



HullSTARS Advisory Committee Meeting

Wednesday 11th May 2016

10.30am

Meeting Room 2, University House

Attending:

Toni Proctor (TP) (HullSTARS); Samantha Page (SP) (HullSTARS); Ashleigh Davies (VP Welfare & Community) Kate Herring (KH) (Advice Centre Advisor); Ian Sanders (IS) (Hull City Council); Jill Cooper (JC) (Head of Accommodation – University of Hull); Danny Gough (DG) (Humber Landlord Association (HLA))

1. Apologies:

Christine Kirk – Hull Student Landlord Association (HSLA)

Debbie Drake – Humber Landlord Association (HLA)

Gina Rayment – Advice Centre Manager

2. General Updates:

HullSTARS:

TP confirmed that HullSTARS had completed 270 audits to date, but were however unable to audit 2 properties, which have subsequently been removed from HullSTARS and lost added benefits with StuRents. There are two weeks of auditing left, and presently we have 45 re-inspections booked in, however more bookings are expected.

TP advised that the major issues to arise from this year's audits were fire doors and fire blankets. Issues varied from a worrying number of properties with no fire doors and blankets being present in the property at all, to fire doors not self-closing correctly, and doors not having intumescent heat seals present.

TP reassured the meeting that a vast majority of these properties are those booked in for a re-inspection. TP mentioned that SP now includes a disclaimer in her emails about the referrals policy.

SP added that a spreadsheet of all fire door related issues has been created, and all will be followed up to ensure work has been completed and rectified.

DG asked TP what percentage of the HullSTARS portfolio are audited each year, to which TP replied 100%. DG praised HullSTARS that out of all 270 properties to only be unable to access 2 properties was excellent.

TP added further that it is the larger agents making up the bulk of the re-inspections, aiming for a 4* minimum on all their re-inspected properties. One of the newer agents is also scoring very well in their audits with several 4 and 5* properties.

DG informed the meeting that Lovelle has bought all of Clubeasy properties for £11m. They will have an office based on Newland Avenue, but from his understanding are now intending to purchase the entire portfolio, and with that amount of money, the business owners must have the capital to improve the houses to a higher standard.

TP concluded that the overall quality of audited properties is increasing, and small landlords have generally maintained or improved their previously achieved star ratings.

Events:

TP moved on to discuss the successful Housing Social held on the April 11th 2016, and invited AD to explain the event in more detail.

AD explained that the purpose of the event was to help students with housing issues and/or questions by directing them to the appropriate HUU service, or bringing together new friendship groups.

For a first time, and so late in the calendar, the event was a success, with an estimated 35-40 students through the door. The event had multiple success stories of students matching up with other students, and after the event a positive tweet from a student thanks HUU for putting on the event.

The aim is to continue with the events from the start of the year next academic year.

TP added that it is her aim to include these events in the housing calendar which will be ready for semester one next year. This will include housing social dates, housing fair dates and will be given to students during WelcomeFEST. TP added that she plans to have one housing social event before the housing fair in semester one, and two housing social events in semester two.

TP also added that at the event held in April, StuRents launched their housemate forum. This has been created as a forum for students to post adverts online seeking someone to fill a room, or someone trying to find a room/housemates. Students can copy adverts from StuRents, pictures can be uploaded and comments made, and the layout is similar to Facebook. So far it has proved extremely successful with a large number of students using it, as recent as last week.

DG asked KH if the Advice Centre has seen an increase in students falling out, as the HLA certainly have seen an increase in figures. MyPad have seen a 10% increase on fall-outs between October-November.

KH confirmed that there has always been a problem with students falling out having signed up so early, but that they have not seen a significant increase this year.



Review Week:

TP advised that Review Week (25th-29th April) saw 432 reviews collected during the week, the figure was less than previous review weeks; however this was due to a decrease in staffing hours and less students in the union due to exams.

Throughout the year HullSTARS promotional staff have collected 1290 reviews, a significant increase on previous years.

TP added that these reviews have helped HullSTARS create a better picture and understanding of the student market in Hull, along with which landlords own which properties. It has also made it apparent that landlords have a large proportion of undisclosed properties, and that they in fact have not registered 50% of their portfolio with HullSTARS.

TP mentioned that having a better landlord/property this has proved useful on occasions when dealing with waste management problems and antisocial behaviour issues, as we know who the landlord is, allowing us to direct any issues to the correct person.

DG advised TP that HullSTARS can utilise the HullSTARS database with the HLA's. If the HLA secretary is contacted she will disclose any landlord details. This is something we can work together on to tackle any complaints or issues. DG also offered to conduct land registry checks through the HLA should there be a requirement.

Action: DG to provide TP with contact details for the HLA secretary.

3. Waste Management Update:

TP gave a brief explanation as to what the meeting was all about, stating it is a multi-agency meeting where local councillors, Hull City Council, HLA, HSLA, University of Hull, HUU and Humberside Police meet twice a year to tackle waste management in the student area. TP advised that the meeting is still in its infancy and there are still lots of issues to get through.

The HullSTARS website will be a source of information for students and landlords alike, offering general updates, guidance and FAQ's.

TP explained the landlord pages in more detail, stating that dates of bring out your rubbish days (BOYRD) will be published on the website, along with information on how to obtain a waste carriers licence and contact details for local charities who will collect larger items as donations to sell on.

TP explained that this information is available to anyone, not just HullSTARS registered landlords. She also added that links to Hull City Council's website are prominent on all pages.

The student page will mirror the landlord pages; however will be written in such a way to be aimed at students. TP advised the meeting this is a working progress and will be completed over the summer break.

DG asked TP if she was aware of a local charity called “Helping Hands” based on Newland Avenue. They collect items from properties for free and will sell on if in a suitable condition, and if unable to sell on, they will dispose of for free as charities can dispose of waste for free.

TP was unaware of this charity, but thanked DG for the information and she will look into it further as it is her aim to build up a large portfolio of local charities.

Action: TP to liaise with Helping Hands to ascertain if they will give permission for the use of their logo on HullSTARS.

AD updated on the “Don’t be a rubbish neighbour” (DBARN) campaign, advising that the artwork will be completed next week ready to be distributed to students. AD asked TP if a list of all HullSTARS properties could be provided to her as it is her intention to include them in the distribution. Also included on the leaflet are the BOYRD dates and a link to the Hull City Council website, how to dispose of confidential waste and what condition to leave a house in. AD would like to include Helping Hands details on the leaflet, but would need to use the logo.

Action: AD to check if permission has been given by Helping Hands to include on her DBARN information leaflet.

DG asked AD if she would like the leaflet to reach the wider landlord community. AD would like it to reach as many people as possible as this could be done and sent to all HLA landlords.

Action: AD to send TP DBARN artwork.

Action: DG to send TP HLA secretary details.

DG added that the HLA are creating an exit pack for students, he would be more than happy to include AD DBARN leaflet in the pack, especially due to the amount of waste left by students last year.

Action: TP to send DBARN artwork to DG and HLA secretary to include in the HLA’s exit packs for students.

TP concluded this agenda point, by inviting the meeting to visit the website and the waste management pages and feedback to her any suggestions on improvements.

<https://hullstars.co.uk/landlords-waste>

4. Referrals Policy:

TP commenced by informing the meeting that referrals policy is not a new thing to HullSTARS, as HullSTARS have always worked closely with Hull City Council. In the





interest of transparency to existing members and interested parties it has been decided to have the policy on paper for everyone to be aware of and have access to.

TP invited the meeting to read through the policy document and provide any feedback.

JC queried if feedback had to be provided now, or could this be done at a later date.

TP welcomed the meeting to take the policy away and feedback when the meeting had time to digest the content.

AD asked for clarification on if 28 days was 28 working days or just 28 calendar days. TP provided clarity to this point answering it was 28 calendar days.

TP advised the meeting the referral policy would be published on the website along with the minutes of this meeting.

5. AOB:

DG began by informing the meeting on the Chancellors new tax increase on buy-to-let mortgages, which will be phased in from 2017 and fully implemented by 2020. DG explained that as a result landlords would be taxed on everything, including any profit made.

DG gave an example of a HLA member known to him who will stand to lose in excess of twenty thousand pounds a year as a result of this new tax levy.

DG advised that the worst hit and affected by this new tax will be the smaller private landlords, predominantly the bulk of HullSTARS members, as the larger companies or those registered as a LTD company won't be affected by the tax increase.

DG went on to explain that the knock on effect of this will hit students hard, as landlords will be forced to increase rent, cut down on repairs or renovations as they won't have the cash to pay for them, or be forced to sell resulting in a decrease in accommodation. Also affected will be the local authorities, as where will the increase in homeless people be housed.

DG stated that 1/3 of the HLA membership will be affected and with in excess of 22,000 houses in Hull alone the impact could be catastrophic.

DG advised the meeting to visit www.property118.com for further information on this. He explained there is also a tool for landlords to calculate how much this new tax levy will affect them. DG also advised the meeting that he has teamed up with the south bank's judicial review, so will be able to get further information if needed.

DG concluded by explaining that Australia did something similar, causing the house market to crash and pushing houses prices up by 33%.

Members thanked DG for this information.

JC talked about revised procedures for directing students into private sector accommodation and how to tackle issues with students being tied into contracts after they withdraw from university.

DG felt it wasn't a massive problem in his opinion, but agreed it will always be a risk letting a property to groups of 1st years, as a couple may not turn up or they may fall out. The main feedback DG received was relating to poor standards of accommodation and poor locations.

JC asked DG if they offer the student any sort of deal to get out the contract should a student drop out as the university see this as a growing problem, with first years most at risk, especially during the transitional period of moving from home to adapting into university life. JC asked for feedback on how a proposal of waiving fees if they withdrew within 12 weeks would be received by landlords.

DG felt that it would be hard to release a tenant from a contract; he charges a £1,000 release fee. He felt that 12 weeks would not be received well by landlords as after 12 weeks as it would be hard to fill the room. DG suggested that a 14-day cooling off period might be received better by landlords.

AD asked JC if university owned accommodation have a system in place of a student is unhappy, to be released from the contract, JC answered that there is, and a student is charged a four-week notice period.

DG suggested this is something to be discussed outside this meeting, including in the working group all parties involved in allocation accommodation. DG felt a meeting should be organised as soon as possible, as now is the perfect time for all parties to work together in preparation for the new academic year.

JC agreed with DG suggestion, adding that it is all about the student experience and if we don't deliver, we simply won't attract the numbers to study at the university.

Action: TP to set up a working group to discuss retention for 1st years in private accommodation. Working group to include UoH, HSLA, HLA, HUU Homes, Advice Centre, VP Welfare & Community.

IS informed the committee that he is in the process of re-writing Hull City Councils standards, as a result of a change in case law and change in market.

A recent change in law after an upper tribunal ruling of a case in Nottingham, confirmed that students could effectively be treated as second-class citizens as they only reside in student accommodation for 10 months of the year and have an alternative address to live in. This subsequently changed the definition of student accommodation to include bedsits and shared houses.

IS felt this case law has reverted things back to before the Housing Act 2004 was implemented.



DG queried if it was just licensable properties that will have to adhere to certain room sizes. IS clarified that this was not the case, he explained that Hull CC also have standards for non-licenced HMO's where bedrooms must be 10m² unless provided with a communal living room, which then reduce bedroom sizes to 6.5m² at present.

IS went on to say, that the upper tribunal case had an impact on the homeless community, opening a market for companies to provide rooms for homeless people, a discussion is happening on how small is too small. This shift in market also needs to take into account change of use for buildings and planning constraints, as companies are converting living rooms into bedrooms to make the most of the space.

DG asked if IS would update the meeting when the updated document was complete.

Action: IS to keep TP updated on the Hull CC standards document. TP to disseminate any updates to landlords.

DG then asked TP if at the next open meeting, he could suggest inviting Tony Balder from Prism Workplace Fire Safety as he has a video on house fires and fire safety. DG felt it would be a beneficial addition to the meeting.

Action: DG to send TP contact details of Tony Balder to invite to the next meeting.

TP concluded the meeting by informing them that tomorrow she is interviewing for next year's Property Auditors.

TP thanked the meeting for their time, the meeting was then closed.

6. Next Meeting:

HullSTARS Advisory Committee Open Meeting - Wednesday 20th July 2016 at 10.30am. Venue TBC

7. Action Table:

| Responsible: | Action: | Deadline: |
|---------------------|---|------------------------------|
| Danny Gough | DG to provide TP with contact details for the HLA secretary. | Friday, 3 rd June |
| Toni Proctor | TP to liaise with Helping Hands to ascertain if they | Friday, 3 rd June |

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| 1 | | will give permission for the use of their logo on HullSTARS. | |
| 2 | Ashleigh Davies | Request permission to use Helping Hands information on DBARN information leaflet. | Monday, 16 th May |
| 4 | Ashleigh Davies | AD to send TP DBARN artwork. | Monday, 16 th June |
| | Danny Gough | DG to send TP contact details of HLA PR representative who will then forward the DBARN information leaflet to all HLA landlords, include on all social media sites and also ping via email to all students. | Friday, 10 th June |
| | Toni Proctor. | TP to send DBARN artwork to DG to include in the HLA's exit packs for students. | Friday, 10 th June |
| | Toni Proctor | TP to set up a working group to discuss retention for 1st years in private accommodation. Working group to include UOH, HSLA, HLA, HUU Homes, Advice Centre, VP Welfare & Community. | Friday, 3 rd June |
| | Ian Sanders | IS to keep TP updated on the Hull CC standards document. TP to disseminate any updates to landlords. | As necessary |
| | Danny Gough | DG to send TP contact details of Tony Balder to invite to the next meeting. | Friday, 3 rd June |



Hull Student
Accommodation
Rating System



@HullSTARS



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www.hullstars.com

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