

# THE PRIVATE SECTOR HOUSING FORUM

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## MINUTES OF THE PRIVATE SECTOR HOUSING FORUM HELD ON 23 JUNE 2010

**PRESENT:** The following members signed the attendance record for the meeting.

Harriet Stephens	VOA
Shane Dyke	One Click Lettings
Caroline Crossley	NSC
Martin Haynes	
Keith Bennett	
Maria Reeve	NSC
Ken Neilson	DKN Ltd
John Trudgian	DKN Ltd
Martin Wride	landlord
Rhona Hall	Liberata
James Corbett	Avon Property Management
Terry Gilbert	North Somerset Enterprise Agency
Gerry Laws	
Lisa Perry	NSC
Howard Evans	NSC
Claire Ward	NSC

### 1. Apologies

Sheila Jones; Caroline Howlett; Shaun Fitzpatrick; Carol Plenty; Drew Elkins; Sean Swords

### 2. Minutes of the last meeting

The Minutes of the last meeting were held as a true record.

### 3. Matters Arising

None.

### 4. Credit Union & Opportunities for Landlords

Mike Davis & Jackie Simpson gave a presentation on the Rent Direct Account. Credit Union is a financial co-op with 1000 members, works same as a bank with deposits protected.

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#### *CHAIRPERSON*

Gary Twinn  
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Rent Direct allows LHA to be passed through system to the landlord. Tenants have to become full members to open an account & there is a charge of £2:50. There are tenant and landlord sign up forms.

On LHA forms, the Credit Union details go where the bank details would go. At present rent is paid to landlords on BACS, but Fast pay will make this quicker & could be same day or next day.

## Benefits for landlords:

- Secure system
- No access by tenant
- LHA is used for intended purpose
- Council happy to use this system

If tenants situation changes Credit Union will inform landlord. There is a £5 charge per transfer, less if Landlord is a member (£4). Statements are provided (email or post). If tenant signs paperwork Credit Union will share information with landlord.

## Benefits for tenants:

- Tenants can have access to other products/accounts/loans
- Good way to get tenants to save & loan safely
- There is a pre paid debit card for tenants

Based in 13 Orchard Street, Weston super Mare

## **5. Caroline Crossley - Accreditation Officer**

Spoke about scheme and an incentive that Buildbase are offering for Accredited landlords and various discounts they are offering. Further information can be obtained by contacting Caroline on 01934 426493.

## **6. Simon Exley – Planning Officer**

Spoke about the Use Class Order changes in the recent legislation. Different uses given to different Classes. C3 is used for people living together as a family. New Class 4 is for up to 6 residents occupying the same property not living as a family, sharing facilities now need Planning Permission. Following consultation last week the government are thinking of further changes – keep C3 & C4 but may not need Planning Permission. At present if C3 use changes to C4 Planning Permission is still required. Changes may come in as it is not practicable and is hard to manage.

Question asked: Weren't Councils each responsible for their landlords?

Answer: If new changes come in this will be the case.

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At present an Article for Direction has to be asked for. Likelihood is that the new change will come to help ease the burden on landlords. The legislation is not retrospective, only applies to new Class use changes. If a property is bought as a shared house the changes would not apply. If a property is bought as a family dwelling and was then used for sharing then it will need Planning Permission.

## 7. Rhona Hall – Liberata

Emergency Budget news:

From April 2011 LHA levels will be restricted to 4 bed rate, Upper limits:

£250 a week for 1 bed

£290 a week for 2 bed

£340 a week for 3 bed

£400 a week for 4 bed

£15 top up will be removed

Non resident carer can now be provided for if over night care is needed.

From October 2011: LHA will be set at the 30<sup>th</sup> percentile of rents in each Broad Rental Market Area rather than the median. Non dependant Deductions – staged increases in these rates in the income related benefits from April 2011.

Government announced intention to reform way LHA rates are set in future. From 2013/14 LHA rates will be uprated on basis of Consumer Prices Index instead of local rents.

From April 2013: Housing Benefit for working age social rented sector customers will be restricted for those occupying a property larger than their needs. Housing Benefit clients claiming JSA will only receive full HB for 12months. After that it will be reduced by 10%, unable to claim full amount until they have left benefit system and been in work for a period. There was mention of discretionary payments and changes.

More information & a full copy of the Budget report is available at

[http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/2010\\_jun\\_budget.htm](http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/2010_jun_budget.htm)

## 8. Harriet Stephens – Rent Officer

Spoke about her function: deals with old claims before April 2007. LHA's Set Broad Rental Market Areas and carry's out reviews. Inspects accommodation, what is provided for Board & Allowances cases, food, location of room, room number etc.

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## 9. Any Other Business

Maria Reeve - Supporting People

Inviting landlords to helping supporting people strategy

Gary offered to carry on representing landlords in going to Strategic Housing & Planning group. Landlords agreed as Gary was the representative last time.

## 10. Date of Next Meeting:

**7.00pm**

**Wednesday 13 October 2010**

**Old Council Chamber, Town Hall, Weston-super-Mare**

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