

**Islington Landlords' Forum**  
**Thursday 10 December 2008**  
**Islington Town Hall, Committee Room five and six**  
**Upper Street, N1 2UD**

## **Minutes of meeting**

### **Opening**

1. The meeting was opened by Patrick Odling-Smee (Chair) of Islington council who thanked everyone for attending on a cold wintry night. He then went on to introduce each speaker and the topics they would be presenting for the evening.
2. **High rent tenancies and the common law – Kieran Gillen Tenancy Relation's officer – Islington Council.**

Kieran introduced the issues surrounding high rent tenancies of over £25,000 per annum, especially in Islington where a lot of rents in the fashionable parts of the borough are much higher. This has an impact on the type of tenancy and also for tenants and landlords who rent or own such properties respectively.

New tenancies are almost certain to be assured short hold tenancies (AST's). However, under the Housing Act 1988 if the rent exceeds £25,000 per annum it cannot be an AST. Similarly if rent for the first six months of a tenancy is £12,501 and no further rent is collected for rest of the year, the annualised rent will be £25,001 pro rata. Likewise if a rent increase in a property that was an AST now brings rent in at over £25,000 then it would cease to be an AST.

A tenancy of this type is a Common Law Tenancy. This means that the tenancy was not created by statute law but by precedence or Judge made law. These types of tenancies do not offer the same type of protection as an AST does and the legislative framework is quite minimal.

Furthermore, the Tenancy Deposit Scheme for tenants does not apply to tenancies of this type.

Kieran suggested the government will have to act by raising the £25k ceiling or bringing in a wholly new tenure.

Contact Kieran for more information on tenant and landlord matters on 020 7527 6386 or by email on [kieran.gillen@islington.gov.uk](mailto:kieran.gillen@islington.gov.uk)

3. **E Benefits and Teleclaims System – Carole Gibson Housing Benefits Islington Council**

Carole Gibson outlined the new system of making claiming for benefits easier for the customer, offering a fast and paperless alternative method of claiming housing or council tax benefit.

This new service is for new claimants only and provides a system where the customer does not have to fill in a form.

Customers wishing to use this service must first make a call into the Housing benefit call centre on 020 7527 4990 which is not a direct line or they can make contact through any of the Area Housing Offices.

An appointment to come into one of the Area Housing Offices will occur after the customer has made contact with the call centre. Customers will be required to bring in personal information such as proof of earnings, Tenancy Agreement or any other identification which is entered into the system. If all the necessary information is provided then the claim will be registered and calculated on the same day.

There are several advantages for the customer of this new system: Speed – much quicker processing of claims; Private documents – original documents do not have to be sent through the post reducing loss; No queuing at benefit offices as visits are by appointment only and priority cases can be assessed on the day.

Carole also introduced the Teleclaims Service, there are leaflets explaining both systems in detail and can be obtained by email: [benefits.service@islington.gov.uk](mailto:benefits.service@islington.gov.uk)

#### **4. Private Rented Sector Report (Julie Rugg) Maryann Pearce National Landlords Association**

Maryann Pearce gave a brief overview of the Rugg report explaining that the report, commissioned by the CLG, was to look into housing in the Private Rented Sector (PRS) across England.

The recommendations to improve the Private Rented Sector for both tenants and landlords were published in October of this year.

The independent review headed by Julie Rugg of the University of York, recommends a new drive to improve the quality of the sector through:

- 1) Introducing a light touch licensing system for landlords and mandatory regulation for letting agencies, to increase protection for both vulnerable tenants and good landlords.
- 2) Introducing a new independent complaints and redress procedure for consumers, to help end long drawn out disputes.
- 3) Tax changes to encourage good landlords to grow, including changes to stamp duty to encourage them to buy more properties.

- 4 Looking at ways for the PRS to be more accommodating towards households on lower incomes, including considering more support for landlords prepared to house more vulnerable people.
- 5) Local authorities taking steps to better understand the sector and support good landlords whilst tackling poorly performing landlords and promoting tenants' rights.

The government does not have to act on all of Rugg's observations or recommendations but it may chose to act on some of them. For the time being a Housing Green Paper due out in 2009 will contain government thinking of the PRS and may contain views on the licensing regime proposed by the Rugg Report, there may also be an interim response from CLG early in the New Year.

A summary of the report can be downloaded from the National landlords Association website: [www.landlords.org.uk/index.htm](http://www.landlords.org.uk/index.htm)

## **5 Landlord Training Courses Irna van der Palen, Islington council**

Irna outlined training courses available for landlords – A Training Topic list was included in the evening's Landlord Forum Pack and landlords were encouraged to indicate on the list which courses they would be interested in attending, or add suggestions of any particular topics.

Disability Awareness Training will be organised for February or March, and will include specific reference to the renting and buying of properties and to adaptations within them.

## **6 Private Sector partnerships (PSP) moving office** – Irna informed attendees that on 16 December 2008 the PSP will be moving to:

Room 111  
Town hall  
Upper Street  
London N1 2UD

All contact telephone numbers will remain the same.

## **7 Frequency of Landlord Forum Meetings:** This is going to be reduced from the current four to three times per year with the next one due in April 2009. That one may be a joint forum with other boroughs in the North London Sub Region (Barnet, Camden, Enfield, Haringey, and Westminster). Details of actual arrangements and dates will be announced soon.

The council is still in the process of reviewing the landlords' forum, with the aim to revamp and refresh. Any suggestions and ideas to be given to Ian Tagg, 0207 527 6078, [ian.tagg@islington.gov.uk](mailto:ian.tagg@islington.gov.uk)

## **8 Thank you**

Irna thanked everyone for working with the council this year and coming to the final forum meeting of the year wishing everyone a merry Christmas. Over 250 properties have been procured under the Rent Deposit Scheme, as well as 90 new units for Temporary accommodation.