20/05/2021



Minutes - Meeting of the Landlords Liaison Group

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The meeting organised in the form of an online conference on the Teams took place on 20th May 2021 at 17:00.

### Participants:

**Landlords:**

**Armadeep Singh Barmi**

**Christopher Sharp**

**Claire Speakman**

**Andrew Paris**

**Richard Kenny**

**Margaret Gretton**

**Council representatives**

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

**Duncan Newbutt** – Safer Housing Manager

**Cllr Linda Woodings –** Portfolio Holder

**Cllr Angela Kandola**

**Lisa Allison –** Comms

**Abigail Malloy –** Waste Management. Development Officer

**Paul Greevy –** Strategic Housing Manager

**Robert Skwierawski –** Business Support

**Partners:**

**Matt Allison -** Unipol

**Giles Inman –** EMPO

**Faye Swanwick -** DASH

### Apologies:

**Paul Dermody**

**Tusvinder Bodhan**

**David Hobbs**

## Waste removal issues

**1.1** It was explained that there is a difference between physical persons and registered businesses therefore free bulky waste collection cannot be offered for the latter. Landlords often are legal business entities.

**1.2** When new waste bins are ordered for the property they tend to be stolen before the owner manages to collect them from the street. It was suggested to put a sticker on a bin with the house number and possibly the address, or at least a number written with a permanent marker on a lid.

**Abigail** **Malloy** said that the landlords receive notification email when the bin is delivered. The bin should be delivered to the door. Landlords stated that it is not always the case and the email notification may be too late.

**Claire Speakman** said she would be ready to pay a bit more for the bin shall the address sticker be added.

***Action 1*: Abigail Malloy** to check what option could be available for bin marking and to make sure that the new bins are delivered to the door.

**1.3** **Giles Inman** and **Armadeep Barmi** asked why the bins cannot be repaired in case of minor damage rather than replaced. **Abigail** explained that the replacement is a cheaper option.

When a new bin is delivered there is a problem what to do with the old one as it is not collected back by the council

***Action 2:* Abigail** to investigate the possibility of repairing the bins and the problem of their disposal

## ASB

**2.1** **Process of investigation and sending notifications to landlords and tenants**

**Pete** **Mitchell** informed that the council works on developing the flow chart of ASB reporting. Addressing the statement that the notifications sent to landlords sound like threats and suggest that all the responsibility for the situation lies on their side, Pete noticed that the wording of notifications has been already amended a few times. The content may seem to be harsh but it must be informative and present regulations and possible options in a clear way. A warning letter is sent after an incident happened. It should not be treated as a threatening letter but information that some issue is happening and must be addressed.

**Giles** stated that some letters go to wrong landlords, or are delayed and when received may refer to previous tenants at the property. He said that the council does not help enough. There are issues like parties, noise which can be addressed by landlords. On the other hand more serious incidents like violence, drugs cannot be dealt by them. This is the role of the council to provide help. Giles also claimed that the letters are sent to the wrong houses.

**Pete** did not agree with this, he said that there is always a verification before any correspondence is sent. He admitted, though, that while dealing with numerous cases, the council may occasionally sent a warning letter to the wrong person but it is very rare and sometimes can be a result of having received wrong information from the reporting parties. It may also happen that during any intervention different people open the door and are not aware of the situation.

Pete emphasised that the purpose of the letters is to keep the landlords informed. They are not expected to act in certain situations but should be informed anyway. Many issues can be resolved at initial stage by a landlord paying a visit and explaining things with the tenants.

**Christopher Sharp** said that the letters shouldn’t have a form of allegations which unfortunately takes place, however there is an understanding that COVID situation made it impossible to pay visits and have proper investigation.

It has been agreed that the letter should contain explicit evidence.

**Cllr Woodings** noticed that in pre COVID situation universities were not eager to cooperate. Now it has changed. Universities contribute to funding additional CPOs, they sent information and warnings to students.

In case of loud parties CPOs can give warning, then they can order to shut the party down, if this doesn’t help they can ask the police to assist. Actually only the police has the power to shut the party down.

Council can only issue warning letters and inform the landlord, in case of serious situations the police should be called.

Cllr Woodings mentioned another problem – students constantly contaminating recycling bins. The problem has been addressed by both the council and the universities.

Cllr noticed that official complains are never vexatious, they may be sometimes mistaken, but not vexatious.

**Matt Allison** reminded that Unipol prepared ASB guide which provides advice and contacts which are useful not only for students but for all tenants. The guide had been sent out to the members of the liaison group.

**Abigail** noticed that it would be beneficial for landlords to have a ready booklet for students

***Action 3*: Availability of ASB guides**

There are three booklets available: The Council one, UNIPOL, and University of Nottingham

The Council booklet is being updated. New version will be published and advertised in media once it is ready.

**Giles** noticed that complaints about banging doors are impossible to be sorted out, the doors are heavy and have closing mechanisms because of fire safety regulations. There are much more serious problems to be addressed like criminal activities, tenants with mental health issues.

**Christopher Sharp** agreed that many ASB reports are related to mental health problems. The council should provide help here. Council should signpost such tenants to certain services.

It has been explained that the Council is not a party to deal with mental health issues. Such problems must be referred to Adult social care. There are organisations like Shelter, Mind Nottinghamshire which can provide help.

**Matt** **Allison** said that Unipol has tenancy support officer who can run a training course for the landlords, also those not related to Unipol.

Details of Mental Health First Aid Training courses, available via Unipol: <https://www.unipol.org.uk/event/details/mental-health-first-aid>

**2.2. Possibility of appointing landlord relationship manager**

The idea to appoint a full time contact landlord relationship manager who has a wide understanding of housing law and can quickly bring agencies together to assist landlords in dealing with issues arising from complex and ongoing ASB, licensing, tenant issues, planning etc.

***Action 4*: Pete Mitchell to investigate this**

**2.3. ASB feedback document**

How the landlords’ feedback on ASB good practice document was implemented into the documents?

The feedback was noted and taken into consideration. The updated guide will reflect the suggestions presented by landlords. It has not been issued yet.

## Dedicated contact numbers

There is not a specific phone number available for the licensing team, however all the queries are answered by email within three working days

* Some information can be provided by the council customer service team on **0115 915 5555**, working 9:00 – 17:00.

ASB issues can be reported on Report It website

* Between 9am and 5pm, Monday to Friday Customer Hub can be called on 0115 915 2020. At any other Nottinghamshire Police on 101 non-emergency number.
* Nottingham City Homes can be contacted on 0115 915 2222

## Update on future licensing scheme

The plans are not defined yet. The council if approved may have to apply to the government for the continuation of the scheme. The scheme may cover similar area to what we have now with some changes.

## Enforcement plan for the licensing

**Duncan Newbutt** presented the work of the enforcement team.

Information about properties that may require licensing is taken from various sources, like TAX Benefit, council benefit, ASB complaints, anonymous reporting.

If the application hasn’t been submitted there is the evidence collection process introduced. Currently we work on about 600 cases collecting further information. Our work has been delayed by COVID.

We regularly analyse incoming data, cooperate with local neighbourhood groups. Communication officers, and CPOs also collect evidence.

Proactive enforcement team encouraged numerous applications to be made within last two years. Additional money collected from these applications has been used for dealing with rouge landlords, and neglected properties.

Having collected data we have now much better picture of the property market, we know how many rented properties there are in the licensed area. We review applications faster than at the beginning of the scheme. 10 weeks’ time frame is now applicable for most of the applications. Obviously there are a few complicated cases which take more time

**Armadeep Barmi** asked why licensing cannot be for every landlord which would be fairer. Duncan answered that the council cannot licence the whole city. This results from the government regulations. The council needs to prepare the evidence why certain areas require licensing.

## Inclusion of the Nottingham Standard of Accreditation in future press releases

This has been taking place.

***Action 5*: Lisa Allison** to make sure the coverage is sufficient in the future

## Clarification of the role of the Safer Housing team as regulator for the private rented sector.

## Concerns about NCH standards and media coverage.

It has been agreed that the press reports concerning Nottingham City Homes can be biased. There is a great number of properties generally managed well, media like picking up stories where things came wrong way, which may create an impression that the houses are not managed correctly but in fact there are little cases like that.

**Giles** accused council of presenting Private Renting Sector in negative light and blaming landlords for neglect.

**Pete** answered that the council cannot influence the way the articles are written in local press including The Evening Post.

**Cllr Woodings** added that there are some press releases about enforcement and against bad landlords. Such releases are to encourage tenants to demand good quality housing and to raise awareness of the licensing system. Cllr Woodings asked Giles to direct to her any releases he may find unfair and she will investigate.

Cllr Woodings said some NCH tenants face eviction. This is very difficult, on one hand we would like to avoid it, on the other ASB and neglect cannot remain without action against.

It was noticed that in case of Section 21, which can be now again implemented after COVID restrictions, tenants receive support from law organisations which makes it very difficult for the landlords to evict them. On the other hand landlords do not receive adequate support in their actions to get rid of bad tenants and tackle ASB.

Dedicated ASB officer is not a solution because the council already provides support through ASB team. In many cases a legal advisor is needed, the council staff cannot do much more.