

Welcome to our Spring Newsletter



Our industry is seeing new legislation that will affect landlords in the housing benefit sector, and

the two major changes are selective Landlord licensing which is being introduced in the Trinity area of Burnley by the Burnley Borough Council and LHA (Local Housing Allowance) which is replacing Housing Benefit in all areas across the country. Coupled with compulsory HIPS for all properties

marketed for sale, and energy ratings required for rental properties later this year it sometimes feels like we landlords are under attack from our own government. Never the less, we have to comply with the rules and RPC is doing everything we can to make the transition as efficient and painless as possible for our landlords.

Landlord Licensing



RPC attended the consultation meetings, wrote in our objections and put the case as strongly as we could against landlord licensing, but the scheme is going ahead.

Burnley Council has applied to start licensing in the Trinity area which includes Hudson Street, Florence St, Elmwood Street, Scarlet Street, Coal Clough Lane, Queensbury Road, Raglan Road, Grange Street, Pritchard Street, Herbert Street, St Matthew Street, Nairne Street and Harold Street. According to the organisers the majority of privately owned households in the area were in favour of licensing, and believe it will cut down anti-social behaviour in the Trinity area.

The license will run for 5 years once granted and the initial costs will be £268 (costs of processing the landlord part of the application) plus

£179 per property they have in the designation area (costs of processing property applications). Following this an annual fee will be charged of £111 per property, every year of the designation of the license. Landlords who are members of the GLAS (Good Landlord and Agent Scheme) will get a 25% reduction in the initial costs of the 5 year license, and will not have to pay the annual fee. RPC is an accredited GLAS agent, so if your property is with us you should qualify for the discount. We have enclosed a separate page quoting the council web site's answers to frequently asked questions about Landlord Licensing.



Lidl Supermarket opens

After months of earth shaking pile driving, noise, dust and construction the new Lidl Supermarket located behind the RPC office officially opened at the end of February. The low rise building is a tidy change to the area and replaced derelect

and run-down industrial units. The entrance to the car park is from Colne Road, and providing you make a purchase from Lidl while you are there, might be a useful place to park when visiting the RPC office in Briercliffe Road.

Local Housing Allowance

LHA - Local Housing Allowance - is replacing Housing Benefit for any new applicants as from 8th April 2008. Tenants already in receipt of housing allowance will continue to receive it until a change in their circumstances means the benefit changes. At that point they will apply for LHA instead. In a few years time Housing Benefit will be fully replaced by LHA, but the transition will take place relatively slowly.

The rent officer has set the maximum rents payable for properties in Burnley as follows:
Shared Accommodation £50.00;
One bedroom self contained £75.00;
Two bedroom property £80.77;
Three bedroom property £98.04;
Four bedroom property £138.46;
Five bedroom property £150.00.
Just as in Housing allowance, this may be reduced by personal circumstances (for example a part time job).

LHA is based on the needs of the tenant, and is not dependent on the

property the tenant chooses to rent. If the allowance is less than the rent, the tenant will have to find the extra payment from their own resources. If the LHA is more than the rent, the tenant is entitled to keep up to £15 per week of the LHA for themselves, with the rest of the allowance going towards the rent. For example, a family on full benefit of £98.04 for a 3 bedroom house can opt to live in a 2 bedroom one with a rent of £85 per week and legally pocket the £13.04 difference between the rent and LHA payment.

LHA will be paid directly to the tenant, and not to the landlord or the agent. The tenant is responsible for paying the rent and RPC will make every effort to collect this from the tenant, either through bank transfer or as a cash collection. Only if the tenant falls more than 8 weeks behind in rent payment can the landlord or agent apply to the council for payment directly to the landlord. One of the objects of LHA is to make tenants take

more responsibility for their own personal and financial affairs and less dependent on the state or social services.

RPC has had a meeting with Barclays Bank and arranged to set up new basic bank accounts with tenants under the new rules. We are completing the bank application forms with the tenants and submitting the applications on their behalf in order to ensure the required details are complete. We will then set up standing orders on the accounts to receive the rent as soon as it clears in the tenant's account. We will keep landlords posted on how well this all works once the LHA starts in April.

The Burnley council has answers to frequently asked questions on LHA on its web site. To view this go to <http://www.burnley.gov.uk> type LHA in the search box and follow the links. If you would like RPC to send you a printed copy of the council site answers, phone Yvette or Kirsty on 01282459459 and we will put one in the post.

Changes at Pendle Council



Burnley Council waiting area

Pendle Council recently ran a trial whereby they did not accept applications for housing benefit without personal interviews with tenants. At the end of the trial there was a waiting list of approximately 3 weeks for appointments at the council, and as a result housing benefit payments were delayed for tenants who's benefits had been suspended. This trial was an attempt to

crackdown on benefit fraud, and we are pleased to see the council taking steps to ensure benefit claimants are genuine. They have now reverted back to accepting written applications, but some landlords have experienced delays in receiving benefits for tenants who were involved in the trial. The backlog is currently being sorted and everyone should be back on target by the end of March.

Prince Charles visits Burnley in February 2008



Message for the people of Burnley from Prince Charles.

“FOR me, Burnley has always been a remarkably special town - it has been ever since I first visited it over 20 years ago.

Four of my charities: The Prince's Trust, Business in the Community, The Prince's School for Traditional Arts and In Kind Direct have begun working closely with the Council and others in Burnley to help create employment opportunities and work experience placements, and to provide mentors, facilities for young people and support for Burnley's own charities. At the same time, my Foundation for the Built Environment and my Prince's Regeneration Trust are contributing to the existing redevelopment plans for the town.

Now I have seen for myself the contribution which my charities are already making and how, working in partnership, we can make even more progress towards giving Burnley the future it deserves.”

The Prince of Wales has pledged the support of six national charities which he created to work in partnership with Burnley Borough Council, local businesses and other government and voluntary organisations in taking forward the regeneration of Burnley.

At The Prince's request, a number of his charities - Business In The Community, The Prince's Foundation for the Built Environment, The Prince's Regeneration Trust, The Prince's School for Traditional Arts, In Kind Direct as well as The Prince's Trust - are working alongside the local authority and other organisations to help provide employment opportunities, work experience and extracurricular activities for young people, and expertise in regenerating part of the town.

Following a visit to Burnley in 2005 to see the work of The Prince's Trust in the area, the Prince felt that a similar initiative could again prove to be beneficial. A series of extensive consultation exercises have taken place between the charities, local government and businesses, the North West Development Agency and the local community to achieve a better understanding of how they can best enhance existing programmes and initiatives in Burnley.

In December 2007, His Royal Highness invited Burnley Borough Council, local business, voluntary sector leaders, and prominent community leaders to Clarence House for a detailed discussion on the proposed priorities and projects.

His visit to Burnley on Thursday 21st February enabled him to see at first hand some of the projects that

have already been implemented, and hear about future plans.

The Prince's Trust is running its 'Acting Up' programme at the Burnley Youth Theatre, working with a group of unemployed, 16 to 19-year-old young women. The Trust's mentoring programme has also helped young people in the area to establish their own businesses.

They have also established the RBS Community Cash Awards which encourages young people to take up community projects, helping to tackle anti-social behaviour in the process.

Business In The Community have started a series of The Prince of Wales's 'Seeing Is Believing' visits to Burnley, and as one result alone, Greggs, Marks & Spencer and Sainsbury's have agreed to support breakfast clubs in 15 of the most needy primary schools in Burnley for a minimum of three years.

Greggs and Asda have supported the Burnley SPACE Youth Bus working in partnership with the police which is deployed to different parts of the town to provide advice, support and leisure facilities for young people.

The Mosaic Initiative, a mentoring programme for young Muslims convened by Business In The Community, is currently pairing up mentors with young people.

An Education Business Cluster, comprised of 10 North West businesses, has been formed to broker long term partnerships between schools and business, with the aim of providing support to the curriculum and local apprenticeships. Community leaders will be invited to attend workshops to help strengthen their skills in areas such as marketing

continued overleaf

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and business planning.

The Prince's Foundation for the Built Environment and The Prince's Regeneration Trust are working closely with Burnley Borough Council in offering their expertise to help review the master plan for the town's regeneration.

The Prince's School for Traditional Arts, which teaches Arts and Crafts skills with profound roots in all the major faith traditions, will provide an artist-in-residence for schools, to help create multi-faith prayer spaces in new school buildings and

run workshops to make arts and crafts objects that will be used for decoration.

In Kind Direct, who distribute companies' surplus goods to charities, are working closely with Burnley Play Association distributing donated goods to them. They are liaising with 55 other charities in the area so that they can also benefit.

Julia Cleverdon, Chief Executive for Business In The Community said:

"The Prince of Wales's determination to encourage and support his charities in working

collaboratively together with our partners in Burnley has provided a unique opportunity to support Burnley in achieving its aspirations as a town.

"The support of Allan Leighton, Chairman of Royal Mail and The Prince of Wales's Ambassador for Corporate Responsibility, in engaging many more businesses in Burnley's regeneration, as well as that of Philip Green, Chief Executive of United Utilities, in supporting the schools has been invaluable in taking the first steps together in this ambitious programme."

RPC Holiday Caravan



Do you fancy a mini break in Lovely Lancashire? Want to inspect your properties, and enjoy the pleasures of Blackpool while you are here? We have a beautiful 35' X 12' three bedroom Atlas Oasis Super 2004 caravan sited on the Marton Mere conservation site in Blackpool (only 40 minutes drive from Burnley) and are offering it to RPC Landlords at reduced rates for 3, 4 or 7 day breaks. The caravan has all modern

conveniences, can sleep 8 and is located in a quiet part of the caravan site with views over the lake.

The park has everything you could ask for a family holiday, including swimming pools, children's entertainment and as you would expect from a top class Park in the Blackpool area, the sizzling evening entertainment with glamorous shows are second to none .

If its more of a quiet holiday you enjoy, take a look at the Nature Reserve and Wildlife Sanctuary in an area of open water, reed beds, scrub and grassland renowned for its wildlife. The reserve is nationally recognised, as a Site of Special Scientific Interest', for its birds, but also it has important populations

of dragonflies, butterflies, hoverflies and other animals such as bats. The Warden gives regular guided walks, as do the Friends of Marton Mere, a voluntary group whose aim is to promote awareness of the nature reserve.

Breaks are Friday to Friday (7 days) Friday to Monday (3 days) or Monday to Friday (4 days). For more information, prices and a separate leaflet on the caravan and the site, email Carolyn on Carolyn@investinburnley.com or ring the office on 01282459459. For an overview of the area and the park check the following two sites, one is the official Haven Holidays site, and the other a private site advertising caravans to let: www.martonmere.co.uk and www.martonmere.org.uk.