

Letting the people who know best about letting do it for you

“Letting agents – they just find you a tenant, collect the rent and then charge you a hefty commission don’t they?” Sound familiar? – it’s what I thought too before I met Trevor Hames and his team from Cambridge Property Lettings. I discovered there’s a lot more to the job than meets the eye and a good agent is more likely to save you money in the long run than sting you for it.

To start with, before you can rent your property you need to be sure it meets the legal requirements. Be honest, how much do you know about fire and gas safety or the housing act regulations, for example? You could bypass hours of research by asking a good agent to advise you.

Next stage – finding tenants. A property needs careful marketing, and it’s hard to match what an agent can offer. Cambridge Property Lettings uses a website, advertises regularly in local property papers, and has connections with accommodation agents across the city. Then there are viewings. Realistically, how available are you? “Often people want to view at very short notice,” explained Dominic of Cambridge Property Lettings. Once a tenant is found, a good agent knows how to draw up a tailor-made tenancy agreement, plus sees to the other necessary legal procedures.

Rent is another important area where an agent’s experience makes a difference. Setting the right rent to start with is key. “I know of one client who is getting £50-70 below the market rent for his property because he decided to manage it for himself,” Trevor commented. As time goes on, rent also needs to be gradually increased. “We know exactly when and how best to do this”. Would you? It’s an awkward subject I suspect most of us would rather avoid.

The contracts are signed, the tenant is in, you can just sit back and watch the money come in...can’t you? Not usually. One of Cambridge Property Lettings’ main activities is, as they put it “taking on the hassle”. Late or non-payment is an obvious headache, but there are other potential problems. Imagine, you are busy trying to meet a deadline at work, and your tenant phones “The bathroom pipes have burst!”. Chasing plumbers is the last thing you need on top of your work crisis, and then what is to be done about the damage? Wouldn’t you rather leave all that to professionals who deal with situations like this on a daily basis? Plus they have the time to develop a good rapport with tenants, so there are generally fewer complaints.

Finally, handling a tenant’s departure is, surprisingly, as important as their arrival. “A good check out can pay our annual management fee in one go,” claimed Trevor. Agents are expert at assessing the condition the tenant is leaving the property in and making the distinction between ‘acceptable wear and tear’ and ‘neglect’ for which the tenant is liable. I suspect most of us would either not notice the stain on the carpet,

or be too embarrassed to raise the issue. But it is an area where a neutral party like an agent could save you a lot of money....and hassle.

So it seems, on closer inspection, letting agents are actually good value. Like most things in life, you get what you pay for – in this case peace of mind. While the phone is buzzing away at Cambridge Property Lettings and phone calls and visits are being made on your behalf...you can just relax and be assured that your investment is in very experienced and capable hands.

Further information:

Call Trevor Hames on 01223 322 277