

**MINUTES OF THE PRIVATE SECTOR HOUSING FORUM HELD ON
12 July 2017**

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

Amazon	NLCE
Crouch	NLCE
Grahame Middle	Landlord
RJS	Landlord
Michael Phaphitis	NLCE
Zacharius Nicolaides	NLCE
Sam Jackson	NLCE
A.Dishkin	Landlord
N.Turner	NLCE
K.Blair	NLCE
M.Nicholas	Landlord
David Seaton	NLCE
Mike Reading	NLCE
Daniel Kilpatrick	Liberata
Karam Badhen	NLCE
Lisa Osborn	NSC
A.Jefferies	
S.Steel	NLCE
Jon Cook	NLCE
R.Southcombe	NLCE
David Heal	Landlord
Margaret Keeshan	Landlord
Jane Barron	NLCE
Ruth Heal	NLCE
Hannah Jones	NSC
Stuart Adams	NSC
Helen Mannion	NSC
Howard Evans	NSC

1. Apologies – Gerry Laws, Clair Weber, Maggie Lyons, Chacque Goldberg-Elliot
2. Minutes from previous meeting – deemed to be correct
3. Matters arising - none
4. Presentation: Homelessness and Rehousing, Helen Mannion, Hannah Jones

CHAIR

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The Home Choice and Housing Advice Teams provide accommodation and housing options for people who are homeless or threatened with homelessness in North Somerset. There are different housing options available depending on an applicant's circumstance, these options include:-

- Advice and help to find accommodation in the private rented sector
- Provide advice to those who have problems paying the mortgage
- Assess an individual's housing needs before they are discharged from hospital
- Provide advice and help if a landlord tries to illegally evict or harass a tenant
- Put individuals in contact with youth supported housing projects for young people who need to leave the family home
- Home Choice Register for social housing

The main aim of the team is to prevent homelessness however, if a homeless approach is made to the council a Housing Advice Officer will determine if the applicant will be assessed as having a priority need.

If a homeless person is in priority need then the local authority may have the following duties:

(1) to provide interim or temporary accommodation when the person applies for homeless assistance.

(2) to secure longer term accommodation where the person applies for homeless assistance.

(3) to provide short term accommodation for a homeless person who is intentionally homeless and in priority need

The councils duties under homelessness law are strongest for homeless people in priority need. The legal meaning of priority need is limited to certain categories of people, an individual will usually have priority need if they are pregnant, have a dependent child who normally lives with them, have been made homeless by a fire, flood, or a similar emergency. There are other circumstances which will mean a person has a priority need for more information please visit <https://nhas.org.uk/factsheets>

The applicant will be housed in temporary accommodation whilst a Housing Advice Officer investigates the circumstances by which the applicant became homeless. If a homeless person is not in priority need then the local authority has a duty to provide advice and assistance only.

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If the applicant is found to be homeless the council have a duty to provide accommodation, this can either be through the Homechoice Register or a private let. The reality is that the applicant is far more likely to be found accommodation in the private rented sector than social housing as we have about 3,500 households waiting on the HomeChoice register, and over 300 new applicants every month, with only about 600 properties becoming available each year.

North Somerset Council have Housing Resource Officers who work with private landlords to find accommodation for people who require assistance, those in priority need will be found accommodation first.

Benefits of working with North Somerset Council

- Free Assured Shorthold Tenancies
- Free inventory and check in
- Free inspections during the course of the tenancy
- Free advice and after care during and after the tenancy
- Direct link to a Housing Benefit Officer
- No fees involved

Some landlords have misconceptions regarding tenants sourced by the local authority believing that all tenants are out of work and in receipt of housing benefit. One third of the ninety people currently waiting for a property are working households.

Many people on the waiting list have found themselves homeless or threatened with homelessness through no fault of their own. For example a landlord has served a S21 notice so they can move back into or sell the property.

Another common belief is that tenants placed by the council who have damaged properties in the past are simply placed in a different property a “revolving door policy”

This is not the case, any tenant who has breached their tenancy deliberately will be found as intentionally homeless and will not be entitled to accommodation through the local authority. Sam Jackson added that the “revolving door policy” is an historic issue, there is a new team at the council and this practice is not in place.

Q: What happens when the six month AST ends? Historically after this period the council were no longer involved and there was no further contact with the landlord.

A: We will work with the landlord throughout the tenancy and carry out periodic inspections on the property.

Q: If there are serious behaviour issues will there be support in place?

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A: Yes we have a floating support worker who can carry out home visits, our Housing Advice Officers will also visit tenants to try and resolve the issues.

Q: Is there a price range?

A: The amount of rent paid is restricted to the Local Housing Allowance, however the Housing Advice Officer will carry out checks to ensure that the client can afford the rent.

Q: Would you do a full reference of the tenant for insurance purposes?

A: The Council do not carry out reference checks however a landlord could utilise the services of a referencing company.

Q: The Council are soft and allow tenants to trash properties and then provide a bond for another property.

A: This does not happen, if a tenant deliberately causes damage to a property and the landlord has provided evidence to this effect the tenant will be found to be intentionally homeless and will not be provided with any further accommodation by the council. The landlord can claim against the bond for the damage caused, you can also claim against the bond for rent arrears as long as you keep the Housing Officer up to date rather than informing them at the end of the tenancy.

Q: Do you provide discretionary payments to support a tenancy?

A: The council will assist the tenant with filling out the form to apply for a discretionary housing payment and will fast track the form to the Housing Benefit Team.

If you are interested in working with North Somerset Council please contact the Housing Advice Team on 01934 426 330 or email housing.resource@n-somerset.gov.uk

We are currently looking for all types of property including flats, studios and 2,3,4 bedroomed homes.

5. Howard Evans – Rent with confidence

The West of England Rental Standard has been renamed ‘Rent with Confidence’ the standards have been reviewed to include some ethical standards. There are currently seven members including the NLCE who have recently joined. Members of Rent with Confidence accredit landlords to join the scheme.

Rent with Confidence is a voluntary scheme that aims to protect tenants by setting out a benchmark for landlords and letting agents in the private rented sector. The standard also recognises that tenant’s should meet their responsibilities and co-operate with reasonable requests from their landlord For more information please visit

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http://news.bristol.gov.uk/rent_with_confidence_-_relaunch_of_rental_standard_across

6. Lisa Osborn – Understanding the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS)

Lisa gave an over view of the HHSRS please see attached presentation



Q: If there is a category one hazard in a property will this affect a landlord serving a section 21 notice.

A: If an Improvement Notice is served on a landlord due to poor property conditions a section 21 notice may not be served. An Improvement Notice is served as a last result by the council, we prefer to work informally with landlords to improve property conditions.

7. Any Other Business – None

**The next meeting will be held on Wednesday 11 October 2017 at 18:30
in the Old Council Chamber.**

**Please go to reception on arrival and a member of staff will come and
collect you.**

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