

**LANDLORDS FORUM MEETING
MINUTES MEETING HELD ON 26th July 2007
HOUSING SERVICES, RUTHIN ROAD, WREXHAM**

1. Introduction

Joanna Seymour, Environmental Health Officer, Wrexham County Borough Council opened the Landlords Forum and carried out the household duties. She informed the group that there was a change in the agenda due late cancellation of Neil Darlington, from the North Wales Fire Service. She introduced Vicki Smith and Ceri Rowlands, both Environmental Health Officers, who have recently joined the Housing Standards Team.

Agenda:

- Introduction
- Housing Act 2004 – **Joanna Seymour**
 - Implementation and Update
 - Landlords Guide
 - Energy Performance Certificates (EPC)
 - Landlords Working Forum (LLWF)
- Housing Strategy – **David Tonks, Principal Housing Strategy Officer**
- Fire Safety in HMOs – **Paul Reynolds from Barlows Electricals**
- Recycling – Information supplied by WCBC Recycling Team
- Question Time
- Next Landlords Forum

2. Housing Act 2004

- Update - Licensing
 - Explanation provided for the implementation of mandatory, additional, transitional and associated designation period of June 2006 - 2009 30th June
 - Informed the group of the possibility of additional licensing and landlord accreditation being introduced in WCBC.
- Landlords Guide
 - Introduced the concept of WCBC producing a Landlords and tenants guide and highlighted that a questionnaire has been sent to all known Landlords. Requested that if a questionnaire had not been completed or received then blank questionnaires were available.
- EPC
 - Information is to be supplied when available and will try and get speaker to attend at the next forum.
- LLWF
 - Developing protocol/approach for dealing with student properties to highlight student's responsibilities and role of NEWI in maintaining standards.
 - Highlighted that action can be taken against students who ignore tenants responsibilities with respect to management regulations for HMO's.

- Will invite members of the group to be involved in the LLWF in due course.

- Feedback Form

- In order to improve meetings and provide topics that are of interest, requested that attendees of group complete feedback form to aid improvements.

3. Housing Strategy

- Explained partners and framework for strategy that covers the next five years for WCBC.

- Consulted for 7 months and explained that WCBC have adopted it at Executive Board and Scrutiny Board level but will go to full council for adoption in September 2007.

- Indicated the legislative/statutory obligation for WCBC to produce a Local Housing Strategy and identified that it covers all areas of housing, including the private rented sector.

- Highlighted that this is not a focus on social housing and in some respects is more focused on private sector housing.

- Discussed consultation process and people involved and that landlord representatives attended, which was most appreciated.

- Brought to the attention of landlords that private rented was one of five aims in the strategy and was actually ranked number 1.

- How is it delivered – explained some of the 20 action plans. The 20 action plans will be monitored by Wrexham Housing Alliance in addition to reviewing annually and LLWF are required to be involved in monitoring/delivering some of actions.

4. Fire Safety in HMOs

- Provided explanation of systems available and how a system is selected for an individual property i.e. dependent on the occupancy and storeys.

- LD2, Part 6 systems – brief on the system provided and highlighted that the system is not being monitored and a record of what alarms were activated not kept.

- LD1, Part 6 systems for more than 2 storey or more than seven occupants – has control panel and wired in fire proof cable. Continuous monitoring for faults including tampering and power. However, this system is not exclusively for three storeys or more and any fire system that is installed is based on the risk associated with the layout of the property, ignition sources, occupants and current fire safety precautions.

- Costs: LD2, Part 6 – for 9 or 10 interlinked smoke detectors and one heat £550.

LD1, Part 6 – similar to part 6 requirements £1200.

- Testing – annual test and replace battery. Also test more frequently e.g. weekly/monthly when a visit is made to the property. Cost of testing a LD2 system is approximately £40 per year and LD1 twice yearly test at £120 annually and all carried out via panel (LD1 only tested at the panel).

- Electrical installation checks required annually (or as indicated by previous installation check) including PAT testing.

- Extinguishers – required to be serviced annually and are often a forgotten requirement

Joanna Seymour introduced the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2006 (RRO) and requirement to do risk assessments. Explained that initially the RRO covered licensable premises but now includes licensed HMO's and landlords and required to look at and produce a basic five point plan for:

- 1) Ignition sources.
- 2) How can risks be reduced?
- 3) Reducing likelihood e.g.
 - Provide description of property layout.
 - Occupants – are there any vulnerable tenants.
- 4) Review risk assessment and make necessary changes.
- 5) Monitor.

Note - risk assessments are not supposed to be paper exercise and should not cause concern or stress and the North Wales Fire Service are happy to assist where required.

5. Recycling – Hot Topic

- Information provided in four languages including Polish and Portuguese.
- If problems continue then recycling team are prepared to visit and provide education and information to tenants.
- Collection dates available depending on collection areas.
- Informed that refuse issue is addressed in Management Regulations and if landlord has done everything necessary then action can be taken against the tenants.

6. Questions

- 1) Empty homes strategy – what is it and who does it apply to?

Answer:

- Privately owned.
- Options available to deal with bringing them back into use.
- Focus on long-term properties and those that have detrimental effects to the amenity.

- 2) Are wireless fire detection systems available?

Answer:

- Explained that power supply is still provided through cable, but the interlinking of the detectors is wireless (i.e. radio interlinked)
- Price implication of this option

- 3) Can extra bins be obtained?

Answer:

- Yes, advised of correct contact number and generally there is no limit on recycling bins but they must be used if requested.

- 4) Green bags for paper recycling – can they not be provided as a box?

Answer:

- advised to contact number provided (01978 292040), although would put suggestion of bags on a roll or box to recycling team.

- 5) Additional bins for HMO's – Acknowledgement of press release

Answer:

- Commercial route available of paying a yearly charge for extra waste to be removed but will defeat object of getting tenants to recycle etc.

7) Complaints – Usually from a tenant but if a landlord complains will Housing Standards etc investigate?

Answer:

- Yes
- All complaints have to be investigated and checked to see if they are substantiated and appropriate course of action taken.

7. Next Landlords Forum

Joanna Seymour again requested feedback form to be completed and thanked the group and speakers for attendance.

Next Landlords Forum to be held 22nd November 2007 at Ruthin Road, Wrexham.