



## **HullSTARS Advisory Committee Meeting**

Wednesday 2nd<sup>rd</sup> November 2016.

10.30am

Meeting Room 2, University House

### **Attending:**

*Toni Proctor (TP) (HullSTARS); Samantha Page (SP) (HullSTARS); Ian Sanders (IS) (Hull City Council); Debbie Drake (DD) (Humber Landlord Association); John Constable (JC) (Hull Student Landlord Association); Michael Rainsford - (Via phone link) (MR) (StuRents); Kate Herring (KH) (Advice Centre).*

#### **1. Apologies**

*George Bainbridge (GB) (VP Welfare and Community)*

#### **2. Housing Events – Calendars/Socials/Review Week/Housing Fair Plans**

TP summarised to the meeting general updates with what has been completed by HullSTARS to date;

##### ***Housing Calendars:***

- Over 300 housing calendars distributed since beginning of term.
- Included in the waste “Bin Smart” leaflet drop
- Handed out at housing socials and review week
- Distributed at the Lawns and Courtyard Housing Roadshows

##### ***Housing Social:***

- Held on 25<sup>th</sup> October during our #HousingHorror Review Week.
- Really disappointing turn out, which was surprising as Tuesday is normally the busiest day in the Union building.
- Relocated to increase passing footfall.
- Present were Environmental Health; Gas Safe; Waste Management; Advice Centre; Humberside Police (no show).
- The aim was to provide students with information on how to avoid a Housing Horror and things to look for in your own home before looking for accommodation for next year.

IS queried who attended from Gas Safe, and if in fact they were the correct department to attend as they deal with private/council gas inspections and may not be able to give the

correct advice to students. IS felt someone from his team would be more appropriate to attend. TP will make enquiries prior to the housing fair in December.

TP advised the meeting that due to the lack of engagement and turnout, continuing with this event next year at this time will be looked at.

### ***Next Housing Social – November:***

- To be held on Tuesday 15<sup>th</sup> November.
- Theme for this event is “Speed Friending” and the idea is for students to expand their friendship groups, make new friends if they have already fallen out with current friends, and even find new housemates for next year.
- Given the disappointment of the last event we intend on being much more active with marketing this event. VP Welfare will be writing a blog promoting the event, which will be shared to students.
- We have prepared a list of housing related questions for students to ask each other to avoid awkward silences.

DD asked if we are holding any similar themed events like last year as she really likes the concept of the events. TP confirmed we won't be holding anymore “Friending” events, but will be holding a “mop up” event in April like we did last academic year for those student still struggling to find housemates.

### ***HullSTARS Awards:***

- Shortlist is now announced and online on HullSTARS website.
- It has also been included in the Landlords newsletter that was emailed out last week. It is also being included in the HUU student newsletter.
- We have received more applications this year, applications seem to be of a much higher quality and we have had an increase on new landlords applying (new to applying, not necessarily new to HullSTARS)
- This year the awards were marked against much stricter criteria. We marked against review scores, feedback ratings etc. This made it a much longer and in-depth but fairer process.
- Winners will be announced on stage at the Housing Fair after the carol singers.



### ***Housing Fair:***

- We have 19 paid landlord stalls compared with 26 last year. This may not be such a bad thing, as it will allow stall holders to have a little more space for displays/signage and will allow us to avoid dark spots within Asylum. \*\*Now 23 landlords.
- External stalls to be outside of Asylum within the Christmas Fair that will be held on the same day. Each stall will have directional signage on them promoting the Housing Fair.
- We will have live reindeers outside the front of the Union building, and again this will have directional signage to the Housing Fair.
- As always, we will have our Promotional Staff on duty for event, they will be canvassing for reviews as well as directing people to the fair.
- We have a local school choir performing on stage from 11am-12pm. Once they have finished we will announce the HullSTARS Awards on stage.
- We have invited external guests to attend the fair, they will be located around the room, and will be on hand to give advice to students. Invited are: Environmental Health; Gas Safe; Waste; Humberside Police; HullSTARS; Advice Centre. \*\*Gas Safe no longer attending, awaiting responses from Humberside Police and Waste Management.
- We're looking for an external food/drink outlet to attend offering freebies. \*\*Confirmed at Dominos.
- Layout to be confirmed nearer to the fair. As with previous years, allocations will be moved from year to year to ensure fairness.

### ***Review Week:***

- Really successful, 467 reviews collected in total.
- Reviews have not been inputted onto the website as yet.
- Approximately 30 reviews down on last year, but we are still really pleased with the result.
- Housing Horrors was chosen given the time of year and allowed Promotional Staff to wear Halloween costumes.
- Students were encouraged to leave a review regardless of their experience, as with last year there was a good balance of positive and negative reviews.
- We are having a contrasting day in February with a Valentine's Day themed "Love your house" day where the Promotional Staff will be canvassing for reviews.

### ***Waste Management;***

- We had a leaflet drop on the 20<sup>th</sup> October 2016.
- TP thanked the landlords who assisted, namely; John Constable; Christine Kirk; Steve Welburn; Pam Barnes. It was a positive day for multi-agency working and working in line with the Community Strategy.
- 5 local residents volunteered, unfortunately no students assisted.
- Leaflets were distributed down Newland Avenue as far as Ella Street. Wellesley Avenue, Beresford Avenue and Heathcote Street were covered separately at an earlier date.

- Included in the pack was an A4 leaflet with information on what to recycle, a recycling wheel, stickers, and our Housing Calendar.
- The good news story was sent to the local press, and included in our HUU newsletter.
- TP noted that it was disappointing that the agents had chosen not to participate, particularly as they were all visited in August and given stickers to use on their bins in preparation for students arriving.

DD gave apologies for not attending, she would have loved to have come, but unfortunately had prior arrangements.

IS asked how we distinguished what was a student home and what was private, he asked if there was a list of properties visited. TP replied that no list was taken and that due to the information being applicable to everyone, residents and students alike; it did not matter if leaflets were posted through non-student doors.

IS enquired about whether HullSTARS kept a database of student properties as Hull CC would like to know the percentage of the market HullSTARS reaches or has involvement in. The Housing Condition Survey in 2010 showed there to be 21,000 units in the city. Hull CC are aware that there has been a dramatic increase in this figure since 2010.

Their own accreditation scheme currently has 1000 signed up which equates to be less than 5% of the market. IS quoted HullSTARS to have approximately 300 registered units, in a student market of approximately 1500 units, equating to approximately reaching 5% of the market. IS asked if there are more concrete data/figures.

TP replied that there is a database that is always being updated with new landlords/properties as and when we are notified. Review weeks pick up on more addresses and landlords that we did not know about, so those details get added. Some agents have recently sold large chunks of their portfolio, and that HullSTARS have made enquiries to see who now owns these properties however responses have been slow.

IS discussed the proposed changes the Government are looking to make in regards to licensing consultation document about increasing the size of properties which will be subject to mandatory licencing. The current definition of a HMO is; a 3 or more storey property, with 5 or more occupants from two or more families sharing facilities. Hull currently has approximately 4500 HMO's, of which around 330 are licenced.

The governments proposal is to remove the number of storeys, and focus on if the property has 5+ occupants who are not related blood or marriage, then that property would be need to be a licenced. This understandably will have a big impact on Hull CC workload, and they anticipate an additional 700-1000 extra properties needing to be licenced.

IS has been tasked with a scoping exercise, MR provided statistics last year in Dec 2015 which was very helpful, but it now needs doing again with more concrete data of 5 bedroom properties. Can HullSTARS help?





TP confirmed that she would need to check with the senior management at HUU to ensure that this does not breach any confidentiality agreement or data protection.

IS asked, are HullSTARS prepared to gather information on the properties where bedrooms numbers are not known. TP believes this will be resource issue, especially with her impending maternity leave. IS suggested including a question as part of the review. TP agreed this could easily be done by simply adding a box to the review card, however would still need authorisation from senior managers.

***ACTION – TP to liaise with marketing department to include a “number of beds” question within the review card template.***

***ACTION – IS to send an email to TP outlining their requirement/request, for TP to then check with SMT.***

TP invited MR to add his feelings.

MR stated that he would need to better understand the Council’s broader goals for data gathering and planning, as it is extremely time consuming to get accurate data. StuRents are happy as always to provide data of what we have in aggravated form. MR feels however there will always be a limitation to the accuracy of the data due to lack of total engagement. MR feels that what StuRents does have in terms of data he is confident it is reflective to the market and statistically significant. MR feels he would need to see some benefit to HullSTARS to invest more time in driving that data. He asked IS if like other cities, Hull offer any incentives to join an accreditation scheme?

IS confirmed that Hull CC offer a £50 discount off the total for accredited properties HMO licence, so yes there is a direct benefit to joining HullSTARS.

TP suggested discussing this outside the meeting at a later date.

***ACTION – TP to arrange a meeting once information received from IS.***

HullSTARS have had positive feedback from the event already as we’ve since seen the leaflets on noticeboards during audit inspections. Feedback during Review Week from students has been that they have already had the information through their door, so it’s great that they are taking note.

Whilst delivering leaflets we found a particular landlord with a number of waste issues at several properties, however thanks to our efforts these issues were rectified within 24 hours.

JC asked the committee if there was the facility to send SMS text messages to student’s reminding them to put bins out for emptying, something similar to what East Riding Council have in place? TP noted that it is not a facility that the union have, and due to having different collections for different areas, it wouldn’t be an easy task. IS stated Hull CC do not provide this service as it is too costly. DD advised that she provides this service to her tenants and it works really well. JC also messages his tenants on Facebook as it is free to remind them.

IS noted that licensed premises must have a clause in their contract preventing tenants from engaging in anti-social behaviour, and if a landlord is not seen to be taking action to remove/reduce noise problems or anti-social behaviour then they may be in breach of their licence. DD asked what Hull CC would expect landlords to do. IS clarified, sending letters; speaking to them; emailing would suffice. It would need to be reordered and monitored and if necessary to seek eviction as breach of tenancy agreement.

IS stated that Hull CC have an exemption from data protection to share licensed properties details. So if requested, they are legally obliged to share information.

TP moved the meeting onto discussing agenda point 4;

### ***Letting Season;***

- HUU Homes have started viewings today, and it looks like things are starting to move in terms of accommodation for next year.
- Student feedback from the lawns is that they are already receiving phone calls asking if they would like to make viewings, however nobody knows who the landlord is as not details are given.
- DD questioned how these agents are getting students details. TP believes they are getting them during fresher's fair. It is thought they sell information and bigger agents have already admitted to buying student contact details.
- MR good news they don't know who they are as it is poor marketing.
- MR confirmed they have noticed an increase in activity Hull and at present Hull is the 3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> busiest in UK for house hunting.
- StuRents are going to promote a message on their website which will be repeated in the all students newsletter – Something similar to “No rush to find housing, when you are ready come to StuRents”
- DD feels students are taking the no rush message on board and browsing a lot more. Last year she had a group of students who had done 20 viewings before coming to her.
- MR as expected at the moment activity is passive and there are more views than enquiries. Impetrative that landlord's get information current and listings accurate.
- Halloween party was held last week by private agent, also advertise housing at the party.
- An external agent was found leafletting on campus and was swiftly ejected. They have also been seen leafleting on Cranbrook Avenue.
- Three agents have been identified as approaching students at sus stop – We are aware of names and will be looking into it.
- University have become involved this year and helping push our message of ‘No Rush, come to our housing fair in December’.
- All first years have been emailed and when spoken to seem to be aware of the HUU message, they also seem to have already seen the posters and can identify it as the “teal poster” so that is positive that they are taking note.



- HullSTARS and Advice Centre attended The Lawns and Courtyard Housing Roadshows. Seemed to be successful and were able to distribute lots of Housing Calendars to first year students.

***ACTION - TP to include in landlords newsletter to ensure StuRents listings are up to date.***

## **5. AOB**

- Maternity cover – TP will be leaving on 9<sup>th</sup> December. Sam Page will be taking over the day to day running of HullSTARS. Will be looking to recruit for cover for Sam's job. Additional support will be given to Sam, who will still be working part time during term time. The office will still be covered 10.30am-3.30pm. During the summer from August, Sam will be working 9am-5pm three days a week, but this will be filtered out to landlords nearer the time.
- General figures – we currently have 278 registered properties, which equates to 2019 beds. Compared with 273 properties last year and 1624 beds in 2015/16. This considerable increase in bed spaces is due to bigger developments such as the Portland coming on board.
- We have had more biennial payments, and only 3 behind on last year. They seem to be proving popular and you can opt in anytime during the year.
- IS asked how many landlords this equates to, and how many have attended the HHSRS?

***ACTION – TP to find out number of registered landlords HullSTARS has, and feedback to IS % figure of registered landlords who have attended HHSRS.***

Advice Centre Update: KH explained to the meeting the following statistics for October;

- The Advice centre have had 17 contract checks, 11 contract releases and 7 House Hunting issues.
- They have had a total of 109 housing issues in October, which is 30 down on October 2015, which is positive as obviously something they are doing is working.
- We have seen less housemate issues which is again positive.
- We have had a huge increase in contract checks, especially with International students, which is again positive as International Students as historically they are group of students we have had problems with in regards to contracts.
- 11 contract releases is slightly alarming, but we have no real reason? Could be a higher number of students withdrawing from Uni, or we have seen a higher number of students coming through the clearing process who can be more vulnerable.

IS asked if Gina was any further along with adopting a referral procedure with Hull CC similar to HullSTARS. KH was unaware, but happy to ask Gina.

TP interjected that Gina was aware and had agreed that they would try and deal in house initially, and if unsuccessful would then refer.

KH explained that she includes notes of referrals on any of her cases, but is unsure if other advisors to do the same? Unsure if this could be pulled from the online software they use.

***ACTION – TP to liaise with Kevin Pearson regarding software development of SUMS.***

TP advised the meeting that this year HullSTARS has had to ban a landlord from signing up to HullSTARS and we will be having no further interaction with this landlord. This decision was based on the landlords conduct towards staff and students. Although this landlord brought in a considerable amount of money to HullSTARS, the welfare of our staff and students, along with HUU Values is more important.

TP asked JC and DD if they would filter this message out to HLA and HSLA members.

HLA Meeting – TP summarised the meeting she recently had with the HLA board, who had expressed concerns over the HullSTARS model. TP stressed that no changes will be made this year as the T&C have already been set out. The concerns they raised were:

- Governance structure of the HSAC group – should they be there to advise or make decisions?
- Open the right to reply to reviews to non-subscribed landlords
- If they did open up the right to reply, would it best to have a panel created to make decisions in relation to reviews?

Concerns raised from the meeting were that by implementing point two above, takes away a huge benefit of signing up to HullSTARS.

If non-subscribed members are prepared to pay to have a review removed, why not sign up and improve standard of accommodation?

Who would be on the “Panel” – who would be suitable and impartial?

***ACTION – SP to send survey to all registered landlords to get their opinions on the matter above. Discuss further at next meeting.***

## 6. Next Meeting;





Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup> January 2016, 10.30am-12.30pm, Meeting Room 2.

**Action Table:**

<i>Toni Proctor / Samantha Page</i>	<b>To liaise with marketing department to include a "number of beds" question within the review card template.</b>	<i>To be completed by the next review week in April 2017.</i>
<i>Toni Proctor / Samantha Page</i>	<b>to liaise with SMT re data sharing our database with Hull CC.</b>	<i>To be completed by 09/12/2016 18/12/16</i>
<i>Toni Proctor / Samantha Page</i>	<b>To find out number of registered landlords HullSTARS has, and feedback to IS % figure of registered landlords who have attended HHSRS.</b>	<i>To be completed by 25/11/2016</i>
<i>Toni Proctor / Samantha Page</i>	<b>To liaise with Kevin Pearson regarding software development of SUMS.</b>	<i>To be completed by 25/11/2016</i>
<i>Toni Proctor / Samantha Page</i>	<b>To send survey to all registered landlords to get their opinions on the HLA matter. Discuss further at next meeting.</b>	<i>To be sent out by 18/11/2016. Discuss results at next meeting.</i>