

London Borough of Bexley

News Release

For Immediate Release

28 October 2016 / PR 8393

ROGUE TENANT PROSECUTED FOR SUB-LETTING SOCIAL HOUSING FLAT

A rogue tenant who illegally sub-let his social housing flat has been successfully prosecuted by the London Borough of Bexley under the Prevention of Social Housing Fraud Act 2013. The Council also obtained an Unlawful Profit Order for its housing partner, Orbit Housing.

At Bexley Magistrates' Court on Wednesday 19 October, Faruq Hameed (27), of Bainbridge Road, Dagenham, Essex, pleaded guilty to two charges of dishonestly sub-letting his social housing flat at Cobham House, Boundary Street, Erith, being in breach of his terms of tenancy.

The court heard that Hameed, at the time said to be living with his parents in Belvedere, was first granted an assured tenancy on 12 November 2012 by Orbit Housing, a partner agency which provides housing to those being assisted by the Council's Housing Service. Hameed held the tenancy until 14 August 2015.

However, on 14 October 2014, contractors working for Orbit Housing reported meeting an occupant at the property who said that Faruq Hameed was the landlord.

Investigations and strong partnership working between the London Borough of Bexley and Orbit Housing followed.

Evidence gathered through a range of sources helped build a case against Hameed, showing that he was not living at Cobham House but had been sub-letting it to others. One sub-letting period ran between May 2014 to December 2015 and the other between January 2015 and August 2015.

Evidence included a witness statement from one of the sub-letters who confirmed that she had paid Hameed £650 per month between May 2014 and December 2015. The Court was told that the rent charged by Orbit Housing at the time was £482.71. This meant Hameed, whose rent was paid by Housing Benefit at the time, had been making a profit.

Hameed, who has no previous convictions, pleaded guilty to the two charges.

For each charge Hameed was given six weeks imprisonment suspended for 12 months, to run concurrently; a community order for 80 hours of unpaid work and an Unlawful Profit Order for £4,800. He was also ordered to pay £500 costs and £80 victim surcharge and a collection order was made.

Cllr Don Massey, Bexley's Cabinet Member for Finance and Corporate Services said: "I am delighted with the successful prosecution. This offence cheats taxpayers and deprives the local authority of resources which could have been used for those with genuine housing need. We will do all we can to ensure that the Council's scarce resources go to genuine claimants."

Mark Connolly, Orbit's tenancy fraud officer, said: "This has been an excellent example of working in partnership with the Council to bring criminals to justice. I hope this sends a warning that illegal sub-letting of Orbit properties will not be tolerated.

"With demand for social housing at an ever increasing level, it is totally unacceptable for a social tenant to sub-let their home while there are so many people with a genuine housing need on the Council's housing register."

Ends

Notes to editors

The two charges were –

Being the tenant of a dwelling-house situated at Flat 29 Cobham House, Boundary Street, Erith, Kent DA8 2ES let to the defendant under an assured tenancy, dishonestly and in breach of an express or implied term of the tenancy, sub-let or parted with possession of the whole or part of the said dwelling-house, and as the tenant, ceased to occupy the said dwelling-house as the defendant's only or principal home, contrary to S2(2) & S2(6) of the Prevention of Social Housing Fraud Act 2013. 27.8.2014 (a) from 1.5.2014 to 31.12.2014 inclusive, & (b) from 5.1.2015 to 14.8.2015 inclusive.

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