

25 SEP 2013

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SINCE 1805
humberts

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Jane Ellison
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23 September 2013

Dear Ms Ellison

Re: Being "Up Front" about fees

Thank you for your letter dated 18th September 2013 regarding letting agent fee transparency. In answer to your points:

1. Professional Code of Practice:
We are signed up to both ARLA and The Property Ombudsman (TPO) codes of practice.
2. Availability of code:
Both are available online so we have the links contained on our Intranet. All Chesterton Humberts employees have the intranet as their home page on their work computers. Additionally, every office has at least one qualified ARLA member to whom team members can turn to should they require explanation or clarification on such matters. Further, we have a centralised ARLA qualified Compliance Officer for all staff to consult if necessary.
3. Are charges explained:
Yes. We ensure this is achieved in several ways.
 - All printed advertising currently contains either the phrase "fees apply" or the fees are listed
 - All applicants that register for a letting search will be informed of charges and provided with a tenant guide. This is available in hard copy and electronically here
<http://www.fournewsletter.com/online/chestertonhumberts/ebook/tenantguide/FLASH/index.html>
 - This electronic Tenant Guide is also attached to most lettings staff email signatures
 - If a tenant offers on one of our clients properties, we will not proceed with the offer until the prospective tenant has read and signed a "terms of offer form" which outlines in writing mandatory charges and potential charges that may apply to their situation prior to committing to entering into a legally binding contract
4. Availability of charges;
As shown above we provide the tenant guide to all prospective tenants, these cost are available on our website here <http://www.chestertonhumberts.com/residential-properties/residential-property-lettings/> and are given to all applicants that register in the office and emailed to all those that make initial online contact.

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5. Staff required to explain charges;
Staff are required to inform prospective tenants of additional charges and explain them where necessary. We train all staff on best practices when registering applicants via our Learning and Development department. On the course our company policy on minimum standards on registering and qualifying applicants is outlined which includes informing the applicant of mandatory fees.
6. Tenants informed of changes to charges;
There are no mandatory charges made by Chesterton Humberts during a tenancy so we do not inform tenants of changes. Should our renewal administration fee increase, current tenants will only be charged the fee that was agreed with them at the start of their original fixed term and they would be informed of the new charge should they renew for a further term.

This is one of the reasons why we express all prices as £* plus VAT, as it is generally only VAT changes that will affect our charges.

Other fees that may change during a tenancy are not mandatory and only become due if the tenant doesn't perform the obligations of the contract or wishes to change the terms of the contract, such as rent arrears chasing administration and tenancy swap administration charges. (Tenancy swaps are also known as change of sharer or transfer of tenancy. It is a process whereby a tenant wish to be removed from a fixed term contract and is swapping with another person of their own finding or the remaining sharers are taking over the departing tenants contractual obligations. The charge is detailed in the tenant's terms of offer in case such an occasion arises. The landlord has no obligation to accept a change of the jointly and severally liable tenants. We would always advise our Landlord that consent is never unreasonably withheld.)

I would like to inform you that we are in the process of making changes to our website and print advertising design to comply with the CAP guidance published last week and will have such changes in place no later than the 1st November. Should you have any further queries, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely



Amy Reynolds
Area Director SW London
Chesterton Humberts