



## **HullSTARS Advisory Committee Meeting**

Meeting Minutes

14<sup>th</sup> April 2015 – 1.00pm

Meeting Room 3, Second floor, University House

### **Attending:**

*Toni Proctor (HullSTARS); Paul Traynor (HullSTARS); Ian Sanders (Hull City Council); Jill Cooper (University Accommodation Manager); Debbie Drake (Humber Landlord Association); Christine Kirk (Hull Student Landlord Association).*

### **Non-committee members:**

#### **1. Apologies**

Jeni Day

Gina Rayment

#### **2. Facts and Figures**

Total of 179 properties registered.

122 properties inspected before Easter – 57 remaining, 37 booked in.

25 paid in advance for next academic year - 2015/16.

8 re-inspections paid for and 2 outstanding.

Audit completion date – 15<sup>th</sup> May 2015

Re-inspection completion date – 11<sup>th</sup> June 2015

IS Question – How many landlords does the 179 properties consist of – TP answer 46.

IS also asked can we have the figures for 1 star properties. It was agreed to provide the total figures for each rating scores 1 to 5 stars, to date as follows:

5 Stars – 15 properties (4 required re-inspection to achieve this).

4 Stars – 27 properties

3 Stars – 32 properties

2 Stars – 13 properties

1 Star – 3 properties

No Stars – No properties

JC Question – does the 179 include HUU Homes and University? – Answer Yes.

CK Question – Why are there more landlords but less properties – Answer all the University owned have not been included as they were last year. The university have 10% of their properties registered with HullSTARS. Previously, it was felt by the university that they were subsidising The Scheme, which they don't feel that they should do for HullSTARS as this is now the Unions responsibility.

Discussion was had around the large landlords when only registering a few properties but having the full advantage of HullSTARS – the benefits being admittance to Housing Fair and being able to say we are a member of HullSTARS and have achieved a star rating (when in fact this is just for a single property or two). We cannot currently change this state of affairs as the Housing Fair was a Sabbatical Officers decision.

CK question to JC – where are surplus students directed in terms of accommodation when going through the university? Could a link to HullSTARS be established? – JC explained University has owned, managed and directed properties – and HUU Homes is the 1<sup>st</sup> place students are directed and that is the present procedure.

TP asked JC – what is the process for directing students to halls of residence as we have a 5\* property that isn't currently used - JC explained capacity had previously been the issue there so it wasn't utilised.





Discussion/ comment followed another regarding external halls as being a place students had been placed and there had been some alleged issues on property standards there. IS said HCC could not comment. CK also asked JC about complaints procedure through the university – the Advice Centre was stated as being the go to place concerning housing issues. It was also stated that previously during The Scheme the University would ask for complaints data from the Advice centre.

TP discussed that in the instance that a student has a complaint about where they have been placed, whether this will affect change is reliant on the University being made aware of the complaint in the first place. TP discussed that if there had been a large portion of negative reviews on HullSTARS or at the Advice Centre regarding a provider the university has directed students to, it is perhaps something that could be passed on to the Accommodation Office for their reference.

TP stated that this year there has been a 30% reduction in contract release enquiries from students wishing to get out of their landlord/accommodation contracts as confirmed by GR prior to the meeting.

JC informed that the new build student accommodation on campus would consist 546 bed spaces.

### **3. Housing Fair Recap**

Survey respondent information was run through by TP. There were 14 responses. The general consensus was that the fair was better than last year, however the majority of the issues surrounded the date of the fair and issues surrounding continuity with the changing of Sabbatical team annually.

CK asked if the university could contribute and assistance with the fair – it was generally discussed that at this time it remained the responsibility of HUU.

TP informed – JD will be issuing 3 proposals in relation to a fair going forward – JD advised that the proposal could be circulated and should be completed by the end of the week.

ACTION: JD to forward TP the proposal plans to circulate alongside these minutes.

#### 4. Hull City Council Re-Inspections

IS reported he completed that 2 surveys on properties were conducted.

IS ran through the criteria – that the surveys were based on HHSRS criteria, and were not therefore based on any template of the HullSTARS audit.

He has divided findings into requirements and recommendations and relation to the HHSRS. The requirements would need to be done within a given period and that HCC would re-inspect following the completion of works.

Widows were stated as an area that stood out – that there was a lack of window restrictors found on fire escape windows in both properties and if this might be thought about in terms of the HullSTARS criteria for next year.

However more information was requested from landlords around specific requirements. IS said there were free HHSRS training courses run by HCC.

It was further discussed that the free training could become a mandatory requirement for HullSTARS registered landlords, as it would benefit all of those concerned. Attendees are required to provide a cheque for £50 which is then returnable on attendance/ completion of the training.

*ACTION: IS to provide dates for training courses being run to TP to be then circulated to all landlords.*

IS question – Does he need to complete the remaining 6 inspections are per original sample amount agreed. TP relied yes – though these would now be selected at random out of the properties audited since the previous selection was made, this should be fair in that all properties would then have the same probability of being selected.





*ACTION: TP to organise the remaining inspections with relevant landlords.*

Discussion was had surrounding if HullSTARS found and major health and safety issues within a property and at what point it would be appropriate to pass it on to HCC. Discussion was had about a recent incidence surrounding fire escape windows, whereby HCC had been contacted for clarification of what HCC then deemed to be an issue worthy of an Improvement Notice. Discussion was had that HCC would always serve a notice if a Break Glass hammer and breakable glass was provided instead of an escape window in the appropriate places.

TP suggested that from a HullSTARS point of view, she should contact the landlord in the first instance to give them fair opportunity to rectify the issue. It was discussed that if the issue is not rectified, HCC would be asked to visit the property. Equally, in the event that the landlord does not contact HCC to confirm the steps they are taking to rectify the issue, this should be followed up by HCC. In the event that the landlord does not contact HCC, HullSTARS would refer the case to HCC.

It was agreed that HullSTARS has a duty of care to its students, and whilst it is not there to 'tell on landlords', putting the safety of our students first is a priority.

*ACTION: TP and IS to arrange a meeting to confirm which parts of the criteria should be referred to HCC to investigate.*

## **5. Review Week and marketing**

TP also noted that canvassing would occur on campus for accommodation feedback reviews for HullSTARS on campus from Tuesday 5<sup>th</sup> to Fri 8<sup>th</sup> May by way of a Review Week.

## **6. AOB**

DD mentioned having been approached by a landlord at a HLA meeting who wished to join HullSTARS but were informed they couldn't. TP explained it was due

to the financial feasibility of allowing subscriptions all year that did not work well with the financial systems in place. It was mentioned that historically landlords would only join The Scheme to be able to attend the Housing Fair and that it was then difficult to arrange in inspection following that. As HullSTARS inspects every property, it would severely limit HullSTARS ability to fit in all audits within the academic year. It was discussed that this is something we can look at in the future but it would need to be agreed with HUU's finance department, and would still only allow subscription up until September that academic year.

*ACTION: TP to look into the possibility of year round subscriptions.*

Some points on a landlords list of concerns/issues were addressed – one point related to the scoring system of HullSTARS audits will become visible to landlords. TP agreed that HullSTARS would publish the criteria alongside weightings for the next academic year as it would cut down on administration for HullSTARS.

IS noted – he had been contacted by Hull City College who run a rating system for accommodation similar to HullSTARS.

*ACTION: IS to arrange contact between the two parties.*

Lastly from IS, some matters concerning licenced properties coming onto the market were discussed.

TP stated that new Vice President for Welfare and Community will be coming into post in June and issues surrounding the Housing Fair date/price etc, as well as HullSTARS fees would be agreed as soon as possible.

**7. Next meeting – OPEN MEETING - 14<sup>th</sup> July 2015 1pm.**

