



**FIRST-TIER TRIBUNAL
PROPERTY CHAMBER (RESIDENTIAL
PROPERTY)**

Case Reference : **CHI/00HG/MNR/2024/0023**

Property : **Flat 1
148 Albert Road
Plymouth
Devon
PL2 1AQ**

Applicant Tenant : **Ms C Sargeant & Mr A Raven**

Representative : **None**

Respondent Landlord : **Mrs X Ming**

Representative : **None**

Type of Application : **Determination of a Market Rent sections
13 & 14 of the Housing Act 1988**

Tribunal Members : **Mr I R Perry FRICS
Mr S J Hodges FRICS
Mr M C Woodrow MRICS**

Date of Inspection : **None. Paper determination**

Date of Decision : **26th February 2024**

DECISION

Summary of Decision

1. On 26th February 2024 the Tribunal determined a market rent of £800 per month to take effect from 1st March 2024. This rent includes £55 per month for gas and £25 per month for water.

Background

2. The case concerned the determination of a market rent for the subject property following a referral of the Landlord's notice of increase of rent by the Tenants pursuant to sections 13 and 14 Housing Act 1988.
3. On 2nd January 2024 the Landlord served a notice under Section 13(2) of the Housing Act 1988 which proposed a new rent of £800 per month in place of the existing rent of £735 per month to take effect from 1st March 2024. The rent would include £55 per month for gas and £25 per month for water which are both supplied by the Landlord. The notice complied with the legal requirements.
4. On 19th January 2024 the Tribunal received an application from the Tenants under Section 13(4) (a) of the Housing Act 1988.
5. The Tribunal does not routinely consider it necessary and proportionate in cases of this nature to undertake inspections or hold Tribunal hearings unless either are specifically requested by either party or a particular point arises which merits such an inspection and/or hearing.
6. The Tribunal issued directions on 2nd February 2024 informing the parties that, unless either party objected, the Tribunal intended to determine the rent based on written representations. The parties were invited to make submissions which could include photographs or videos.
7. Both parties submitted papers by the specified dates setting out their respective cases. The papers were also copied to the other party.
8. Neither party objected to the matter being determined without an oral hearing, so the Tribunal determined the case on 26th February 2024 based on the written representations received.
9. These reasons address **in summary form** the key issues raised by the parties. They do not recite each and every point referred to either in submissions or during any hearing. However, this does not imply that any points raised, or documents not specifically mentioned were disregarded. If a point or document was referred to in the evidence or submissions that was relevant to a specific issue, then it was considered by the Tribunal. The Tribunal concentrates on those issues which, in its opinion, are fundamental to the application.

The Law

S14 Determination of Rent by First-tier Tribunal

- (1) Where, under subsection (4) (a) of section 13 above, a tenant refers to a First-tier Tribunal a notice under subsection (2) of that section, the Tribunal shall determine the rent at which, subject to subsections (2) and (4) below, the

Tribunal consider that the dwelling-house concerned might reasonably be expected to be let in the open market by a willing landlord under an assured tenancy-

- (a) which is a periodic tenancy having the same periods as those of the tenancy to which the notice relates;
 - (b) which begins at the beginning of the new period specified in the notice;
 - (c) the terms of which (other than relating to the amount of the rent) are the same as those of the tenancy to which the notice relates; and
 - (d) in respect of which the same notices, if any, have been given under any of Grounds 1 to 5 of Schedule 2 to this Act, as have been given (or have effect as if given) in relation to the tenancy to which the notice relates.
- (2) In making a determination under this section, there shall be disregarded-
- (a) any effect on the rent attributable to the granting of a tenancy to a sitting tenant;
 - (b) any increase in the value of the dwelling-house attributable to a relevant improvement carried out by a person who at the time it was carried out was the tenant, if the improvement-
 - (i) was carried out otherwise than in pursuance of an obligation to his immediate landlord, or
 - (ii) was carried out pursuant to an obligation to his immediate landlord being an obligation which did not relate to the specific improvement concerned but arose by reference to consent given to the carrying out of that improvement; and
 - (c) any reduction in the value of the dwelling-house attributable to a failure by the tenant to comply with any terms of the tenancy.
- (3) For the purposes of subsection (2)(b) above, in relation to a notice which is referred by a tenant as mentioned in subsection (1) above, an improvement is a relevant improvement if either it was carried out during the tenancy to which the notice relates, or the following conditions are satisfied, namely-
- (a) that it was carried out not more than twenty-one years before the date of service of the notice; and
 - (b) that, at all times during the period beginning when the improvement was carried out and ending on the date of service of the notice, the dwelling-house has been let under an assured tenancy; and
 - (c) that, on the coming to an end of an assured tenancy at any time during that period, the tenant (or, in the case of joint tenants, at least one of them) did not quit.
- (4) In this section "rent" does not include any service charge, within the meaning of section 18 of the Landlord and Tenant Act 1985, but, subject to that, includes any sums payable by the tenant to the landlord on account of the use of furniture, in respect of council tax or for any of the matters referred to in

subsection (1) (a) of that section, whether or not those sums are separate from the sums payable for the occupation.

The Property

10. From the information given in the papers and available on the internet, the property comprises a first floor flat in a 3-storey building within a mixed-use residential area on the western side of Plymouth and close to HM Dockyard, Devonport.
11. The accommodation is listed as including an open plan Living Room/Kitchen, 2 Bedrooms and a Bathroom with WC. Outside there is a shared yard.
12. The property has gas central heating and double glazing. The Energy Performance Rating is 'C'. The existing rent includes £55 per month for gas and £25 per month for water, the same amounts are proposed for the coming year.

Submissions

13. The initial tenancy began in 2018, the Tribunal was supplied with a copy of a tenancy agreement commencing 1st March 2023.
14. The accommodation has gas-fired central heating and double-glazed windows. The Landlord has provided a dehumidifier and tumble drier but no washing machine or fridge.
15. The Landlord provided the Tribunal with internal photographs showing a very cluttered property and external photographs showing the property to be of relatively modern construction.
16. The Landlord has carried out redecoration in recent years to remedy mould caused by condensation and provided a dehumidifier to try and prevent future problems. A new boiler was installed in 2022, a section of the kitchen was renewed in December 2023, a new oven in 2022, a new gas hob in 2020 and a tumble dryer provided in 2019.
17. The Landlord provided details of comparable 2-bedroom properties with rents ranging from £825 to £950 per month and also provided details of how the water and gas shares are calculated.
18. The Tenants also provided details of comparable properties, stating that there are many properties to rent in the area for less than £800 per month.
19. The comparable properties provided by the parties were generally for flats let where the tenant would be responsible for gas and water utilities direct.

Consideration and Valuation

20. The Tribunal first considered whether it felt able to reasonably and fairly decide this case based on the papers submitted only with no oral hearing. Having read and considered the papers it decided that it could do so.

21. The Tribunal is required to determine the rent at which the subject property might reasonably be expected to be let in the open market by a willing Landlord under an assured tenancy. The personal circumstances of the Parties are not relevant to this issue.
22. Having carefully considered the representations from the parties and associated correspondence, and using its own judgement and knowledge of rental values in Plymouth, the Tribunal decided that the market rent for the subject property if let today in a condition that was usual for such an open market letting would be £750 per month.
23. The Tribunal needs to adjust this rent downwards to reflect the Tenants' provision of some white goods and curtains, and adjust the rent upwards to reflect the fact that gas and water are included in the rent.
24. Using its experience the Tribunal decided that a reduction in rent of £30 should be made to reflect the absence of some white goods and curtains to a net rental value of £720 but this should be increased by £55 to reflect the provision of gas for heating, hot water and cooker hob, and a further £25 per month to reflect the provision of water and sewage. The inclusive rent becomes £800 per month.
25. The Tenants made no representation that the starting date for the new rent specified in the Landlord's notice would cause the Tenants undue hardship.

Determination

26. The Tribunal therefore decided that the rent at which the subject property might reasonably be expected to be let in the open market by a willing Landlord under the terms of this assured tenancy was £800 per month, including £25 for water and £55 gas.
27. The Tribunal directed that the new rent of £800 per month should take effect from 1st March 2024 this being the date specified in the notice.

RIGHTS OF APPEAL

1. A person wishing to appeal this decision to the Upper Tribunal (Lands Chamber) must seek permission to do so by making written application to the First-tier Tribunal at the Regional office which has been dealing with the case. Where possible you should send your application for permission to appeal by email to rpsouthern@justice.gov.uk as this will enable the First-tier Tribunal Regional office to deal with it more efficiently.
2. The application must arrive at the Tribunal within 28 days after the Tribunal sends to the person making the application written reasons for the decision.
3. If the person wishing to appeal does not comply with the 28-day time limit, the person shall include with the application for permission to appeal a request for an extension of time and the reason for not complying with the 28-day time

limit; the Tribunal will then decide whether to extend time or not to allow the application for permission to appeal to proceed.

4. The application for permission to appeal must identify the decision of the Tribunal to which it relates, state the grounds of appeal, and state the result the party making the application is seeking.