

## Preparing Your Property for Letting

Whether letting a property for the first time or re-letting following the end of an existing tenancy, the main objective is to obtain the best rental level within a reasonable period of time minimising any voids losses. It is a matter of judgement as to what in general terms attracts a tenant to a property. However, on the basis that the property's location is fixed, such general sayings as "good quality properties attract good quality tenants" and "first impressions count" do have a great deal of resonance with the market.

There are a number of key features which we believe should be observed. Many will appear as common sense but it is useful for landlords to have a general checklist for their property. Here are some of our suggestions:

### **1. Decoration**

This should be kept simple and neutral. The sight and smell of a freshly decorated property both inside and outside is very powerful. It shows that the property is cared-for. Ideally some decorating should be undertaken prior to all lettings in order to keep on top of wear and tear.

### **2. Repairs**

Any damage or wear and tear should be attended to. Bathrooms and kitchens are key rooms in any rental property and should be kept both in good repair and decorative condition. Carpets can be notoriously difficult to keep looking fresh and replacement from time to time goes hand in hand with being a landlord.

### **3. Cleaning**

Very often cleaning is carried out by either the out-going tenant or the landlord. Although there is a cost, the use of a professional cleaning company is more suitable. Tenants have high expectations and falling short of these will lower the appeal of the property.

All unpleasant smells including those of pets and cooking must be removed. This can involve the deep cleaning of carpets and curtains. In extreme cases it may mean replacing them in part or whole.

For information provided to Tenants regarding our expectations for vacation please see our help sheet [Cleaning on Vacating](#).

#### 4. Safety

It is mandatory to have the appropriate numbers of smoke detectors fitted in a property and where there are solid fuel burning appliances carbon monoxide detectors must be fitted. We believe it is best practice for CO detectors to be installed in all properties other than in those which are heated electrically. For further information see our help sheet on *Smoke & Carbon Monoxide Detectors*.

Similarly, in-date gas safety certificates for properties with gas appliances are a statutory requirement.

We also recommend (although still not mandatory) that a property passes a Periodic Electrical Inspection Report.

For those landlord's considering letting to American military members, the property must pass a Adequacy Standards inspection – the requirements for which are set out in our help sheet *Letting to the American Military*.

#### 5. Energy Performance Certificates

All properties brought to the market require an EPC. Those looking for rental property are much more discerning now and will take note of the energy assessment. Even with energy costs reasonably stable for those properties which have an assessment of less than band D then thought should be given to upgrading. It should be noted that with effect from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2018 all rental properties (there are a few exceptions) should be a minimum of band E and from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2016 tenants are statutorily able to request a landlord carries out measures to improve the energy rating.

#### 6. Exterior

As well as the general importance of maintaining the property in good repair the landlord should be seeking to achieve an overall cared-for impression. It is the exterior of the property which is viewed first. The garden should be tended, the external décor presented in good condition, rubbish and wheelie bins tidied away and any patios cleaned.

There is much to be considered when preparing a property for letting. For guidance on the important items which must be taken into account call on the many years of experience of either Jane Sewell [jane@hazellsonline.co.uk](mailto:jane@hazellsonline.co.uk) or Chris Oakes [chris@hazellsonline.co.uk](mailto:chris@hazellsonline.co.uk) of Hazells on 01284-702626.