

SOUTH LAKES HOUSING TENANTS' COMMITTEE MINUTES
11.00 am THURSDAY 11 AUGUST 2011
HELD AT
THE RESOURCE CENTRE, LITTLE AYNAM HOUSE, KENDAL

Present: Charles Howarth (Chair)
Joan Chadwick
John Short
Janet Cherry
Dorothy Dixon
Doone Ward
Robin Martakies
Don Brookes

Officers in attendance: John Mansergh, Performance Manager- SLH
Sue Boulton, Business Support Manager - SLH

Guests Glenys Brood (Guest)
Jamie Martin, Independent Tenant Adviser

Apologies: Margaret Akrigg
Win Sayers
Margaret Pritchard
Ron Pritchard
Annice Lewis

Circulation: As above

758 Welcome to visitors

The Chairman welcomed Glenys Brood, John Mansergh and Jamie Martin to the meeting.

759 SLH Board Minutes (18 August 2011)

Minute 1015 - Robin Martakies asked if the new Board Members were 'finding their feet' and how this was being achieved. The Chairman replied that the Chairman of the Board had scheduled individual 1-2-1s with all Board members to discuss all aspects of Board membership.

Minute 1016- Robin Martakies asked if a meeting had been held to discuss the provision of standby on call overnight at Sheltered Housing Schemes. John Short informed the Committee that a Sheltered Housing Service Improvement Group meeting had been held to discuss the matter and a further meeting was to be arranged.

AK/GA

John Mansergh explained the government's revised approach to housing inspections where the aim was to reduce the bureaucratic burden on organisations by reducing the number of official inspections and empowering local people to scrutinise performance. Jamie Martin said that a fuller explanation on co-regulation would be discussed later on the agenda.

760 SLH Board Agenda (18 August 2011)

The Committee considered all items of business due to be considered by the Board on 18 August, with specific reference to the following.

Item 6.1 - Robin Martakies queried the invitation of the TSA to the 8 September Board meeting and the purpose of the visit. John Mansergh explained that Steve Fox of the TSA had been invited to give a presentation on the Registration Process and regulation requirements post 2012. Steve Fox would be available to meet with members of Tenants' Committee from 2.30pm that afternoon and a meeting would be arranged should Tenants' Committee wish it.

JM

Robin Martakies referred to the one complaint received by SLH regarding Choice Based Lettings and queried if applicants to the waiting list were sufficiently aware of the process. Dorothy Dixon confirmed that details of all available properties were displayed in the area offices. Janet Cherry said that she herself was registered on Choice Based Lettings and that she was kept well informed of available properties. Internet access was provided by SLH for applicants who did not have access themselves. Housing Management to clarify how prospective applicants are made aware of the process for applying for council housing.

AK

John Short complimented the Chief Executive on the inclusion of a Glossary of Terms within the report on Quarter 1 Deliver Plan and Performance.

Robin Martakies questioned why sheltered housing was a red risk. John Mansergh advised that this related to uncertainties around Supporting People income and the impact on Sheltered Housing provision in the future. Securing Supporting People funding is proving to be a complex procurement. Nationally, there are also changes planned to Housing Benefit. A process was now in place to address these risks and this would be reported back to the Sheltered Housing SIG, the Board and to Tenants' Committee

Jamie Martin explained the potential impact that these developments could have on the Offer Document and the commitments that had been made. The changes to Supporting People funding and Housing Benefits were out of SLH's control, however SLH had made a commitment on Sheltered Housing which was over and above what could be offered should transfer not go ahead.

Item 8.1 – Robin Martakies complimented Board Members on their commitment to the company. Sue Boulton confirmed that the subsistence allowances detailed in paragraph 2.3 where applicable to members of Tenants' Committee.

761 Editorial team – 4th August

John Mansergh reminded the Committee that the production of the Annual Report had been delegated to the Editorial Team following agreement of the content. The Editorial Team had held two meetings and changes had been made to the presentation of the Annual Report. Tenants' Committee had previously agreed that every tenant should receive a copy of the Annual Report. John Mansergh reported that the advisers on Stock Transfer and the Council were concerned about sending out additional information during the consultation period and felt that all other communications should cease during this period, in line with the Government's Housing Transfer Manual. John Mansergh had sought guidance from the TSA and read out the correspondence to the Committee who were advised that it was up to Committee how the Annual Report should be disseminated to tenants.

Doone Ward emphasised the need for communications to be kept simple and understandable.

Jamie Martin said that the Annual Report was an important tool in assisting tenants to judge and assess their landlord's performance; the TSA expected tenants to scrutinise and hold their landlord to account. However, it was probably not the right time at present to give information on SLH's performance. Tenants needed to be able to focus on one main item, the ballot. Going forward, it was important that Tenants' Committee made sure the Annual Report was in a format that tenants could easily understand to enable them to challenge performance.

Robin Martakies advised that the Committee could delay the publication of their report until after the stock transfer ballot due to the exceptional circumstances. Other Committee members felt that tenants should have a copy of their report but that a delay would be preferable. John Short queried whether this course of action would be acceptable to the TSA. Jamie Martin advised that the TSA should support this action as tenants were in charge of the decision and not the landlord.

Jamie Martin said that there was a list of things that he needed to discuss with Tenants Committee during the period between the ballot and actual transfer including:

- The future role of Tenants' Committee
- Changes to the Constitution
- New landlord structure
- Succession planning to the Board
- Council activities including tenant involvement in Overview & Scrutiny Committee etc
- Scrutiny of new landlord and how promises are measured including Mystery Shopping and Tenant Inspection
- Involvement of wider community through Environmental Improvement projects
- Area Discussion Groups
- Role of Tenants' Committee in allocating/prioritising environmental improvements
- Changing legislation – Housing Ombudsman- Democratic Filters – Tenants' Panel
- Annual Report

Don Brooks asked if a list could be provided for Tenants' Committee to work through.

JM

Jamie Martin replied that it was important that Tenants' Committee focused on the issues at hand, following a successful ballot there would be three or four months to conduct a series of discussions, there would be a systematic approach so that everyone was clear about their role.

John Mansergh referred Tenant's Committee to page 35 of the Delivery Plan which reflected the suggestions detailed above and demonstrated SLH's commitment to support Tenant Scrutiny and demonstrated SLH's commitment to support Tenant Scrutiny. Progress against the action would be reported to Tenants' Committee and to the Board

Resolved:

Due to the exceptional circumstance of consulting tenants on Stock Transfer the Annual Report to be distributed to tenants following the completion of the ballot.

John Mansergh to contact the TSA once the minutes are agreed.

JM

762 AOB

Don Brooks proposed that Glenys Brood be co-opted onto the Tenants' Committee. Janet Cherry seconded the proposal.

Resolved:

Glenys Brood be co-opted on to Tenants' Committee.

Robin Martakies commended Jamie Martin, John Mansergh and officers of SLH for their diligence during the LSVT process. He said he was impressed by the quality of debate within Tenants' Committee, SLH, SLDC and the TSA and he believed that Tenant's Committee had been well served.

Jamie Martin gave the committee an update on consultation:

- The second wave of Road Shows had been completed
- The door knocking had been a really useful exercise and had complemented the newsletters
- Tenants appeared to be much more aware of the ballot and it was hoped that this would boost participation.
- The Offer Document had gone to print on Monday 8 August and would be delivered to tenants on the 22nd, 23rd, 24th and 25th August.
- Staff were being briefed on what they could and couldn't say during the door knocking
- Tenants' Committee support vital in keeping tenants informed

Dorothy Dixon asked what the Government's position was with regard to LSVT. Jamie Martin responded that the process was progressing but he felt that the Government would have to agree if there was a positive ballot.

Robin Martakies asked how long was left on the ITAs contract. Jamie Martin confirmed that he was contracted through to the ballot and subject to a positive result the contract would be extended until the 31st March 2012. John Mansergh confirmed that a budget had been identified within next year's Business Plan for Independent Tenant Advice.

The meeting ended at 12.00 noon

763 Date of Next Meeting

10.30 am Thursday 1st September 2011.