

SOUTH LAKES HOUSING TENANTS' COMMITTEE MINUTES
THURSDAY 9 APRIL 2009 AT 10.30 HRS
HELD AT
THE RESOURCE CENTRE, LITTLE AYNAM HOUSE, KENDAL

Present: Margaret Pritchard Chairman
John Short
Peter Bland
Dorothy Dixon
Sherralyn Clement
Joan Chadwick
Charles Howarth
Su Marriott
Ron Pritchard
Margaret Akrigg
Sherralyn Clement

Officers in attendance: Suzy Duffy- Community Participation Coordinator, SLH
John Stirling- Tenant Participation Officer, SLH

Guests Brenda Gray- Housing Portfolio Holder, SLDC

Officers attending part of meeting: Simon Hughes- Senior Housing Officer, SLH
Alison Kinnon- Housing Manager, SLH
Peter Thomas- Chief Executive, SLH

Apologies: Win Sayers
Ian Elleray- Community and Housing Manager, SLDC
Lisa Chant- Customer Services Manager- Bramall Construction

Circulation: As above

Copy to:

Action

486 Minutes of previous meeting (26 February 2009)

Minute 482. John Short asked for 'teambuilding' to be replaced by 'away day'.

The minutes were then accepted as a true record.

487 Matters arising

Minute 470, Ron Pritchard thanked the Tenant Board members for raising his concerns about the sale of Council land to Housing Associations at the Board meeting on 5 March.

Margaret Pritchard reported that she had not yet presented Don Brookes with his gift from the Committee, but she was likely to do it on 5 June at his birthday party.

488 Gardening Scheme

Simon Hughes gave the Committee an overview of the gardening scheme which had been set up some years ago to assist vulnerable tenants abide by the terms of their tenancy. Tenants who were over 60 years of age or disabled, and had nobody else

living with them in the property able to undertake the work, were eligible to apply for assistance to maintain their gardens. Assistance was limited to grass and hedge cutting only. Flower beds, shrubs and trees were excluded. The current cost was £295 per property, split between a payment by the tenant of £100 and a subsidy of £195 by SLH. A total of 50 properties could be funded from the scheme, however demand has exceeded supply and a waiting list has to be managed.

Robin Martakies asked if a part service could be requested to take account of individual needs. Simon said that there was flexibility in the scheme and this might be arranged.

Brenda Gray asked if any action could be taken against vulnerable tenants with untidy gardens who had been identified as potential beneficiaries of the subsidised scheme, but had declined to apply. Simon said that cases of this nature would be subject to further investigation with enforcement action being taken if necessary.

489 Rent Increase 2009-2010

Helen Smith said that government guidance inviting local authorities to reduce the annual rent increase from 6.2% to 3.1% had been received on 6 March, after letters giving statutory notice of the 6.2% increase had been sent to tenants. At their meeting on 8 April, Cabinet had agreed to the lower increase and SLDC would be making a bid to government for funding to cover losses to the Housing Revenue Account (HRA). Additional administration costs caused by late notification were not recoverable.

The overpayment of rents already collected would be reimbursed to tenants either by a single refund, or a reduction in payments spread over the remainder of the year. The final decision was dependant on IT issues.

John Short asked if there would be a reduction of the management fee paid by SLDC to SLH. Helen Smith said that she was unable to commit to any specific outcome, however she aimed to secure the best deal possible for tenants, and assured that all overpayments would be refunded.

490 Joint Grounds Maintenance and Street Cleaning Contract

Alison Kinnon outlined current negotiations between SLDC and Barrow Borough Council regarding a joint street cleaning and grounds maintenance contract, which was being put out to tender shortly. Whilst researching street cleaning schedules it had come to notice that some estates managed by SLH were receiving more street cleaning than others. It was unclear if the reasons for the differences were still valid, and Alison invited members of the Committee to meet with officers of SLDC to explore the matter further and make recommendations. Sherralyn Clement, Su Marriott, Margaret Akrigg, Robin Martakies, Dorothy Dixon and Peter Bland all expressed an interest and Alison would contact them when more details were known.

AK

491 Consultation – New Council Housing

Peter Thomas gave a verbal update concerning new developments in council housing, particularly around 6 ALMOs that have been granted investment partner status, and a further 17 that are in the process of preparing similar bids. Prudent borrowing by and support from local authorities was the key to enabling these developments.

492 Reviews of Service Improvement Groups and Newsletter

As requested by the Committee, Peter Thomas had commenced reviews of Service Improvement Groups and the Newsletter. The views of staff were now to hand and he invited the Committee to nominate members to join working groups to take the matters forward and make final recommendations. Phyllis Tweedale asked who else would be

on the working groups and Peter said SLH staff and possible representatives from SLDC. Suzy Duffy said that Tenant Involvement Club (TIC) members would also be invited.

Action

John Short said that the views of staff had been received at short notice and asked that the matter be deferred to the next meeting.

Resolved- That the reviews of the Service Improvement Groups and the Newsletter be deferred to the next meeting.

493 SLH Board Minutes 5 March 2009

The minutes were noted with further detail asked about-

Board minute 721- Robin Martakies sought clarification from Brenda Gray about Audit Commission assessment of SLDC.

BG

Board minute 732- Joan Chadwick asked about the continued use of the 01539 717717 telephone number, as opposed to 0845 057 0080. Suzy Duffy said she would arrange for an update to be available for the next meeting of the Committee.

SD/SAB

Board Minute 733- Robin Martakies asked who would be on the Board Remuneration Committee as it was usual for this type of committee to include individuals from outside the organisation. John Short said that the individuals had not yet been nominated, but the Committee would consist of 4 or 5 members and be representative of the Board.

494 SLH Board Agenda – 16 April 2009

Noted.

495 Housing Options update

Brenda Gray said that work on the Project Initiation Document (PID) due to be considered by cabinet on 8 April, had identified further costs. There was now a requirement to quantify and approve these additional costs, and as a result of this the PID had been deferred to Cabinet on 27 May. Brenda acknowledged how important this piece of work was to tenants, but wanted the document to be as complete as possible.

496 Treasurers Report

John Short circulated his report detailing Committee expenditure since the last meeting. After payment of mileage claims a sum of £630 remained and he had asked for further funding. The report was noted and John thanked for his work.

Suzy Duffy said that she would contact Garry Ronson to discuss the Committee budget for next year.

SD

497 Equality and Diversity Policy review

Pradeep Passi, the independent consultant advising the Committee, had given his feedback which had been circulated to members. The Committee identified a number of layout and typing errors in the draft document which would be rectified prior to printing.

JSt

Resolved- That the revised policy as amended by Pradeep Passi be adopted by the Committee subject to any observations by Reader Panel.

498 Service Improvement Group Nomination	Action
The Allocations Service Improvement Group invited the Committee to nominate a member to join them. Margaret Pritchard was nominated. Brenda Gray asked to be kept up to date with progress.	LH
499 Training Needs Analysis 2009-2010	
John Stirling had drawn together requests from members, and proposed a training programme reflecting those needs. Some members had mislaid their returns and asked for an extension of the return deadline. The Committee agreed to extend the deadline for returns and for the training programme to reflect the revised needs of the Committee.	SD/JSt
500 Suggestions for service areas to be included in tenant audits 2009-2010	
Suzy Duffy asked the committee to suggest areas of the service which should be included in the programme of tenant audits for 2009-10. Joan Chadwick suggested telephone contact with SLH be included, and Robin Martakies suggested satisfaction with response repairs to communal areas/facilities also be included. Suzy thanked the Committee for their suggestions.	
Robin also said that the Resident Involvement SIG had made reference to the practical difficulties of a small number of well known tenants engaging in mystery shopping exercises, and asked if costing could be obtained for an external company to undertake this work. Suzy Duffy said that she would be looking into this possibility.	SD
501 Decent Homes Reports	
In the absence of Lisa Chant, her written report was noted.	
502 Members reports	
Margaret Pritchard- had attended the House of Commons on 24 March to raise the concerns of the Committee with Members of Parliament and senior members of the Tenant Services Authority (TSA)	
Robin Martakies- TSA landlord event in Manchester on 18 March. (report was circulated with the agenda papers). TSA video van in Carlisle on 3 March when tenants views from across the region were taken. Resident Involvement SIG on 10 March when the issue of using external mystery shoppers was discussed. A Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership (CDRP) Streetsafe on Kirkfield, Negotiating Skills course hosted by Eden Housing Association on 19 March and a Cumbria Improvement and Efficiency Partnership event at Newton Rigg on 2 April.	
Charles Howarth- Community Overview and Scrutiny Committee had discussed the new 10 year grounds maintenance contract and some flexibility within the first 2 years to allow for the identification of work not scheduled upon commencement of the contract.	
Phyllis Tweedale- Community Overview and Scrutiny Committee had discussed the Councillors 'Call to Action'	
Ron Pritchard- The Cumbria and North Lancashire Tenants and Residents Participation Forum had hosted a well attended event in Barrow on 25 March looking at issues surrounding safety issues to be considered when hosting public events.	
Joan Chadwick & Margaret Akrigg- Had represented The Community Investment Group at the opening of the Ulverston Multi Use Games Area (MUGA) on 7 April.	

They were also attending the Doodleshire Fair on 16 May which was being supported by the Bramall Community Fund Group.

Action

Peter Bland- Had attended the Gas Servicing Monitoring Group and reported that only 2 properties remained outstanding from the annual statutory inspections, and legal action was being taken in appropriate cases. He asked permission to invite a representative of H &B Heating and Plumbing, who currently held the contract for gas servicing to the next meeting of Tenants Committee to brief them about their work. The Committee agreed to the invitation.

PB

503 Any other business

John Stirling advised the Committee that due to 2 Public Holidays between the close of business today and the Board meeting on 16 April, there would be a delay in the circulation of minutes of the meeting. Suzy Duffy confirmed that the team would aim to have the minutes available for the Board meeting.

Suzy Duffy advised that due to the schedule of Newsletters, it was necessary for the Committee to consider moving the date of their AGM to allow sufficient time for receipt of nominations to Tenants Committee from interested parties. The Committee agreed a revised date of 16 July for the AGM.

504 Date of next meeting

Thursday 21 May 2009