

The Door



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To a Brighter future

Issue 1 June 2008

A Newsletter for Applicants on the Breckland Common Housing Register.

Welcome to the first edition of "The Door" the Breckland Common Housing Register newsletter for applicants and partner agencies. We hope that we will provide advice and information on various matters relating to housing that you will find interesting and useful.

It is anticipated that most of you will receive "The Door" either when you request an application form for housing or subsequently review your existing application. The review is our opportunity to find out if you still require housing or other associated services and to ask if you have had any changes in your circumstances since we last had contact with you. Should you have any concerns about your application or current housing situation, please contact our services on the following numbers: 01842 756416 / 418 / 427 / 434

Proposed changes to the Housing Register to improve Service delivery

The new partnership of Breckland Council and ARP Trading Ltd to operate and administer the Breckland Housing Register from July of last year was the first step in a series of changes designed to improve the way in which the service is delivered!

Customers are often confused about who they should contact to join the register for housing in Breckland as different housing association landlords have different application forms. Breckland Council is working with ARP Trading and Housing Associations across the Breckland District to Improve this situation for customers by developing a common housing register — or a single point of access for all social rented and shared ownership housing in the Breckland District.

A new application form that will be introduced very soon will provide access for all!

The second and more substantial improvement is the introduction of a Choice Based Lettings scheme across the Breckland District by late 2008. These schemes allow people to register an interest in an individual property. Information is easily accessed on what homes are available and where, together with key details about the property itself e.g. photographs, the number of bedrooms and the rent to be charged.

Available properties are advertised and traditionally, applicants then 'bid' to be considered for a property within their 'band'. Choice Based Letting schemes usually offer a variety of bidding and information platforms including the use of the internet, text message and free bidding hotline numbers.

The development of this exciting new way of letting affordable housing is in the early stages, so we will keep you updated as to progress in future editions of 'The Door' newsletter.

The Housing Market.

I am sure everyone has noticed how the housing market has escalated into prices beyond most of our pockets. This has of course had a knock on effect to the Housing Register.

In the last few months, it is very noticeable that we are not getting so many properties to nominate to, especially family sized accommodation. This is believed to be caused by the housing market.

In the past, many people have taken a tenancy with a housing association whilst saving for a deposit on a property of their own. Now however because of the rise in house prices, the majority of people are not so easily able to do this and to consider the option of owner occupation. Hence, the turnover of vacant properties is much reduced.

The level of points for allocations by property type and then number of Voids occurring by property type.

The following information gives an indication of the level of points that allocations have been made on for the different property types in the five market towns in the Breckland District for the period July 2007 to March 2008

| | Flats | Bungalows | Houses | Sheltered Housing | Overall average |
|--------------|-------|-----------|--------|-------------------|-----------------|
| Attleborough | 67 | 52 | 60 | 31 | 45 |
| Dereham | 43 | 60 | 64 | 32 | 55 |
| Swaffham | 44 | | 45 | 36 | 51 |
| Thetford | 38 | 45 | 49 | 35 | 48 |
| Watton | 64 | | 44 | 52 | 45 |

The following information gives an indication of the level of points that allocations have been made on for the different property types in the Breckland District excluding the five market towns for the period July 2007 to March 2008.

| Flats | | Bungalows | | Houses | |
|--------------------------------|----|---------------|---------------|------------|----|
| Bed sit flats | 0 | 1Bed Bungalow | 30 | 2Bed House | 44 |
| Ground Floor Flat | 30 | 2Bed Bungalow | 49 | 3Bed House | 42 |
| First Floor Flat | 43 | | | 4Bed House | 0 |
| Second Floor Flat | 24 | | | 5Bed House | 46 |
| Sheltered Accommodation | | | | | |
| Ground Floor Flat | | 24 | 1Bed Bungalow | | 37 |
| First Floor Flat | | 0 | 2Bed Bungalow | | 40 |

The following information shows the number of voids by property type that occurred for the period July 2007 to March 2008.

| | Flats | Bungalows | Houses | Sheltered | Totals |
|-------------------|-------|-----------|--------|-----------|--------|
| Attleborough | 4 | 2 | 8 | 13 | 27 |
| Dereham | 32 | 10 | 28 | 15 | 85 |
| Swaffham | 9 | 1 | 10 | 10 | 30 |
| Thetford | 25 | 10 | 23 | 6 | 64 |
| Thetford Abbey | 23 | 1 | 34 | 3 | 61 |
| Watton | 4 | 0 | 20 | 2 | 26 |
| Rest of Breckland | 9 | 41 | 42 | 17 | 109 |

Housing Problem – We can help!

Many people with housing problems are unsure of their rights and where they can go for help. The Housing Advice and Homelessness Service at Breckland Council provide advice and assistance on a wide range of housing related problems. All our advice is free and confidential.

The Housing Advice and Homelessness Service provide advice and practical help on:

Tenancy matters - including notices from landlords, tenancy conditions you don't understand, and allegations that you have breached the terms of your tenancy agreement. Issues may also arise where landlords do not follow the legal procedure in notifying tenants of rent increases. People living in private rented accommodation may also have disputes with their landlords about who is responsible for repairs.

Deposits – The law relating to deposits has recently changed and we can give you advice about your position. Breckland Council operates a rent deposit loan scheme, which may be available to people at risk of homelessness.

Difficulties paying your rent or mortgage – we can help and the earlier you seek help the better. People fall into arrears for many different reasons, including unemployment or health problems. There are various options available which can help you to avoid losing their home, even if court proceedings have already begun

LANGUAGE LINE TRANSLATION SERVICE

If you have any difficulty in understanding 'The Door' or any of our forms or brochures, please contact us on the number shown in the ARP Trading contact details. We will arrange for it to be translated into a more convenient language or for it to be explained to you by an interpreter.

Should you wish to telephone us to discuss any aspects of the Lettings services, we can arrange for you to use the services of 'Language Line' these services are free of charge to you.

Problems coping with your home generally – you may have the above difficulties with your home, you may struggle to budget, or you may have problems maintaining your home (particularly as an owner-occupier). There are services available to help people manage better and to help improve properties in the private sector

Relationship breakdown - many people are not aware of their housing options when they separate from a partner. We can advise you and may be able to help you talk to your partner in a neutral environment about practical matters such as the fair distribution of assets.

Suffering violence or abuse – if you are suffering at home from a partner, ex-partner, or from someone else, confidential advice is available from the Council

Homelessness - advice is available at any time if people think they may be homeless in the future, or where they are already homeless which are available to people who are looking for alternative housing

Housing Options – we have a range of options which are available to people who are looking for alternative housing A lot of information is available on the Council's website at www.breckland.gov.uk – just follow the links to housing.

If you wish to discuss your housing problem, please call 01362 656870 and ask for the duty Housing Advisor or send an email with your name, address and telephone number to housing.advice@breckland.gov.uk. If it is a complex matter or you are at risk of homelessness, we will probably offer you an appointment with a Housing Advisor. Home visits are available if you cannot travel to one of the Council's offices.

If you have any suggestions or questions you would like to see addressed in future editions, then please write to:

Housing Needs Team
ARP Trading Ltd
Breckland House
St Nicholas Street
Thetford, Norfolk
IP24 1BT

Tel: 01842 756416 / 418 / 427 / 434 Fax: 01842 756513
Email: housingregister@arptrading.co.uk