

**SOUTH LAKES HOUSING TENANTS' COMMITTEE MINUTES
THURSDAY 15 JANUARY 2009 AT 10.30 HRS
HELD AT
THE RESOURCE CENTRE, LITTLE AYNAM HOUSE, KENDAL**

Present: Margaret Pritchard (Chair)
Wyn Sayers
Ron Pritchard
Margaret Akrigg
Dorothy Dixon
Robin Martakies
Don Brookes
John Short
Cllr Baverstock
Liz Easton
Phyllis Tweedale

Officers in attendance: Suzy Duffy

Attending part of the meeting: Garry Ronson Director of Finance - SLH
Lisa Chant Customer Development Manager – Bramall
Construction

Apologies: John Stirling
Peter Bland
Cllr Brenda Gray (Portfolio Holder)
Charles Howarth
Joan Chadwick
Su Marriott
Sherralyn Clement

Circulation: As above

Copy to: P Thomas

Subject

Action

Circulated at the meeting

Sheltered Housing Agreement
Notes of meeting with Helen Smith 8 January 2009

Margaret Pritchard welcomed Cllr Baverstock from Milnthorpe, who had asked to come along to this Tenants' Committee as an observer.

454 Minutes of previous meeting (11 December 2008)

The minutes of 11 December 2008 were agreed as a true record.

455 Matters arising

Margaret Akrigg brought along a copy of Age Concern's 'Tradespeople's Register'.
Suzy will circulate a copy with the mins.

Action
SD

Board members informed Don Brookes that they were monitoring the issue of tenants paying for the Handyman Service and that David Stubbs was dealing with it.

456 SLH Board Minutes (18 December 2008)

Minute 693: – John Short answered Ron Pritchard's enquiry about why sheltered tenants could not 'tap into' office broadband; it was not possible to secure the broadband, so any users could gain access to SLH files, which could not be authorised.

Don Brookes asked to be informed when sheltered tenants would be getting broadband. Don had been promised this 12 months ago and would like to be informed why he has not got it.

SAB

Phyllis Tweedale asked whether all sheltered schemes would be provided with a computer in the lounge.

SAB

Minute 703: - John Short answered queries about the Grant Applications Panel. It was agreed that Suzy would circulate the minutes and notes to keep everyone informed.

SD/CAT

457 SLH Board Agenda (21 January 2009)

Ron P and John Short commented on the item regarding elections to the SLH Board. John said that it had been proposed that one of the four tenant Board places should be made available to a leaseholder (though currently no leaseholder had applied).

458 Management Accounts 2009/10

Garry explained that the papers for the management accounts were going out to the Board tomorrow and was sorry they had not been available for today's meeting as they have only just been completed.

This year, tenants had been involved in the very early stages of negotiation for the Management Fee (the money from the Housing Revenue Account that SLDC, SLH and Tenants agree to be used by SLH to provide the housing and repairs service). Government policy in housing finance means that more and more Housing Revenue Accounts are beginning to face difficulties. The Council has been supportive and has listened to our bid for the fee. Garry said that the management fee for 2009/10 had been agreed at £2.4 million, which did represent an increase on previous years.

It has not been an easy negotiation, but we have now agreed a budget which will allow us to manage to provide the service, though there have been efficiencies to make. Efficiencies made though the Value for Money Plan through 2008-9 included:

- Re-tendering banking provision, insurance, internal and external audit, electricity
- Maximising insurance and other recharges to make sure we reduce our overall costs where we can

Though there were inevitable increases in costs there had been no increase in some budgets, for example overhead costs, and others are expected to remain constant, for example, the cost of the repair service following the introduction of 'Optitime' has led to freezing of fuel and some other vehicle costs.

Cyclical repairs and the cyclical painting programme are also fully funded.

Action

Margaret Pritchard led the Committee in thanking Garry and the rest of the staff for their efforts; every section of the organisation had helped to make savings, which had helped SLH to remain in the top quartile for cost effectiveness in the benchmarking analysis.

Lastly, Garry confirmed that current reserves are £99K.

459 Treasurer's Report

John explained that there will be quite a large bill coming in from Graham Martin for his work as Independent Adviser, and there are funds in the Tenants' Committee account to cover the bill. John is expecting a cheque from Garry Ronson to top up the budget in the next few months. Interest on the account will drop off from around £100 per annum to a few pounds following falls in interest rates. The Committee thanked John for all his hard work.

Wyn asked about the Independent Advice for the Options. Suzy explained that there would be a 'tender' process where two or three suitable candidates could be considered. The tender process is activated when a piece of work or project exceeds a certain price.

460 Signing the Sheltered Housing Agreement

Suzy explained that this item had been put on the agenda before Monday's signing had been arranged. Copies of the Agreement were available.

461 Future Options update

Suzy said that Ian Elleray had called and said that Margaret, Ron and John Short had been involved in a preliminary 'Options' meeting on 19 December to talk about setting up a meeting to kick off the review. Ian's next task is to draft a project plan for the review, which he will bring before the Committee at the earliest opportunity. Don commented that all of the Committee were involved at the last Options review. Suzy said that tenants had not previously been invited to this preliminary meeting in the past so this was in fact a sign of an improvement in participation. Robin welcomed this extra layer of tenant involvement and also observed that Don was right.

462 Training Needs Analysis

Suzy said that when John Stirling returned to work he would be circulating a Training Needs Analysis for next year's training programme. Suzy commented that it is important that everyone completes and returns their form as it will help the Tenant Participation team determine which training events are most popular. The form includes plenty of choices but there will be a blank space to enter any training individuals require that is not included in the list. Suzy then asked if anyone would like to comment on last year's analysis, training programme, and choices.

It was agreed that the following be considered in drawing up the programme:

- Discuss with SLDC (Gill Rawle) the possibility of joining their events
- Ask about using SLDC facilities; on the SLDC InformationTechnology (IT) training all the attendees had a laptop to work on
- Invite the Housing Portfolio Holder to all the events

- Use in-house (free) training where this is possible
- Ask Kendal College about outreach training for sheltered housing (Yewbarrow Lodge)

Action

463 Review of newsletter – an updates

Suzy read an email from Peter Thomas about his latest thoughts on the review. Peter will be in touch with Editorial Team members to take part in the review.

PT

464 Tenants' Committee membership and non-attendance: what our Constitution says

Suzy explained that the Committee had asked for a discussion about Liz Easton not having attended a number of meetings, and wanted to decide how to proceed. The relevant minute of the Constitution says: 'If a member of the Committee fails to attend three consecutive meetings of the Committee over a six month period, whether or not they have given apologies, the Committee shall decide whether or not the member is able to fulfil their obligations under this constitution. If the Committee decides that the member concerned is not able to fulfil their obligations they will be deemed to have resigned and will be notified accordingly.' Suzy confirmed that Liz had missed the consecutive meetings in June, August, September, October and December 2008.

The Committee asked Liz a number of questions about whether she felt able and was willing to be a full and committed member of the Committee in the future. Liz apologised for the fact that her absence had affected the Committee and said that she does want to continue being a member. Liz said that she has been pursuing an enquiry about Milnthorpe Residents Association with SLH and SLDC.

Following a discussion with Liz it was **decided that she may continue as a member of the Tenants' Committee.**

465 Decent Homes Reports

Lisa Chant was welcomed to the meeting and said:

- Staveley is virtually complete
- 262 completed in Windermere
- Externals are a bit behind because of the weather
- Satisfaction levels remain high
- Comments from customers will be sent to Suzy for inclusion in newsletter
- 109 tenants have said yes to 'mop up' (over half of total) – starting in Feb
- Mop up will be followed by Estate Improvements
- SLDC Cabinet have given approval for the Honeypot MUGA (Ulverston)

Lisa explained the process for measuring leaseholder satisfaction with the works. Lisa is trying to improve the process and will continue to report back.

Dorothy Dixon asked about the external works to Dr Mannings Yard, Kendal. Lisa said that the property is a listed building and requires specialist repairs which we may not be able to fund from Decent Homes.

Lisa confirmed that leaseholders do have to pay a share for tenants' window replacement in their block, even if they have replaced their own.

The Committee thanked Lisa for her report.

466 Members' Reports

Robin had attended the Area Discussion Group (ADG) in Ulverston and said that despite the information being absolutely brilliant, few tenants had attended. Robin asked whether there could be better publicity about the ADGs. Suzy said that she is to meet with the Senior Housing Officers, who organise the ADGs, to see if we can improve attendance, and asked if the Committee had any ideas about how we could attract people to these events. Suzy had also got some space on the rents year planner for publicity for the dates for 2009.

Members thought the following might help:

- Local radio adverts
- Advertise locally
- Get village voices to door knock
- Get volunteers to phone friends/bring people
- Make sure venues are publicised in newsletter (dates already published)

John Short revealed that he is the co-author of a report about IT for the Overview and Scrutiny task group.

467 Any Other Business

Suzy said that she was circulating some explanatory notes from Helen Smith's recent session. The notes explained what all the categories in the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) budget include, and could be kept as a reminder about this complex topic.

Lisa Maguire said:

- Water butts are being delivered soon
- Ask if you want a power down unit for your TV, she has 500
- Fire Service is holding 'keep warm in winter' events

Members were experiencing delays in sending and receiving emails with attachments. These get 'parked', sometimes for over 24 hours, regardless of whether they may be urgent documents. **It was resolved** to make representation to SLDC to speed up external emails with attachments.

JS

John Short asked for 2 possible dates for the next Tenants' Committee Away Day and the dates are 30 March or 6 April 2009.

Margaret Pritchard said that she had been invited (as Tenants' Committee Chairman) to a meeting in the House of Commons, and will report back.

468 Date of next meeting

10.30 am 26 February 2009.

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