

National Code of Standards for Large Student Developments
Minutes of the Committee of Management (CoM) Meeting
Held on Friday 19th February 2010 at IQ Property Partnership, London

Present: Mr John Daniels (Chair); Mr Jason Baines (Derwent Living); Mr Michael Ball (ASRA); Mr Chris Blencowe (Cambridge Colleges); Mr Bob Crompton (Victoria Hall); Ms Jane Crouch (IQ); Mrs Cheryl Darnell (Association of Colleges); Mrs Ruth Hammond Laing (LACoRS); Mr Paddy Jackman (CUBO); Mrs Yvonne Jones (Carlton North Wales); Mr Charles Kerr (South Street); Mr Ian Robertson (University of Leeds); Mr Paul Rowlinson (Sanctuary Management Services); Mr Alan Russell (Unite); Mr Tom Toumazou (ANUK); Ms Geraldine Ward (University of Hertfordshire); Ms Sarah Wayman (NUS); Mr Brian Welsh (Liberty Living); Mr Keith White (CRM);

In Attendance: Mr Bill Franciscy (University of Greenwich); Mr Simon Jones (Unite); Mr Simon Kemp (National Code Administrator);

Apologies: Mr Mark Allen (UPP); Mr David Arblaster (AMoSSHE); Mr Martin Blakey (Unipol Student Homes); Mr Jonathan Chandler (University of Greenwich); Mr Jeff Childs (Welsh Assembly); Mr Gavin Duncan (Opal); Mr Ian Fletcher (ANUK); Ms Hannah Greenslade (Unipol Student Homes); Mr Allan Hilton (Cass and Claredale); Ms Vicki Johnson (Leeds Metropolitan University); Mr Robert Russell (AoC);

The Chair opened the meeting at 10.05am. He thanked IQ for agreeing to host the event, and for providing a buffet lunch. He invited members present to introduce themselves.

Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on October 23rd 2009 were approved

Matters Arising

Marketing and Publicity

The new logo has been distributed to existing members in jpeg version but some requested it in EPS version. Michael Ball reported that he had met with UCAS to discuss how private providers have been advertising accommodation via their service and that some agreements had been reached.

Impact Reports

The National Code Administrator tabled some examples of introductory text for these reports and invited comments from the CoM as to whether they were sufficiently promotional. It was also reported that providers would be given the opportunity to edit these for accuracy. The CoM agreed that the statements were suitable.

LACoRS Guidance

The Chair summarised the content of the Guidance and then invited Ruth Hammond-Laing to make any additional comments.

NUS Issues

Sarah Wayman reported that NUS was now represented on the Student Loans Company Governance Board, which meant that they were now in a better position to try and deal with problems that students were facing with receiving their loans. She reported that NUS were aware that some students were still waiting for money to come through and invited members

of the CoM to pass on any examples they became aware of. She promised to provide an update to members of the CoM, via email, in April.

She also announced that the NUS/Unipol Accommodation Costs Survey would be launched in March and the NCA displayed a few example slides from the report. Some members of the CoM suggested that the final report should provide a detailed explanation of how the data for the report had been compiled so as to ensure proper comparisons were possible.

National Code Conference

The CoM supported the idea of holding a joint conference with CUBO/UUK in 2010, either in November/December.

Code Membership and Membership of the CoM

The NCA informed the meeting that the number of bed spaces covered by both the Codes had increased by 12.6% since the last meeting, to 147,925. This figure would have been closer to 150,000 but for the loss of 2,000 bed spaces from membership as a result of Operon going into administration.

It was also reported that a significant number of members had not paid the 2010 membership fee, despite invoices being sent out to them in December. The NCA tabled a proposal that all 2010 fees be paid by April 1st and that invoices for 2011 membership should be dispatched no later than 17th December 2010 and paid by 14th February 2011, otherwise a late payment fee of £400 would be imposed. This was agreed.

The meeting welcomed Mr Chris Blencowe as the representative of the 31 Cambridge Colleges which have joined the ANUK/Unipol Code for Educational establishments (adding an additional 14,986 bed spaces to that Code). Chris reported that the colleges decision to change Codes was motivated not only for financial reasons but also because they wished to be more engaged with the Code at a local level - something which the new peer to peer verification system offered them. He also announced that Cambridge would be pleased to host the next meeting of the Audit Panel

The CoM endorsed proposed changes to membership of the group and welcomed all the new members who were present.

Assessment and Verification

In addition to receiving a report on the last meeting of the Audit Panel, the CoM was provided with copies of the minutes from that meeting. The CoM agreed that it was useful having copies of the minutes and that in future they be included on the agenda as a matter for report.

The 2010 timetable for planned verification visits and re-visits was discussed and agreed.

It was reported that a team of peer-to-peer verifiers had been recruited by the Cambridge colleges and that a day's training had taken place for them. It was anticipated that the team would begin verifying in March and that all the colleges would be completed by the end of June.

Review of the Code for Non-Educational Establishments

The notes from the first meeting of the Review Group, held in December 2009, were tabled at the meeting and a summary of the discussions was included within the paperwork.

The CoM expressed support for the inclusion of a section in the revised Code on tenant satisfaction surveys, but on the whole they hoped that the tone of the Code was less prescriptive than it currently is.

The NCA announced that the second meeting of the Review Group would take place in March and requested any additional comments from members of the CoM for the review by the end of February.

Rugg Review Response and Possible Alterations to the Use Classes Order

The Chair reported that the Government had issued a summary of responses and next steps document related to the Rugg Review, however, it was not anticipated that anything would come of it because of the impending General Election.

NUS reported that they had written to the Minister asking for further clarification as to the implications of proposed changes to the Use Class Orders, especially in respect of their impact on shared student HMOs. LACoRS stated that they too were seeking clarification as the proposals appear to contradict local authorities planning policies. Tom Toumazou (for ANUK) felt that one impact of the proposed alterations could be less support from landlords for local accreditation schemes.

Proposed Revisions to the Complaints Procedures

The NCA introduced a proposed alteration to the complaints procedures in respect of complaints from representatives of tenants - especially parents - which would have required a determination to be made as to whether they had a 'legitimate interest' in the complaint.

The CoM debated the proposal and suggested an alternative wording, which was agreed. The opening paragraph of the complaints procedure will be revised to read as follows: "All complaints made under the Code must be received either from a tenant of the property concerned, an ex-tenant of that property or a representative from either. If the representative is a parent or relative of a tenant or ex-tenant, then the representative must have written authority from the tenant or ex-tenant and if he/she is a parent or other person with a vested interest in the matter then that interest must be declared".

Any Other Business

Business Rates for Reception Areas – Jane Crouch (IQ) reported that they were being asked to pay the business rate for developments where they have a reception area and asked whether other providers have had to do the same. Different providers reported similar experiences, some have challenged it and others accept it because they use their reception areas to 'sell' their accommodation. The Chair reminded the meeting that the Com was not set up as a lobbying organisation, however, ANUK might be able to do so.

Unipol's "What is Happening and What Will Happen to Student Accommodation in London" Conference – The NCA announced that Unipol were holding a one-day event on this topic in London on March 25th and circulated details of the agenda.

Dates and Venues for Future Meetings

The NCA reported that the date for the June CoM had been changed from the 18th to the 21st and that the University of Leeds had agreed to host it. Unite have offered to host the October CoM, scheduled for Friday 29th February, at one of their venues in London. Details will be circulated as soon as possible nearer the time.

It was proposed that the meeting dates for 2011 should be Friday 18th February, Monday 20th June and Friday 28th October. Members of the CoM were asked to inform the NCA of any possible clashes on these dates as soon as possible.

The meeting closed at 12.36pm.