

HARRINGAY ADDITIONAL LICENSING REPORT 25/01/13

Introduction:

On 7 June 2011 the council designated an additional licensing scheme in respect of houses in multiple occupation (HMOs). This scheme came into force on 1st October 2011. The area affected covers the whole of the Harringay Ward, together with the whole of Turnpike Lane, Green Lanes and all of Salisbury Road in the St Ann's Ward.

The type of properties which need to be licensed in the Harringay area:

A House in Multiple Occupation is a building that is occupied, as a main residence, by more than one household. HMOs include:

- Buildings that consist of bedsit rooms where at least some facilities are shared
- Buildings converted into self-contained flats that don't comply with the Building Regulations 1991 **and** where less than two thirds of the flats are owner-occupied
- Buildings with multiple units of accommodation that all have their own exclusive facilities but which are not self-contained
- Buildings which contain a mixture of the above types of accommodation
- Hostels
- Shared houses

The definition of household relates to any members of a family, including aunts, uncles, nieces, nephews, cousins, grandparents etc and partners living together

How much does a license cost?:

The license fee is £208 per residential unit i.e. a landlord has to pay this fee for each bedsit room, self contained flat, non self contained flat or bedroom in a house let on a single tenancy agreement to a group of friends. All licencing fee money covers the Councils costs of administering the licensing process. To date £105,000 fee income has been received.

How we are able to ensure HMOs are well managed and maintained:

When we inspect an HMO following a license application, we look at the repair, security, fire safety and overall management of the house. A Fire Officer visits the Department every fortnight to check the plans of the properties we are dealing with to confirm they are happy with the fire precautions we are asking the owner to put in place. Harringay Council has their own set of standards for HMOs which set out the size of bedrooms we will accept in HMOs and the number of kitchens and bathrooms which need to be provided for the number of occupants in the property. The license we issue will inform a landlord of the number of people who can occupy the property, any works which need to be done as a condition of that license and also whether the kitchen and bathroom facilities are adequate for the number of occupying tenants. Landlords are given a set period of time to carry out required works and the property is then re-inspected to ensure they have been carried out.

Update on scheme:

Since the scheme began in October 2011, the Council has received 137 license applications from landlords. 53 licenses have been issued to date.

Conditional works are attached to licenses which have to be completed by the landlord within a set period of time. These are very often related to fire safety as officers find that many HMOs have no mains operated smoke alarms, heat alarms

and fire doors. As Haringey has very high Domestic Burglary rates security is a hazards in all HMOs which do not have the Council's prescribed security package for the type of accomodation being licenced. Security measures which fail to meet the appropriate standard are also requested to be upgraded failure to do do will lead to enforcement action. Following the completion or works or on the expiry of the given time frame a property is then re-inspected to ensure the works have been completed satisfactorily and as requested.

We have created a portfolio of landlords in the area who own more than one property and we have written to them all. 91 landlords have been sent letters which cover 217 properties. These letters have been copied to 105 interested parties. So far this has resulted in 59 applications being submitted with 59 more expected shortly.

Statutory Notices have been served on properties in the area which fail to comply under the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) which was brought in under the Housing Act 2004 and allows officers to rate the health and safety of a dwelling. 11 properties in Haringay have had Improvement Notices served on them with regard to various hazards such as entry by intruders, falls between levels, fire, excess cold and electrical hazards. A Prohibition Order has also been served on one owner using a lean-to as sleeping accommodation, prohibiting the room to be used this way. Notices have also been served under other Statute for defective drainage.

Where conversions are found which have no Planning approval or Building Regulations, the relevant Departments within the Council are informed. If we find that inadequate Council Tax is being paid on a property we contact Council Tax to ensure the correct amount can be collected.

Now that the area has been running for over a year, the Department will be looking to prosecute landlords who continue to fail to license their properties despite being written to on more than one occasion by the Council. We are currently working on a list of properties and their owners with regard to this, following an enforcement process which requires dedicated resources and collabaration with our safet Neighbourhood Police team. We will also be aiming to find HMOs which need to be licensed and will target roads in order to do this. Landlords who own several properties which are not licensed and those receiving large numbers of Housing Benefit payments from the Council will be the first to be Prosecuted.

Although Additional licensing is a priority the team also have to deal with Mandatory Licensing borough wide and those HMO properties across the borough which are causing the most problems to either their tenants or local residents.

Consequences to Landlords of not applying for a license:

A person having control of or managing a prescribed HMO in the designated area must apply to the London Borough of Haringey for a licence. Failure to apply for a license is an offence under Section 72(1) of the Housing Act 2004 for which a person may be fined up to £20,000. In addition they may be required to repay up to 12 months rent if the tenant or the council, in the case of housing benefit payments, apply to the Residential Property Tribunal under the provisions of section 73 and section 74 of the Housing Act 2004 for a rent repayment order.

We welcome any information from the public as to any HMOs which they are aware of and we always follow up complaints about properties from the public or our Members. There is an email address to send referrals to: hitadditionallicensing@haringey.gov.uk