

Approved Minutes of HRA Committee Meeting
Held on 12th January 2015
At Highfield House Hotel

Present	Roger Brown, Jerry Gillen, Jill Baston, Stephen Connelly, Chris Klewe, John Bradshaw, Headley Rossell Nicolla Martin,
Attending	Councillor Matthew Claisse, Councillor Paul O'Neill, Tom O'Connor, Nicholas Bacon, Roret Blue, Ellie Cawthera VP Engagement, Jon Walsh (Southampton University), Karen Hunter and Janet Hawkins, (Southampton Council HMO Licensing Dept.), Denise Long, PC Virginie Freval.
Apologies	Councillor Linda Norris, Farooque Ahmed, Nadine Johnson, Ross Gordon, Simon Hill, Adrian Vinson, Bryan Wakeley, Alison Shelley.

1. Welcome, declaration of interests.
There were no declarations of specific interests.
2. Minutes of the previous meeting were approved.
3. Matters Arising
The Building Bridges Project seemed to be running into a problem. Roger Brown explained that the grant money needed to have been spent by 31st December 2014, but invoices have not been forthcoming from the University. Also the date of the next event had been changed from 29th to 27th January 2015, which was not a viable date. The event should therefore to be cancelled. It was also unlikely that the gardening competition would go ahead. Ellie Cawthera apologized for the problems and errors that had occurred but confirmed that she was still very much behind the project. Roger Brown proposed a meeting between himself, Jerry Gillen and Ellie Cawthera to be held in the near future.
4. HMO licensing.
Karen Hunter and Janet Hawkins explained how the new licensing scheme was working. In the 4 core Wards, (Portswood, Bevois Valley, Polygon and Bargate), there were thought to be about 4,500 HMO's of which about half had now applied to be registered with the Council. The department was trying to get the remaining landlords to register. Two HMO wardens have been appointed. Their work would be to check on HMO's. The scheme would be reviewed after 5 years. The scheme would also be extended to all other Wards with a significant percentage of HMO's, likely to be Freemantle, Shirley, Bassett and Millbrook. All the data collected from applicants was being made available on the Council website. Karen confirmed that the wardens were empowered to act as enforcement officers if any problems were encountered. Matthew Claisse said that in his experience some landlords were economical with the truth and asked if any checks were made to ensure that the landlords

were fit and proper persons for this business. Janet Hawkins confirmed that such a test is carried out.

Headley Rossell asked what the registration fees were. Janet Hawkins confirmed that they vary with the size of the property, but were generally in the range of £200 to £400 per property and would last until 30th June 2018. Some cases of non-compliance by landlords were being prosecuted.

5. The Website Presentation was cancelled due to the absence of Nadine Johnson.

6. AGM
This would be held on 30th April 2015.

Roger suggested that the format might be changed with no outside or guest speakers allowing more time for questions from the floor. There was then a general discussion of potential formats.

7. Lettings Boards
These were considered to be a major eyesore in many areas and there was a general discussion about what could be done to reduce the problem. The current voluntary scheme was clearly not working. Jon Walsh from Southampton University confirmed that other universities had similar problems and some had found that a blanket ban was the most successful, but that there appeared to be legal problems in some councils. Janet Hawkins confirmed that the Town and Country planning act was not totally clear on the matter and there was little appetite in the Council for a total ban. This was partly because completing HMO registration had a greater call on scarce resources than the removal of lettings boards. Agents have no interest in removing them and quite often do not know how many are out there or where. After much discussion it was agreed to contact the other local Resident Associations and put a joint case to the Council for a ban. Jon Walsh and Virginie Freval indicated that the University and the Police might support this.

8. Reports
Membership
Data from Nicolla Martin was as follows:-

Data base records	560
Paid up total	424
Rolling paidup	424

Finances

Headley Rossell reported that the finances are healthy and a report on the Community Foundation Grant would be given at the next meeting..

Planning

It was agreed that Roger Brown would send a formal letter to Galliard Homes seeking clarification of their planning proposal concerning Highfield House Hotel..

Jerry Gillen confirmed that 2 recent appeals had found in our favour.

Denise Long informed the committee about problems with an HMO in Holyrood Road. This was taking a very long time to resolve and she felt that the Council were favouring the Landlord in this matter. Councillor Matthew Claisse agreed to raise the Matter with Simon Rowbury.

On a general point, it was noted that Councils had a legal duty to investigate breaches of planning regulations or permissions, but not necessarily to enforce them.

9. AOB

John Bradshaw confirmed that he went to a recent Council consultation meeting on the Proposed cycleway, but was still confused as why the meeting was necessary. It was agreed to revert to this matter at a subsequent meeting. PC Virginie Freval confirmed that Portswood Police Station was up and running, but that the front desk would not be open to the public for reports or advice at least for the time being. All policing would now be on a per Ward basis, and Portswood had 3 Officers and 3 PCSO's

10. Reserved Business

11. The next meeting would be on 9th February 2015.

The meeting closed at 9.10pm.