

**Minutes of Meeting held on 23 November 2010 at 3.00 p.m.
At Little Aynam House, Kendal**

Present: Sandy Ryder Business Improvement Manager, SLH
Suzy Duffy Community Participation Coordinator, SLH
Tim Keegan 6 Applerigg, Kendal
Alan Mark 6 Longlands View, Kendal
Trevor Woodward Contract Partnership Manager, SLH
Dorothy Dixon 44 Waterside, Kendal
Ms A Dickinson 5 Jennings Terrace, Kendal
Mrs D Thornton 7 Jennings Terrace, Kendal

Apologies: Vince Carter, Housing Officer, SLH
Pauline Keeley, Finance Assistant, SLH
John Mansergh, Performance Manager
John Atkinson, 20 Sedbergh Drive, Kendal
Phil Dixon, SLH Board Director and SLDC Cllr
Margaret Pritchard, Tenants' Committee representative
Maureen Pearson, South Lakes Housing
Tom Lynch, Repairs Operations Manager, SLH

Circulation: All

Copy to: Peter Thomas
David Stubbs

Subject

Action

1.0 Minutes of last meeting

The minutes from the meeting of 23 February 2010 were declared a true record.

2.0 Matters arising

Housing Options Study

To recap, the aim of the study is to secure long term investment for council housing in the district. The money has dried out.

There are 2 main options open to us:

- Operating under a different financial settlement from Government (known as 'self financing'), or
- Creating a brand new Housing Association – which can attract additional funding to improve homes and services.

During the summer, we have been consulting tenants on their views:

- Newsletters have been sent to 3,187 tenants and letters to 247 leaseholders
- 'Drop-in' sessions have been held in 22 locations around the district

- 813 responses received (approx 25% return)
- Support for staying with Council and Housing Transfer
- Over 90% stated they want a vote on the future of their homes

Next steps:

- A report was discussed at SLDC Full Council meeting on the 14th October,
- Decision to await further Government policy on the reform of the HRA,
- This is expected as part of the Comprehensive Spending Review (20th October) and the part of the forthcoming Decentralisation and Localism Bill (November).
- Reality is that HRA reforms could take another two years.
- Government expected to rule out most transfers unless they do not cost the public purse too much – this means there could be room for a transfer for South Lakeland if there is an appetite politically.

3.0 Gas servicing for leaseholders

Trevor Woodward reminded the Group about the availability of gas service to leaseholders:

- Leaseholders can have gas servicing carried out by the contractor employed to service tenants' appliances
- Contract covers all spare parts, as well as smoke detectors
- Leaseholders need to ask for a quotation; price will depend on number of appliances in your home
- Price is fixed and is the same as that charged for tenanted homes
- Contractor is local, from Carnforth, and customer satisfaction has reached 100%
- Contact details for the contractor are: Rogerson Homeserve + Tarnwater, Yealand Conyers, Carnforth, Lancashire LA5 9RJ. 01524 734350

It was **agreed that the availability of the service should be advertised by putting a note on the website, and adding an advert to the next run of invoices.**

JM/SR/TW

4.0 Review of the lease

Sandy Ryder said that developments included:

- Trowers and Hamlin, SLH's solicitors, had already reviewed 4 of the 7 or so types of leases
- SLDC have been involved in the review, including staff from Legal and Finance departments
- Reviews have been time-consuming and extra staff had been drafted in to help
- Training for staff has been provided eg on how to deal with the legal requirements of s.20 consultation (major repairs)
- Scanning onto computer of lease and relevant details; these can now stay with property records
- Future work includes updating individual leases; checking property database; and pulling out important information eg how much ground rent, when due
- We are aiming to finish this work by December
- If successful next step will be to go through it in detail and try to fulfil our ultimate aim, which is to invoice for specific costs rather than have a 'blanket' approach

- Being invoiced for specific costs means that leaseholders will not be paying towards others' costs

Sandy commented that segregating costs in this way may generally mean that leaseholders could expect to pay less.

Sandy also confirmed that all leases cannot be changed by an addendum, but that the new more modern leases were better.

Sandy said that SLDC no longer provided 100% mortgages for new leaseholders.

The Group expressed concern about the way that tenants and leaseholders have to pay twice for services such as grounds maintenance, when freeholders only pay once. SLDC is aware of this situation.

Cllr Dixon to note

The Group thanked Sandy for the information about the review of the lease.

5.0 SLH Service Offer Two Leaseholders and Right to buy Leaseholders

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|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will issue leaseholders with an estimated invoice for ground rent and leasehold service charges in April each year and issue a final statement of account in March of the following year and advise of any additional charges or refund due. | <p>How will we check this?</p> <p>Sandy Ryder to provide evidence</p> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will provide more details about the cost of maintenance and how your service charge has been calculated. | <p>Leaseholders want a copy of job ticket for everyone on a block</p> <p>New work on service charges will provide more detail; more on this at next meeting</p> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will provide instalment facilities to allow payment of service charge invoices over 10 months. | <p>Do provide on request. Will have a negative cash flow impact. Can numbers of those taking advantage of instalments be provided?</p> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will provide you with details of programmes of planned works and improvements to your estate and arrange for contractors to contact you to discuss carrying out works to your home at a reasonable cost. | <p>We write to all leaseholders</p> <p>On newsletter and in website</p> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will arrange for our gas contractor to provide gas servicing to you at a competitive price. | <p>Numbers of leaseholders using the service requested.</p> |

Though not a term of the contract, contractors will usually offer services as goodwill

- We will hold regular Leaseholder Service Improvement Group meetings to bring leaseholders together to agree priorities for improvement.
- We will offer a responsive repairs service to leaseholders for all repairs. This will include a 24-hour, 365 day emergency call out service for emergency repairs.

Publish minutes and advertise membership

Do we record leaseholder usage of the service TL?

Right to Buy

- We will acknowledge receipt of your application within 20 working days and send a house/freehold offer letter within 12 weeks of receipt of an application.
- We will explain the implications of becoming a leaseholder to you in an induction Interview as soon as is practicable after your application is received.
- We will send a flat/lease-hold offer within 12 weeks of receipt of an application.
- We will instruct the Councils' Legal Section within 10 working days of receipt of tenant's instruction to proceed with the sale.

Are these figures already collected?

Identify team providing advice

Are these figures already collected? Changed to 12 weeks.

Alter to read SLH?

6.0 Leaseholder nominee for review of SLH anti-social behaviour policy

Suzy Duffy said that Alison Kinnon, Housing Manager, was looking for a leaseholder volunteer to take part in the review. Alison was looking for someone to attend one or two sessions between Mid January and end March. It would be useful if the person might have had some experience of serious anti-social behaviour in their neighbourhood.

Dorothy Dixon agreed to be nominated to attend the review and will let the Group know how she gets on.

AK/SH

Any other business

The Group debated whether to continue with quarterly meetings, and decided to do so at least for the time being. The Group also discussed the possibility of having another 'open event' for leaseholders. This could happen to replace the meeting to be held in May 2011, if agreed. The possibility of combining the open event with the Tenant Conference was briefly discussed. The event would need to be advertised in the newsletter or via invoice letters.

Dates of next meetings

1 March 2011

24 May 2011