

Committee of Management for the National Codes of Standards for Large Student Developments

Minutes of Committee of Management Meeting

held on Friday 5th October, 2007, at the University of Greenwich

Present: Mr Neil Marsden (ANUK and Chair), Mr Mark Allen (UPP), Mr Jason Baines (Derwent Living), Mr Martin Blakey (Unipol), Mr Jonathan Chandler (University of Greenwich), Mr Bob Crompton (Victoria Hall), Mr Heriberto Cuanalo (CRM for Mr Keith White), Mr John Daniels (Chair elect), Ms Ruth Hammond-Laing (LACORS), Mr Paddy Jackman (CUBO), Ms Jacqueline McNee (Unipol), Ms Valerie Nicholls (ASRA), Mr Paul Rowlinson (Shaftesbury), Mr Alan Russell (UNITE), Mr Nick Stanton (Mainstay), Mr Terence Treadwell (NIDO).

In Attendance: Mr Jeff Childs (Welsh Assembly Government), Mr Simon Kemp (National Code Administrator)

Apologies: Mr Stuart Black (London Metropolitan University), Ms Kirstin Blagden (CLG), Mr Gavin Duncan (Opal), Mr Ian Fletcher (ANUK), Mr Allan Hilton (Cass & Claredale), Mr Dennis Hopper (University of Leeds), Mr Charles Marshall (Liberty Living), Ms Helen Mc Neely (AMOSSHE), Mr Terry Waide (NIHE)

The meeting began at 11.35am. The Chair thanked the University of Greenwich for arranging the venue and the lunch and then asked members to introduce themselves.

Minutes of the Previous Meeting

These were **APPROVED** with one exception – the spelling of Mr Baines' name, which has an 'e'.

Membership of the Committee and Election of Chair

The meeting agreed a proposal that CUBO (College and University Business Officers) be represented directly on the CoM. Mr Paddy Jackman, formally one of three UUK reps, was accepted into membership as the CUBO rep. It was noted that UUK no longer have representation on the CoM and agreed that this matter would be discussed with UUK's Chief Executive.

It was proposed that Mr Terence Treadwell, former Chair of ASRA and now employed by Nido Student Living, be invited to continue as a member of the CoM. This was agreed.

It was reported that due to his increasing activities as a member of the National Code Audit Panel the current Chair of the CoM, Neil Marsden, had offered to resign. The CoM expressed its gratitude to Mr Marsden for all his efforts as Chair since the creation of the CoM. Mr John Daniels (formally of CLG) was proposed as the new Chair and his appointment for an initial three year period was agreed.

Matters Arising

Training – Martin Blakey reported that further in-house training events on the National Codes had been taking place, and that particular emphasis was placed on the assessment and verification process. He suggested that an annual conference of the Code should take place – either later November or early December – if people thought it was a good idea. The CoM agreed that a conference would be valuable, especially for non members of the CoM as well as staff managing or responsible for large developments. It was agreed that the National Code Administrator would circulate some dates for a conference in 2007 and may also ask members whether they would be willing to lead a session if asked.

Publicity & Awareness – The National Code Administrator announced that three full page ads for the ANUK/Unipol codes had appeared in national publications at the end of September. The advert – thanking providers already signed up to the codes for their commitment to ever improving standards of housing management – was carried in *The Times Higher*, *The Education Review*, and *The National Student*.

It was announced that additional advertising space had been secured in *The National Student* for two further editions. The National Code Administrator requested the thoughts of the CoM on possible themes for these ads. It was suggested that one should ask the question “Do you know what the Code is?”.

ANUK Website Page Impressions – The National Code Administrator apologised to the meeting for not being able to provide the comparisons of page impressions for 2006 and 2007, as agreed at the previous meeting. It was proposed that these figures be forwarded to members via email as soon as possible after this meeting.

Tenancy Deposit Protection Schemes – Following the decision at the previous meeting to make an approach to The Disputes Service with the intention of establishing a bespoke protection scheme for operators of large developments, it was announced that a meeting was likely to take place in November.

Membership Application Process – The National Code Administrator reported that only a small number of members had responded to an email request for comments on possible alterations to the current membership application process. It was suggested that it might be better to reverse the existing first and second stages of the application process so that when a new member applies they are asked to complete the self-assessment questionnaire before members of the CoM are asked to comment on the application.

It was agreed that any new member making an application after October 5th 2007 should be required to complete the SAQ within 28 days (or 56 in the case of FE colleges). Assuming the analysis of the SAQ return does not reveal substantial non-compliance, the National Code Administrator will then contact members of the CoM requesting comments and/or any objections to the membership application being agreed.

Security Standards – The CoM were reminded of a previous discussion concerning some suggested security standards proposed by the Home Office. It had been anticipated that somebody from the HO would be able to attend this meeting to respond to the comments of the CoM, however, they were unable to do so. It was agreed that this matter either be deferred to a future meeting or be discussed by a working group.

Update on Code Membership

The National Code Administrator reported that the total number of bed spaces covered by the ANUK/Unipol Codes, as of October 1st 2007, was 98,643. This was an increase of 0.2% on the figures last reported to the CoM in June 2007. Although two new members had joined since June – Parklane, The Triangle (a development based in Leeds) and St Edmunds College, Cambridge, London Metropolitan University have sold some of their halls. This means that the net total has increased only very slightly.

Martin Blakey announced that ANUK had received an approach from the Scottish Government requesting applications from interested parties in setting up a national voluntary landlord accreditation scheme in Scotland. On the basis of this the National Code Administrator has been in contact with the Scottish Government to enquire as to whether it would be willing to consider approving the ANUK/Unipol Codes for larger developments in Scotland. The response was positive and a meeting is to be arranged with them to discuss this.

It was also proposed that, as Martin Blakey is due to attend a meeting in Belfast early in November, a similar approach with regard to approved status should be made to the Northern Ireland Housing Executive.

Assessment and Verification Procedures

The National Code Administrator reported that a number of the new members who had joined early in 2007 had not as yet returned the self-assessment questionnaire by the given deadlines and, despite several reminders, had still not done so by early October. At a previous meeting of the CoM where similar failures were reported, it was proposed that members concerned be issued with a final deadline for the return of the SAQ, after which their membership would be terminated if the SAQ was not completed and returned. The CoM therefore agreed that a similar approach be taken in respect of these other members.

Neil Marsden informed the meeting that the first round of verification visits had taken place in May. A total of 24 developments were visited by the verifiers – himself and Mr Philip Moxon – and copies of the reports have been circulated to the providers involved. He thanked the providers present who had taken part in the process for their assistance and asked that they pass on his thanks to the site managers. His overall impressions from the visits was positive, although he felt that more needed to be done to make site managers and incoming tenants more aware of the content of the codes.

It was reported that the Audit Panel met on August 29th to receive copies of the verification visit reports and to make any recommendations arising from these. The National Code Administrator was instructed to ask all providers for whom action points were identified to report when the actions had been addressed. The Audit Panel received a nomination from the Chartered Institute of Environmental Health that Dr Stephen Battersby replace Mr Andrew Griffiths as its representative on the Panel. The Audit Panel also proposed that NUS be directly represented on the Panel and instructed the National Code Administrator to ask for a nominee. Finally, the Audit Panel proposed that the next round of verification visits take place in late October/early November and that they focus on developments in London.

The National Code Administrator informed the CoM that arrangements for the second round of visits was in hand and that Dr Battersby would join Neil and Phil in undertaking the visits. It was also reported that a third series of visits would be arranged for January/February 2008, and that these would centre on developments in Newcastle, Manchester and Liverpool.

The CoM was invited to discuss how often verification visits should be made to developments of a particular provider. The general consensus was that once every 2 to 3 years would mean that such visits became a useful management tool, but that some account should also be made of situations where developments change ownership from one provider to another.

Core Principles of Accreditation

Martin Blakey introduced a paper entitled *Accreditation – What is it?* in which he argued a case that there were four criteria for accreditation. He invited the CoM to discuss any aspects of these criteria that were of interest.

The CoM welcomed the paper as part of a wider debate on accreditation and there was no dissent on the core values. It was felt that the third criteria – continuing improvement – was particularly apt in respect of the National codes, especially the emphasis on the management of buildings not just the physical conditions.

The UUK Code

It was reported that the second meeting of the UUK/Guild HE Code of Practice Management Board was held on Friday 13th June. At the time the papers for the CoM meeting were distributed, no official minutes from this meeting had been issued and so notes produced by the National Code Administrator (who had attended the meeting) were issued with the CoM paperwork. The official minutes were issued in the week leading up to the CoM and copies are available from the National Code Administrator.

Martin Blakey reported that CLG had endorsed the comments made in the notes of the meeting in respect of the UUK draft annual report and the proposals by CUBO to take over the administration of the UUK/GuildHE code. They also appear to be taking the view that different approaches are being taken by the operators of the approved codes. As such, they

no longer believe convergence of the Codes is a worthwhile goal and the CoM were asked to endorse this approach. This was agreed.

Martin Blakey was concerned that some aspects of the existing protocol agreement – signed by ANUK and UUK in April 2006, were not being followed by UUK. However, he felt that some of the better universities were using the UUK Code in a positive way, but were doing so at a local level without support from UUK.

Review of the ANUK/Unipol/NUS Code of Educational Establishments

The National Code Administrator reported that, following discussion between several members of the Code for educational establishments, the Chair of ANUK and NUS, it has been proposed that the existing code for educational establishments be reviewed. The aim of the review is to make this code more distinctive and to reposition the code as a viable alternative to the UUK code. It would look to move away from precise physical requirements towards management requirements.

Martin Blakey welcomed the fact that CUBO were now represented in their own right on the CoM and thanked Mr Jackman for his initial input into the idea of the review. He also thanked Mr Dennis Hopper for agreeing to Chair the Review group.

The CoM approved the proposal to establish the review group which will report, in the first instance, to the Consortium who have ownership of the Codes. The National Code Administrator was instructed to seek nominations from the educational sector to join the group.

Draft Marketing Strategy

The National Code Administrator spoke briefly to a paper setting out some initial thoughts on a draft marketing strategy aimed at accommodation providers, students and parents. He requested that members of the CoM contact him via email before the next meeting with any thoughts or suggestions.

Code Amendments

The CoM was invited to comment on a proposed alteration to clause 2.04 of the Code, suggested at the previous meeting. It was proposed to delete the existing wording:

All tenants are provided with a written copy of the letting agreement at the time they sign that agreement or at the time that they pay any booking fee or deposit.

And replace it with

All tenants are provided with a written copy of the letting agreement at the time they sign that agreement or at the time that they pay any booking fee or deposit. For tenancies entered into on line the tenants should be able to download the full terms and conditions of the agreement at the time they make the application and this option should be made clear to them. Paper copies of any agreement would be provided to these tenants should they request them in writing.

This alteration was agreed.

National Code of Standards Budget 2008 and Proposed Fee Structure for 2008

Martin Blakey introduced the proposed budget and fee structure for 2008. The CoM were asked to agree to keep fee levels for existing members at 77p per bed space plus VAT and to require new members who join after 31st December to pay 87p per bed space plus VAT. It was further proposed that the maximum fee limit be removed and that the minimum fee level be increased from £250 to £400.

The CoM noted that the budgeted fee income did not take account of future growth in membership. It also suggested that the budget could be revised at the half-year point in order

to take into account any unforeseen but necessary expenditure. The CoM approved the outline budget

Confidential Salary, Benefits and Conditions Survey of Housing Managers and Related Staff

An earlier meeting of the CoM had discussed an idea of undertaking a survey of salary structures and costs of staffing so that information was available to suppliers about average salary costs throughout the sector.

Martin Blakey reported that Compass Consulting had undertaken a scoping survey on just such a project and had suggested an outline process and timetable for completion. It was proposed that Compass Consulting conduct the survey and that the costs would be divided between those providers who would be interested in the results.

The Chair suggested that if any members were interested in this proposal then they should contact the National Code Administrator. If enough people were interested then it might be necessary to set up a working group to discuss the project in more detail with Compass Consulting.

AOB

Code of Standards Complaint (Chair's Adjudication) – The National Code Administrator reported that the details of the adjudication have been posted on the ANUK website.

Dates and Venues of Next Meetings

The National Code Administrator proposed that the next CoM be held on Thursday 7th February, 2008. He reported that Liberty Living had agreed to host this meeting at their offices in The Gherkin (30 St Mary Axe).

Some members of the CoM felt that early October was not a good time for a meeting and some questioned whether it would be better to have an earlier or later start time to the meetings. It was agreed that the National Code Administrator would contact members of the CoM and ask for meeting time/date preferences. Suggested dates for the other two CoM meetings for 2008 would be circulated at the same time.

The meeting closed at 2.00pm