

**Minutes of Meeting held on 19 August 2008 at 3.00 p.m.  
At Little Aynam House, Kendal**

Present: S Mallinson Leasehold Manager, SLH  
S Duffy Community Participation Coordinator, SLH  
Cllr Hodson SLH Board Director and SLDC Cllr  
Tony Whittaker Principal Housing Strategy Officer, SLDC  
Ms Dorothy Dixon 44 Waterside, Kendal  
Ms Anne Dickinson 5 Jennings Terrace, Kendal  
Mrs Dorothy Thornton 7 Jennings Terrace, Kendal  
Mrs Joan Chadwick 4 High Tenterfell Court, Kendal,  
Tenant Board Director  
Mr Alan Mark 6 Longlands View, Kendal

Apologies: Mr V Carter, Housing Officer, SLH  
M Pearson, SLH  
Miss AER Crowley, Longlands View  
Mr Tom Lynch, Repairs Operations Manager, SLH  
Mr Trevor Woodward, Contract Partnerships Manager, SLH  
Tim Keegan, 6 Applerigg, Kendal  
P Keeley, SLH

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**Subject**

**1.0 Buy Back Policy**

**Action**

Sue M introduced SLDC's Principal Housing Strategy Officer, Tony Whittaker, to talk about the buy back policy.

Tony explained that the Leasehold Strategy developed in partnership between leaseholders, SLH and SLDC in 2007/08 made a commitment to introduce the buy back policy, which also applies to freeholders. Tony asked for comments and suggestions for alterations or additions to the policy, so that leaseholder input is in place before SLDC Cabinet considers it on 10 September.

Tony confirmed that SLDC does not have sufficient funds to operate the policy on its own, so is planning to involve one of its Housing Association partners. Tony commented that future ownership of the bought back property was one of several practical issues not yet resolved; where a home might be in the middle of a block managed by South Lakes Housing it would make sense for them to manage the bought back home as well.

Tony said that SLDC would not be able to provide additional help if the owner was in negative equity.

Tony then answered a number of questions:

Q. If the home is sold on by the person who bought it from the Council, can the new owner apply for buy back?

A. No

Q. It has been estimated that there may be up to 4 applications a year. What if

the Scheme is more popular?

A. The Scheme will be reviewed in due course. All applications will be considered according to the criteria but there will be a finite budget. Upon review partners might decide to introduce a more detailed evaluation of applications for example a 'points' scheme.

Q. When the property is bought back, could the occupiers apply for a transfer, leaving the home to be let to a family?

A. The future ownership will determine whether the occupiers could apply for a transfer. Transfers are normally restricted to SLH tenants, and housing association tenants with whom SLH has a nomination agreement.

Q. What if the home has been paid for by family members for investment – can anything be done?

A. No, the Council would not know where the funding had come from

Q. Who will do valuations?

A. NPS, the property consultants who currently carry out RTB applications

The Group asked **Tony to report back on the Scheme's progress** and thanked him for his attendance.

TW

## **2.0 Minutes from Leaseholder SIG 3 June 2008** were declared a true record

### **3.0 Matters Arising**

- Sue M confirmed that it is not current policy to let leaseholders know if an aerial or other improvement is to be made to the fabric of the block.
- Dorothy commented that she has signed up for both the gas servicing and the tenants contents insurance and both have gone well.
- Sue M - Martin Mason, SLDC Insurance spokesperson had said that buildings insurance had increased by 3.77% across the board. People who think their insurance has increased by more than this amount may contact Martin at SLDC.
- Sue M – Service charge loans policy has been adopted by SLDC Cabinet. Confirm this does not include those who have owned their homes for more than 10 years.
- Suzy explained that permission is still required for erecting satellite dishes and Andy Bell can give any necessary advice. It is unlikely that significant amounts of staff time will be deployed to investigate cases where permission has not been sought.
- Advance bills (estimates) will be out in September and will be estimated on individual records. March bills will adjust to actual costs.

### **4.0 SLH Delivery Plan**

Sue M explained that the Delivery Plan comprised headline targets, SLH aspirations, recommendations from our inspection and improvements to performance. The Plan is reported to SLH Board and SLDC and will be monitored regularly by the Group to ensure leaseholder targets are being met. The Plan also makes provision for leaseholders to influence decisions and develop and shape the leaseholder service.

### **5.0 Revised Lease**

SLDC Legal Department have now confirmed that only new leaseholders will be issued with a new lease containing the variations for anti-social behaviour and gas servicing. Existing leaseholders can request the new lease but it will cost around £300 per house. It would have cost SLDC £87,000 to give everyone the revised lease and employ staff to handle the work. The Council decided this was not

good value for money. Sue M confirmed that ASB policy applies to all residents on SLH estates.

## **6.0 Payment method for sundry debts and leasehold bills**

Sue M said that the Audit Commission had recommended that we look at costs involved in setting up a greater choice of payment methods for sundry debts, similar to methods available for rent payments. There cannot be the electronic methods that the Council use but some other methods might be agreed by the Group.

- Allpay - this is available at lots of outlets and can include text payments
- Callpay – this would cost £700 per year. Users can pay by their debit card. The cost would not be charged to leaseholders. This involves a phone call and uses the Allpay internet system.
- Bar coding – this would cost £250 to set up plus 50p per invoice plus postage. The coding appears on your invoice and the Allpay machine reads the code.

**The Group recommended that all the suggested options be implemented and that Sue M reports back on progress in due course.**

SKM

## **7.0 District Wide Communal Charges**

The Audit Commission had recommended that SLH and SLDC review all communal charges, that is grounds maintenance and communal lighting.

Sue explained that the Grounds Maintenance Contract is up for re-tender so the review is timely. The new contract will keep sheltered housing separate. Communal energy costs internal and external are to be analysed and apportioned.

The review of the above charges is underway.

**The Group asked to be kept informed about the progress of the review.**

SKM

## **8.0 Review of leaseholder section in SLH News**

“I always turn to that bit first” said Dorothy. The Group liked the section dedicated to leaseholder information and promised to submit any ideas/articles.

## **9.0 Any other business**

None

## **10.0 Dates of Next Meetings**

3.00 p.m. Tuesday 18 November 2008

3.00 p.m. Tuesday 17 February 2009