



## **HullSTARS Advisory Committee Meeting**

Meeting Agenda 2<sup>nd</sup> August 2017 – 10.30am

Meeting room 3 University House

### **Attending:**

*Samantha Page (SP) (HullSTARS); Danny Gough (DG) (Humber Landlord Association); Christine Kirk (CK) (Hull Student Landlord Association); Michael Rainsford - (Via phone link) (MR) (StuRents);*

#### **1. Apologies**

*Jill Cooper (JC) (University Accommodation Manager)*

*Ian Sanders (IS) (Hull City Council)*

*Gina Rayment (GR) (HUU Advice Centre).*

*Jennie Watts (JW) (Welfare & Community Officer)*

*Liz Pearce (LP) (Director of Membership Services HUU)*

#### **2. Ratification of minutes & Update on Actions**

All present in agreement with minutes.

SP updated group on the progress and completion of actions from previous committee meeting held on 29 March.

SP highlighted the improvements that have been made to the HullSTARS website over the summer.

- A tab has been created on the homepage which allows students a quick one click link to registration, as feedback was students were finding it difficult to figure out how to leave a review.
- The formatting of property reviews and landlord replies has been altered to make replies more prominent, following a similar theme to Facebook, so instantly recognisable to students.
- Partial search now available on street, road, avenue etc, and will bring up property hits even if misspelt.
- Verification link now extended 24 hours.

#### **3. Feedback from HullSTARS Open Meeting**

SP asked attendees for their thoughts and feedback on the recent HullSTARS Open Meeting.

Agreement that the meeting had been extremely positive and informative. Landlords were given a clearer understanding of HullSTARS' current work and plans for the future.

Attendees felt that the informal nature of the meeting had contributed to its success as people had felt comfortable and willing to contribute.

DG raised with the group the date change of the Housing Fair to an earlier November date. The reasons for moving the date shared at the meeting were felt by attendees to be positive.

SP confirmed that a large part of the decision to bring the Housing Fair forward was down to a change in student attitudes to housing. Students are starting to look earlier each year, so it is hoped by bringing the Housing Fair forward help and guidance can be shared with them prior to signing contracts. HullSTARS to continue their 'no rush, no pressure' campaign to promote informed decisions.

Group discussion held about larger commercial landlords wanting to be a part of the Housing Fair and whether this would be beneficial to the Fair and HullSTARS.

Concerns raised that any increase in HullSTARS registrations may negatively affect smaller landlords. DG warned that the Housing Fair could be altered completely with larger landlords in attendance and gave examples of how smaller landlords may be at a disadvantage.

DG suggested that information regarding HullSTARS should be sent out from the University to all students/potential students.

SP confirmed she had spoken to Jill Cooper and that HullSTARS will have a more prominent piece in this year's booklet. HullSTARS have also been included as part of an E-induction that will be sent to both new and second year students. It is hoped this will help to get information out there regarding HullSTARS work and guidance on student lettings.

SP explained that all 5 stars properties receive recognition as part of the HullSTARS' social media campaign, to highlight both the landlord and the property. CK expressed a view that a further push for small landlords would be appreciated.

SP confirmed that HullSTARS will have a presence alongside the Advice Centre at the Lawns and the Courtyard on arrivals Saturday to help educate parents and students.

Attendees raised and discussed idea of running a larger HUU campaign to protect students from being pressurised on campus and on the street. SP to action.

DG suggested HUU could work with local landlords to produce a Code of Conduct. To be part of HullSTARS landlords would agree to abide by the terms of the code and if found to be in contravention could be banned from the Housing Fair. SP to action.

Group agreed that protecting students was key and that HSAC should look to push the proposal to create a Code of Conduct.

MR provided an update to HSAC on the work StuRents were undertaking to protect students from unscrupulous landlords and poor housing.





StuRents currently checking that properties on their site have quality listings and both accurate and up to date photographs. Duplicate photographs are being removed and landlords are being asked to verify their websites.

MR highlighted work StuRents are undertaking regarding student housing contracts. In an attempt to standardise ASTs across the country StuRents are producing a template which could be made available to all landlords at a cost.

MR to confirm when circulation of the first draft is expected but agreed to send first draft to HullSTARS for distribution to gain feedback & comments. MR to action.

#### **4. HSAC Panel – Vacant Post Discussion**

SP raised with attendees the current vacancies on the HSAC Panel and questioned if the current membership was failing to fulfil the purpose of the Panel.

SP asked if attendees felt HullSTARS' landlords were underrepresented on the overall committee. Attendees expressed the view that a small landlord representative and a HLA representative could adequately represent a wide range of landlords.

DG stated he believed there wasn't a need for additional landlords to be invited at this stage, due to the differing points of views already represented.

Attendees highlighted the view that HullSTARS in the past had been too heavily skewed towards students and that the current HSAC membership provided a more balanced view.

MR confirmed that StuRents would be keen to continue their participation in the committee going forward.

Group agreed that the national presence and information StuRents could provide to HSAC was advantageous, however felt that the decision on permanent membership for StuRents required discussion and agreement with current members.

Due to the limited attendees at this meeting the question of StuRents' membership of HSAC to be added to the next meeting's agenda.

Attendees in agreement that the HullSTARS Process should be amended to give the committee the powers to co-opt people/representatives onto the committee if required.

Question of any additional members to be carried forward for consideration at the next meeting where a vote is to be cast. Group expressed view that a good cross representation of views was key for an effective HSAC.

#### **5. HullSTARS Audit Criteria**

SP confirmed that the Audit Criteria has now been confirmed for the upcoming year and the only change to the criteria was an amendment to the ceiling height.

No improvements or suggestions received from consultation.

Audit Criteria is now available to view on HullSTARS website and has been sent out in the landlord's newsletter.

## 6. A.O.B.

SP updated attendees on current work to update HullSTARS code and process. Once amendments are completed SP will circulate to all committee members for feedback/changes. SP highlighted that it will include a referral policy to Hull City Council if there are safety concerns at a property, along with a Reporting Review Policy.

Currently included in process that HSAC will recommend the appointment of external auditors to review HullSTARS' property ratings. Historically this has been undertaken by IS (Council) comparing random samples of 1 or 2 stars and 4/5 star rated properties.

SP asked attendees to consider the necessity of appointing an independent auditor and if this was required in the HullSTARS code.

Group discussed that the local Council may be required to inspect all properties due to a legislation change. Group discussed the possibility of these inspections being shared with HullSTARS and used to cross check. SP to action.

Attendees decided that this topic should be put on hold for further consideration at the next HSAC meeting.

Subscriptions are now open for HullSTARS with no price increases this year.

SP confirmed this year's Housing Fair will be held in the Lindsey Suite of Canham Turner. HullSTARS will have stalls in HUU and the library on the day to promote event and boost footfall.

HullSTARS currently running a '60 days of summer' competition. For every 20 reviews submitted to HullSTARS website a winner is being picked at random to receive an Amazon voucher.

SP asked if attendees could look at the updates to the website and share any changes or feedback they have.

SP confirmed this would be her last committee meeting as she has taken a new job role. Toni will be attending the next meeting.

SP invited the room to contribute with any other business:

DG discussed with group the HMO & HSRS training being offered to landlords who are part of the Humber Landlord Association. HLA wished to extend the offer to attend the training to any HullSTARS landlord at a cost of £100 a course (£50 HLA member). Training course would be available for HullSTARS' auditors at £50 a course.

DG explained details of the training and confirmed that the HMO course was 1 day with no certification and the HSRS was a 2 day course with certification. No confirmation of next course, however there is a requirement of 20 attendees per course.





SP agreed to include the training offer in the next landlords' newsletter. DG to action. SP to action.

CK suggested that as part of the HSAC's aim to work together perhaps a HUU venue could be used for the course. This could potentially benefit HLA by reducing the costs of hosting the course.

### 7. Next Meeting:

To be held on Wednesday 8<sup>th</sup> November 2017, 10.30am, Meeting Room 3, HUU.

#### Action Table:

Samantha Page	To liaise with Jennie Watts about promoting the #No Rush campaign to have a more prominent presence	To be completed by 1 <sup>st</sup> September
Samantha Page	To liaise with Jennie Watts & Liz Smith and organise a working group to create a Code of Conduct for landlords to sign.	To be completed by 1 <sup>st</sup> September
Michael Rainsford	To circulate a template of StuRents.com standardised Tenancy Agreement once drafted.	To be completed by 1 <sup>st</sup> November
Samantha Page	To liaise with Ian Sanders, Hull CC to ascertain if the council are required to quality check a completed HullSTARS audit	To be completed by 11 <sup>th</sup> September
Danny Gough	To send Samantha Page full details/links to the HLA training courses	To be completed by 31 <sup>st</sup> August
Samantha Page	To include information provided by Danny Gough regarding HLA Training in September's landlords monthly newsletter	To be completed by 1 <sup>st</sup> September