

Landlords' forum news

A newsletter for Haringey landlords

Issue 11 January 2010

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Message from Cllr John Bevan

"Welcome to the first Landlords' Forum for 2010.

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 partnership working.

In this issue you will see that the re-structure of the Strategic and Community Housing Service was formally launched on 23 September 2009.

We were pleased to welcome Kriss Akabusi and Commander Jim Webster to help us launch the housing service whose role is now one of providing advice and offering choice through a range of housing options.

The re-design of the housing structure has been introduced to improve our interface with our customers, including yourselves, and I hope you see the benefits in your daily working with us.

On page 3 you can read about the Private Sector Leasing Schemes that are available with the council. These schemes are increasingly popular due to the guaranteed rent and free management service that we offer.

On page 4 you will see we have collected almost £115,000 of debt from the owners of 11 empty properties.

This has been made possible through the use of the Enforced Sales and Compulsory Purchase Orders Procedures.

We are taking a tough stance on empty properties especially as we have 3,000 privately owned properties currently unoccupied and 4,000 households waiting for a permanent home.

Best wishes for 2010."

Cllr John Bevan

Tackling Overcrowding

David Clayton, the National Overcrowding Co-ordinator from Communities and Local Government, met with officers from Housing in October 2009 to discuss the progress that Haringey has made in addressing under-occupation and tackling overcrowding.

Haringey is part of the overcrowding pathfinder programme and received £90,000 funding from the CLG for 2009/10 to support work in this area.

Officers updated David on the progress made in increasing the supply of larger sized social housing properties, delivering an options approach for overcrowded households and encouraging under-occupiers to move and free up much needed family size homes.

A follow up letter from David stated; "The progress made since our last meeting puts you in a good position to make a case for further funding for your council. You've made significant progress in developing your action plan and therefore now have a framework in which to deliver the programme."

Haringey is working with partners to develop an Overcrowding and Under-occupation Strategy which will be completed in 2010. The strategy will initially cover Council and housing association tenants but will be expanded to include the private sector later in 2010.

Launch of new housing service

Haringey's Housing Strategy and Community Services was formally launched on 23 September 2009.

The new housing structure has been designed to help us reduce the numbers of people in temporary accommodation; improve communication and joint working with other housing providers.

An important part of the new structure is the Private Sector Lettings Team whose aim is to improve our interface with private landlords and to work proactively with them to provide good quality, affordable, well managed private rented accommodation for people in temporary accommodation and those who find themselves homeless.

The launch was attended by over 200 housing staff. The aim of the day was to inspire and motivate staff to have belief in our ability to transform and to take

ownership of their roles in the new service.

The key note speakers were Kriss Akabusi, the 3 times Olympic medallist and Commander Jim Webster.

Phil Harris introduced the day with a reflection on how much the service had already achieved.

Commander Jim Webster, Devon and Cornwall Constabulary followed, talking about how he has developed community engagement in Plymouth by giving frontline Officers small grants in which to make a difference to local communities and reduce crime and antisocial behaviour.

This has been phenomenally successful and inspired

housing staff to think if we could do something similar.

The key issues from the workshops were:

1. Improved communication
2. Senior staff and managers to 'go back to the floor' to get a better understanding of what it is like.

Kriss Akabusi, the 3 times Olympic medal winner, plus the World and European Championships finished with a humorous, fun and thought provoking speech.

Weaving in the key issues for housing into his story he showed how set backs and demotivation can be overcome. He was exciting, energetic, enthusiastic but most importantly made staff feel they could achieve too. A brilliant orator!



Kriss Akabusi and Com. Jim Webster



Follow the leader...

Private Sector Leasing Schemes

The Procurement and Compliance Teams are currently marketing their new schemes

The London Borough of Haringey uses Private Sector Leasing (PSL) as one of the methods of fulfilling the Council's duty to provide temporary housing accommodation. At present there are two methods that the Borough is adopting to procure PSL properties.

1. Supply Managed Private Sector Leasing (SMPSL) – The Borough has appointed a number of suppliers (after a rigorous tendering process) to procure up to 400 properties. These properties will be managed by the supplier.
2. Private Sector Leasing – The Procurement Team currently requires up to 400 properties for the PSL scheme with guaranteed rent for 3 years.

To find out more contact: Procurement and Compliance Team
Telephone: 020 8489 4248
Email:
housing.supply@haringey.gov.uk



Landlords

Would you like the benefits of:

- A guaranteed rent?
- Free management service?
- A three year lease?

If so, lease directly to Haringey Council.

Properties must be in excellent condition, self-contained with 1-4 bedrooms, located in or close to Haringey.

Lease rents available are discounted from market rates.

To find out more contact: Procurement and Compliance Team

Telephone: 020 8489 4248
Email:
housing.supply@haringey.gov.uk

Action on Empty Properties Helps Clear Debt

The council has found a way to help tackle homelessness and recoup some debts, primarily Council Tax, all at the same time.

The council is using Enforced Sales Procedures and Compulsory Purchase Orders to take enforcement action on the 50 worst empty eyesores in the borough. Any money owed to the council on these homes is taken out of the proceeds.

Since March this year, simply through the enforced sales process, the council has recovered almost £115,000 of debt from the owners of 11 empty properties.

Much of this money was raised through the enforced sale of two properties. A family has already moved into one of the empty properties and the other empty property is being renovated.

The council is now targeting another 27 properties for enforced sales to recover debts totalling more than £181,000.

Cllr John Bevan, cabinet member for housing, says: "We really mean business. Where there is a debt to the council on a vacant property, the enforced sales procedure will be pursued."

The council recently recouped debt even when a

building wasn't sold. The owners of a flat in Priory Road N8 that had been empty for 11 years settled their debt of more than £14,000 just before the property was sold at auction.

Cllr Bevan continues:

"Where the empty property owners have settled their debt and their properties remain empty, the council will automatically pursue these through the Compulsory Order process until these properties become occupied."

A further 10 properties have been approved by the council for Compulsory Purchase and three formerly threatened with a take over are now occupied.

Cllr Bevan says: "It is crazy to have 3,000 privately owned properties unoccupied and abandoned when we have almost 4,000 households waiting for a permanent home. We know properties become empty sometimes because the owners can't cope and we can offer help in those cases.

"Leaving a property empty is not acceptable. Vacant

properties attract criminal activities, vermin, can devalue the neighbouring properties and can become eyesores.

"Grants can sometimes be offered to owners of long term vacant properties for renovation. As well as providing comprehensive advice on all aspects of letting, the Council operates a rent deposit scheme and private sector leasing scheme to prevent homelessness and provide temporary accommodation for people who are homeless."

**For information contact:
Anoma Amarajeewa,
Empty Homes Officer, on
020 8489 4214.**

HARINGEY LANDLORDS' FORUM

Next Meeting

**22 April 2010
from 6-8.30pm**

Registration 5-6pm
Council Chamber, Civic
Centre, High Road,
N22 8LE