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**Business  
advice**

# Business View

Providing news, advice and support for your business

## Landlords and letting agents

Welcome to the first of our new style of business advice pages. Featuring a different business sector in each issue, we hope to provide a guide to relevant council services available to local businesses. We will also be inviting colleagues from relevant agencies, like fire and rescue, health and safety and the police to provide useful information.

This issue focuses on landlords and letting agents but is of equal use to those who occupy business property, use standard contracts or are renovating properties.

### Planning

If you are considering making changes to the outside or the use of your property or a property you are looking to buy, it is always worth discussing it with a member of our planning team to find out what options you have based on the area the property is situated. Our planning team offer free initial consultations through Gateway, the council's customer service centre.

### Building control

Contact the council's building control team before you start work. From rewiring to installing central heating or knocking through walls, we can make you aware of national building regulation standards and support you when commissioning building works - right through to the initial completion and getting work approved. In the first instance you should contact us with details of the work you are planning and arrange a site visit from one of our team. If you have any questions you can call us for advice on building regulations.



### Private sector housing

This service protects and improves lives by ensuring homes are safe and warm. Providing guidance for property owners whose premises have failed to meet minimum standards, could pose a risk to its occupants or be the cause of local complaint. They focus their efforts on the very worst offenders and to help owners to improve standards in order to avoid legal action.

### Economic development

Economic development not only work to encourage businesses to come to the city, they also support new businesses starting in Southampton. With advice on council services to where to go for advice about finance and property.

### Waste and recycling

Often new tenants don't know how essential council services are run, especially if they've moved from outside the area. We can supply landlords with A-Z guides to council services which include a detailed guide to waste and recycling services. We also offer bulky household waste collection like furniture and white goods if you are clearing out a property.



### Trading standards

We can help you identify legislation applicable to your business and provide practical advice on how to keep your business within the law. We visit businesses within the city to monitor compliance with the legislation we enforce and will provide advice on how to rectify any problems identified. Key issues for landlords include unfair contracts and EPCs (Energy Performance Certificates). For more information contact: [trading.standards@southampton.gov.uk](mailto:trading.standards@southampton.gov.uk) ☎ 023 8083 3999.

### Environmental health

The most common environmental health issues we get involved with for rented houses are noise nuisance, rubbish accumulation (inside and out), overgrown gardens, blocked drain/ sewer and household pests including rodents. Noise nuisance cases alarm and disturbance for neighbours, while rubbish accumulation presents a real health hazard. We work with and support responsible landlords and agents to help them avoid these issues and we concentrate our efforts on tackling the worst offenders.



### Housing benefit

Many tenants in the city claim housing benefit to help them pay their rent. Housing benefit is given to people on a low income and the amount of their rent they can claim depends on their circumstances. We will only pay what we consider is a reasonable amount of rent for a property that meets their needs and we decide this amount based on comparable rents for similar properties within an area. We deal with the tenant not the landlord but with the tenant's agreement we can pay their housing benefit direct to their landlord. Overpayments will be recovered from the landlord in this circumstance.

### Warm Front grants

There are financial grants for property owners whose properties have poor insulation and inefficient heating. Grants are awarded based on a number of criteria. There is more information on page 8 about grants.

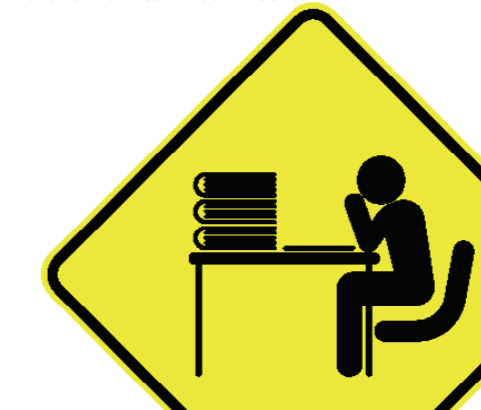
### Hampshire Fire and Rescue

There are fire safety standards for all residential and commercial buildings, it is the landlord's responsibility to get these right. Typical defects include a lack of safe fire exits, fire resistant doors, working smoke alarms and fire extinguishers. We provide guidance on our website at [www.hantsfire.gov.uk](http://www.hantsfire.gov.uk) and carry out site visits to high risk premises.



### Student lettings

Southampton City Council has been working with Southampton Solent University and the University of Southampton over the last six months to compile a private student housing list. Landlords have to be accredited and comply with standards set by the council to feature. The new website [www.sassh.co.uk](http://www.sassh.co.uk) is proving to be very popular with students and landlords alike and has had nearly five thousand hits in four weeks.



Get in touch about these services  
☎ 023 8083 3002  
✉ [business@southampton.gov.uk](mailto:business@southampton.gov.uk)  
🌐 [www.southampton.gov.uk](http://www.southampton.gov.uk)

## Landlords and Lettings Agents Seminar

As a landlord or letting agent you will be aware of the legislation relating to your business, this is an opportunity to gain a better understanding of what in practical terms you need to do.

Presented by key experts the seminar includes a series of short presentations on the essentials and provides an opportunity for you to put questions to the council and other agencies. With information on support for businesses, grants and more this is an opportunity to get some free business advice.

For further details and a free ticket contact: [trading.standards@southampton.gov.uk](mailto:trading.standards@southampton.gov.uk)



### Coming next month

In the next issue, due out in late October 2009, we will focus on ERWIN (Everything Regulation, Whenever It's Needed), the national one-stop web site for all your Trading Standards business related information.

We welcome any comments and suggestions on how these pages can be improved, problems you have, complaints or compliments. Please email: [trading.standards@southampton.gov.uk](mailto:trading.standards@southampton.gov.uk)



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