

ACCOMMODATION CONCERN

15 LONDON ROAD, KETTERING.
NN16 0EF. TEL 523509

ANNUAL REPORT : JULY 1990

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TREASURER'S REPORT

Accommodation Concern received a grant of £250 from the Maud Elkington Trust in March 1989, and with the added interest of £10.06, the Account at 30 June 1989 stood at £260.06.

BELOW IS THE STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 1990

INCOME		EXPENDITURE	
	£		£
Balance b/fwd 1.7.89	260.06	Payment of Honorarium to Information Co-ordinator for 6 months 16.10.89 to 13.4.90	200.00
Interest at 31.12.89	12.45	Stationery from WRAS	8.38
Further Grant from Maud Elkington Trust 17.5.90	250.00	Photocopying by MIND	19.76
		Payment of Honorarium to Information Co-ordinator for 3 months 14.4.90 to 13.7.90	100.00
		Balance at Bank 30.6.90	194.37
	<u>£522.51</u>		<u>£522.51</u>

R. Thorley

Roz Thorley
Treasurer
6.7.90

SECRETARY'S REPORT

In contributing to the first Annual Report of Accommodation Concern, I am looking back over its formative stages. My first thought is that the fact that Accommodation Concern keeps going as a group is a measure of the "concern" felt by its members about the great difficulties anyone on a low income faces in finding and keeping a roof over their head - especially if they have no claim on local authority housing.

This concern is a reflection of the national situation, which is often highlighted by the Press. Locally the problem is, of course, smaller and less obvious than in the big cities - but equally the resources are far more limited, whether in the form of expert advice, local authority legal and environmental health services, specialised or general hostels, or any other schemes.

As a small organisation with no secure source of funding, Accommodation Concern has had to set itself limited goals in spite of members' awareness of the wider problems. Margaret Clarke has already detailed the service offered through her work in maintaining the accommodation list; an educational/watchdog role has always been an implicit part of the group's work, but is at present identified as its focus over the coming year.

As Secretary of the group I am perhaps especially aware of the limitations placed on our development by lack of resources. Projects such as producing simple information leaflets for people moving into privately-rented accommodation, or trying to obtain local information about the role of privately-rented accommodation/hostels in meeting the accommodation needs of the poor and vulnerable would be valuable; at the same time I am aware that it is difficult enough to find time to cope with the administration and keeping myself and the group up-to-date with changes in relevant benefits, the law, etc.

For the past nine months I have had Margaret Clarke's assistance in keeping track of necessary administration and "making sure things happen". We will sorely miss this input now that Margaret will be working under CAB auspices, grateful as we are that she is willing to continue to produce the accommodation list on a voluntary basis.

In spite of my caution about the problems caused by manpower limitations, I am hopeful that over the coming year Accommodation Concern will contribute to improving knowledge about the rights and problems of those in accommodation need. However, in concluding by thanking all the members of the group and of other relevant organisations for their support, I also need to emphasise our continuing reliance on your support - in encouragement, co-operation, practical help and feed-back.

INFORMATION CO-ORDINATOR'S REPORT

Since commencing this job on 16th October 1989, two lists of accommodation have been issued in January 1990 and July 1990 to the undermentioned outlets. It is difficult to measure the success of these, but several landlords have confirmed that they have received excellent tenants through these channels and are most willing for their names to remain on our lists. The lists consist of hostels, private landlords and landladies, list of shops which advertise accommodation, and information from Kettering Borough Council's "Where To Stay" brochure. Naturally no responsibility can be taken by the Association for the standard of accommodation offered, nor whether vacancies are available.

Since October too, a weekly list has been compiled of accommodation advertised in the local Press. This is also issued to the public through the undermentioned outlets and with the attached summary proves a useful guide to prices which will be charged. It is interesting to note that during the last nine months rents have remained steady at around £66.00 per week for whole houses and £34.00 per week for single rooms. In Kettering there has been an upward trend in the number of bed-sits now advertised as available for rent - an average of 30 per week in June 1990 compared to 16 in October 1989. Although domestic rates have now been superceded by the Community Charge, this has not been reflected in a lowering of rents.

The Accommodation Co-ordinator would like to thank everyone who has provided names of landlords etc. and helped in compiling the lists, especially Mr. Frank Wheeldon of Social Services.

List of Outlets For Accommodation Lists

1. Citizens Advice Bureau, Kettering
2. Welfare Rights Advisory Service, Kettering
3. Church Housing Association
4. Kettering General Hospital : Social Work Department
5. Housing Department : Kettering Borough Council
6. Volunteer Bureau
7. Youth and Community Service : William Knibb Centre
8. Hazelwood House
9. Probation & Aftercare Service, Kettering
10. Social Services Department, Kettering.

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CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Accommodation Concern was launched on 28th November 1988 when its constitution was formally adopted. Previously there had been informal meetings of representatives of the various agencies in Kettering who were concerned with the problems of homeless persons and the provision of accommodation for them.

The main achievements of the informal meetings had been the production of an accommodation list to be used by all the agencies and, with the assistance of officers of the Borough Council, the production of informative leaflets on housing benefit and rents.

Having obtained a small grant from the Maud Elkington Trust we were able to appoint an Information Co-ordinator in October 1989 and were fortunate to obtain the services of Margaret Clarke, an Adviser with the Citizens Advice Bureau. Margaret was able to continue the excellent work which had previously been done by Jean Sturgess and we are grateful to both ladies for their efforts.

Although another small grant from the same Trust has been received, it will not be possible to retain the post of Information Co-ordinator beyond July 1990. The Citizens Advice Bureau has therefore agreed to accept responsibility for the production and circulation of the accommodation list and the work will, not surprisingly, continue to be done by Margaret.

Accommodation Concern will continue to meet on a regular basis with its focus on an educational/watchdog function.

My task as Chairman has not been too onerous due in the main to the efficiency of our Secretary, Dinah Elliott, whose enthusiasm is appreciated by us all.

CHRIS HARRISON
Chairman