

## SUMMARY OF DECISIONS TAKEN

**MEETING:**                    **Community Select Committee**  
**Wednesday 19 November 2014, Shimkent Room, Daneshill House, Stevenage, SG1 1HN**

**MEMBERS PRESENT:**    Councillors: S Mead (Chair), M Notley (Vice Chair), L Bell, R Broom, M Gardner,  
 E Harrington and P Stuart.

Also Present:                Ken Staunton, National Landlords Association  
  
 Cllrs M Cherney-Craw & M McKay

<b>1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST</b>	<b>ACTION/LEAD</b>
<p>Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors E Connolly, A McGuinness and J Mead</p> <p>There were no declarations of interests.</p>	<p>O Adeoye Ext 2014</p>
<b>2. MINUTES – 4 NOVEMBER 2014</b>	
<p>It was <b>RESOLVED</b> that the Minutes of the meeting of the Community Select Committee held on 4 November 2014 be agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.</p>	<p>O Adeoye Ext 2014</p>
<b>3. SCRUTINY REVIEW OF THE LOCAL PRIVATE RENTED SECTOR – INTERVIEW SESSION</b>	
<p><u>National Landlords Association</u></p> <p>Mr Ken Staunton, Head of Regions, National Landlords Association (NLA) informed the Committee about the</p>	

work of the Association, that it is presently the largest Landlords Association in the country with over 25,000 landlord members, who pay an annual registration fee of £85 (£75 if on-line). He indicated that the Association were a lobby group both nationally and locally with Government on issues affecting landlords and the body offers on-line advice on Assured Shorthold Tenancies, business plans for first time or 1 property landlords, and assist members with their paper work, supports a telephone advice line on tenancy legislation etc.

Mr Staunton welcomed the opportunity of developing a working relationship with SBC as it would help promote best practices for landlords in the town and most importantly bring professionalism to landlord activities. The meeting was informed that when associates fail to abide by the code of practice they are removed from the Association membership.

The Committee were advised by Mr Staunton that NLA offer's an accreditation scheme, free for members who would attend a 1 day training event with topics that range from how to undertake checks on tenants background; getting the paperwork right; inventories; tenancies – rights of entry; fire risk assessments; s21 notices; troublesome tenants etc. He indicated that the accreditation scheme counts as 10 hours of Continuous Professional Development but must be repeated each year to remain up to date.

Mr Staunton informed the committee that over 40% of landlords had experienced rent arrears in the last year and considering only 25,000 associate members have just 1 property which is let, this could be financially disastrous for landlords if rents are not received beyond 1 month.

Members were advised that landlords in the private sector were very wary of the challenges that the universal credit will pose for them especially as benefits would be paid directly to claimants and not landlords.

Members posed a number of questions on how the NLA handles rouge landlords, retaliatory evictions, on issues around aids and adaptations especially for disabled tenants.

In response to a Member question, Mr Staunton acknowledged that the NLA do provide seminars on a range of issues and had just completed one which provided support for single letting landlords on how to developing a strong business case and contingencies for worst case scenarios.

The Strategic Housing Solutions Manager welcomed the input from the NLA and suggested that she would be keen for the Council to work together with the NLA to help foster a more professional pool of landlords locally.

#### Social Lettings Agencies

In response to questions about the possibility of setting up Social Lettings Agencies, the Strategic Housing Solutions Manager stated that she was aware of authorities setting up local lettings agencies and was currently engaged with other Housing Officers investigating the feasibility of setting up such a scheme locally but planning and preparation for this type of initiative was not straightforward and careful research of the local market conditions would be required but it was hoped that an outline feasibility study would be prepared in the new year.

#### Resident Involvement Groups

The Chair was concerned that locally residents were unaware of the work of the Council and that the Resident Involvement Groups could be used to impart relevant information to tenants but they were largely underused because of a lack of awareness.

It was **RESOLVED** that

1. The input regarding the National Landlords Association and Social Lettings Agencies be noted; and
2. The following draft recommendations to include
  - I. Resident Involvement Groups have a fresh awareness campaign, promoting the logo and purpose of the groups amongst local residents (of any tenure), this could be undertaken by an article in the Chronicle, the Council's Residents magazine
  - II. Endorse the National Landlords Association and look at the possibility of promoting and hosting training sessions to encourage local landlords who were not associates to take up the advice and best practise re

<p>relationships with tenants, with the caveat that officers provide some more background information to Members on the NLA before embarking on any formal promotion or training with the NLA.</p> <p>III. Look at providing some awareness training to residents on what the expectations are of letting a property to help educate them and avoid avoidable pitfalls.</p> <p>IV. Look at undertaking an awareness campaign regarding the advice that Council Housing Officers can provide to all Stevenage residents whether private rented sector or Council social tenants.</p> <p>V. Members welcome the Strategic Housing Solutions Manager offer of a feasibility study being undertaken into the local suitability of a social lettings agency and await with interest its findings.</p> <p>N.B. These draft review recommendations will be circulated to Members who undertook the review for comment along with any further recommendations that the Scrutiny Officer derives from the previous sessions with agreement of the Chair and the Lead Officer for the review, Aidan Sanderson along with a draft report which the Community Select Committee will be invited to sign off at a future Committee meeting.</p>	
<p><b>4. URGENT PART 1 BUSINESS</b></p>	
<p>None</p>	
<p><b>5. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC</b></p>	
<p>Not required.</p>	
<p><b><u>PART II</u></b></p>	
<p><b>6. URGENT PART II BUSINESS</b></p>	
<p>None</p>	