

Landlords' forum news

A newsletter for Haringey landlords

Issue 10 August 2009

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Message from Cllr John Bevan

"Welcome to the second Landlords' Forum for 2009.

The Landlords' Forum is an opportunity for everyone involved in the private rental sector to discuss with the council any issues that arise from our joint working practice.

In this issue you will see that the re-structure of the Strategic and Community Housing Service (SCHS) is currently being implemented and will be formally launched on 23 September 2009.

As well as improving efficiency and effectiveness of the service by defining staff's roles and responsibilities, the service will also be encouraging partnership working and actively involving service users in planning, shaping and monitoring services.

This will also assist us and the staff in improving the customer service experience for all users of the housing service.

As part of our continued strategy to tackle homelessness in the borough and reduce the number of people living in temporary accommodation SCHS has set up an Emergency Accommodation Reduction Team to promote the use of Assured Shorthold tenancies in Haringey. You can read about this on page 3.



Housing Benefit performance has been particularly hit by the current economic recession. Caseloads have increased by nearly 6% and there are now nearly 40,000 claimants across all tenure types, with the most notable increase in the private rented sector. This has resulted in substantial increases in workloads resulting in the Benefits and Local Taxation Service assessing an additional 500 new claims per month in comparison with 12 months ago. Despite this, processing a new claim in July took an average of 32 days - the same as performance for the whole of 2008/09.

Also, do check out the article called Schemes For Landlords which details the options that are open to you on how you wish to use your property.

I hope the topics to be discussed at the next Landlords Forum are both informative and useful and I look forward to working with you to improve the borough."

Cllr John Bevan

Haringey's Housing Strategy 2009-2019

Haringey's Housing Strategy 2009-2019 sets the vision for housing in the borough for the next ten years. It has now been agreed by the council.

The strategy is a partnership approach by all groups involved in delivering high quality housing that meets the needs of all residents in Haringey.

A copy of the strategy is on our website at www.haringey.gov.uk/housingstrategy

We will be launching the strategy in the autumn.

For more information please contact Rosie Green, Strategy and Partnerships Manager on 020 8489 4526 or rosie.green@haringey.gov.uk

Affordable Warmth Strategy Consultation Event

A Consultation Event to gather views about the council's Affordable Warmth Strategy for tackling fuel poverty in Haringey has been held at the Cypriot Centre.

The event was well attended by community groups, residents, housing associations, officers from across the council and Members of the council.

Cllr Bevan opened the event by highlighting the importance of affordable warmth and encouraging energy efficiency.

The feedback received is being used to inform the development of the strategy with the final strategy being launched in autumn 2009 in time for the colder winter months.

The strategy recognises that many people live in homes that they are unable to heat properly due to the poor condition of the building, low income and high fuel prices.

SCHS are working with partners in various ways to reduce the number of people living in fuel poverty.

The four main priorities identified to help us tackle

affordable warmth issues are:

1. To improve awareness and understanding of fuel poverty
2. To increase the energy efficiency of Haringey's housing
3. To maximise resources and opportunities for tackling fuel poverty
4. To ensure the continuing implementation, monitoring and review of the affordable warmth strategy

The Strategy will go to the Integrated Housing Board on 21 September 2009 with a launch date to be set in October 2009.

For more information please contact Paul Dowling, Principal Housing Strategy Officer on 020 8489 4301.

HARINGEY LANDLORDS' FORUM

Next Meeting

**21 January 2009
from 6-8.30pm
Registration 5-6pm
Council Chamber,
Civic Centre, High
Road, N22 8LE**

A Day In The Life...



For this edition of Landlords' Forum news I caught up with John Liassides from Pineland Properties Ltd to find out about how he got involved in the property market.

Hello John, are you a Haringey resident?

I live in Winchmore Hill, in the borough of Enfield, which is a neighbouring borough of Haringey.

How long have you owned and managed properties?

I bought my first investment property in Friern Barnet in 1999. This was to be used as our pension for when my wife and I are old and grey, but I caught the bug, and have not stopped buying since then.

What do you like about Haringey?

My parents decided to emigrate to the UK in 1970 with my four siblings and I. We lived in a two bedroom ground floor flat in Cranleigh Road, Haringey. We all have very fond memories of those times which we will never forget. *Continued on page 4.*

Update On Empty Homes

To tackle homelessness in the borough, Haringey Council are working with empty property owners to bring their empty properties back into use.

This also assists with the council's strategy to reduce the number of people living in temporary accommodation.

The robust empty property process, which focuses on long-term empty properties, has been developed in partnership with the North London Sub Region who provide funding and support to advance this work.

The North London sub-region is made up of representatives of the six London boroughs of Barnet, Camden, Enfield, Haringey, Islington, and Westminster.

A street survey of empty properties in Haringey was undertaken in Summer 2007 giving an indication of the number of empty properties.

These properties were then surveyed individually and ranked in priority order for action. From this list we identified the worst 50 eyesore properties and these are now subject to action.

Once we have identified an empty property we try to contact the property owner to give them advice and encourage them to bring the property back into use. Grants are also available to the owner of £17 - £30K to undertake any necessary works.

A condition of the grant is that the property is let to the council for two years as an assured shorthold tenancy.

If the owners fail to respond or undertake the necessary works to bring the property back into use, enforcement action is taken.

Enforcement Action can include urgent works such as boarding up an open property, removing rubbish, repairing external plumbing/clearing

drains, other works to minimise nuisance to neighbours and and instigating the sale of the property.

If the property still remains vacant, the council will either enforce its sale (if there is any debt on the property) or pursue the compulsory purchase order process as a last resort.

The Enforced Sale Procedure is a process by which the council can bring about the sale of a long-term problematic empty property through the use of debt recovery proceedings. The new owner is then encouraged to bring the property back into use.

Since November 2008 we have taken possession of two properties via Enforced Sale action. A further 20 are with our legal team waiting for court dates.

Compulsory Purchase Orders (CPOs) are another form of enforcement action except Central Government approval is needed before the sale can take place.

Once the council has taken possession of the property it is sold, preferably, to a housing association.

Haringey's Cabinet members have approved 15 properties for CPO action. As a result of this cabinet decision many owners have undertaken the necessary works and occupied the properties.

All of the empty property work is supported by a multi-disciplinary group of officers who meet every six weeks to discuss progress of each case and decide a forward plan to ensure constant progress.

For more info please contact the Empty Homes Officer on 020 8489 4214.

EMERGENCY ACCOMMODATION PROJECT

The Emergency Accommodation Project Team was established at the end of June 2009 in late June. Its objective is to reduce the use of nightly paid accommodation, the most expensive form of temporary accommodation, from 1,700 to 200 by the end of March 2010. The figure is still over 1,500.

To achieve this target we are agreeing with providers of nightly paid accommodation to change to new ways of working with us. Most of these suppliers have agreed and are now converting existing nightly paid accommodation to Assured Shorthold Tenancies (ASTs), either for the existing tenant or for a new client.

As part of the project our existing suppliers, and new ones, will be looking for more properties to use either as ASTs or, in more limited numbers as properties leased to the council. If you have good quality properties in the boroughs or within 1.5 miles of the borough's boundaries that may be suitable you can get more information from Mike Conneely (Principal Project Officer) on 020 8489 5877. mike.conneely@haringey.gov.uk

Re-structure of Strategic and Community Housing Services

The restructure of Strategic and Community Housing Services (SCHS) is currently being implemented and will be formally launched on 23 September 2009.

The primary purpose of the new structure is to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of Strategic and Community Housing Services by defining roles and responsibilities, re-aligning teams and services, improving communication and joint working, holding managers more accountable for the conduct and performance of their teams, encouraging partnership working and actively involving service users in planning, shaping and monitoring services.

It is envisaged that the new

structure will lead to a much more customer-focused service.

A high-profile launch for staff will be held on 23 September 2009 where there will be presentations from Kriss Akabusi MBE, 3 times Olympic medallist, World, European and Commonwealth Champion and Commander Jim Webster, from the Devon and Cornwall Constabulary.

We will be sharing information with you about the new service on our website after the launch.

Schemes For Landlords

As a landlord you have the choice of providing the council with your property in two ways. It can be used by the Private Sector Lettings Team with an Assured Shorthold Tenancy or the Private Sector Supply Team as a leased property.

There are benefits to be gained from both of the schemes.

With the Private Sector Leasing Scheme you are guaranteed rent as soon as you hand the property over to us for the duration of the lease. We then manage your property and deal with most maintenance issues.

However, if you take the Private Sector Lettings route you have the potential to attract a higher rent and are eligible for an eight week or 11 week incentive payment that you do not have to repay. You are, however, responsible for managing the property including all repairs.

More information about these two schemes will be handed out at the Landlords' Forum.

For more information about private sector lettings please contact the Private Sector Lettings Team on 020 8489 4726.

For more information about private sector leases please contact the Private Sector Supply Team on 020 8489 4248.

Day in the life...continued

All the different nationalities and experiences were very fascinating to a small four-year-old.

I believe Haringey will always be a borough where people from different backgrounds can live together in harmony and strive to fulfil their dreams.

I have been trying to purchase the flat where we lived in Cranleigh Road, N15 but haven't managed it yet.

What is a typical day for you as a Landlord?

When you are a landlord there is no day that is the same. Every day there is a new challenge. This is mainly because we are dealing with a variety of people who all have different expectations of what we should be doing for them.

Generally my day is spent viewing properties while my wife and our team deal with the other aspects of the business.

Recently my job has become much busier. This is because we have become GasSafe registered. Instead of depending on sub-contractors, we now provide a Domestic Gas Appliance management service. Through this we employ our own GasSafe registered engineers and therefore have more control of the quality of service provision. I am also extending this service so if there are any procurement managers reading this article, we can provide an excellent service to your tenants with a considerable reduction in the cost.

An annual Landlord Gas Safety certificate for any landlord who works for Haringey Council is available for only £39.00.

What has it been like working with Haringey Council?

I have really enjoyed the experience and hope our working relationship becomes bigger and better in the future.