

**SOUTH LAKES HOUSING TENANTS' COMMITTEE MINUTES**  
**THURSDAY 1<sup>st</sup> JULY 2010 AT 10.30 HRS**  
**HELD AT**  
**THE RESOURCE CENTRE, LITTLE AYNAM HOUSE, KENDAL**

Present: Margaret Pritchard (Chair)  
Phyllis Tweedale  
John Short  
Peter Bland  
Robin Martakies  
Win Sayers  
Charles Howarth  
Ron Pritchard  
Margaret Akrigg  
Dorothy Dixon  
Joan Chadwick

Officers in attendance: John Stirling- Tenant Participation Officer- SLH

Guests Paul Athersmith- Tenant  
Janet Cherry- Tenant  
Doone Ward- Tenant  
Anita Thompson- Tenant  
Anne Corbett- Tenant

Apologies: John Mansergh- Performance Manager- SLH  
Jamie Martin- Independent Tenant Advisor  
Peter Thornton- Portfolio Holder- SLDC

Circulation: As above

**Action**

Circulation of Documents

A brief report was circulated outlining the speech of Tenants' Committee Chairman to full Council on 29 June, prior to their debate on the Stock Options Study.

The Chairman opened the meeting by welcoming Paul Athersmith, Janet Cherry, Doone Ward, Anita Thompson and Anne Corbett as observers to the Committee. Their interest in tenant participation and the work of the Committee was most welcome.

**634 Minutes of previous meeting (20 May 2010)**

Robin Martakies asked that the figures relating to age and percentage at minute 628 be checked for accuracy as they appeared unusual.

SB

John Short asked for the words 'when possible' to be added to Resolution 2 of minute 629, to cater for occasions when his monthly report would not be synchronised with the 6 weekly cycle of Tenant Committee meetings.

J St

Proposed by Ron Pritchard and seconded by Robin Martakies that the minutes as amended by the above be accepted as a true record. Agreed.

**635 Matters arising**

Ron Pritchard asked about minute 611 from the 8 April meeting and the subsequent update by John Mansergh at minute 620 of the 20 May meeting and queried the current state of discussions between John Sykes and the Department of Communities and Local Government.

JM

**636 SLH Board Minutes (27 May 2010)**

Noted.

**637 SLH Board Agenda 8 July 2010**

John Short commented that item 6.3 (Substance Misuse) was an internal policy.

**638 Newsletter and Website Review**

Ron Pritchard said that he had hoped to return from the Cumbria Tenants Forum meeting held yesterday with examples of newsletters from other landlords, but in the event only South Lakes Housing took their newsletter to the meeting. It would not be possible for the Committee to peruse these other examples over lunch.

Robin Martakies said that the Resident Involvement Service Improvement Group (RISIG) had already looked at some newsletters from other landlords, and many were far worse than that produced by SLH. At their next meeting they would use a laptop to test websites of SLH and other landlords.

Peter Bland said that he had recently done some extensive testing of the SLH website and although all the links worked well there was a problem with the calendar of meetings which had since been rectified.

JM

John Short asked the SIG to look at the possibility of reverting to the previous practice of publishing the names and responsibilities of officers, together with their telephone numbers.

SD

Dorothy Dixon asked that if library photographs of tenants or leaseholders were used in future, the individual be consulted in advance.

**639 Housing Options Study – Communication and Consultation Strategy**

John Stirling said that as SLDC had agreed to consult with tenants about future options to finance the housing service, a draft programme of drop in sessions had been planned around the District. In order for SLH to fully support these sessions, SLH had already cancelled a number of other meetings but Tenants' Committee agreement was needed to postpone a further 5 SIGs. Peter Bland said that in addition to the draft timetable of drop in sessions before the Committee, he had agreed to reschedule the Grant Applications Panel (GAP) meeting of 18 August, to 25 August. This would allow a Kendal session to take place on 18 August, and not 27 August as per the draft timetable.

Robin Martakies said that the Resident Involvement Service Improvement Group (RISIG) was part way through a significant programme of work relating to communications with tenants via the newsletter and website, and that the RISIG should not be cancelled.

JM

The matter was put to the vote and the recommendation to postpone the SIGS was carried. Robin Martakies asked that his vote not to postpone the RISIG was noted.

JS/SD

John Stirling would circulate a sheet after the meeting asking members to indicate the sessions they were able to attend. Appropriate briefing/training would be provided to members prior to them attending the drop in sessions.

#### **640 TSA Regulatory Framework**

Robin Martakies said that even though the Tenant services Authority (TSA) may be abolished in future, there would still be a regulatory framework. Until any changes were made, SLH had to comply with current legislation and he favoured SLH providing a summary report to all tenants, with the option of being provided with a full report either on request or via the SLH website.

The Committee agreed to this suggestion and the timetable contained within the report.

Win Sayers said that in her view, the TSA had merely 'reinvented the wheel'.

#### **641 Conference Feedback**

John Short said that the Tenant Conference was the best event of that nature he had ever attended.

Peter Bland said that he too thought the event was the best ever, and had provided him with an opportunity to network with fellow tenants and promote the work of the GAP.

Robin Martakies said that by using SLDC facilities the event provided value for money, but wondered if a later start would have increased attendance as public transport was an issue for rural tenants. An address by Jamie Martin the Independent Tenant Advisor (ITA) would have been a useful addition.

Many members felt that the TSA representative spoke for too long and their presentation was too technical for a significant proportion of tenants present.

Dorothy Dixon asked that any future conference took account of the status of leaseholders and that they could join a workshop which would reflect their particular circumstances.

JM

John Stirling said that the comments of the Committee would be reported back to the conference organisers.

#### **642 Nomination of Tenant Board Director**

John Stirling said that each year, the longest serving Tenant Board Director had to stand down, and unless they had served the maximum term as a Director they were able to put themselves forward to serve a further term. The longest serving Tenant Director was Charles Howarth and he had to step down at the Board AGM on 23 September. The Committee was invited to consider their nomination.

The Chairman asked Charles to confirm that he was willing to serve a further term. There were no other nominations.

Robin Martakies proposed that Charles Howarth be nominated to the Board of SLH for 3 years as a Tenant Director. The proposal was seconded by Win Sayers and agreed by the Committee.

JS

#### **643 Tenants' Committee Expenses Policy & Procedure**

John Short said that following the Committee Away Day he had met with John Mansergh and Sandy Ryder to produce the new policy which was designed to be clearer whilst retaining an element of discretion. It would also give Tenants' Committee full control over their own budget.

Robin Martakies queried the following

2-4 the requirement to have formal minuted approval for meetings or events out with the prescribed list was over bureaucratic.

2.5- the monetary and environmental cost of SLH providing new ink cartridges as compared with his practice of having old cartridges refilled.

3.3- the prospect of him having to make a specific journey to have another member of Tenants' Committee sign off his expenses.

Charles Howarth said that he too was uncomfortable signing off the claims of other Committee members and wished the current system to remain.

Joan Chadwick said that SLH officers had knowledge of who had attended which meeting, whereas Tenants' Committee members were not as well informed unless personally involved.

Peter Bland said that paragraph 3.5 could make it difficult for the Treasurer to claim their own expenses.

Phyllis Tweedale said that she too was concerned with the prescriptive nature of paragraph 2.4.

JSh/JM/  
SR

The Committee rejected the proposals and asked John Short to meet again with SLH officers to renegotiate the policy.

John Short said that a third cheque signatory was required and asked for somebody who lived in Kendal to take on that role. Margaret Akrigg said that she was willing to be considered.

It was proposed by Charles Howarth, seconded by Ron Pritchard that Margaret Akrigg be the third cheque signatory. There were no other nominations and the Committee unanimously agreed to Margaret Akrigg being appointed as the third cheque signatory.

#### **644 Treasurers' Report**

The report was noted.

#### **645 Review of District Wide Tenant Participation Agreement**

Margaret Pritchard reminded the Committee that despite the workload of the Stock Options Study, the review of the District Wide Tenant Participation Agreement was due in 2010. It was agreed the Committee hold an initial session immediately following the Annual General Meeting on 15 July.

It was also agreed to seek independent advice at an appropriate time in the review process and John Short was asked to make a budgetary provision for this.

#### **646 Members' Report**

Ron Pritchard- The Cumbria and North Lancashire Tenants Forum will be holding an Awareness Day in Carlisle on 23 September. The theme would be about future national housing policy.

Ron had also been invited by SLH to join a group which are reviewing the Repairs and Maintenance service.

Charles Howarth- the Overview and Scrutiny Committee now held a pre meeting to determine the best questions to ask officers, so maximising value for money.

Joan Chadwick- had been involved in the preparation of a 'Welcome Pack' for sub contractors.

Margaret Pritchard- had addressed full Council prior to their debate on the Stock Options Study, followed by an interview with Radio Cumbria which had subsequently been broadcast. The Committee wished to record their appreciation to Margaret in speaking up for tenants.

JM

Phyllis Tweedale- wished to question the performance of the grounds maintenance contractor and sought agreement of the Committee to make a formal request. The Committee agreed to the request.

Margaret Akrigg- for personal reasons would not seek re-election to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Robin Martakies- for personal reasons would not seek re-election to the Cumbria and North Lancashire Tenant and Resident Forum.

Margaret Pritchard thanked the observers for taking an interest and invited them to consider joining the Committee as there were currently a number of vacancies. John Stirling would provide them with papers for the AGM.

#### **648 Date of next meeting**

15 July- AGM

16 September- Committee

The meeting closed at 1300hrs.