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12 January, 2009

EDITOR'S NOTE

On behalf of Committee of the Nottingham Action Group I hope you all had a peaceful Christmas and New Year, and that 2009 will be a good year for all of us.

Thank you to everyone for your help and support, especially those of you who rallied round and provided back up (and cakes) at the meeting with Iain Wright MP at St. Mary's Church Hall in May last year

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

WEDNESDAY, 28 JANUARY 2009

7.15 pm Hillside Club, Lenton

Meeting with City Council Waste Management & Streetscene Officers

WEDNESDAY, 25 FEBRUARY 2009

7.15 pm Hillside Club, Lenton

Briefing on the Lenton Week of Action by Crime & Drug Partnership Officers & Updates on ECOTEC & Rugg Reports

WEDNESDAY, 25 MARCH 2009

7.15 pm Hillside Club, Lenton

Meeting with City Council Noise Pollution Officers

WEDNESDAY, 17 JUNE 2009

7.15 pm Hillside Club, Lenton

General Meeting

(including election of Committee and Officers)

It is also planned to have a meeting in April. The programme for this meeting is still being finalized so, for now, please only provisionally pencil the date into your diary.

Wednesday, 29 April

7.15 pm at the Hillside Club

You will get full details for this (and other meetings later in the year) as soon as possible.

IDEAS FOR FUTURE MEETINGS?

The Committee would like your ideas so that it can arrange meetings you want to go to.

Give us a call on **0776-525-625** or E-mail contact@nottinghamaction.org.uk

TABLES TURNED ON ROGUE HMO LANDLORDS

THE COUNCIL IS CONTINUING ITS CRACKDOWN ON LANDLORDS. IN THE LAST ISSUES OF THE NAG MAGAZINE AND OF NEWS DESK, WE REPORTED THAT two landlords – Maurice Doyle and Michael Singh (more about him below) – had been fined at Magistrates' Court hearings for various offences under the terms of the Housing Act 2004.

Since then, the Council has taken another four landlords to the Courts and obtained judgements against them. On the 5 January, Mr Barrington Oliver-Mighten and Mr Zahir Malik, were fined £5,000., and on the 7 January, Mr. Tufeil and Mr. Rupert Mellis also pleaded guilty to offences under the terms of the Housing Act 2004.

More prosecutions are in the pipeline.

TWICE BITTEN

MICHAEL SINGH WAS FINED £8,000 IN JULY LAST YEAR FOR FAILING TO LICENCE AN HMO ON LENTON BOULEVARD AND FOR FAILING TO REPAIR IT. THE student tenants of the three-storey house applied to the Rent Assessment Panel of the Residential Property Tribunal for repayment of rent they had paid Mr. Singh. At a meeting of the Panel on the 24 October, 2008, Mr. Singh was ordered to return 80% (£7,628) of the rent he had received from the five students during the year they had lived at the property

The Tribunal's report of the proceedings states that Mr Singh:

'... showed a blatant disregard of his legal responsibilities as a landlord. The property was an unlicensed HMO throughout the tenancy, exposing the Applicants to unacceptable risks to their health and safety ...'

GOVERNMENT PUBLISHES REPORTS ON HMOs & ON THE PRIVATE RENTED SECTOR

THE DEPARTMENT FOR COMMUNITIES & LOCAL GOVERNMENT (DCLG) HAS PUBLISHED THE RESULTS OF TWO PIECES OF RESEARCH IT COMMISSIONED ON HMOs (the ECOTEC Report) and on the Private Rented Sector (the Rugg Report).

In September, 2008 the DCLG published the findings and recommendations of the research (to which the NAG, and Cllr. Dave Trimble and Mike Cole had contributed) carried out by ECOTEC into HMOs. The Report highlights measures that can be used to tackle and stop the complex causes and symptoms of studentification.

From the Nottingham Action Group's viewpoint, the most important of these is a recommendation that consultation should take place on changes to planning legislation – in other words a change to the Use Classes Order (UCO) so that conversion from family home to HMO requires planning permission.

The Rugg Review was launched on the 23 October, 2008. Richard Tyler of the National HMO Lobby attended the launch. He reported that although the Review has many positive features (e.g. it recommends universal licensing of landlords), its approach to student housing leaves a great deal to be desired. The Report concludes that student concentration is an issue in only 0.7% of wards in England and dismisses the significance of student housing.

MINISTER CONFIRMS INTENTION TO CONSULT ON HMOs

DURING A RETURN VISIT TO LOUGHBOROUGH IN DECEMBER 2008, IAIN WRIGHT MP CATEGORICALLY STATED THAT HE INTENDS TO GO AHEAD WITH A consultation on the recommendations of the ECOTEC Report regarding Use Classes Orders and HMOs.

Later in the month, he reaffirmed his intention to consult and said that he hoped the consultation would take place early in 2009.

NOTE: If you are interested in reading the full ECOTEC Report and/or the Rugg Review, please contact the Editor:
Phone: 07762-525-625
E-mail: contact@nottinghamaction.org.uk

'CHANGING UK': THE BBC LOOKS INTO COMMUNITY LIFE IN BRITAIN

IN NOVEMBER THE BBC FEATURED RESULTS PRODUCED BY RESEARCH CARRIED OUT ON ITS BEHALF BY SHEFFIELD UNIVERSITY'S DEPARTMENT OF GEOGRAPHY. An analysis of census data by the Sheffield team revealed how neighbourhoods in every part of the UK have become more socially fragmented. One of the key factors identified as being responsible for reducing the sense of belonging in a community is having a large student population. The BBC Report can be found at <http://sasi.group.shef.ac.uk/research/changingUK.html>

LANDLORDS JUMP THE GUN: 'TO LET' & 'LET BY' BOARDS

ALTHOUGH THE OFFICIAL START FOR THE 2009-2010 STUDENT HOUSE HUNTING SEASON DOES NOT BEGIN UNTIL SATURDAY, 24 JANUARY, YOU WILL NO DOUBT be more than aware of the fact that many of our landlords and lettings agencies jumped the gun and started to put up 'To Let' boards in early November. We are told that there is no shortage of good student accommodation in Nottingham so presumably this is an attempt by landlords and agents to bounce students into booking next session's accommodation well before there is any need to do so. Although there is nothing we, as residents, can do about that, there is something we can do to cut down on the number of 'Let By' boards which are already beginning to appear (or perhaps never disappeared).

As we reported in the last issue of the NAG magazine, 'Let By' boards identify those properties which are no longer on the market, and if they remain in place for more than 14 days, they contravene regulations. Last year, when this was flagged up with the City's Planning Enforcement officers, they wrote to the landlords and agents concerned and the signs were removed.

We would suggest that one way in which you can do something to help your neighbourhood is by making a note of the day a 'Let By' sign goes up and the name and contact details of the landlord or agent. You can then either let the Council know (Mike Cole, Student Strategy Manager on Nottingham 9156794), or let us at the NAG know on 07762-525-625. The information will then be logged and passed on to the relevant officers.

If you would like copies of the UNIPOL-DASH Code for student housing for your information or to pass on to your student neighbours, please give us a call on **07762-525-625**, or E-mail contact@nottinghamaction.org.uk.

FROM SAT NAV TO MEDIEVAL MANUSCRIPTS: EXPLORING TOGETHER THE MANY FACES OF THE UNIVERSITY

NOTTINGHAM UNIVERSITY IS TO HOLD A 'DAY OF EXPLORATION' ON SATURDAY, 25 APRIL, 2009 FROM 10.00 am to 4.00 pm.

The University has asked us to pass on the information that it will be opening its doors to everyone in the community.

'Staff and students will be on hand to give you a taste of University life

There will be bit sized talks and presentations on subjects as diverse as film-making and satellite technology, visits around the eco houses, science experiments and a variety of children's art events.

The sports department have a huge timetable planned for the day, from archery to swimming, and don't forget to have a cup of tea and take a look at the award winning gardens.

Make a note in your diary, a full programme of events will be available nearer the day.'