <p>David provided the landlords with an update on some changes that were coming to effect from October 2008.</p> <p>Changes to Incapacity Benefit – long term off work New benefit being introduced on 27th Oct 2008. Different emphasis - old claims looks at what the claimant can't do and the new one looks at what the claimant can do. Only effects new claims made after 27th Oct 2008. Claimant will need to take a work capability test and attend a work focused interview to get benefit and the aim will be to get them back to work.</p> <p>No major impact on council tax or housing benefit at present, unless the claim is stopped.</p> <p>Backdating- From 6th October 2008 the period of backdating will be reduced from 52 weeks to 3 months. Therefore maximum backdating will be limited to 13 weeks and under no circumstances will the claim be allowed to be backdated for more than 13 weeks.</p>	
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<p>David reminded landlords of the LHA rates which are being used to determine rent levels.</p> <p>Rent payment schedules are not sent out to tenants at present and there are no plans to give rent schedules to landlords for clients claiming LHA. Tenants are paid every two weeks. If tenants on the bond scheme fall into 4 weeks rent arrears, landlord must then contact the Landlord & Initiatives team who will liaise with housing benefits. If tenants are receiving benefits and not passing it on to landlord/agent then Prevention team will get tenants into the housing options centre to investigate non payment of rent. If tenants fall into more than 8 weeks rent arrears, then landlord can request housing benefits to be paid directly to them. Tenants who negotiate a saving which is the difference between LHA and the rent requested by landlord (below LHA rate) tenant can gain maximum of £15 pw on housing benefits, this arrangement will be ending at the early part of 2010. New Housing benefits system will be phased in over the next two years.</p> <p>There are about 50% new H/B claims compared to last year due to the recession.</p> <p>Benefits dept moving from Broadway Chambers Stratford to the new Dockland offices Building 1000 from March 2009.</p>	
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**Newham Landlords Survey and other projects during 2009/10 - Ian Dick-
Housing Service Standards Strategic Manager**

Ian Dick introduced himself and went over some topics - here are some points from the meeting.

Private Sector Housing Group – Our Strategic Aims are to –
Protect the health, safety and welfare of Newham residents renting privately,
or with a registered social landlord.

Promote quality, choice and opportunity in all rented housing across the borough.

Landlord & Agents Survey - as part of stakeholder consultation we want to hear the views of the Landlord Community in Newham and hope to commission a survey during 2009. If you are selected to take part we do hope you will spare the time to provide information and tell us what you think and make suggestions for improvements.

A Neighbourhood Improvement Zone Pilot will be launched in the Summer of 2009. This will involve a small area probably in Manor Park where private landlords will be required to apply for a licence to let property. The aim will be to improve the area overall to ensure all homes meet the decency standard, are energy efficient and environmental problems are tackled. The Council will be asked to give their approval in March 2009. Further information can be obtained from Neil Coles - HMO Team Manager 0208 430 3798.

In response to the Olympic & regeneration activity in the borough we are doing a survey in 2009 of all hotels, hostels and B & B accommodation with the fire brigade and other agencies to ensure safety and standards are being maintained.

Further information from Neil Coles - HMO Team Manager 0208 4303798.

Know an empty property, land or building please ring our Empty Property Hot Line on 0208 4304436 and let us have details.

Ahmed Choudhury on behalf of Ian Dick went around collecting contact details from landlords for survey purposes.

Gas safety changes to Corgi registration – New Scheme Gas Safe Register which starts from 1st April 09

At the last minute, Unfortunately this presentation had to be rearranged for the next forum. Some materials on Gas Safe were available and left on table for landlords to collect.

Landlord Insurance – Allison Simpson- Kounnis Insuforce Plc

Allison Simpson Introduced herself and gave a presentation on Cert CII Claims, She gave details of landlords cover, which can provide cover for DSS

Council tenants, Asylum Seekers, Students and Professional Working People.
Cover includes Accidental damage cover, Loss of Rent Cover and Property Owners Liability.

Full information packs were available and if any further information is required, please call Kounnis Insuforce on 0208 523 0008.

Bond Scheme update – Moses Nyaunu-Principal Prevention & Advice Manager

As per Sharon Webb, All bond scheme properties in the Newham borough will be inspected for property condition quality checks and planning permission checks.

Questions raised by landlords on timely response times on letters sent to HOC, rent arrears , property abandonment, notice issues, communications issues with Housing benefits depts in and out the borough.

Moses stated that their will be a new Tenancy sustainment team starting up very soon to handle all these types of queries and situations.

Bond Scheme claim process for Loss of rent- Sharon Webb Initiative Team Manager

When a client moves out of a property without giving Landlords one months notice, the Council will look into the reason why.

Abandoned Property

If the client abandoned the property and the Landlord notifies the council as soon as possible, The Council will try and refer another client to prevent rental loss to Landlord.

The Landlord can claim on the Bond certificate any loss of rent up to four weeks only.

If a client has been offered permanent accommodation via bidding and only giving two days notice to landlord.

Landlord should advise client to put in writing to the Housing Benefit department, of the Borough the property is in, that they had no option but move into their permanent accommodation, they must request for the four weeks notice period to be paid to the Landlord, a copy of the letter must be given to the Landlord & the Initiative Team at HOC, 3 Prigel Street, Plaistow, E13 9HB.

The Housing Benefit department will pay up to 4 weeks loss of rent while the property is empty.

The Landlord must notify the Initiative Team immediately that the client has moved out.

If the tenant moves out before her tenancy expires the Council will try and refer a tenant to stop any loss of rent to the Landlord, in this instance another Bond certificate will be given but no Incentives will be paid.

If the client has been in the property for more than one year and moves out

<p>via permanent accommodation, another incentive will be paid if the property is let out again on the Bond scheme.</p> <p>Fred thanked forum guest/speakers & members for attending and reminded landlords that the next forum meeting will take place around mid Sept 2009, 2-4pm Lister Room East Ham and the agenda will be sent nearer to the time. Meeting closed at 16.00</p>	
<p><u>Any other Items for discussion at the next forum</u></p> <p>Treatment for pest control. Most of pest issues are related to hygiene and up keep of property. A landlord suggested a 50-50 sharing of cost for treatment. Someone from Gas safe & Pest control will do a presentation in next forum.</p>	