

# BELVOIR!

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24<sup>th</sup> May 2018

Dear Sir/Madam

The implementation of banning tenant fees is causing myself & my husband sleepless nights. We are honest, genuine Letting Agents and do not charge our tenants 'outrageous, un-justified fees', for example we charge £240.00 incl VAT for 2 tenants whereas another Agent in our town charges upwards from £700.00 for 2 tenants ( this agent is part of the Countrywide group, so one would have imagined they would 'know better!' than to 'fleece' tenants) This agent also charges an add-on fee if the tenants wish to move-in on a Saturday or an extra fee for an 'express move-in!!, we do not do this, we just work faster if people want to move-in quickly!! Please also take in to account that the fees in London have no relevance to what we charge in the outskirts, I know that in London costs are higher, however the fees we agree are often astronomical.

We can wholeheartedly justify every penny of our £240.00 with staffing costs/administrative costs/ payment to referencing firms, it costs us £45.00 for an clerk to produce and Inventory and we only charge £75.00 in total and so costs go on. our Google reviews) and superb employees would be without a job if these fees were to be abolished, so I would be so grateful if you could kindly read as per below:

I feel strongly that I/we must write to you in regard to For us personally as our own business it would mean us having to make some staff redundant, therefore we would not be able to provide the exemplary service we feel we already give ( please see the abolishment of 'tenants fees' which will have a damaging effect not only on our industry and the continuation of the affordability of employment for staff , and of course importantly on the tenants whose rents will undoubtedly rise due to this abolishment as well as the inane 'Clause 24 --' notably the 'Tenant Tax!' (Myself & my husband attended the Tenant Tax Summit in London this year)

I have read with horror over the course of the last year various articles stating some of the excessive/unfair charges currently placed on tenants ie: £40.00 for a same-day Bank Transfer to return their deposit / £150.00 for the placing of a deposit / £75.00 for a tenancy agreement(this is as an extra to the initial administration fees!), I can assure you that we also find these charges unfair when these particular companies are already charging an initial administration fee.

We and many other agents do not have these charges and would not even consider implementing them. As a result of these 'fees' we feel strongly that we are being 'attacked'/'punished' as genuine, fair agents due to these agents who are clearly taking liberty's with tenants hard-earned money.

A cap on fees is the answer please,not to ban them which will quite simply mean that we are performing copious amounts of work for absolutely no cost at all, I doubt any other industry has to perform in this manner. As you will read below, the landlords monthly fee does not and would not even cover our costs and often, nor do they at present.

[www.belvoir.co.uk/leamingtonspa](http://www.belvoir.co.uk/leamingtonspa)

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Landlords are being 'targeted' at every angle at present and have been for the last few years, so to say that *they are responsible for the tenants fees* is grossly unfair and an ill-informed statement. Landlords are not all 'Aristotle Onassis', the majority are hard-working, working-class people and currently the government are deterring landlords from providing rental accommodation, as well as causing the demise of genuine letting agencies' existence.

Reputable letting agencies who offer a reassuring drop in office presence for both landlords and tenants, visit and advise landlords, accompany tenants and conduct viewings, fully manage properties, oversee work by tradesmen etc etc have overheads, rent, rates, staff wages, heat, light, transport, fuel etc as well as professional memberships and indemnity and insurances to fund. I would like to know how like any business Baroness Greender, Shelter, Generation Rent think we will cover our expenses to offer such a comprehensive service.

Online agents simply advise and introduce one to another, however I am not writing to argue their existence, merely pointing out what they 'can't and don't ' do as they do not charge fees. Without extra charges they can't do property inspections, negotiate with tradesmen, pre- end of tenancy visit to advise tenants what they need to get done and of course the check out, handling or overseeing the return of deposits and advising utilities of change of tenants, meter readings etc. These are standard services, not including the 'extra-mile' we go for our landlords/tenants who ask us just to 'pop up and let them in as they have lost keys, mow landlords properties lawns to make it more presentable for letting whilst they are on holiday...and so it goes on...all for no charge

Our average income from a landlords management fee is between £60-£80.00 pcm. This more often than not does not cover the work we do nor the expenditure we face just to provide the service they need for managing their property. As a couple of examples, we liaise with the council/utility firms on their behalf, often spending hours on the phone and that's just waiting for the call to be answered!! We liaise with the Environmental Health on occasions which takes copious amounts of time and administrative work, all of which we have to fund. These two are just a small 'snap-shot' of works we carry-out for landlords/tenants; £60.00 often does not even come close to covering our costs when you include staff wages/electricity/emails/rental of premises/licence fees in order to be fully-regualted etc etc, never mind the frequent 'gestures of goodwill' that many landlords/tenants are not even aware of, using our own fuel/car/time.

Sadly the perception seems to be that we let a property and say ' thank you, we will take it off the market', 'oh and by the way please give us £240.00 just for pressing a few buttons to mark it as 'let'!!

This perception shows an immense ignorance. I can personally testify to that as prior to joining my husband in this industry; when he came home stressed, I was known to retort 'you let a house, fill out a bit of paperwork, what's the big stress??' Since joining the industry 5 years ago, I have felt a deep sense of guilt for my lack of understanding over the last 20 years!

This industry is relentless in its demands and requirements; the ever-changing legislation of which we have to spend time training our team and keeping ourselves knowledgeable as the ramifications of not adhering can result in custodial sentences or heavy fines, ie: Gas Safety/ Right to Rent etc.

I would welcome anyone who challenges these fees to come and spend a week with us to actually realise what we do do, they would be alarmed to say the least!!

Whilst the monthly commission in high rent areas where rents are an average of £1200-£1500 per month are more may be enough to cover the above, in many parts of the UK the average rent is well below at £550 which at 10-12% simply doesn't earn enough to offer a comprehensive service which protects the best interest of both landlords and tenants. A fair setting up fee by a letting agency for the work entailed is not unjustified, after all solicitors charge for the same property depending whether you are the vendor or the purchaser. Will Baroness Greender, Generation Rent, Shelter think that unfair to purchasers too I wonder?

**We also represent the interests of tenants where safety and legislative requirements are concerned. Tenants who rent through a private landlord have very little protection and, of course, if tenants aren't happy with the service an agent provides they can lodge a complaint with a redress scheme such as TPO which they're unable to do if they rent privately. A very modest upfront cost,( not unfair, excessive charges) is a small price to pay for tenants to pay in exchange for the numerous benefits they receive.**

**I/we do agree on 'capping' tenants fees so as to filter-out the agencies who are being irresponsible and unfair by charging extortionate fees and causing the majority of agents to be likened to their practices.**

**I/we would be most grateful if you could bear my comments in mind when you are in parliament as the stress this 'decision' has caused to us as private business owners is immense and I know the same feeling of delusion is felt amongst many other 'genuine' agents of whom we have been conversing.**

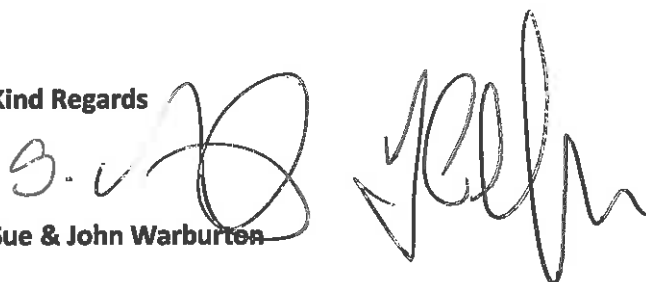
**If you ever wish to pop-by for a chat and see what work we do carry-out for our hard-earned fees, you are more than welcome!**

**Thanking you in anticipation**

**Kind Regards**

**Sue & John Warburton**

**Proprietors of Belvoir – Leamington Spa**

Handwritten signatures of Sue and John Warburton. The signature on the left is 'S. Warburton' and the signature on the right is 'John Warburton'. Both are written in black ink.