

## **Minutes of the Committee of Management Meeting**

**held on Thursday 7<sup>th</sup> February 2008, at 30 St Mary Axe, London**

**Present:** Mr John Daniels (Chair), Mr Mark Allen (UPP), Mr Andy Attewell (Victoria Hall, for Bob Crompton), Mr Jason Baines (Derwent Living), Mr Stuart Black (London Metropolitan University), Mr Martin Blakey (Unipol Student Homes), Mr Jonathan Chandler (University of Greenwich), Mr Gavin Duncan (Opal Property Group), Mr Ian Fletcher (ANUK), Ms Julia Gristwood (CLG, for Kirsten Blagden), Ms Ruth Hammond-Laing (LACORS), Mr Paddy Jackman (CUBO), Mr Charles Marshall (Liberty Living), Ms Jacqueline McNee (Unipol Student Homes), Mr Ian Robertson (University of Leeds, for Dennis Hopper), Mr Paul Rowlinson (Sanctuary Management Services), Mr Terence Treadwell (Nido Student Living), Mr Terry Waide (Northern Ireland Housing Executive), Ms Geraldine Ward (University of Hertfordshire), Ms Sarah Wayman (NUS), Mr Keith White (CRM)

**In Attendance:** Mr Colin Chapman (CC&A Consulting), Mr Simon Kemp (National Code Administrator), Mr Bob Miller (University of London), Mr Roland Shanks (University of London)

**Apologies:** Mr Chris Baines (Servite), Mr Neil Marsden (ANUK), Ms Helen McNeely (AMOSSHE), Mr Alan Russell (UNITE)

The Chair opened the meeting at 10.15am. He thanked Liberty Living for agreeing to host the meeting and invited Charles Marshall to make any necessary housekeeping announcements. Members of the CoM were then asked to introduce themselves.

### **Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

The minutes of the meeting held on October 5<sup>th</sup> 2007 were approved.

### **Matters Arising**

**National Code Conference** – The National Code Administrator reported that the conference had taken place on December 10<sup>th</sup> 2007 and that a total of 30 delegates – fewer than hoped for – were in attendance. He asked members of the CoM for some feedback on both the event itself and the concept behind it. Charles Marshall thought that it was important to have a National Code event that did not just focus on the CoM, but questioned whether it would be better to hold it in February or March. Martin Blakey highlighted the importance of the event for staff working in developments covered by the Codes, he therefore suggested the CoM agree an acceptable date for the next conference at this meeting. Members of the CoM were divided over possible dates; Gavin Duncan thought either July or November but Paddy Jackman felt July was not good for educational establishments. It was agreed that a date in November be selected and emailed to all Code members, who in turn would be asked to book in advance. The number of booking received by an agreed date would then determine whether the event went ahead.

**Code Publicity and Draft Marketing Strategy** – The National Code Administrator announced that adverts for the Code had appeared in November and December editions of *The National Student*. Members of the CoM would be sent copies of the advert via email and invited to comment on whether they felt it contained the sort of information both existing and potential tenants would find useful and, if not, to comment on what would be better. It was also reported that no feedback had been received on the draft marketing strategy document presented at the last meeting. Martin Blakey informed the meeting of a European Directive that required organisations to make clear on their websites whether they were signed-up to any professional bodies and/or Codes of Practice. He asked whether members of the CoM currently refer to being members of the National Code on their websites and the majority reported that they did so.

**National Codes Section of the ANUK Website** – The National Code Administrator apologised to the CoM for not being able to provide the meeting with a comprehensive breakdown of page impression data from the section of the ANUK website relating to the National Codes. It had been anticipated that some comparative figures showing visits between 2006 and 2007 would be available, but they were not. It was agreed that the figures be circulated via email once they were ready. It was reported that the web page containing details of the list of developments covered by the Codes was the second most visited page on the ANUK website between May 2007 and Feb 2008, after the ANUK home page itself.

**Tenancy Deposit Protection** – Martin Blakey reported that he was due to meet with the Managing Director of The Disputes Service, Lawrence Greenberg, to discuss the possibility of developing a bespoke TDP scheme for landlords who are members of accreditation schemes. It was agreed that details of the meeting be reported to members of the CoM via email. Most of the providers present – who charge a deposit – appear to already be signed-up to the protection scheme operated by TDS, it was therefore felt that they were unlikely to benefit greatly from any bespoke scheme that was developed.

**UUK Code and Protocol Agreement** – It was reported that CUBO have agreed to take over the administration of the UUK Code. Paddy Jackman informed the meeting that CUBO's involvement was likely to lead to a change of approach in the day-to-day operation of the Code, with more emphasis on verification processes. The National Code Administrator reported that the new Code contact at UUK had taken up his post and that a meeting to discuss the current protocol agreement between ANUK and UUK would hopefully be held before June.

**Salary, Benefits and Conditions Survey** – Following the proposal made at the last meeting to conduct such a survey should one or more private providers find it of use, the National Code Administrator reported that there had been no expressions of interest received. It was therefore agreed that no further action was required.

### **Update on Code Membership**

The National Code Administrator reported that the number of bed spaces covered by the Codes at the end of 2007 remained unchanged from those reported in October – at 93,643. However, this was likely to change as new applications had been received and were being processed, existing private providers had been invited to re-join for 2008 – a number of which had increased the number of bed spaces they operate, and some existing educational establishment providers were no longer managing any of their own accommodation. The total number of bed spaces therefore covered by the Codes at the beginning of 2008 was 99,628.

It was reported that, because of some uncertainty over the launch date of the revised Code for educational establishments, a request had not yet been issued for members of that Code to re-join for 2008. During the course of the ensuing discussion, CLG confirmed that it would not be possible for the revised Code to be approved before October 2008, it was therefore agreed to invite the existing members to apply again for 2008.

Martin Blakey informed the meeting that he was due to meet with representatives from the Scottish Government and the consortium of the Scottish Association of Landlords and the Scottish Rural Property and Business Association which have been awarded the contract to develop a nationwide accreditation scheme in Scotland. The meeting will be on February 15<sup>th</sup> and notes from the meeting will be circulated to members of the CoM via email.

Terry Waide (Northern Ireland Housing Executive) was invited to comment on developments with accreditation in Northern Ireland. He noted that very few private providers had developed accommodation for students and that this was probably due to land costs. Mark Allan, commenting on UPP's experiences in NI, stated that partnership arrangements with universities in NI had been problematic.

The National Code Administrator distributed a paper suggesting revisions to the existing membership and verification flow chart, devised to take into account alterations to both processes agreed at the last CoM. The meeting accepted the need for the alterations and welcomed elements of the draft, however, it was suggested that the reference to members being automatically accepted be removed. Instead, provisional membership should be awarded, with full membership not being granted until a verification visit had taken place – which should be within 12 months. It was also suggested that some account be taken of a provider's track record, and that this be inserted into the self assessment questionnaire when it is revised. LACORS have requested the use of the flow chart for a publication they are producing to explain the approved codes, which was agreed.

The National Code Administrator reported that a search of Leicester De Montfort University's website had revealed a number of locally based private accommodation providers who were not as yet signed up to the ANUK Code,

but were members of Leicester City Council's accreditation scheme for small shared houses – called The Scheme. Jason Baines stated that Derwent Living were members of The Scheme as well but that it was not really appropriate to larger developments; it also was not regarded as being particularly effective at improving accommodation standards. The CoM agreed that the National Code Administrator should write to the various providers operating in Leicester to make them aware of the National Code and its function.

### **Assessment and Verification**

The National Code Administrator informed the meeting that a series of verification visits were carried out during October, November and December 2007, focusing mainly on developments in London.

A summary of the Audit Panel meeting, held on December 19<sup>th</sup> 2007 to discuss the draft versions of the auditors' reports, was provided to members of the COM. Ian Fletcher, a member of the Audit Panel, commented that the inclusion of NUS on the Panel and the active involvement of CIEH had significantly enhanced the verification process. He also felt that it had been useful for the Panel to be given some direct feedback from the providers who were being verified before agreement was reached on the final versions of the auditors' reports. Martin Blakey expressed the view that the verification team was working well and that it might be useful to expand its membership.

A provisional timetable for the next round of verification visits was circulated by the National Code Administrator, proposing visits to 14 providers on various dates in early March. This was agreed. It was also proposed that a further series of visits occur in late April/early May, concentrating on the remaining members of the Codes (up to the end of 2007) who had not already been subject to a verification visit. The CoM agreed this approach.

### **Review of the Code for Educational Establishments**

Colin Chapman, of CC&A Consulting, gave a short presentation outlining the ways in which the working party – led by Dennis Hopper of the University of Leeds – believe this Code ought to be revised. The CoM expressed its thanks to Dennis and the working party and requested that Colin's presentation be circulated by email to members as soon as possible after the meeting.

A number of points were made during the discussion which followed the presentation. Gavin Duncan felt that the more subjective approach being taken in the revised Code would make verifying compliance with the Code more of a challenge; he also wondered how auditors would treat the use of certain terminology within the Code such as 'sufficient'. Charles Marshall thought that the changes would mean the verification process would become more rigorous and prescriptive. Jason Baines asked whether elements of the

re-drafted Code would be incorporated into the Code for private providers and it was agreed that some could easily be made relevant to both Codes. However, Martin Blakey felt the changes to the educational establishment Code were a reflection of the different culture within such institutions, especially the proposal that verification be conducted via peer to peer review.

### **Revised Security Standards**

Martin Blakey reported that a meeting was to be held on June 19<sup>th</sup> to discuss the development of a Home Office approved security standard, to which key stakeholders would be invited. If members of the CoM were interested in attending that meeting then they were asked to email the National Code Administrator at least two weeks before the meeting.

### **2008 Annual Report to CLG**

The National Code Administrator announced that the second annual report to CLG was due to be submitted at the beginning of April and that, as such, a draft version of the report would need to be circulated to members of the CoM by email.

Martin Blakey suggested that the emphasis of the second report should be on promoting activities that have taken place over the last year, both at a national and local level. He proposed that the National Code Administrator should email all members of the Codes and request information from them about what work they have been doing to promote the code to potential and existing customers, which could include promotional photographs. The report also should include a detailed section on on-going assessment and verification processes.

### **Dates and Times of Next Meetings**

The National Code Administrator reported that the next meeting of the CoM would take place on Thursday 26<sup>th</sup> June, starting at 10am (unless otherwise requested). The University of Hertfordshire have agreed to host the meeting at their Hatfield campus.

The October meeting of the CoM is scheduled to take place on Friday 17<sup>th</sup> October, somewhere in London (a venue is still be sought), also with a 10am start.

### **Any Other Business**

CLG reported that the Government had recently announced it was to undertake a review of the Private Rented Sector, to be headed by Professor Julie Rugg from the University of York. It was suggested that the CoM might wish to have some input into the review.

The meeting closed at 12.30pm