

**SOUTH LAKES HOUSING TENANTS' COMMITTEE MINUTES
THURSDAY 21 MAY 2009 AT 10.30 HRS
HELD AT
THE RESOURCE CENTRE, LITTLE AYNAM HOUSE, KENDAL**

Present: John Short
Dorothy Dixon
Robin Martakies
Charles Howarth
Joan Chadwick
Ron Pritchard
Peter Bland (part)
Sherralyn Clement
Win Sayers
Margaret Pritchard (Chairman)

Officers in attendance: Peter Thomas- Chief Executive Officer, SLH (part)
Suzy Duffy- Community Participation Coordinator, SLH
John Stirling- Tenant Participation Officer, SLH
Trevor Woodward- Contracts Manager, SLH (part)
Dave Peek- Gas Contracts Officer, SLH

Guests Lisa Chant- Customer Services Manager, Bramall Construction (part)
Kevin Nichol- General Manager, H&B Heating and Plumbing

Apologies: Margaret Akrigg
Su Marriott
Phyllis Tweedale
Brenda Gray- Housing Portfolio Holder, SLDC
Ian Elleray- Community and Housing manager, SLDC

Circulation: As above

Copy to:

Action

John Stirling reported that he had received a telephone call from Liz Easton resigning from the Committee.

505 Minutes of previous meeting (9 April 2009)

Robin Martakies and Phyllis Tweedale to be shown on the attendance list.

Minute 488. Brenda Gray requested that her question be recorded as 'How SLH would deal with a situation where vulnerable tenants declined to take part in the scheme, because of cost, which resulted in unkempt gardens.'

Subject to the above amendments, the minutes were accepted as a true record.

506 Matters arising

Minute 493: Robin Martakies asked if any action had been taken about introducing an independent member onto the Board Remuneration Committee. John Short said that he raised the matter at the Board meeting of 16 April and the Remuneration Committee was still considering the matter. The Remuneration Committee would report to the Board on 9 July. Robin asked if the remunerations under consideration

referred to Board members or staff. John said that all Board members were unpaid and the Remuneration Committee was only concerned with staff.

Action

Minute 500: John Stirling reported that external mystery shoppers could be engaged for a cost of approx £950. Suzy Duffy said that despite some difficulties, members of Tenants Committee and Tenant Involvement Club had provided an excellent mystery shopping service, and expenditure in the order of the indicative cost could not be justified from the tenant participation budget. Robin Martakies asked that SLH consider engaging external mystery shoppers on a corporate level. Suzy Duffy said that she would refer the matter on.

SD

507 Telephone Contact Technology

Sue Boulton had circulated a report detailing the current arrangements for customers to contact SLH by telephone. Whilst acknowledging some operational difficulties, the Committee supported the principle of publishing a single point of contact via a local rate number.

SB to note

508 SLH Board Minutes 16 April 2009

Board minute 741: Robin Martakies asked that the Board keep their standing item 'Residents' Questions' on the agenda. The strategic options review would generate significant interest from tenants, and they must not be discouraged from questioning the Board.

Resolved- the Committee make a formal recommendation to the Board that they retain their standing agenda item 'Residents' Questions'.

Board minute 743: Joan Chadwick asked if any progress had been made with council new build. Peter Thomas said that SLH had provided SLDC with information in order to evaluate the opportunities.

509 SLH Board Agenda 28 May 2009

Item 12 (Aids and adaptations): Win Sayers referred to paragraph 4.17 and believed that the policy should be worded 'substantially adapted', also that the tenant concerned be informed of the requirement to move before the home is adapted.

Resolved- the Committee recommend the Board include the following at paragraph 4.17 of the proposed Aids and Adaptations Policy.

- (i) the paragraph refers to 'substantial adaptations'
- (ii) the tenant concerned be informed of the requirement to move before the home is adapted.

510 Review of Service Improvement Groups

Peter Thomas said that the Service Improvement Groups (SIGs) were very important as many tenants were motivated by a single issue but did not wish to join Tenants Committee. It was very important to capture the views of these individuals.

Robin Martakies referred to the forthcoming agenda item on the Tenant Participation Budget 2009-10, and asked if an adequate budget would be provided to support any outcome of the review. Suzy Duffy said that the review group would have to consider value for money.

John Short said that staff time could be better used by combining a number of the current Groups. Also, the Groups should discuss issues that were important to

tenants and leaseholders.

Action

Ron Pritchard said that it was important to involve as many tenants as possible.

Joan Chadwick said that the Groups formed the grass roots of policy, and in her experience staff had made particular efforts to encourage tenants drawn from TIC to voice their views.

It was agreed that John Short, Joan Chadwick and Dorothy Dixon would join the review group.

PT

511 Reviews of Newsletter

Peter Thomas said that the newsletter had to contain a balance of articles of interest of tenants generally, and information upon which bodies such as the Audit Commission would consider in judging on the performance of SLH. Robin Martakies asked that the front page of the newsletter better reflected the balance referred to by Peter.

John Short said that he had received positive feedback from fellow tenants about recent editions of the newsletter. In addition he now wished to withdraw from Editorial Team.

Ron Pritchard said that the space apportioned to Anti Social Behaviour (ASB) matters was out of proportion to the problems experienced by tenants.

It was agreed that Win Sayers would join Peter Bland and Su Marriott on Editorial Team.

PT

512 Tenant Participation Budget 2009-10

Sue Mallinson reminded the Committee that completion of the Decent Homes Programme (DHP) would see a reduction in the fee paid to SLH by SLDC with effect from April 2010. In anticipation of this reduction all budget holders had been asked to identify target savings in order to build up a reserve. Budgets were not being cut, and if holders needed their full allocation this would be accommodated. The Committee was invited to nominate two members to join a group to examine if target savings could be identified from the Tenant Committee budget.

John Short said that savings may be identified from the overall TP budget, but having regard to the likely commitments of members whilst SLDC was considering their position on a strategic review, it was unlikely that the TC budget could offer any savings. He was also conscious that the Committee was currently 8 members below its constituted maximum of 21, and sought an assurance that should additional members join the Committee, their activities would be funded.

Robin Martakies said that it was inequitable that government was promoting tenant empowerment but the Committee was being asked to identify savings.

Joan Chadwick said that travelling expenses could be minimised by combining meetings.

It was agreed that John Short, Margaret Pritchard, Sue Mallinson and Suzy Duffy would form a small working group to examine the issues.

SD/SKM

513 Decent Homes Programme Report

Lisa Chant said that as the Programme was now at the mop-up stage, the usual

written reports would be of diminishing value. Many of the tenants involved were extremely frail and Resident Liaison Officers (RLOs) had committed significant time to assisting with packing and unpacking etc. A number of tenants had been identified to SLH for consideration of Sheltered Housing or for onward referral to other support agencies.

Despite the anticipated slow progress during the mop-up stage of the Programme, to date 19 returns had been received with a satisfaction rate of 100%.

Lisa invited 2 members of the Committee to be the guests of Bramall Construction at the Chartered Institute of Housing exhibition on 18 June.

514 Gas Safety

Margaret Pritchard welcomed Kevin Nichol to the meeting, who gave an overview of the gas maintenance schedule and associated safety issues his company had been contracted to undertake by SLH.

515 Treasurers Report

John Short circulated his report detailing income and expenditure to date. He also reported on a cheque book which had gone missing in the post and a subsequent attempt to withdraw money from the account. The matter had been formally reported to the bank, Peter Thomas and the Police, and John was complying with all their requirements.

John was thanked for his written report, and also his diligence in attending to the issues emerging from the lost cheque book.

516 Involvement Update

Suzy Duffy presented her written report as contained within the Board agenda for 28 May. She thanked the Committee for their contribution to a very successful year, with all targets met with the exception of mystery shopping.

Robin Martakies asked about applications that the Grant Approval Panel had either rejected or had agreed to but the work had not been done, as he was concerned about a seat at Kirkfield which had not been installed. Suzy said that she would arrange for a report to be prepared for the next meeting.

SD/TW

517 Members Reports

Ron Pritchard: Had been re-elected as Chairman of the Cumbria and North Lancashire Tenants and Residents Forum at their AGM on 20 May 2009.

Joan Chadwick: Had attended the Doodleshire Fair on 16 May together with Margaret Akrigg and Bev Townley.

518 Any Other Business

John Stirling reported that the Cumbria Choice Based Lettings (CBL) Project Board was asking for 2 or 3 tenants from each participating landlord to form a tenants panel under the direction of their Project Manager. It was anticipated that the panel would meet 5 times over the next 18 months at various locations throughout Cumbria. Tenants Committee was invited to make the nominations on behalf of SLH.

JSt

Ron Pritchard, Margaret Pritchard and Win Sayers were nominated.

Action

519 Date of next meeting

Thursday 2 July 2009