

Housing Benefits / Private Sector Landlord

Liaison Meeting – 10 March 2011

Actions and Decisions

MBC Representatives:

Stephen McGinnes, Head of Revenues and Benefits

Gary Hunter, Benefits Manager

Jaye Butler-Moore , Revenues and Benefits Finance officer

Nick Russell, Benefits Assessment Officer

John Littlemore, Head of Housing

Phillip Jennings, Housing Services

Apologies – Marion Money

Open landlord invitation – 9 attendees

Item	Responsible officer
<p>Minutes</p> <p>Minutes agreed and update on agreed actions as follows.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Guidance on payment for two homes circulated• Procedures where awaiting tenants bank details revised.• Notification letters checked for duplication• Copy of "Benefit Changes" presentation circulated• 30th percentile comparison figures circulated <p>Actions carried forward.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• GH to obtain stats on payment direct for other Councils in Kent for comparison.	
<p>Performance Update</p> <p>GH provided an update on the current performance of the benefits department.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• New claims and changes being processed in 9-10 days• Customer satisfaction over 90%• Oldest work item 6-7days <p>SM confirmed key appointments within the new partnership</p>	

<p>arrangement with Tunbridge Wells.</p> <p>Gary Hunter – Benefits Manager across the two councils Nita Golding – Assistant Benefits Manager based at MBC</p>	
<p>Grants</p> <p>Landlord's Grants</p> <p>The grant budget for 2010/2011 has been allocated and the Council is awaiting for the budgets to be finalised for 2011/12 before approving any more grants.</p>	
<p>Current Issues</p> <p><u>Email response</u> – Issue reported with email enquiry not being responded to. SM to investigate and any further issues to be raised with GH or SM.</p> <p><u>Bond Process</u> – Delays reported in decision making on bond applications. Suggestion that could be links could be made to L/Lord accreditation process. JL to review.</p> <p><u>8 weeks arrears</u> – request made that consideration be given to payment direct where the tenant is approaching but not in 8 weeks arrears.</p> <p>GH explained that statutory provision for 8 weeks but consideration within the safeguard policy where there is reason to believe the tenant will not pay the rent, where arrears are less than 8 weeks. Landlords requested to contact the benefits team as soon as they have concerns.</p>	<p>SM</p> <p>JL</p>
<p>Benefit Changes</p> <p><u>Payment Direct</u> - SM gave a presentation on the changes to the payment direct rules (copy attached).</p> <p><u>Under 35's</u> - Concern raised regarding the availability of accommodation for under 35's, following recent change in benefits and wider impact on young people. Reluctance reported from some landlords to let to those under 35 in case restrictions</p>	

<p>apply later in the tenancy.</p> <p>Date that change comes into effect confirmed as January 2012.</p> <p>Discussion regarding 13 week protection to rent restriction that already exists and will apply to some tenants claiming benefit for the first time. SM to circulate guidance.</p> <p><u>DHP</u> – details of the 2011/12 awards within Kent circulated for information. Noted that MBC receive a higher grant due to the ongoing contribution by the Council to the DHP fund.</p> <p><u>30th Percentile</u> – comparison figures for March circulated.</p>	<p>SM</p>
<p>AOB</p>	
<p>1. Date of Next Meeting</p> <p>9 June at 5.00.</p>	